

What You Should Know About the 2020 Democratic Party Platform

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BY JOE CARTER – EDITOR FOR “THE GOSPEL COALITION”

During the Democratic National Convention the delegates vote to adopt their party’s platform, a document that outlines the statement of principles and policies that the party has decided it will support.

Why should Christians care about a document that few non-politicians will ever read? Because of the influence the two major party platforms have on public policy. While the platform is not binding on the presidential nominee or any other politicians, political scientists have found that over the past 30 years lawmakers in Congress tend to vote in line with their party’s platform: 89 percent of the time for Republicans, and 79 percent of the time for Democrats. For this reason we should be aware of what is proposed in these documents and how they may affect the welfare of our nation (Jer. 29:7).

This article will provide, without commentary, an outline of the Democratic platform as it relates to several social issues. Every statement is either a direct quote or a summary of the platform's position.

Bioethics and Health Issues

Opposes all federal and state laws that prohibit or restrict abortion.

Supports restoring taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood.

Supports the repeal of the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits federal funds from being used for abortion services.

Opposes restrictions on medication (i.e., non-surgical) abortions that are “inconsistent with the most recent medical and scientific evidence and that do not protect public health.”

Supports “medically accurate, LGBTQ+ inclusive, age-appropriate sex education.”

Opposes conscience-based exemptions that would allow medical providers, employers, and others to refuse to provide contraceptives and abortifacients.

Supports making COVID-19 testing, treatment, and any eventual vaccines widely available, convenient, and free to everyone.

Supports increased financial support to states to enroll eligible adults in Medicaid, have the federal government cover a higher percentage of the bill, and add incentives for states that have not yet expanded Medicaid to do so.

Supports the federal government paying 100 percent of the tab for COBRA insurance, which keeps people on their employer-sponsored plans, without restrictions, during the pandemic.

Supports re-opening the Affordable Care Act marketplaces during the pandemic, even outside of the normal open enrollment season, and expanding subsidies for health coverage.

Supports the federal government working with private-sector manufacturers to dramatically scale up U.S. domestic manufacturing capacity for both personal protective equipment and essential medicines.

Supports a prohibition on the rationing of health care that refuses or diverts hospitalization, treatment, or supplies based on a patient's disability.

Supports improving oversight and expanding protections for residents and staff at nursing homes.

Supports expansion of telemedicine.

Supports a national public health surveillance program for COVID-19 and future infectious diseases.

Supports increased funding for health and medical research and federal grants across agencies, including at the National Cancer Institute and other components of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the CDC, and the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, and for state and local public health departments.

Supports providing medical and public health research grants for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to research health disparities in the context of COVID-19.

Supports paid sick leave protections as part of the COVID-19 response for all workers in the economy, including contractors, gig workers, domestic workers, and the self-employed.

Opposes the lifetime ban on blood donation by men who have had sex with other men.

Creation Care and Environmental Issues

Supports using the federal government's procurement power to incentivize the humane treatment of farm animals in accordance with commercially recognized animal welfare standards.

Supports rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement.

Supports applying a carbon adjustment fee at the border to products from countries that “fail to live up to their commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement.”

Supports “restoring” protections for “irreplaceable public lands and waters, from Bears Ears National Monument to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.”

Supports eliminating carbon pollution from power plants by 2035.

Supports a national goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for all new buildings by 2030.

Supports expanding solar and wind energy deployment through community-based and utility-scale systems, including in rural areas.

Supports California’s statutory authority under the Clean Air Act to set its own emissions standards for cars and trucks.

Supports the creation of an environmental justice fund to “make historic investments aimed at eliminating legacy pollution, which disproportionately causes illness and premature death in communities of color, low-income communities, and Indigenous communities.”

Supports banning new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters, modifying royalties to account for climate costs, and establishing targeted programs to enhance reforestation and develop renewables on federal lands and waters.

Supports fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Criminal Justice Reform

Supports removing barriers that keep the formerly incarcerated from accessing food assistance.

Supports increasing funding for public defenders and the Legal Services Corporation to “ensure those who cannot afford private representation can nevertheless equitably access the civil justice system and have their day in court.”

Supports automatically sealing and expunging juvenile records.

Supports banning the use of chokeholds and carotid holds and permitting deadly force only when necessary and a last resort to prevent an imminent threat to life.

Supports federal standards for “no-knock warrants.”

Supports a ban on racial and religious profiling in law enforcement.

Supports investments to incentivize police departments to build effective partnerships with social workers and mental health and substance use counselors to help respond to public health challenges.

Supports broader use of body cameras.

Opposes the use of “weapons of war that have no place in our communities.”

Supports limiting the sale and transfer of surplus military weapons to domestic law enforcement agencies.

Supports lowering the intent standard for federally prosecuting law enforcement officials for civil rights violations.

Supports “reining in” the doctrine of qualified immunity.

Supports the establishment of a national registry of officers who have been found to have abused their power.

Supports measures to increase diversity among the ranks of police departments.

Supports increased funding for officer health and well-being in police departments across the country, including for personal safety equipment and mental health services.

Supports eliminating the use of cash bail.

Opposes imprisonment for failing to pay fines or fees.

Opposes having driver’s licenses revoked for unpaid tickets or simple violations.

Supports creating new federal district and circuit judgeships consistent with recommendations from the Judicial Conference.

Supports allowing judges to determine appropriate sentences.

Supports repeal of federal mandatory minimums, incentivizing states to do the same, and making all sentencing reductions retroactive so judges can reconsider past cases “where their hands were tied.”

Supports ending the federal sentencing disparity between crack and powdered cocaine.

Supports the continued use of the President’s clemency powers to secure the release of those serving unduly long sentences.

Supports establishing an independent clemency board to “ensure an appropriate, effective process for using clemency, especially to address systemic racism and other priorities.”

Supports ending the use of private prisons and private detention centers.

Supports taking steps to eliminate “profiteering” from diversion programs, commercial bail, electronic monitoring, prison commissaries, and reentry and treatment programs.

Supports ending solitary confinement for adults and juveniles.

Supports a ban on the use of restraints on pregnant federal inmates.

Supports programs that provide educational opportunities, including pursuing college degrees, for those in the criminal justice system, both in prison and upon release.

Supports the automatic expungement of certain criminal records for those that have been fully acquitted, wrongfully convicted, or pardoned by the executive.

Supports expanded access to mental health and substance use treatment for those on parole.

Supports ending the practice of reincarcerating people for technical violations of probation or parole.

Supports federal and state efforts to “ban the box” (i.e., removing the check box that asks if applicants have a criminal record from hiring applications).

Supports restoration of voting rights for the formerly incarcerated.

Supports abolishing the death penalty.

Discrimination and Racial Issues

Supports ending discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

Supports re-issuing federal guidance from the Department of Education and the Department of Justice to prevent the disparate disciplinary treatment of children of color and children with disabilities in school and educational settings.

Supports removing the Confederate battle flag and statues of Confederate leaders from public properties.

Supports making Juneteenth (June 19th) a federal holiday.

Supports establishing a national commission to “examine the lasting economic effects of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and racially discriminatory federal policies on income, wealth, educational, health, and employment outcomes; to pursue truth and promote racial healing; and to study reparations.”

Supports empowering local governments to “combat gentrification.”

Supports launching an “all-of-government effort to eliminate health disparities, including by achieving universal health coverage through a high-quality, affordable public option; expanding funding for community health centers, rural health centers, and mobile health clinics; and tackling environmental racism that sees communities of color

disproportionately impacted by air pollution, water pollution, and toxic chemicals.”

Supports having all federal agencies produce materials in languages commonly spoken in the United States, including languages spoken by Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and that voting materials are also easily accessible for citizens with limited English proficiency.

Supports ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Supports passing the Paycheck Fairness Act.

Drugs and Drug Abuse

Supports ending the “War on Drugs.”

Opposes imprisonment solely because of drug use.

Supports the decriminalization of marijuana use and rescheduling it through executive action on the federal level.

Supports allowing states to decide about decriminalizing marijuana.

Supports allowing states to make their own decisions about recreational use of marijuana.

Opposes federal prosecutions of drug-related conduct that is legal at the state level.

Supports automatically expunging all past criminal convictions for marijuana use.

Supports increased use of drug courts, harm reduction interventions, and treatment diversion programs for those struggling with substance use disorders.

Education

Supports universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year-olds and expansion of Head Start and Early Head Start.

Supports K-12 instruction in civics and climate literacy.

Supports tripling Title I funding.

Supports banning for-profit private charter businesses from receiving federal funding.

Supports measures to increase accountability for charter schools, including by requiring all charter schools to meet the same standards of transparency as traditional public schools, including with regard to civil rights protections, racial equity, admissions practices, disciplinary procedures, and school finances.

Opposes private school vouchers and allowing public-funded scholarships to be used at private schools.

Supports “protect[ing] the rights of transgender students.”

Supports appointing judges who will enforce the Civil Rights Act in schools.

Supports making community colleges and trade schools tuition-free for all students, including DACA recipients.

Supports increasing federal support for services like child care on college campuses.

Supports increased funding for wraparound services, including covering the cost of textbooks and fees for low-income students and establishing programs to address campus food insecurity.

Supports forgiving all undergraduate tuition-related federal student debt for those earning less than \$125,000 who graduated from two- and four-year public colleges and universities, and we will also apply this benefit to individuals holding federal student loans for tuition from private HBCUs and MSIs.

Supports increased public investment in rural, urban, and Tribal broadband infrastructure, and subsidies to offer low-income Americans subsidies for accessing high-speed internet, and invest in digital literacy training programs, so “children and families and people with disabilities can fully participate in school, work, and life from their homes.”

Family Policy

Supports increasing the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.

Supports funding for grants to states to help low-income and middle-class families afford child care.

Homelessness

Supports a housing-first approach to ending homelessness.

Supports providing Section 8 housing support for every eligible family, and will enact protections to keep landlords from discriminating against voucher recipients.

Supports increased investments in public housing.

Human Trafficking

Supports increasing the annual visa cap for victims of human trafficking.

Immigration

Supports the termination of the Trump administration's travel and immigration bans, and supports legislation to

“ensure that no president can enact discriminatory bans ever again.”

Supports protections for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients.

Supports ending prosecution of asylum seekers at the border and policies that force them to apply from “safe third countries.”

Supports rescinding the Trump administration’s immigrant wealth test.

Supports restoration of family reunification programs ended by the Trump administration.

Supports legislation to treat the spouses and children of green card holders as immediate relatives.

Supports ending workplace and community immigration enforcement raids

Supports policies and programs to “make it easier for qualified immigrants and their families to become full and equal citizens, including increasing funding for culturally appropriate immigrant inclusion and citizenship services, legal support, English classes and bilingual education, workforce development, and adult education.”

LGBT Issues

Supports measures to improve training and education for judges, corrections officers, prosecutors, public defenders, and police officers to “ensure transgender and gender non-conforming people” receive fair and equitable treatment in the criminal justice system.

Supports passage of the Equality Act.

Supports outlawing “discrimination against LGBTQ+ people” in housing, public accommodations, access to credit, education, jury service, and federal programs.

Supports ban on “conversion therapy” practices.

Supports allowing “all transgender and non-binary people” the ability to procure official government identification documents that “accurately reflect their gender identity.”

Supports prohibiting discrimination by federal contractors on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Supports allowing LGBT people to apply for asylum if they are “unsafe in their home countries.”

Pornography

Supports federal and state legislative efforts to make “revenge porn” and other unauthorized disclosures of intimate images a civil and criminal offense.

Poverty

Supports the 10-20-30 funding approach, which directs at least 10 percent of federal funding to communities where 20 percent or more of the population has been living below the poverty line for 30 years or longer.

Supports expanding nutrition assistance and food security programs.

Supports incentivizing states to expand Medicaid and enroll low-income people who do not otherwise have health insurance.

Supports increased funding for programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), WIC, and school meals.

Religious Liberty

Supports making it a “policy of the Democratic Administration to advocate for religious freedom throughout the world.”

Opposes “broad religious exemptions to allow businesses, medical providers, social service agencies, and others to discriminate.”

Supports increased funding and support for security investments and protection at houses of worship.

Torture

Supports immediately reaffirming the Obama administration's ban on torture.