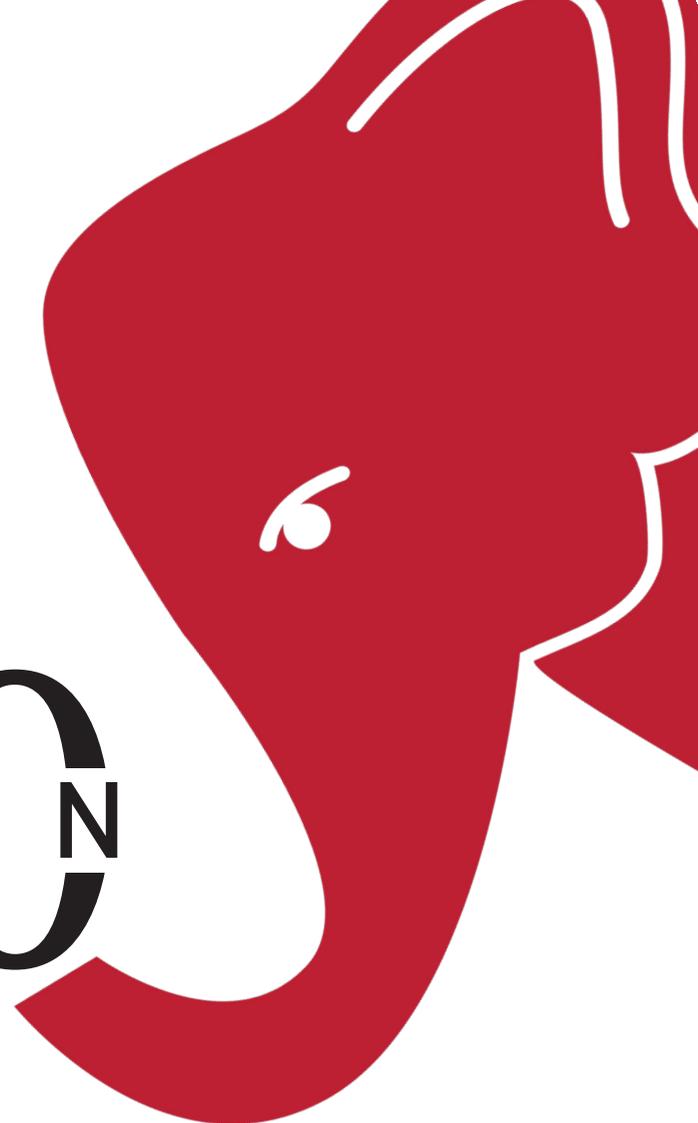




# 2020 ELECTION



—comparing the Democratic and Republican platforms—

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There is an exhortation in 1 Peter 3 to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (NIV). While this is a call to describe matters of faith, the same could be said for standing up for what you believe in matters of public policy. Too often in today’s society the ability to engage in a knowledgeable, respectful discourse on the grounds for which we support one candidate over another is lost.

The Alabama Policy Institute believes that the election cycle for 2020 may be one of the most momentous, disparate, and dynamic our nation has ever seen. The vast differences in the platforms of the two major political parties are paired with the dynamic of social media, civil unrest, a global pandemic, and a growing inability to debate openly and reasonably. This must change, and the only means by which it can change is for our people to truly know that upon which they stand and to engage in the type of debate that promotes the concepts of liberty and mutual respect characteristic of our great nation.

This presentation of the platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties is offered as a primer for those who agree that we need such knowledgeable debate. We strive to avoid anything more than mere comparison. To be sure, there are nuances of each platform position that are not argued or opined herein—that opportunity is left to the reader so that, after having been apprised of the platforms, they can make their own stand armed with a greater understanding and appreciation for the team they have chosen.

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all quotes may be attributed to the 2020 Democratic Platform or the 2016 Republican Platform, which was re-adopted for 2020

## SOCIAL POLICY



abortion, same-sex marriage, religious liberty, marijuana legalization, paid sick and family leave

## STATED POSITION OF PARTY

AS DETAILED IN THE 2020 DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM AND THE 2016 REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM (RE-ADOPTED FOR 2020)

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Democratic Platform</u>	<u>Republican Platform</u>
Abortion  	<p>“We believe unequivocally, like the majority of Americans, that every woman should be able to access high-quality reproductive health services, including safe and legal abortion. We will repeal the Title X domestic gag rule and restore federal funding for Planned Parenthood.”</p> <p>“Democrats will fight to overturn federal and state laws that create barriers to reproductive health and rights. We will repeal the Hyde Amendment, and protect and codify the right to reproductive freedom.”</p>	<p>“We assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and legislation to make it clear that the Fourteenth Amendment’s protections apply to children before birth.”</p> <p>The GOP Platform also includes opposition to the use of public funds to perform or promote abortion and the funding of organizations that provide or refer for abortions. The platform also supports a federal act to ban abortion after twenty weeks, opposes embryonic stem cell research, human cloning, and infanticide.</p>
<p>The difference between the party platforms on this issue could not be more pronounced. The Republican platform expresses the desire to eliminate legal abortion through a human life amendment to the Constitution while the Democratic platform seeks to expand both federal funding for and the availability of abortion through repealing the Title X domestic gag rule, which prohibited Title X family planning funds from going to organizations that refer women to abortion, and by repealing the federal Hyde Amendment, which is a long-standing legislative provision barring federal funds from paying for most abortions.</p>		

## Same-Sex Marriage



Throughout the Democratic platform, the party continually describes itself as the party that will “protect and promote the equal rights of all our citizens” including “LGBTQ+ people.”

There is no explicit mention of *Obergefell v. Hodges* or *United States v. Windsor*, the Supreme Court cases that resulted in the nation-wide legalization of same-sex marriage.

“Traditional marriage and family, based on marriage between one man and one woman, is the foundation for a free society and has for millennia been entrusted with rearing children and instilling cultural values. We condemn the Supreme Court’s ruling in *United States v. Windsor*, which wrongly removed the ability of Congress to define marriage policy in federal law.”

“We also condemn the Supreme Court’s lawless ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*...[and] support the appointment of justices and judges who respect the constitutional limits on their power and respect the authority of the states to decide such fundamental social questions.”

While the Republican platform suggests the need to overturn *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a sitting President that has, at least nominally, embraced the LGBTQ+ community paired with shifting cultural values suggests this to be an unlikely result. The largest question in regards to same-sex marriage and the LGBTQ+ community comes in the form of religious liberty and the platform’s differences on the topic, as explained in the next section.

TopicDemocratic PlatformRepublican Platform

## Religious Liberty



“Religious freedom is a core American value and a core value of the Democratic Party. Democrats will protect the rights of each American for the free exercise of his or her own religion.”

“We will reject the Trump Administration’s use of broad religious exemptions to allow business, medical providers, social service agencies, and others to discriminate.”

“[Democrats will] ban harmful conversion therapy.”

“Ongoing attempts to compel individuals, businesses, and institutions of faith to transgress their beliefs are part of a misguided effort to undermine religion and drive it from the public square.”

“We urge the repeal of the Johnson amendment.”

“We endorse the First Amendment Defense Act, Republican legislation in the House and Senate which will bar government discrimination against individuals and businesses for acting on the belief that marriage is the union of one man and one women.”

Both the Democratic and Republican platforms propose protections for religious liberty. These protections, however, differ heavily by platform. The Democrats decry the “broad religious exemptions” that allow organizations and individuals to operate in line with their religious beliefs. The Democratic platform, if implemented, would require Christian adoption agencies to place children with same-sex couples and businesses, like wedding photographers and bakers, to participate in ceremonies and services that go against their deeply held religious beliefs. How and from what the Democratic platform seeks to protect religious liberty is unclear, apart from increased “security investments” at houses of worship.

The Republican platform, however, supports the repeal of the Johnson amendment, which limits the political activity of churches and bans the endorsement of political candidates from the pulpit. The GOP also supports the First Amendment Defense Act, which would allow individuals and organizations to act according to their belief in traditional marriage.

## Marijuana

“Democrats will decriminalize marijuana use and reschedule it through executive action on the federal level. We will support legalization of medical marijuana, and believe states should be able to make their own decisions about recreational use.”

“[M]arijuana is virtually legalized despite its illegality under federal law.”

“Congress and a new administration should consider the long-range implications of these trends for public health and safety and prepare to deal with the problematic consequences.”

While the Republican platform is ambiguous on its stance towards marijuana legalization, the Democratic platform’s plan is to decriminalize marijuana, legalize it for medical use, and leave the states to determine its recreational fate.

## Paid Sick and Family Leave

“We will fight to ensure workers are guaranteed at least 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers and family units.”

The Republican platform does not mention paid sick and family leave.

The Democratic platform proposes 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave though it is short on specifics. Whether the Democratic party believes family leave should be required (and paid for) by all employers or whether they seek to establish a new government program is not detailed. The GOP platform does not mention paid sick or family leave.



## TAXES AND SPENDING



tax policy, healthcare, Social Security, defense spending, welfare,  
education

## STATED POSITION OF PARTY

AS DETAILED IN THE 2020 DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM AND THE 2016  
REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM (RE-ADOPTED FOR 2020)

### Topic

### Democratic Platform

### Republican Platform

#### Tax Policy



“Democrats will take action to reverse the Trump Administration’s tax cuts benefitting the wealthiest Americans and rewarding corporations for shipping American jobs overseas”

“Corporate tax rates, which were cut sharply by the 2017 Republican tax cut, must be raised, and “trickle-down” tax cuts must be rejected. Estate taxes should also be raised back to the historical norm.”

“Democrats will reform the tax code to be more progressive and equitable...including more generous, refundable tax credits...equalizing tax benefits for retirement contributions and providing more accessible tax breaks for home ownership.”

“Wherever tax rates penalize thrift or discourage investment, they must be lowered...we will not divide the American people into winners and losers. We will eliminate as many special interest provisions and loopholes as possible and curb corporate welfare.”

“We oppose retroactive taxation.”

“To guard against hypertaxation of the American people in any restructuring of the federal tax system, any value added tax or national sales tax must be tied to the simultaneous repeal of the Sixteenth Amendment, which established the federal income tax.”

The first action item of the Democratic platform in regards to tax policy is the reversal of the 2017 tax cuts. These tax cuts, however, resulted in increased income to the lower and middle class. The Democratic platform does not mention whether or not these cuts will be retained. Instead, throughout their platform they argue for increased “tax credits” for low-income individuals or home ownership in hopes of offsetting their tax increases.

The Republican platform differentiates greatly, promising not to “divide the American people into winners and losers” through the tax code, as many conditional tax credits do by their nature. The Democratic platform also suggests raising the estate tax, also known as the “death tax”, while the Republican platform sets a path forward for the elimination of the federal income tax altogether.

#### Healthcare – Medicaid, Universal Coverage, Etc.



“We will incentivize states to expand Medicaid and enroll low-income people who do not otherwise have health insurance in a new, high-quality public option without premiums.”

“Health care is a right for all, not a privilege for the few.”

“We will give all Americans the choice to select a high-quality, affordable public option through the Affordable Care Act marketplace. The public option will provide at least one plan choice without deductibles; will be administered by CMS, not private companies; and will cover all primary care without any co-payments and control costs for other treatments by negotiating prices with doctors and hospitals, just like Medicare

“Any honest agenda for improving healthcare must start with repeal of the dishonestly named Affordable Care Act of 2010: Obamacare...it must be removed and replaced with an approach based on genuine competition, patient choice, excellent care, wellness, and timely access to treatment.”

“To guarantee first-rate care for the needy, we propose to block grant Medicaid and other payments and to assist all patients, including those with pre-existing conditions, to obtain coverage through a robust consumer market.”

“We will promote price transparency so consumers can

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Democratic Platform</u>	<u>Republican Platform</u>
Healthcare - Medicaid, Universal Coverage, Etc., cont.	<p>does on behalf of older people.”</p> <p>“The lowest-income Americans, including more than four million adults who should be eligible for Medicaid but who live in states where Republican governors have refused to expand the program, will automatically be enrolled in the public option without premiums; they may opt out at any time.”</p> <p>“Democrats will also empower the states, as laboratories of democracy, to use Affordable Care Act innovation waivers to develop locally tailored approaches to health coverage, including by removing barriers to states that seek to experiment with statewide universal health care approaches.”</p>	<p>know the cost of treatments before they agree to them.”</p> <p>We believe that individuals with preexisting conditions who maintain continuous coverage should be protected from discrimination.”</p> <p>“We propose to end tax discrimination against individual purchase of insurance and allow consumers to buy insurance across state lines.”</p> <p>“We look to the growth of Health Savings Accounts and Health Reimbursement Accounts that empower patients and advance choice in healthcare.”</p>

These are two widely different visions for the future of healthcare in America. The GOP’s platform aims to improve healthcare through the competitive free market, with an eye on the market’s tendency to lower prices. The Democratic platform seeks to “achieve” healthcare for all. It does not initially promote doing so with a single-payer government-run “Medicare for All” system. Instead, the Democratic plan is to add a public (government-run) option available to anyone. It does not ban private insurance but lacks concern over the viability of private insurance markets when a new, public option subsidized by the tax-payer enters the market.

Healthcare - Medicare



<p>“Democrats will fight any efforts to cut Medicare benefits, and support finding financially sustainable policies to expand Medicare to cover dental, vision, and hearing.”</p>	<p>“To preserve Medicare and Medicaid, the financing of these important programs must be brought under control before they consume most of the federal budget, including national defense...we intend to save Medicare.”</p>
<p>“We will enable millions of older workers to choose between their employer-provided plans, the public option, or enrolling in Medicare when they turn 60, instead of having to wait until they are 65.”</p>	<p>“Impose no changes for persons 55 and older. Give others the option of traditional Medicare or transition to a premium-support model designed to strengthen patient choice, promote cost-saving competition among providers, and better guard against...fraud and abuse.”</p>
<p>“Democrats are categorically opposed to raising the Medicare retirement age.”</p>	<p>“Without disadvantaging present retirees or those nearing retirement, set a more realistic age for eligibility in light of today’s longer life span.”</p>

The Democratic platform is “categorically” opposed to some cost-saving measures to Medicare. The Republican plan for Medicare is a sort of phasing out of the current system into one that promotes competition with the hopes of cost-savings in the future.

TopicDemocratic PlatformRepublican Platform

## Social Security



“We will enact policies to make Social Security more progressive, including increasing benefits for all beneficiaries, meaningfully increasing minimum benefit payments, increasing benefits for long-duration beneficiaries, and protecting surviving spouses from benefit cuts.”

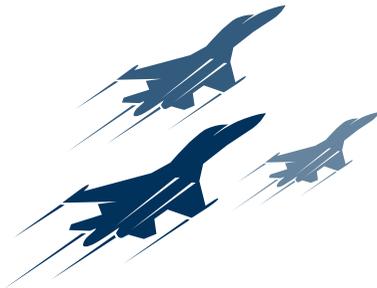
“Democrats will reject every effort to cut, privatize, or weaken Social Security, including attempts to raise the retirement age, diminish benefits by cutting cost-of-living adjustments, or reduce earned benefits.”

“Everyone knows that its current course will lead to a financial and social disaster...as the party of America’s future, we accept the responsibility to preserve and modernize a system of retirement security forged in an old industrial era beyond the memory of most Americans. Current retirees and those close to retirement can be assured of their benefits.”

“All options should be considered to preserve Social Security. As Republicans, we oppose tax increases and believe in the power of markets to create wealth and to help secure the future of our Social Security system.”

The Democratic platform is against implementing cost-cutting measures in the Social Security program, which is expected to be insolvent by 2035 according to its own trustees’ estimates.<sup>1</sup> Even though reforming it is part of the Republican platform, neither party has approached a consensus for change in years and the GOP has no explicit plan for the system. With Democrats hoping for expansion and Republicans stressing the need for frugality, there appears little likelihood of reform in the near future.

## Defense Spending



“We believe we can and must ensure our security while restoring stability, predictability, and fiscal discipline in defense spending. We spend 13 times more on the military than we do on diplomacy.”

“We can maintain a strong defense and protect our safety and security for less. It’s past time to rebalance our investments, improve the efficiency and competitiveness of our defense industrial base, conduct rigorous annual audits of the Pentagon, and end waste and fraud.”

“The Republican Party is committed to rebuilding the U.S. military into the strongest on earth, with vast superiority over any other nation or group of nations in the world.”

“We support lifting the budget cap for defense and reject the efforts of Democrats to hold the military’s budget hostage for their domestic agenda.”

“No major part of the Department of Defense has ever passed an audit. Republican leaders in Congress have called for a full financial audit of the Pentagon to ensure that every dollar spent is truly benefitting our national security.”

Both the Democratic and Republican platforms suggest that there is waste in the current level of defense spending. Each propose audits of the Pentagon to “ensure that every dollar spent is truly benefitting our national security” (the Republican platform).

The Democratic platform likewise touts the need for “fiscal discipline in defense spending” while the Republican platform supports “lifting the budget cap” as Congress did in 2019.<sup>2</sup> On this issue, the typical roles of the Democratic and Republican platforms are reversed. A Democratic administration is likely to decrease defense spending while a Republican administration is likely to increase it. Even so, neither platform details specific investment costs and therefore the true difference in their positions, excluding the need to audit the Pentagon, is unclear.

Topic

Democratic Platform

Republican Platform

Welfare (excl. Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security)



“We will significantly expand affordable housing and build new public housing for the first time since the 1990s, and guarantee Section 8 benefits to all who qualify.”

“Democrats will increase funding for food assistance programs, including SNAP, WIC, and school meals.”

“We must scale back the federal role in the housing market [and] promote responsibility on the part of borrowers.”

“We have been fighting the War on Poverty for 50 years and poverty is winning. Our social safety net - about 80 separate means-tested programs costing over \$1 trillion every year - is designed to help people born into or falling into poverty. It rarely lifts them out...Republicans propose to evaluate a poverty program by whether it actually reduces poverty and increases the personal independence of its participants.”

“We propose instead the dynamic compassion of work requirements in a growing economy, where opportunity takes the place of a hand-out, where true self-esteem can grow from the satisfaction of a job well done. “

“Government cannot create prosperity, though government can limit or destroy it,” is the second sentence in the GOP platform. This is opposite the view of the Democratic platform, and their policy proposals show that reality clearly. The Democratic platform hopes to expand the federal government’s role in providing and controlling welfare programs while the Republican platform seeks work requirements in the hopes of getting beneficiaries off the government rolls and self-dependent. The GOP platform is not against a safety net, but its size would be considerably smaller than that proposed by the Democratic platform.

Education



“[I]t is the government’s responsibility to ensure that every child, everywhere, is able to receive a world-class education that enables them to lead meaningful lives.”

“For too long, we have short-changed our children by underinvesting in our nation’s public schools and in our higher education system.”

“We will work with states to offer pre-K for all three- and four-year-olds and expand Head Start and Early Head Start.”

“Democrats are committed to closing the school funding gap by tripling Title I Funding, which benefits schools that serve low-income students, and incentivizing states to adopt progressive funding formulas that direct resources to the schools that need it most.”

“Students should have multiple public school pathways to be able to access the opportunities they deserve.”

“We will continue our fight for school choice until all parents can find good, safe schools for their children. To protect religious liberty we will ensure that faith-based institutions, especially those that are vital parts of underserved neighborhoods, do not face discrimination by government.”

“Parents have a right to direct their children’s education, care, and upbringing. We support a constitutional amendment to protect that right from interference by states, the federal government, or international bodies such as the United Nations. We reject a one-size-fits-all approach to education and support a broad range of choices for parents and children at the state and local level.”

“We likewise repeat our long-standing opposition to the imposition of national standards and assessments... and congratulate the states which have successfully repealed [Common Core].”



<u>Topic</u>	<u>Democratic Platform</u>	<u>Republican Platform</u>
Education (cont.)	<p>“Democrats will work to expand access to career and technical education, magnet schools for science and the arts, International Baccalaureate programs, and early college high schools.”</p> <p>“We will ban for-profit private charter businesses from receiving federal funding...[we need] more stringent guardrails to ensure charter schools are good stewards of federal education funds.”</p> <p>“Democrats oppose private school vouchers and other policies that divert taxpayer-funded resources away from the public school system.”</p>	<p>“We encourage state legislatures to offer the Bible in a literature curriculum as an elective in America’s high schools.”</p> <p>“We especially support the innovative financing mechanisms that make options available to all children: education savings accounts (ESAs), vouchers, and tuition tax credits.”</p> <p>“A young person’s ability to succeed in school must be based on his or her God-given talent and motivation, not an address, ZIP code, or economic status. We propose that the bulk of federal money through Title I for low-income children...should follow the child to whatever school the family thinks will work best for them.”</p>

The Democratic platform is largely against school choice that is not within the public system. The GOP platform opposes national standards such as common core and seeks to create a competitive market in education through school choice and funding mechanisms that would allow parents flexibility to choose what school they should go to, regardless of whether it is private or public.

### Higher Education



“We will make public colleges and universities tuition-free for students whose families earn less than \$125,000—roughly 80 percent of the American people.”

“Democrats support making community colleges and trade schools tuition-free for all students, including Dreamers.”

“We will increase federal support for services like child care on college campuses, so more students are able to balance the demands of school and family and graduate with degrees.”

“We call on state officials to preserve our public colleges, universities, and trade schools as places of learning and the exchange of ideas, not zones of intellectual intolerance or “safe zones,” as if college students need protection from the free exchange of ideas.”

“The federal government should not be in the business of originating student loans. In order to bring down college costs and give students access to a multitude of financing options, private sector participation in student financing should be restored.”

“Accreditation should be decoupled from federal financing, and states should be empowered to allow a wide array of accrediting and credentialing bodies to operate.”

The Democratic plan does not explain how it will fund tuition-free college to 80% of American families and would allow some undocumented immigrants in the country the benefits of a free community college. The GOP plan is aimed at distancing the federal government from college loans and would widen what type of schools could get federal funding. The GOP does not propose a tuition-free college experience.

## CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES



the second amendment, civil asset forfeiture, occupational licensing,  
the minimum wage, electoral politics

## STATED POSITION OF PARTY

AS DETAILED IN THE 2020 DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM AND THE 2016  
REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM (RE-ADOPTED FOR 2020)

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Democratic Platform</u>	<u>Republican Platform</u>
<p>The Second Amendment</p> 	<p>“Democrats will enact universal background checks, end online sales of guns and ammunition...and adequately fund the federal background check system.”</p> <p>“Democrats will ban the manufacture and sale of assault weapons and high capacity magazines.”</p> <p>“We will pass legislation requiring that guns be safely stored in homes.”</p> <p>“Democrats believe that gun companies should be held responsible for their products, just like any other business, and will prioritize repealing the law that shields gun manufacturers from civil liability.”</p>	<p>“We support firearm reciprocity legislation to recognize the right of law-abiding Americans to carry firearms to protect themselves and their families in all 50 states.”</p> <p>“We support constitutional carry statutes and salute the states that have passed them.”</p> <p>“We oppose ill-conceived laws that would restrict magazine capacity or ban the sale of the most popular and common modern rifle. We also oppose any effort to deprive individuals of their right to keep and bear arms without due process of law.”</p> <p>“We condemn frivolous lawsuits against gun manufacturers.”</p>

The Democratic platform seeks to expand background checks and ban online gun sales while the Republican platform hopes to make firearm licenses reciprocal in all fifty states and supports the removal of licensure for handguns. The Democratic platform suggests that gun companies should be liable for the actions of gun owners while the Republican platform opposes such lawsuits it calls “frivolous.”

### Civil Asset Forfeiture

The Democratic platform does not mention civil asset forfeiture.

“We call on Congress and state legislatures to enact reforms to protect law-abiding citizens against abusive asset forfeiture tactics.”

Civil asset forfeiture is a process through which law enforcement charges property with being involved in a crime and seizes it. Aimed towards crippling the drug trade, civil asset forfeiture has been abused by law enforcement to deprive citizens of their property. In some cases, law enforcement have seized thousands of dollars of cash and vehicles worth tens of thousands of dollars from innocent citizens. Under civil asset forfeiture, due process is ignored as assets can be seized from a person even if they are not convicted of a crime. The Republican platform suggests the need for forfeiture reform while the Democratic platform does not mention the problem explicitly.

### Occupational Licensing

The Democratic platform does not mention occupational licensing.

“We should reduce the occupational licensing laws that shut untold millions of potential workers out of entrepreneurial careers.”

Licensing of occupations by states was originally implemented as a way to ensure safety in healthcare and standards in law. In recent years, occupational licensing has expanded to cover almost a quarter of the U.S. workforce as practitioners lobby legislatures to establish limits to who else can join an occupation. These competition-eliminating efforts have proven successful for auctioneers, interior designers, and even florists in creating barriers to entry for those hoping to join the profession. Run by state-sanctioned boards, they are anti-competitive at their best and corrupt at worst. The Democratic platform does not mention occupational licensing while the Republican platform seeks to reduce the practice.



<u>Topic</u>	<u>Democratic Platform</u>	<u>Republican Platform</u>
Minimum Wage	“We will raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.”	“Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.”
<p>The Democratic platform supports a federal minimum wage of \$15 an hour while the Republican platform suggests that state and local governments are best-suited to determine their minimum wage. Arriving at roughly \$32,000 a year for a full-time worker, the Democratic minimum wage proposal does not take into account cost of living differences. The Republican platform, at least in theory, allows for that flexibility. Many Republican states, like Alabama, however, have limited the ability of cities to raise their minimum wages.</p>		
Electoral Politics - Election Financing	“Democrats will fight to pass a constitutional amendment that will go beyond merely overturning <i>Citizens United</i> and related decisions like <i>Buckley v. Valeo</i> by eliminating all private financing from federal elections.”	The Republican platform does not mention election financing.
<p>Since the Supreme Court ruled in <i>Citizens United</i> that the free speech clause of the First Amendment prohibits the government from limiting the political spending of corporations and other entities, Democrats have hailed the need for change. By eliminating private financing from federal elections, the playing field would, in many respects, be more equal. The Democratic platform does not, however, go into specifics about what a post-private-funding-of-elections environment would look like and how campaign costs would be paid.</p>		
Electoral Politics - Counting Illegal Immigrants, Non-Citizens, for Purposes of Apportionment	“We will protect the integrity of the decennial Census from political interference, including ensuring that apportionment and redistricting be based on total population counts.”	“In order to preserve the principle of one person, one vote, we urge our elected representatives to ensure that citizenship, rather than mere residency, be made the basis for the apportionment of representatives among the states.”
<p>How many congressional districts each state is allocated depends heavily on the population of that state as determined by the decennial census. Currently, thanks to Supreme Court precedent in <i>Wesberry v. Sanders</i> (1964), seats are allocated based on total residents regardless of citizenship status. This created a system where the votes of those citizens in districts with more non-citizen residents, and therefore a smaller percentage of citizens, are more powerful than the votes of citizens in districts with less non-citizen residents. The one person, one vote, principle is thrown by the wayside and will continue to be ignored in practice unless 1) non-citizen residents are allowed to vote, or 2) seats in the House of Representatives are allocated by the number of citizens in a state, not the number of total residents. The first option causes obvious constitutional issues. The second is the position of the Republican platform. The Democratic platform does not seem to take issue with a system that offers certain citizens more voting power than others.</p>		



TopicDemocratic PlatformRepublican Platform

Electoral Politics - The  
Electoral College

The Democratic platform does not mention the Electoral College.

“We oppose the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact and any other scheme to abolish or distort the procedures of the Electoral College.”

The Electoral College has come under scrutiny and has been attacked primarily by progressives. Citing how the winner of the national popular vote is often not the winner of the election, they support abandoning the Electoral College and embracing a system based purely on the winner of the popular vote. While the Democratic platform does not mention the Electoral College, the Republican platform is expressly against changing the system.



## INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



the Iran Nuclear Deal, Israel, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization,  
international refugees

## STATED POSITION OF PARTY

AS DETAILED IN THE 2020 DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM AND THE 2016  
REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM (RE-ADOPTED FOR 2020)

### Topic

### Democratic Platform

### Republican Platform

#### The Iran Nuclear Deal



“We believe the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) remains the best means to verifiably cut off all of Iran’s pathways to a nuclear bomb.”

“The nuclear deal was always meant to be the beginning, not the end, of our diplomacy with Iran. Democrats support a comprehensive diplomatic effort to extend constraints on Iran’s nuclear program.”

“We consider the [Obama] Administration’s deal with Iran, to lift international sanctions and make hundreds of billions of dollars available to the Mullahs, a personal agreement between the President and his negotiating partners and non-binding.”

“A Republican president will not be bound by it. We must retain all options in dealing with a situation that gravely threatens our security, our interests, and the survival of our friends.”

President Obama’s Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran Deal, eliminated certain sanctions on Iran in exchange for promises of transparency in the regime’s nuclear program. The Obama Administration claimed that lowering sanctions would open Iran to the West and all it offers, including democracy. The Administration’s plan was to keep an eye on Iran’s nuclear program while pushing younger, less religiously conservative Iranians into embracing a western way of life in which hatred of the United States would falter and new, pro-American leaders would rise up. Since taking office, the President Trump has exited the Iran Deal citing the failure of Iran to maintain its end of the agreement and the fact that the deal was never a formal treaty approved by Congress and was therefore not binding. Sanctions, the Trump Administration believes, will serve as a better hurdle to Iran’s nuclear endeavors.

#### Israel



“We support a negotiated two-state solution that ensures Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state with recognized borders and upholds the right of Palestinians to live in freedom and security in a viable state of their own.”

“We oppose settlement expansion.”

“We believe that while Jerusalem is a matter for final status negotiations, it should remain the capital of Israel, an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths.”

“We oppose any effort to unfairly single out and delegitimize Israel, including at the United Nations.”

“We recognize Jerusalem as the eternal and indivisible capital of the Jewish state and call for the American embassy to be moved there in fulfillment of U.S. law.”

“The United States seeks to assist in the establishment of comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, to be negotiated among those living in the region.

We oppose any measures intended to impose an agreement or to dictate borders or other terms, and we call for the immediate termination of all U.S. funding of any entity that attempts to do so.”

Both the Democratic and Republican platform support Israel’s right to exist, the status of Jerusalem as the capital, and a peaceful solution in the Middle East. President Trump moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, as the GOP platform suggests, in his first term. The major difference between the two parties may lie in the Democratic platform’s opposition to settlement expansion and the Republican platform’s relative silence on the issue. Regardless, policy towards Israel is one area in which the Democratic and Republican platforms are largely congruent even though there is some diversity of opinion among Democratic politicians that is absent in the Republican caucus.



TopicDemocratic PlatformRepublican Platform

The North Atlantic Treaty  
Organization (NATO)



“NATO is the world’s most formidable military alliance.”

“We will reaffirm America’s commitment to NATO and defending our allies.”

“With the American people spending on defense, per capita, four times the amount spent by Europeans, we demand, as we have in the past, that our fellow members of NATO fulfill their commitments and meet their need for greater investment in their armed forces.”

President Trump angered many in the Democratic party when he called on NATO’s member nations to contribute more to the joint protection NATO provides. At the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales, member countries set a goal of spending 2% of their GDP on defense. In 2019, the United States was one of nine member countries meeting that goal. Nineteen others, including Germany, France, and Italy, spent less than 2%.<sup>3</sup> The Democratic platform seeks to “reaffirm America’s commitment,” and does not mention the spending goals of other countries.

International Refugees



“Democrats will end the Trump Administration’s shameful efforts to close doors to the world’s most vulnerable.”

“We will significantly raise the annual global refugee admissions target, and work with Congress to create a minimum annual number for refugee admissions, while expanding and identifying new pathways for refugees to seek safe havens.”

“Admitting refugees is not only the right thing to do—it’s the smart thing to do. ..[it] preserve[s] the stability of America’s partners abroad, strengthens our hand in getting other countries to uphold their obligations, grows our economy, and enriches our society.”

“From its beginning, our country has been a haven of refuge and asylum. That should continue—but with major changes.”

“To ensure our national security, refugees who cannot be carefully vetted cannot be admitted to the country, especially those whose homelands have been the breeding grounds for terrorism.”

While the Republican platform seeks to ban those refugees who cannot be “carefully vetted,” the Democratic platform plans to create a minimum number of refugees that must be allowed in each year. Each refugee that is resettled in the United States is extensively vetted through a six-step plan that begins with an international refugee agency, goes through the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI, and other federal agencies, then to US Citizenship and Immigration Services, then to the Department of Defense and other agencies, and finally to resettlement.<sup>4</sup> President Trump, while decreasing the total number of refugees admitted each year, has continued to allow refugees from Syria and other countries to be resettled in the United States.

## FURTHER DOMESTIC POLICY



unions, the fiduciary obligation, the environment, regulation and government agencies, police reform, immigration

## STATED POSITION OF PARTY

AS DETAILED IN THE 2020 DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM AND THE 2016 REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM (RE-ADOPTED FOR 2020)

### Topic

### Democratic Platform

### Republican Platform

#### Unions



“Democrats will prioritize passing the PRO Act (Protecting the Right to Organize Act) and restoring workers’ right, including the right to launch secondary boycotts.”

“We will repeal so-called “right to work” laws that undermine worker power and lead to lower wages and less protection for workers across the economy.”

“We will also establish the federal government’s role in promoting and facilitating collective bargaining and helping the parties bring their negotiations to a rapid and successful conclusion, committing to a high standard for intervening in strikes, including under the Railway Labor Act.”

“Democrats will strengthen labor rights for the more than 20 million public-sector employees in the United States by passing the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act, which would provide a federal guarantee for public-sector employees to bargain for better pay and benefits and the working conditions they deserve.”

“All workers, including union members, must be free to accept raises and rewards without veto power from union officials. All unionized workers should be able to find out what is going on in their union trust funds and in their executive compensation.”

“We support the right of states to enact Right-to-Work laws and call for a national law to protect the economic liberty of the modern workforce.”

“The unionization of the federal workforce, first permitted by Democrat presidents in the 1960s, should be reviewed by the appropriate congressional committees to examine its effects on the cost, quality, and performance of the civil service.”

The Democratic platform seeks to elevate unions in the market by forcing members of a profession to pay union dues regardless of their desire to be in a union. The Republican platform aims to give workers freedom to choose whether or not they want to be a dues-paying member of a union. While this does weaken union power and the potential for collective bargaining, unions may continue to exist. Instead of having government favor, however, their strength will depend on how well they can convince workers that they are worth the cost.

The Democratic platform would also increase the role of the federal government in collective bargaining.

#### The Fiduciary Obligation

“We will take immediate action to reverse the Trump Administration’s regulations allowing financial advisors to prioritize their self-interest over their clients’ financial well being.”

The Republican platform does not mention the fiduciary obligation.

The Obama Administration ruled that financial advisors had to prioritize the financial well being of their clients over their own self-interest. This is known as the fiduciary obligation or the fiduciary rule. The Trump Administration postponed this rule and failed to argue for it in court. Regardless of the rules’ future, fiduciaries (financial advisors who abide by a fiduciary requirement) are available to investors who are looking for that protection. The Democratic platform simply seeks to expand that requirement to all financial advisors.



TopicDemocratic PlatformRepublican Platform

## The Environment



“We will rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and, on day one, seek higher ambition from nations around the world, putting the United States back in the position of global leadership where we belong.”

“[T]he United States—and the world—must achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and no later than 2050.”

“Democrats commit to eliminating carbon pollution from power plants by 2035 through technology-neutral standards for clean energy and energy efficiency.”

“We will set a bold, national goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for all new buildings by 2030...within five years we will incentivize tens of billions of dollars in private-sector investment to retrofit four million buildings.”

“[Democrats will] reestablish strong standards for clean cars and trucks...and accelerate the adoption of zero-emission vehicles.”

“[Democrats will] transition the entire fleet of 500,000 school buses to American-made, zero-emission alternatives within five years.”

“We will require public companies to disclose climate risks and greenhouse gas emissions in their operations and supply chains.”

“We support banning new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters.”

“We reject...the Paris Climate Agreement.”

“We propose to shift responsibility for environmental regulation from the federal bureaucracy to the states and to transform the EPA into an independent bipartisan commission.”

“We believe in promoting active, sustainable management of our [national] forests and that states can best manage our forests to improve forest health and keep communities safe.”

“We support the opening of public lands and the outer continental shelf to exploration and responsible [energy] production.”

“[The Obama Administration’s] Clean Power Plan—the centerpiece of [President Obama]’s war on coal—has been stayed by the Supreme Court. We will do away with it altogether.”

“We support the development of all forms of energy that are marketable in a free economy without subsidies, including coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear power, and hydropower.”

“We oppose any carbon tax.”

“We assert that private ownership has been the best guarantee of conscience [environmental] stewardship.”

The Democratic platform includes an array of goals meant to decrease pollution, waste, and production of fossil fuels. This is all proposed to be a top-down approach, with the federal government establishing goals and standards and enforcing those standards. The Democratic plan also proposes a number of taxpayer subsidies into “clean” energy and retrofitting buildings to become “environmentally friendly”, though it does not specify a cost nor explain how the programs will be funded.

The Republican platform is largely a rejection of the Democratic one. One such distinction can be seen in regard to the Paris Climate Agreement (signed by President Obama), which manipulated market forces in signing countries through expanded regulation with the goal of increasing “clean” energy and creating what the Democratic platform calls “anti-pollution standards.” The Trump administration has announced its withdrawal from the agreement, while the Democratic platform seeks to rejoin the agreement and, even further, to “seek higher ambition” than what was previously decided.



Topic

Democratic Platform

Republican Platform

The Environment (cont.)

The Republican platform, overall, assumes that “private ownership has been the best guarantee of conscience [environmental] stewardship.” This results in a platform that is largely against federal oversight of the environment and in support of state and local control.

Regulation and Government Agencies

“Democrats support the creation of an infrastructure bank.”

“We must scale back the federal role in the housing market, promote responsibility on the part of borrowers and lenders, and avoid future taxpayer bailouts.”

“Democrats will expand access to credit by creating a public credit reporting agency.”

“We support reinstating the Glass-Steagal Act of 1933 which prohibits commercial banks from engaging in high-risk investment.”

“We will condition state and federal aid on maintaining and expanding public-sector employment.”

“Over-regulation is the quiet tyranny of the “Nanny State.” It hamstring American businesses and hobbles economic growth.”

“[Democrats will be] expanding safeguards that separate retail banking institutions from more risky investment operations.”

“Democrats will expand funding for Affordable Care Act outreach and enrollment programs.”

“Sensible regulations can be compatible with a vibrant economy.”

“[Democrats will] expand Medicare to cover dental, vision, and hearing.”

“We are determined to make regulations minimally intrusive, confined to their legal mandate, and respectful toward the creation of new and small businesses.”

“We will increase federal funding to expand accessible transportation.”

“Congress should consider a regulatory budget that would cap the costs federal agencies could impose on the economy in any given year.”

There are over 140 instances of the word “expand” or “create” in the Democratic platform.



In regard to regulation and the authority of government agencies, the Democratic and Republican platforms differ based primarily on philosophical differences. The Democratic platform assumes that the federal government is best suited to solve the country’s most pressing problems. The expansion of programs such as Medicare and the creation of other government agencies such as the proposed public credit reporting agency stem from this tenet of modern American liberalism.

The Republican platform, on the other hand, assumes that individuals and organizations other than the federal government are best suited to address the country’s problems. This allows what the platform calls “sensible regulations” that are “minimally intrusive.” The platform does not, as the Democratic platform does, suggest the expansion of regulation and the creation of new government agencies. It is not that the Republican platform ignores the problems the Democratic platform addresses through government expansion, though. According to the Republican platform, the government is not the best avenue for change.

TopicDemocratic PlatformRepublican Platform

## Police Reform



“Democrats will establish strict national standards governing the use of force, including banning the use of chokeholds and carotid holds and permitting deadly force only when necessary and a last resort to prevent an immediate threat to life.”

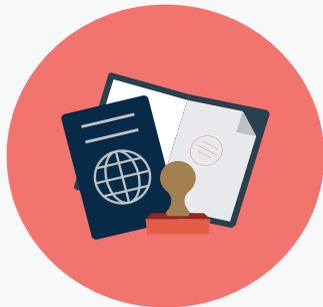
“We will work to establish “no-knock warrants” standards.”

“We will require officer training in effective nonviolent tactics, appropriate use of force, implicit bias, and peer intervention, both at the academy and on the job. And we will ban racial and religious profiling in law enforcement.”

The Republican platform, written in 2016 and re-adopted in 2020, does not mention police reform.

The Democratic platform’s response to the shootings of Black americans by police officers includes a ban on chokeholds, “no-knock warrants” standards (no further details are given on what this would look like), and implicit bias training. While the Republican platform does not expressly detail its position on police reform (as it was written in 2016), GOP-sponsored legislation in the United States Senate has offered similar reforms to what is proposed in the 2020 Democratic platform.

## Immigration



“We will immediately terminate the Trump Administration’s discriminatory travel and immigration bans that disproportionately impact Muslim, Arab, and African people.”

“Democrats believe it is long past time to provide a roadmap to citizenship for the millions of undocumented workers, caregivers, students, and children who are an essential part of our economy and of the fabric of our nation.”

“We believe detention should be a last resort, not the default.”

“Democrats will rescind President Trump’s fabricated “National Emergency,” which siphons funding away from our men and women in uniform to construct an unnecessary, wasteful, and ineffective wall on the southern border.”

“Democrats will end the Trump Administration’s freeze on green cards for new immigrants.”

“Democrats support policies and programs to make it easier for qualified immigrants and their families to become full and equal citizens.”

“Our immigration system must protect American working families and their wages, for citizens and legal immigrants alike, in a way that will improve the economy.”

“We both encourage the preservation of heritage tongues and support English as the nation’s official language, a unifying force essential for the advancement of immigrant communities and our nation as a whole.”

“We oppose any form of amnesty for those who, by breaking the law, have disadvantaged those who have obeyed it.”

“We support building a wall along our southern border and protecting all ports of entry.”

“Because ‘sanctuary cities’ violate federal law and endanger their own citizens, they should not be eligible for federal funding.”

### Immigration (cont.)

The Democratic platform seeks to increase the number of legal immigrants the United States permits while also offering those who are undocumented, or illegally in the United States, a “roadmap to citizenship.” The Republican platform opposes this path and calls it an affront to those who entered the country through the current legal process.

Even so, President Trump has voiced support for finding a path to citizenship for “Dreamers”—children brought to the United States by their parents illegally—who have been given some level of protection from deportation through President Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.<sup>5</sup>

The party platforms also differ in regards to a wall along the southern border. The Republican platform supports it while the Democratic platform calls it “unnecessary, wasteful, and ineffective.”



## Endnotes

- 1 Social Security Administration, “The 2020 Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability trust Funds,” Social Security Administration, April, 22, 2020.
- 2 McGarry, Brenden W., “The Defense Budget and the Budget Control Act: Frequently Asked Questions,” Congressional Research Service, September 30, 2019.
- 3 Macias, Amanda, and Nate Rattner, “Here’s what each NATO country contributes financially to the world’s strongest military alliance,” CNBC, December 3, 2019, <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/12/03/each-nato-countrys-financial-contribution-to-the-military-alliance.html>.
- 4 The Center for Victims of Torture. n.d., “Rigorous Refugee Vetting Process for the U.S,” <https://www.cvt.org/Refugee-Vetting-Process>.
- 5 Kumar, Anita, “Trump is still looking for a DACA deal,” Politico, July 10, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/07/10/trump-daca-deal-356789>.



the Democratic platform may be found at:

<https://www.demconvention.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-07-31-Democratic-Party-Platform-For-Distribution.pdf>

the Republican platform may be found at:

[https://prod-cdn-static.gop.com/docs/Resolution\\_Platform\\_2020.pdf](https://prod-cdn-static.gop.com/docs/Resolution_Platform_2020.pdf)



“This nation was founded on one principle above all else: the requirement that we stand up for what we believe, no matter the odds or the consequences. When the mob and the press and the whole world tell you to move, your job is to plant yourself like a tree beside the river of truth and tell the whole world - ‘No, you move.’”

