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1996 Democratic Party Platform

August 26, 1996

Today's Democratic Party: Meeting America's
Challenges, Protecting America's Values

Introduction

In 1996, America will choose the President who will lead us from the millennium which saw the birth of our nation, and into a future that has all the potential to be even greater than our magnificent past. Today's Democratic Party is ready for that future. Our vision is simple. We want an America that gives all Americans the chance to live out their dreams and achieve their God-given potential. We want an America that is still the world's strongest force for peace and freedom. And we want an America that is coming together around our enduring values, instead of drifting apart.

Today's Democratic Party is determined to renew America's most basic bargain: Opportunity to every American, and responsibility from every American. And today's Democratic Party is determined to reawaken the great sense of American community.

Opportunity. Responsibility. Community. These are the values that made America strong. These are the values of the Democratic Party. These are the values that must guide us into the future.

Today, America is moving forward with the strong Presidential leadership it deserves. The economy is stronger, the deficit is lower, and government is smaller. Education is better, our environment is cleaner, families are healthier, and our streets are safer. There is more opportunity in America, more responsibility in our homes, and more peace in the world.

Today's Democratic Party stands proudly on the record of the last four years. We are living in an age of enormous possibility, and we are working to make sure that all Americans can make the most of it. America is moving in the right direction.

Now we must move forward, and we know the course we must follow. We need a smaller, more effective, more efficient, less bureaucratic government that reflects our time-honored values. The American people do not want big government solutions and they do not want empty promises. They want a government that is for them, not against them; that doesn't interfere with their lives but enhances their quality of life. They want a course that is reasonable, help that is realistic, and solutions that can be delivered -- a moderate, achievable, common-sense agenda that will improve people's daily lives and not increase the size of government.

That is what today's Democratic Party offers: the end of the era of big government and a final rejection of the misguided call to leave our citizens to fend for themselves -- and bold leadership into the future: To meet America's challenges, protect America's values, and fulfill American dreams.

Opportunity

For 220 years, America has been defined by a single ideal: Opportunity for all who take the responsibility to seize it. The mission of the Democratic Party in 1996 is to ensure that the great American Dream of opportunity for all is within reach for all, and that it travels with us, whole and intact, as we walk together into tomorrow.

Economic growth. Since Bill Clinton became President, America has seen an explosion of job growth, economic renewal, and opportunity. The American people have created more than 10 million new jobs. After trailing Japan for 14 years, America once again became the world's leading manufacturer of automobiles in 1994, and remained number one last year. The combined rate of inflation, unemployment, and mortgage interest rates is the lowest in three decades. Now, 4.4 million more Americans own their own home, and Americans have started a record number of new small businesses in each of the last three years.

In the 12 years before President Clinton took office, Republicans in the White House allowed the deficit to spiral out of control, and ignored the economic interests of ordinary Americans. Bill Clinton was determined to turn things around and move America in a new direction. With his leadership, we put in place a comprehensive strategy for economic growth. Today's Democratic Party knows that the private sector is the engine of economic growth, and we fought to put America's economic house in order so private business could prosper. We worked to tap the full potential of a new global economy through open and fair trade. We fought to invest in the American people so they would have the capacity to meet the demands of the new economy. And we have invested in the roads, bridges, and highways that are the lifelines of American commerce.

Democrats in Congress supported this course and America is better off because they did. Republicans opposed our economic plan; America's economic growth over the last four years makes it clear that they were wrong. Our strategy is in place, and it is working. We are proud of our economic record over the last four years -- and we know that our record is a record to build on, not to rest on. We have to move forward, to make sure that every American willing to work hard has the opportunity to build a good life and share in the benefits of economic success.

In the last four years we worked to get the American economy going: cutting the deficit, expanding trade, and investing in our people. In the next four years we have to make the new economy work for all

Americans: balancing the budget, creating more jobs, making sure all families can count on good health care and a secure retirement, and, most of all, expanding educational opportunities so all Americans can learn the skills they need to build the best possible future.

Balancing the budget. For 12 years, Republicans hid behind rosy scenarios while quadrupling the national debt. We knew this had to stop. In 1992, we promised to cut the deficit in half over four years. We did. Our 1993 economic plan cut spending by over a quarter trillion dollars in five years. The only deficit left today is interest payments on the debt run up over the 12 Republican years before fiscal responsibility returned to the White House. President Clinton is the first President to cut the deficit four years in a row since before the Civil War.

Now the Democratic Party is determined to finish the job and balance the budget. President Clinton has put forward a plan to balance the budget by 2002 while living up to our commitments to our elderly and our children and maintaining strong economic growth. The Republican Congress' own economists admit the President's plan will balance the budget by 2002. It cuts hundreds of wasteful and outdated programs, but it preserves Medicare and Medicaid, it protects education and the environment, and it defends working families. The President's plan reflects America's values. The Republican plan does not.

Today's Democratic Party believes we have a duty to care for our parents, so they can live their lives in dignity. That duty includes securing Medicare and Medicaid, finding savings without reducing quality or benefits, and protecting Social Security for future generations. The Republican agenda rests on massive Medicare cuts, three times bigger than the largest Medicare cuts in history, including new premium increases on seniors, and drastic changes to Medicaid that will jeopardize the health care of children and seniors.

Today's Democratic Party believes that all children should have the opportunity and the education to make the most of their own lives. We believe that schools should be run by teachers and principals, not by Washington. The Republican agenda slashes college scholarships and college loans, cuts Head Start, and cuts funds to reduce class size and improve teacher standards.

Today's Democratic Party believes we have a duty to preserve God's earth and American quality of life for future generations. We are committed to reform, so we protect our environment but we do not trap business in a tangle of red tape. The Republican budget guts environmental protection.

Today's Democratic Party believes that working people should not be taxed into poverty. The Republican budget raises taxes on millions of working families.

Today's Democratic Party believes that America must put our families first. The Republican budget tried to take Big Bird away from 5-year-olds, school lunches away from 10-year-olds, summer jobs away from 15-year-olds, and college loans away from 20-year-olds.

Today's Democratic Party believes in a government that works better and costs less. We know that government workers are good people trapped in bad systems, and we are committed to reinventing government to reform those systems. We believe that public servants have suffered too long from unfair politically based criticism destroying their morale and hampering their ability to perform duties which the private sector will not

undertake. The Republican budget cuts government where it is needed to protect our values, and they were even willing to shut down the government altogether to force their budget on the American people.

Tax relief for working families and small businesses. President Clinton and Democrats in Congress expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit, cutting taxes to help 40 million Americans in 15 million working families -- without a single Republican vote. The Dole-Gingrich budget was designed to give a massive tax break to the wealthiest Americans, and pay for it by raising taxes on ordinary Americans and slashing health care for the elderly. America cannot afford to return to the era of something-for-nothing tax cuts and smoke-and-mirrors accounting that produced a decade of exploding deficits. Today's Democratic Party is committed to targeted tax cuts that help working Americans invest in their future, and we insist that any tax cuts are completely paid for, because we are determined to balance the budget.

We want to strengthen middle-class families by providing a \$500 tax cut for children. We want to cut taxes to help families pay for education after high school and to guarantee the first two years of college. We want people to be able to use their IRA's to buy a first home, deal with a medical emergency, or provide for education. We want to cut taxes for small businesses that invest in the future and set up pensions for their workers. And we want to cut taxes for people who are self-employed and self-insured so their health care is more affordable.

Technology. We know investments in technology drive economic growth, generate new knowledge, create new high-wage jobs, build new industries, and improve our quality of life. In the face of Republican efforts to undermine America's dedication to innovation, President Clinton and the Democratic Party have fought to maintain vital investments in science and technology. We remember that government investment in technology is responsible for the computer, for jet aircraft, and for the Internet -- no investments have ever paid off better, in jobs, in opportunity, or in growth.

We support government policies that encourage private sector investment and innovation to create a pro-growth economic climate, like a permanent research and development tax credit. We want technology to create jobs and improve the quality of life for American workers. President Clinton and Vice President Gore fought for, and the President signed, a sweeping telecommunications reform bill that will unleash the creative power of the information industry to create millions of high-wage American jobs. We recognize that our system of research colleges and universities is the bedrock of American leadership in science and technology. When we invest in our research institutions we are literally investing in our future by helping to train the next brilliant generation of American scientists and engineers. As we enter the 21st century, we will continue to invest in world-class research and development, advanced technologies in transportation, information, and other industries, and agricultural and environmental research in partnership with American business. We are working to reinvent the national laboratories and revitalize America's space program, including support for the space station.

Creating jobs through trade. We believe that if we want the American economy to continue strong growth, we must continue to expand trade, and not retreat from the world. America's markets are open to the world, so America has a right to demand that the world's markets are open to

our products. American products are the best in the world. When American workers and American companies have the chance to compete around the world, we do not take second place.

In the last four years, the Clinton-Gore Administration has signed over 200 trade agreements, including NAFTA and GATT, to open markets around the world to American products, and create more jobs for the people who make them here at home. We have put in place the most sweeping agreements to lower foreign trade barriers of any administration in modern American history, including over 20 such agreements with Japan alone -- and American exports to Japan in the sectors covered by those agreements have increased by 85 percent. All over the world, barriers to American products have come down, exports are at an all time high -- and we have created over one million high-paying export-related jobs.

In the next four years, we must continue to work to lower foreign trade barriers; insist that foreign companies play by fair rules at home and abroad; strengthen rules that protect the global economy from fraud and dangerous instability; advance American commercial interests abroad; and ensure that the new global economy is directly beneficial to American working families. As we work to open new markets, we must negotiate to guarantee that all trade agreements include standards to protect children, workers, public safety, and the environment. We must ensure adequate trade adjustment assistance and education and training programs to help working families compete and win in the global economy.

Education. Today's Democratic Party knows that education is the key to opportunity. In the new global economy, it is more important than ever before. Today, education is the fault line that separates those who will prosper from those who cannot. President Clinton and Democrats in Congress have spared no effort over the last four years to improve the quality of American education and expand the opportunity for all Americans to get the education they need to succeed.

Every step of the way, we have been opposed by Republicans intent on cutting education. Now, they want to cut education from Head Start through college scholarships. They want to undermine our public schools and make borrowing for college more difficult for millions of students.

Today's Democratic Party will stand firmly against the Republican assault on education. Cutting education as we move into the 21st century would be like cutting defense spending at the height of the Cold War. We must do more to expand educational opportunity -- not less.

Strengthening public schools. We increased Head Start funding to expand early education for more children who need it. We passed Goals 2000 to help schools set high standards, and find the resources they need to succeed: the best books, the brightest teachers, the most up-to-date technology. We restructured federal education programs and eliminated federal regulations to give local schools, teachers, and principals the flexibility and help they need to meet those standards. We've worked to make sure our children have the best teachers by expanding teacher education. We applaud the work of state and local Democrats to develop innovative solutions to make sure our children get the best possible education.

In the next four years, we must do even more to make sure America has the best public schools on earth. If we want to be the best, we should expect the best: We must hold students, teachers, and schools to the

highest standards. Every child should be able to read by the end of the third grade. Students should be required to demonstrate competency and achievement for promotion or graduation. Teachers in this country are among the most talented professionals we have. They should be required to meet high standards for professional performance and be rewarded for the good jobs they do. For the few who don't measure up to those high standards, there should be a fair process to get them out of the classroom and the profession. And we should get rid of the barriers that discourage talented young people from becoming teachers in the first place. We should not bash teachers. We should applaud them, and find ways to keep the best teachers in the classroom. Schools should be held accountable for results. We should redesign or overhaul schools that fail. We should expand public school choice, but we should not take American tax dollars from public schools and give them to private schools. We should promote public charter schools that are held to the highest standards of accountability and access. And we should continue to ensure that America provides quality education to children with disabilities, because high-quality public education is the key to opportunity for all children.

Teaching values in schools. Today's Democratic Party knows our children's education is not complete unless they learn good values. We applaud the efforts of the Clinton-Gore Administration to promote character education in our schools. Teaching good values, strong character, and the responsibilities of citizenship must be an essential part of American education.

Safe schools and healthy students. If young people do not have the freedom to learn in safety, they do not have the freedom to learn at all. Over the last four years, we have worked hard to keep schools safe and drug-free, and students healthy. When Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich led Republican efforts to cut school safety funding, President Clinton and Democrats in Congress wouldn't let them get away with it. When Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich led Republican efforts to destroy the nation's school lunch program, President Clinton and Democrats in Congress stopped them cold. Now, we must work together at every level of government to launch a major rebuilding effort to make sure our children go to school in high-quality facilities where they can learn. We must help schools set the highest standards for good behavior and discipline in our schools. Children cannot learn -- and teachers cannot teach -- without order in the classroom.

Technology in the classroom. We must bring the 21st century into every classroom in America. There is a vast realm of knowledge waiting for our children to tap into. Computers are powerful tools to teach students to read better, write better, and understand math. President Clinton and Vice President Gore understand that technological literacy is essential to success in the new economy. The only way to achieve that for every student is to give them all access to a computer, good software, trained teachers, and the Internet -- and President Clinton and Vice President Gore have launched a partnership with high-tech companies, schools, state, and local governments to wire every classroom and library to the Information Superhighway by the year 2000.

Preparing students for jobs. We passed School-to-Work so young people can learn the skills they need to get and keep high wage jobs. The Republican Congress is trying to destroy it, and we pledge to stop them. We want to keep working with the private sector, to encourage community partnerships that build the bridge between a good education and a good job.

Higher education for all Americans. Finally, we must make sure that every American has the opportunity to go to college. Higher education is the key to a successful future in the 21st century. The typical worker with a college education earns 73 percent more than one without. America has the best higher education in the world. We do not need to change it -- we need to make it available for all Americans. Our goal must be nothing less than to make the 13th and 14th years of education as universal as the first 12.

Over the last four years, the Democratic Party under President Clinton has put an unprecedented college opportunity strategy in place: We reformed the student loan program, to make college more affordable for 5.5 million students -- and we saved money for the taxpayers by eliminating the middleman, cutting red tape, and cutting the cost of student loan defaults in half. We have expanded Pell Grant college scholarships for deserving students. And the President's national service program has already helped 45,000 Americans earn money for college by helping their communities.

Tax cuts for college. Over the next four years, we want to go even further: We should expand work-study so one million students a year can work their way through college by the year 2000. We should allow people to use money from their IRA to help pay for college. We should give a \$1000 honor scholarship for the top 5 percent of graduates in every high school. And we must make 14 years of education the standard for every American. The Democratic Party wants to create a \$10,000 tax deduction for families to help pay for education after high school. And we want to create a \$1,500 tax cut for Americans, modeled after Georgia's successful HOPE scholarships, to guarantee the first year of tuition at a typical community college, and the second year if individuals earn it by maintaining a B average. No tax cut will do more to raise American incomes than a tax cut to pay for college.

Economic security for American families in the 21st century. In the old economy, most workers could count on one job for life. They knew that hard work was rewarded with raises and steady jobs; they were confident the company would take care of them, their families, their health, and their retirement. Success was tied to the success of their employer: sacrifice when times were tough and a share in the wealth when times were good. In the new economy, the rules have changed. We need to find new ways to help working families find economic security: better training to help workers learn skills to get new and better jobs; the security of good health care and safe pensions so they can take care of themselves and their families. This is a challenge that American workers and managers are ready to face, and the Democratic Party will continue to tackle.

Rewarding work. We honor work in America. Americans work hard, and they have a right to expect that work will pay. We want to continue reversing the trend of the eighties, so all Americans benefit from continued economic growth and rising wages. The President and Democrats in Congress raised the minimum wage to \$5.15 an hour, after defeating fierce Republican opposition led by Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich. We believe the minimum wage should be a wage you can live on. President Clinton and Congressional Democrats fought for and won the largest expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit in history, a tax cut for 15 million working families, because no parent who takes the responsibility to work full time should have to raise children in poverty. We want to strengthen families, and we challenge the private sector to help their workers earn enough to support a family.

Health care. The Democratic Party is committed to ensuring that Americans have access to affordable, high-quality health care. Because of President Clinton's determined leadership and the tireless efforts of Democrats in Congress, we passed the Kennedy-Kassebaum health reform bill to stop insurance companies from denying coverage to families where one member has a preexisting condition, and to make sure that people can take their health insurance with them when they change jobs. No more Americans should have to turn down a better job because they would lose their health care if they took it. We have expanded the Women, Infants, and Children program that provides prenatal and early childhood nutrition, so that all eligible women, infants, and children will have access to the health and nutrition services they need. We established a comprehensive effort to immunize children, after defeating Republican opposition led by Senator Dole. Last year, the percentage of two-year-olds in America who were fully immunized reached an historic high.

The Clinton-Gore Administration has dramatically shortened the approval process for new lifesaving drugs at the Food and Drug Administration and will continue to work to streamline the process further; and we have made AIDS research, prevention, and treatment a top priority, increasing funding by almost 40 percent, including more than doubling the Ryan White Care Act to help care for people with AIDS. We are committed to finding a cure for AIDS, combating HIV-related discrimination, supporting HOPWA funding to help with housing for people living with AIDS, and working to ensure that all Americans living with AIDS have access to new and potentially lifesaving drugs; serious biomedical research which promises breakthroughs for so many diseases; and doing more to help all Americans live longer, healthier lives. We recognize the enormous contribution of our teaching hospitals and medical schools -- they lay the foundation for the best medical care in the world, and we will continue to promote policies that strengthen them.

We have paid special attention to women's health issues, including a 65 percent increase for breast cancer research. We are committed to finding a cure for breast cancer and we pledge to continue supporting funds for innovative research, and access for all women to high quality treatment and care.

The Democratic Party is proud that we held the line against the Republicans' mean-spirited Medicare and Medicaid cuts that would risk the health care of millions of Americans, from infants to seniors. Senator Dole voted against Medicare when it was first created, boasts about it today, and now Republican leaders want Medicare to wither on the vine." The Dole-Gingrich Medicare plan would put millions of our parents into a second class health care system for the first time in their lives, and we will not stand for it. The Dole-Gingrich Medicaid plan would end the guarantee to meaningful health benefits for millions of children, older Americans, and people with disabilities. President Clinton forced Republicans to put aside their attempt to block grant Medicaid, and insisted that welfare reform protects women and children by maintaining the Medicaid guarantee. The Democratic Party wants America to preserve and strengthen Medicare and Medicaid, so we honor our values and protect the health of our children, parents, and grandparents, ensuring they can get the health care they need, from doctors visits to long-term care.

In 1993 -- without a single Republican vote -- President Clinton and Democrats in Congress extended the Medicare Trust Fund into the 21st century. We have given 12 states more flexibility to run their Medicaid programs more efficiently and expand coverage, while maintaining the

guarantee of meaningful benefits. When these plans are implemented, two million more Americans will have health insurance because of them. We have given Medicare beneficiaries more health plan choices and increased benefits. We have cracked down on health care waste, fraud, and abuse, saving more than \$15 billion in three years. Now we must finish the job -- we can balance the budget while we preserve and strengthen Medicare and Medicaid, protecting millions of middle class families from being overwhelmed by health care costs for their parents, children, or family members with disabilities.

In the next four years, we must take further steps to ensure that Americans have access to quality, affordable health care. We should start by making sure that people get help paying premiums so they do not lose health care while they're looking for a new job. We support expanded coverage of home care, hospice, adult day-care, and community-based services, so the elderly and people with disabilities of all ages can live in their own communities and as independently as possible. We are disappointed Congress walked away from bipartisan efforts to provide mental health parity; we believe health insurance coverage for mental health care is vitally important and we support parity for mental health care.

Retirement. Over the last four years, President Clinton took strong steps to protect the pensions of more than 40 million workers and retirees by fixing the federal pension insurance system and demanding that companies fund their retirement plans fully. We established a nationwide retirement protection program to protect workers' 401K retirement savings from fraud and abuse. We recognize the unique concerns of women when it comes to preparing for retirement and have worked to protect women's pension rights.

Over the next four years, we want to take further steps to make sure that Americans who have worked hard for their whole lives can enjoy retirement in the dignity and security they have earned. We want to make sure people can carry their pensions with them when they change jobs, protect pensions even further, and expand the number of workers with pension coverage. We will continue to support the Railroad Retirement System. Democrats created Social Security, we oppose efforts to dismantle it, and we will fight to save it. We must ensure that it is on firm financial footing well into the next century. We call on Republicans to put politics aside and join us in a serious bipartisan effort to make sure that Social Security will continue to provide true security for future generations, as it has done for millions of older Americans for decades.

Training. We must do more to make sure all Americans have the skills they need to compete. We want a G.I. Bill for Workers to transform the confusing tangle of federal training programs into a simple job-training skill grant that will go directly to unemployed workers so they will be able to get the training that is right for them. We want to strengthen training opportunities for people with disabilities, so they can learn the skills they need to live independent, productive lives.

Standing up for working Americans. We nearly doubled funding for the dislocated worker program and launched special projects to help workers displaced by base closures, natural disasters, and mass layoffs. We are reforming OSHA so it can do a better job to protect worker safety with less red tape, and we continue to oppose Republican efforts to gut it. We beat back efforts to undermine workers' rights to form and join unions and to dismantle the enforcement powers of the National Labor Relations Board. The Democratic Party is committed to prompt, fair, impartial, protection of workers and the traveling and shipping public by improving

the speed, efficiency, authority, and efficacy of the FAA and the FRA. We vigorously oppose Republican efforts to pass Right-to-Work legislation, and we are proud the President vetoed efforts to undermine collective bargaining through the TEAM Act. We are working to eradicate sweatshops in the U.S. apparel industry by stepping up enforcement and public education. We oppose the hiring of permanent workers to replace lawful economic strikers; we support the President's action to stop the government from procuring goods and services from companies that do so; and we support legislation to prohibit the permanent replacement of lawfully striking workers. We believe in equal pay for equal work and pay equity.

Promoting economic growth and opportunity for all Americans. We know that it is good for America when small, minority, and women-owned businesses have the opportunity to grow and prosper. These business-owners create new jobs, expand opportunities, and serve as powerful role models for young people. Over the last four years, the President has transformed the Small Business Administration to eliminate burdensome paperwork and deliver real assistance to entrepreneurs as they work to start or expand their businesses. At the same time, since Bill Clinton became President, we have more than doubled the number of loans to small businesses, nearly tripled loans to minority businesses, and quadrupled loans to women-owned businesses. The President ordered all federal agencies to comply with laws designed to ensure that small, minority, and women-owned businesses can compete for their fair share of procurement dollars. We are committed to continued efforts to expand opportunity for small, minority, and women business owners.

Clean, affordable energy. Clean, abundant, and reliable energy is essential to a strong American economy. We support investment in research and development to spur domestic energy production and enhance efficiency. New technologies -- natural gas, energy efficiency, renewable energy -- developed in partnership with American industries and scientists are increasing productivity and creating jobs. We believe America should reduce its dependence on foreign energy sources.

Corporate citizenship. Employers have a responsibility to do their part as well. President Clinton and the Democratic Party stand on the side of working families. We believe that values like loyalty, fairness, and responsibility are not inconsistent with the bottom line. The Democratic Party insists that corporate leaders invest in the long-term, by providing workers with living wages and benefits, education and training, a safe, healthy place to work, and opportunities for greater involvement in company decision making and ownership. Employers must make sure workers share in the benefits of the good years, as well as the burdens of the bad ones. Employers must offer employees the opportunity to share in the profits they help create. Employers must respect the commitment of workers to their families, and must work to provide good pensions and health care. When CEOs put their workers and long-term success ahead of short-term gain, their workers will do better and so will they.

Responsibility

Today's Democratic Party knows that the era of big government is over. Big bureaucracies and Washington solutions are not the real answers to today's challenges. We need a smaller government . . . and we must have a larger national spirit. Government's job should be to give people the tools they need to make the most of their own lives. Americans must take the responsibility to use them, to build good lives for themselves and

their families. Personal responsibility is the most powerful force we have to meet our challenges and shape the future we want for ourselves, for our children, and for America.

Fighting crime. Today's Democratic Party believes the first responsibility of government is law and order. Four years ago, crime in America seemed intractable. The violent crime rate and the murder rate had climbed for seven straight years. Drugs seemed to flow freely across our borders and into our neighborhoods. Convicted felons could walk into any gun shop and buy a handgun. Military-style assault weapons were sold freely. Our people didn't feel safe in their homes, walking their streets, or even sending their children to school. Under the thumb of special interests like the gun lobby, Republicans talked tough about crime but did nothing to fight it.

Bill Clinton promised to turn things around, and that is exactly what he did. After a long hard fight, President Clinton beat back fierce Republican opposition, led by Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich, to answer the call of America's police officers and pass the toughest Crime Bill in history. The Democratic Party under President Clinton is putting more police on the streets and tougher penalties on the books; we are taking guns off the streets and working to steer young people away from crime and gangs and drugs in the first place. And it is making a difference. In city after city and town after town, crime rates are finally coming down.

Community policing. Nothing is more effective in the fight against crime than police officers on the beat, engaged in community policing. The Crime Bill is putting 100,000 new police officers on the street. We deplore cynical Republican attempts to undermine our promise to America to put 100,000 new police officers on the street. We pledge to stand up for our communities and stand with our police officers by opposing any attempt to repeal or weaken this effort. But we know that community policing only works when the community works with the police. We echo the President's challenge to Americans: If 50 citizens joined each of America's 20,000 neighborhood watch groups, we would have a citizen force of one million strong to give our police forces the backup they need.

Protecting our children, our neighborhoods, and our police from criminals with guns. Bob Dole, Newt Gingrich, and George Bush were able to hold the Brady Bill hostage for the gun lobby until Bill Clinton became President. With his leadership, we made the Brady Bill the law of the land. And because we did, more than 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers have been stopped from buying guns. President Clinton led the fight to ban 19 deadly assault weapons, designed for one purpose only -- to kill human beings. We oppose efforts to restrict weapons used for legitimate sporting purposes, and we are proud that not one hunter or sportsman was forced to change guns because of the assault weapons ban. But we know that the military-style guns we banned have no place on America's streets, and we are proud of the courageous Democrats who defied the gun lobby and sacrificed their seats in Congress to make America safer.

Today's Democratic Party stands with America's police officers. We are proud to tell them that as long as Bill Clinton and Al Gore are in the White House, any attempt to repeal the Brady Bill or assault weapons ban will be met with a veto. We must do everything we can to stand behind our police officers, and the first thing we should do is pass a ban on cop-killer bullets. Any bullet that can rip through a bulletproof vest should be against the law; that is the least we can do to protect the brave police officers who risk their lives to protect us.

Tough punishment. We believe that people who break the law should be punished, and people who commit violent crimes should be punished severely. President Clinton made three-strikes-you're-out the law of the land, to ensure that the most dangerous criminals go to jail for life, with no chance of parole. We established the death penalty for nearly 60 violent crimes, including murder of a law enforcement officer, and we signed a law to limit appeals. The Democratic Party is a party of inclusion, and we respect the conscience of all Americans on this issue.

We provided almost \$8 billion in new funding to help states build new prison cells so violent offenders serve their full sentences. We call on the states to meet the President's challenge and guarantee that serious violent criminals serve at least 85 percent of their sentence. The American people deserve a criminal justice system in which criminals are caught, the guilty are convicted, and the convicted serve their time.

Fighting youth violence and preventing youth crime. Nothing we do to fight crime is more important than fighting the crime and violence that threatens our children. We have to protect them from criminals who prey on them -- and we have to teach them good values and give them something to say yes to, so they stay away from crime and trouble in the first place.

The Democratic Party understands what the police have been saying for years: The best way to fight crime is to prevent it. That is why we fought for drug-education and gang-prevention programs in our schools. We support well thought out, well organized, highly supervised youth programs to provide young people with a safe and healthy alternative to hanging out on the streets. We made it a federal crime for any person under the age of 18 to possess a handgun except when supervised by an adult. Democrats fought to pass, and President Clinton ordered states to impose, zero tolerance for guns in school, requiring schools to expel for one year any student who brings a gun to school.

At the same time, when young people cross the line, they must be punished. When young people commit serious violent crimes, they should be prosecuted like adults. We established boot camps for young non-violent offenders. If Senator Dole and the Republicans are serious about fighting juvenile crime, they should listen to America's police officers and support the steps Democrats have taken, because they are making a difference, and then they should join us as we work to do more.

We want parents to bring order to their children's lives and teach them right from wrong, and we want to make it easier for them to take that responsibility. We support schools that adopt school uniform policies, to promote discipline and respect. We support community-based curfews to keep kids off the street after a certain time, so they're safe from harm and away from trouble. We urge schools and communities to enforce truancy laws: Young people belong in school, not on the street.

We also know that we must do everything we can to help families protect their children, especially from dangerous criminals who have made a dark habit of preying on young people. Study after study shows that sex offenders are likely to repeat their crimes again and again. Under President Clinton, we have taken strong steps to help keep children safe. We required every state in the country to compile a registry of sex offenders. The President signed Megan's Law to require that states tell a community whenever a dangerous sexual predator enters its midst. We support the President's directive to the Attorney General, calling on her to work with the states and Congress to develop a national sex offender

registry. This will ensure that police officers in every state can get the information they need from any state to track sex offenders down and bring them to justice when they commit new crimes.

Battling illegal drugs. We must keep drugs off our streets and out of our schools. President Clinton and the Democratic Party have waged an aggressive war on drugs. The Crime Bill established the death penalty for drug kingpins. The President signed a directive requiring drug testing of anyone arrested for a federal crime, and he challenged states to do the same for state offenders. We established innovative drug courts which force drug users to get treatment or go to jail. We stood firm against Republican efforts to gut the Safe and Drug Free Schools effort that supports successful drug-education programs like D.A.R.E. The Clinton Administration went to the Supreme Court to support the right of schools to test athletes for drugs. The President launched Operation Safe Home to protect the law-abiding residents of public housing from violent criminals and drug dealers who use their homes as a base for illegal activities. We support the President's decision to tell those who commit crimes and peddle drugs in public housing: You will get no second chance to threaten your neighbors; it is one strike and you're out. We are making progress. Overall drug use in America is dropping; the number of Americans who use cocaine has dropped 30 percent since 1992. Unfortunately casual drug use by young people continues to climb. We must redouble our efforts against drug abuse everywhere, especially among our children.

Earlier this year, the President appointed General Barry McCaffrey to lead the nation's war on drugs. General McCaffrey is implementing an aggressive four part strategy to reach young children and prevent drug use in the first place; to catch and punish drug users and dealers; to provide treatment to those who need help; and to cut drugs off at the source before they cross the border and pollute our neighborhoods. But every adult in America must take responsibility to set a good example, and to teach children that drugs are wrong, they are illegal, and they are deadly.

Ending domestic violence. When it strikes, nothing is a more dangerous threat to the safety of our families than domestic violence, because it is a threat from within. Unfortunately, violence against women is no stranger to America, but a dangerous intruder we must work together to drive from our homes. We know that domestic violence is not a "family problem" or a "women's problem." It is America's problem, and we must all fight it. The Violence Against Women Act in the 1994 Crime Bill helps police officers, prosecutors, and judges to understand domestic violence, recognize it when they see it, and know how to deal with it. In February, the President launched a 24 hour, seven-day, toll-free hotline so women in trouble can find out how to get emergency help, find shelter, and report abuse to the authorities. The number is 1 800 799-SAFE. Everyone who knows it should pass it on to anyone who might need it. Every American must take the responsibility to stop this terrible scourge. As we fight it, we must remember that the victims are not to blame. This is a crime to be punished, not a secret to be concealed.

We must do everything we can to make sure that the victims of violent crime are treated with the respect and the dignity they deserve. We support the President's call for a constitutional amendment to protect the rights of victims. We believe that when a plea bargain is entered in public, a criminal is sentenced, or a defendant is let out on bail, the victims ought to know about it, and have a say. A constitutional amendment is the only way to protect those rights in every courtroom in America.

Immigration. Democrats remember that we are a nation of immigrants. We recognize the extraordinary contribution of immigrants to America throughout our history. We welcome legal immigrants to America. We support a legal immigration policy that is pro-family, pro-work, pro-responsibility, and pro-citizenship, and we deplore those who blame immigrants for economic and social problems.

We know that citizenship is the cornerstone of full participation in American life. We are proud that the President launched Citizenship USA to help eligible immigrants become United States citizens. The Immigration and Naturalization Service is streamlining procedures, cutting red tape, and using new technology to make it easier for legal immigrants to accept the responsibilities of citizenship and truly call America their home.

Today's Democratic Party also believes we must remain a nation of laws. We cannot tolerate illegal immigration and we must stop it. For years before Bill Clinton became President, Washington talked tough but failed to act. In 1992, our borders might as well not have existed. The border was under-patrolled, and what patrols there were, were under-equipped. Drugs flowed freely. Illegal immigration was rampant. Criminal immigrants, deported after committing crimes in America, returned the very next day to commit crimes again.

President Clinton is making our border a place where the law is respected and drugs and illegal immigrants are turned away. We have increased the Border Patrol by over 40 percent; in El Paso, our Border Patrol agents are so close together they can see each other. Last year alone, the Clinton Administration removed thousands of illegal workers from jobs across the country. Just since January of 1995, we have arrested more than 1,700 criminal aliens and prosecuted them on federal felony charges because they returned to America after having been deported.

However, as we work to stop illegal immigration, we call on all Americans to avoid the temptation to use this issue to divide people from each other. We deplore those who use the need to stop illegal immigration as a pretext for discrimination. And we applaud the wisdom of Republicans like Mayor Giuliani and Senator Domenici who oppose the mean-spirited and short-sighted effort of Republicans in Congress to bar the children of illegal immigrants from schools -- it is wrong, and forcing children onto the streets is an invitation for them to join gangs and turn to crime. Democrats want to protect American jobs by increasing criminal and civil sanctions against employers who hire illegal workers, but Republicans continue to favor inflammatory rhetoric over real action. We will continue to enforce labor standards to protect workers in vulnerable industries. We continue to firmly oppose welfare benefits for illegal immigrants. We believe family members who sponsor immigrants into this country should take financial responsibility for them, and be held legally responsible for supporting them.

Welfare reform. Today's Democratic Party knows there is no greater gap between mainstream American values and modern American government than our failed welfare system. When Bill Clinton became President, the welfare system undermined the very values -- work, family, and personal responsibility -- that it should promote. The welfare system should reflect those values: we want to help people who want to help themselves and their children.

Over the past four years, President Clinton has dramatically transformed the welfare system. He has freed 43 states from federal rules and regulations so they can reform their welfare systems. The Clinton

Administration has granted 77 waivers -- more than twice as many waivers as granted in the Reagan-Bush years. For 75 percent of all Americans on welfare, the rules have changed for good already, and welfare is becoming what it should be: a second chance, not a way of life. Welfare rolls are finally coming down -- there are 1.8 million fewer people on welfare today than there were when President Clinton took office in January 1993.

Now, because of the President's leadership and with the support of a majority of the Democrats in Congress, national welfare reform is going to make work and responsibility the law of the land. Thanks to President Clinton and the Democrats, the new welfare bill includes the health care and child care people need so they can go to work confident their children will be cared for. Thanks to President Clinton and the Democrats, the new welfare bill imposes time limits and real work requirements -- so anyone who can work, does work, and so that no one who can work can stay on welfare forever. Thanks to President Clinton and the Democrats, the new welfare bill cracks down on deadbeat parents and requires minor mothers to live at home with their parents or with another responsible adult.

We are proud the President forced Congressional Republicans to abandon their wrong-headed and mean-spirited efforts to punish the poor. Republicans wanted to eliminate the guarantee of health care for the poor, the elderly, and the disabled. They were wrong, and we stopped them. Republicans wanted to destroy the food stamp and school lunch programs that provide basic nutrition to millions of working families and poor children. They were wrong, and we stopped them. Republicans wanted to gut child abuse prevention and foster care. They were wrong, and we stopped them. Republicans wanted to cut off young, unwed mothers -- because they actually thought their children would be better off living in an orphanage. They were dead wrong, and we stopped them. The bill Republicans in Congress passed last year was values-backward -- it was soft on work and tough on children, and we applaud the President for stopping it.

We know the new bill passed by Congress is far from perfect -- parts of it should be fixed because they go too far and have nothing to do with welfare reform. First, Republicans cut too far into nutritional assistance for working families with children; we are committed to correcting that. Second, Republicans insisted on using welfare reform as a vehicle to cut off help to legal immigrants. That was wrong. Legal immigrants work hard, pay their taxes, and serve America. It is wrong to single them out for punishment just because they are immigrants. We pledge to make sure that legal immigrant families with children who fall on hard times through no fault of their own can get help when they need it. And we are committed to continuing the President's efforts to make it easier for legal immigrants who are prepared to accept the responsibilities of citizenship to do so.

But the new welfare plan gives America an historic chance: to break the cycle of dependency for millions of Americans, and give them a real chance for an independent future. It reflects the principles the President has insisted upon since he started the process that led to welfare reform. Our job now is to make sure this welfare reform plan succeeds, transforming a broken system that holds people down into a working system that lifts people up and gives them a real chance to build a better life. States asked for this responsibility -- now we have to make sure they shoulder it. We must make sure as many people as possible move from welfare to work. We must make sure that children are protected. In addition to health care and nutritional assistance, states should provide

in-kind vouchers to children whose parents have reached the time limit. We challenge states to exempt battered women from time limits and other restrictions. We challenge states to ensure that hard-earned, federal taxpayer dollars are spent effectively and fraud and abuse are prevented. We challenge the business community to provide more of the private sector jobs people on welfare need to build good lives and strong families. We know that passing legislation is not enough; we must make sure people get the skills they need to get jobs, and that there are jobs for them to go to so they leave welfare and stay off. We want to make sure welfare reform will put more people to work and move them into the economic mainstream, not take jobs away from working families.

We call on all Americans to make the most of this opportunity -- never to use welfare reform as an excuse to demonize or demean people, but rather as a chance to bring all our people fully into the economic mainstream, to have a chance to share in the prosperity and the promise of American life.

Child support. Nobody has the right to walk away from the responsibility to care for his or her children. If you owe child support, paying it fully and promptly is just the first step in living up to your responsibility as a parent. The Clinton Administration has made a determined effort to crack down on deadbeat parents, collecting a record \$11 billion in 1995 through tough enforcement -- almost a 40 percent increase over 1992. President Clinton issued an Executive Order to track down federal workers who fail to pay child support, and force them to pay. The Clinton Administration is working to put wanted lists of parents who owe child support in the post office and on the Internet. President Clinton and Democrats in Congress insisted that the toughest possible child support enforcement be part of the new welfare reform plan -- including the President's plan to deny drivers licenses and professional licenses to people who do not pay their child support. We are telling deadbeats: If you neglect your responsibility to your children, we will suspend your license, garnish your wages, track you down, and make you pay.

Teen pregnancy. For the first time in years, the teen pregnancy rate has leveled off and begun to drop. But we all know it is still far too high. Government alone cannot solve this problem. That is why President Clinton challenged community, business, and religious leaders together to form a national campaign to keep the teen pregnancy rate going down. And he expanded support for community-based prevention programs that teach abstinence and demand responsibility. We must send the strongest possible signal to young people that it is wrong to get pregnant or father a child until they are married and ready to support that child and raise that child.

We also know that half of all underage mothers were made pregnant by a man in his twenties, or even older. Statutory rape is a crime, but unfortunately the laws that protect young women from it are almost never enforced. We echo the President's call to America's prosecutors: Enforce the statutory rape laws vigorously against men who prey on underage women.

Choice. The Democratic Party stands behind the right of every woman to choose, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, and regardless of ability to pay. President Clinton took executive action to make sure that the right to make such decisions is protected for all Americans. Over the last four years, we have taken action to end the gag rule and ensure safety at family planning and women's health clinics. We believe it is a

fundamental constitutional liberty that individual Americans -- not government -- can best take responsibility for making the most difficult and intensely personal decisions regarding reproduction.

The Democratic Party is a party of inclusion. We respect the individual conscience of each American on this difficult issue, and we welcome all our members to participate at every level of our party.

Our goal is to make abortion less necessary and more rare, not more difficult and more dangerous. We support contraceptive research, family planning, comprehensive family life education, and policies that support healthy childbearing. For four years in a row, we have increased support for family planning. The abortion rate is dropping. Now we must continue to support efforts to reduce unintended pregnancies, and we call on all Americans to take personal responsibility to meet this important goal.

Reinventing government. The American people have a right to demand that responsibility is the order of the day in Washington. The mission of today's Democratic Party is to expand opportunity, not bureaucracy. We have worked hard over the last four years to rein in big government, slash burdensome regulations, eliminate wasteful programs, and shift problem-solving out of Washington and back to people and communities who understand their situations best.

In the last four years, President Clinton, working with the National Performance Review chaired by Vice President Gore, has cut the federal government by almost 240,000 positions, making the smallest federal government in 30 years. We did it the right way, treating workers with respect. The federal government is eliminating 16,000 pages of outdated and unnecessary regulations, has abolished 179 programs and projects, and saved taxpayers billions of dollars. The President fought for and signed unfunded mandates legislation. This stops Congress from requiring state and local governments to implement expensive policies without providing any means to pay for them, and encourages better partnerships and more balance of resources and responsibilities. Beginning with Ulysses S. Grant, Presidents have tried to get the line-item veto and failed; President Clinton signed landmark legislation that will give him and his successors this powerful tool to cut pork-barrel spending from bills passed by Congress.

For years, Republicans talked about making government smaller while letting it grow -- Democrats are doing it. For years, Republicans talked about cutting the deficit while letting it climb -- Democrats are doing it. For years, Republicans talked about shifting power back to states and communities -- Democrats are doing it. For years, Republicans talked about making government more businesslike and efficient -- Democrats are doing it. Democrats are bringing responsibility back to Washington. In the last two years, Republicans under Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich shut the federal government down in an irresponsible attempt at partisan blackmail. Democrats under President Clinton said, and America agreed: Partisan threats are no way to run a government. Nobody should ever shut down the government again. The Republican shutdown cost the taxpayers \$1.4 billion. Democrats believe government should work better and cost less -- not work less and cost more.

The Republican shutdown was an affront to the hardworking public servants in our cities, towns, states, and nation who devote their lives to improving life in our country. Thanks to them our streets are safer, our water is cleaner, and our nation is secure. We condemn Republican tactics to sow cynicism and mistrust by scapegoating those government workers. Front-line federal workers committed to providing quality

services have joined the President's efforts to make government work better for the American people. With their help, we are saving money for the taxpayers and improving services for our people. Those workers who are doing more with less deserve our respect and admiration.

In the last four years, we have transformed the Federal Emergency Management Agency from an outdated bureaucracy into a swift and effective agent of relief for victims of earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, or other disasters. Americans with life-threatening diseases like cancer and AIDS gain access to new drugs faster, because the Food and Drug Administration has streamlined its approval process, become more flexible in certifications, and eliminated unnecessary paperwork. The Small Business Administration has eliminated half of its regulations, cut loan applications as long as 100 pages down to one, and doubled its loan volume -- all helping Americans to produce record numbers of small businesses in each of the last three years. American homebuyers are saving an average of \$1,000 in closing costs because the Department of Housing and Urban Development has eliminated paperwork and other unnecessary burdens.

Over the next four years, the Democratic Party will continue to make responsibility the rule in Washington: cutting bureaucracy further, improving customer service, demanding better performance, holding people and agencies accountable for producing the best results, ensuring all Americans have access to high quality public services, whether they reside in inner cities, suburbs, or rural communities, and forging new partnerships with the private sector including small, minority, and women-owned businesses, and with state and local governments to enhance opportunities for all Americans from technology to transportation to travel and tourism. We concur with the unanimous findings and recommendations of the Department of Labor Task Force on Excellence in State and Local Government outlining further ways to improve the functions of government through labor-management partnerships.

Political reform. Today's Democratic Party knows we have a responsibility to make our democracy work better for America, by limiting the influence of special interests and expanding the influence of the American people. Special interests have too much power in the halls of government. They often operate in secret and have special privileges ordinary Americans do not even know exist. Elections have become so expensive that big money can sometimes drown out the voices of ordinary voters -- who should always speak the loudest.

Shortly after Bill Clinton took office, he implemented the toughest ethics code on executive officials in history: Senior appointees are barred from lobbying their own agencies for five years after they leave, and they can never lobby for foreign governments. After years of Republican delay, Democrats passed and the President signed the Motor Voter Bill to make it easier for people to participate in our democracy and exercise their civic responsibility in the voting booth. The President led the fight to repeal the tax loophole that let lobbyists deduct the cost of their activities, and prevailed. In 1995, after a Republican filibuster, Congress finally answered the President's call to stop taking gifts, meals, and trips from lobbyists; to bring lobbyists out from dark rooms and into the bright light of public scrutiny by requiring full disclosure; and to apply to itself the laws that apply to the rest of the country.

But we must take further strong action. The President and the Democratic Party support the bipartisan McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform bill. It will limit campaign spending, curb the influence of

PACs and lobbyists, and end the soft money system. Perhaps most important of all, this bill provides free TV time for candidates, so they can talk directly to citizens about real issues and real ideas. Unfortunately, Republicans in Congress will not even let this bill come up for a vote. We call on them to stop stonewalling. It is time to take the reins of democracy away from big money and put them back in the hands of the American people, where they belong. We applaud efforts by broadcasters and private citizens alike, to increase candidates' direct access to voters through free TV.

Finally, we believe all Americans have a right to fair political representation -- including the citizens of the District of Columbia who deserve full self-governance, political representation, and statehood. We recognize the existing status of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and the strong economic relationship between the people of Puerto Rico and the United States. We pledge to support the right of the people of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to choose freely, and in concert with the U.S. Congress, their relationship with the United States, either as an enhanced commonwealth, a state, or an independent nation. We support fair participation for Puerto Rico in federal programs and are committed to providing effective incentives for investment based on preserving and creating jobs in the islands. We pledge just and fair treatment under federal policies to the peoples of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands; we respect their right to be consulted on policies that affect them directly, and to choose freely their future political status; and we will continue to work with Guam to reach agreement on establishing a Commonwealth of Guam.

Security, Freedom, and Peace

The firm, sustained use of American might and diplomacy helped win the greatest victory for freedom in this half of the century -- the end of the Cold War. But to meet the challenges of this new era of promise and peril, America needed leadership that was able to see the contours of the new world -- and willing to act with steadiness, strength, and flexibility in the face of change to make the most of it.

President Clinton and Vice President Gore have seized the opportunities of the post Cold War era. Over the past four years, their leadership has made America safer, more prosperous, and more engaged in solving the challenges of a new era.

Four years ago, thousands of Russian nuclear weapons were aimed at American cities. Today, not a single Russian missile points at our children, and through the START treaties, we will cut American and Russian nuclear arsenals by two-thirds from their Cold War height.

Four years ago, the forces of reform in the former Soviet Union were embattled. Today, U.S. initiatives are helping democracy and free markets take root throughout the region, Russian troops are out of the Baltics, and democracy has triumphed in Russia's elections.

Four years ago, the Middle East process had not moved beyond a set of principles, and there were no signs of peace in Northern Ireland. Today, in the Middle East we have seen real agreements toward peace, and handshakes of history, and the people of Northern Ireland have seen a 17 month cease-fire and historic negotiations among the parties.

Four years ago, the North Koreans were operating a dangerous nuclear program. Today, that program is frozen, under international inspection, and slated to be dismantled.

Four years ago, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization -- the bulwark of Western security during the Cold War -- was losing direction and support. Today, NATO is keeping the peace in Bosnia with its Partnership for Peace allies and, as a result of American leadership, preparing to welcome new members from Central Europe.

Four years ago, America stood aloof as war and genocide spread through the former Yugoslavia. Today, thanks to NATO airstrikes, American diplomacy and the deployment of troops from the U.S. and other nations, the war has stopped and Bosnia has its first real chance for a lasting peace.

Four years ago, dictators ruled in Haiti, abusing human rights and leaving thousands of its citizens desperate to flee to our shores. Today, the dictators are gone, democracy has been restored, and Haiti's mass-exodus has stopped.

Four years ago, South Africa was struggling under political violence associated with apartheid. Now, following the 1994 elections -- which the United States strongly supported -- there is a national unity government and South Africa is free and democratic.

Four years ago, there was good reason to worry that the world was dividing into separate, isolated, regional trading blocks. Today, thanks to Clinton Administration efforts to find new markets for American products and strengthen our existing ties, America's relations with our trading parties around the world are stronger than ever. We applaud efforts like the Summit of the Americas, the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation meetings, and, especially, the extraordinary leadership of Commerce Secretary Ron Brown on behalf of American industry and workers everywhere. Ron Brown will always be remembered with great pride and the deepest gratitude by the Democratic Party and by all Americans.

The Clinton-Gore Administration's record of leadership has deterred America's adversaries and earned respect from our allies and partners. The Dole-Gingrich Congress and the Republican Party have a different approach to America's security. Too often they would force America to go it alone -- or not at all. Their shortsighted approach has cut resources for diplomacy that could strengthen our security, and reflects an inadequate understanding of the threats and opportunities of this new era.

Today's Democratic Party is unwilling to surrender to the voices of retreat and indifference. We believe the only way to ensure America's security and prosperity over the long run is to continue exerting American leadership across a range of military, diplomatic, and humanitarian, challenges around the world. Led by President Clinton and Vice President Gore, today's Democratic Party has set a far reaching agenda to strengthen our security, and promote peace and freedom.

Strengthening our security. The highest imperative for our security is the protection of our people, our territory, and our key interests abroad. While both parties share a commitment to strong security, there is a real difference. The Republican desire to spend more money on defense than the Pentagon requests cannot obscure their inability to recognize the challenges of a new era and build the balanced defenses we need to meet them.

Today's Democratic Party is committed to strengthening our military and adapting it to new challenges; reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction; and meeting new challenges to our security such as terrorism, international crime, and drug trafficking.

Strengthening our military. Over the past four years, the Administration has undertaken the most successful restructuring of our military forces in history. Even as the size of our forces has decreased, their capabilities, readiness and qualitative edge have increased. The Administration has ensured that America is prepared to fight alongside others when we can, and alone when we must. We have defeated attempts to cut our defense budget irresponsibly. Three times in three years, President Clinton has increased our defense spending plans -- a total of almost \$50 billion -- for readiness, force modernization, and quality of life improvements. We will continue our work to ensure that the men and women who wear American uniforms receive adequate pay and support, including: childcare, education, housing, access to quality health care for themselves and their families, and protection against sexual harassment. The Administration defense plan reverses the downward trend in procurement with a 40% real increase for weapons modernization by 2001. At the same time, as part of its reinventing government program, the Administration has fundamentally reformed government procurement rules in order to get the most for our money. We should also work to increase our efforts to convert unnecessary or obsolete military facilities to serve important economic needs of local communities and, while maintaining military readiness, to continue our initiatives to make our defense industrial base and products applicable to domestic commercial markets.

Repeatedly during the past four years -- from the Persian Gulf to Bosnia -- our men and women in uniform have proven they are the best trained, best equipped, best prepared fighting force in the world. The Democratic Party is committed to build on this record by fully funding the Pentagon's 5-year defense plan; undertaking a second fundamental review of our defense structure; finding new ways for our service branches to work jointly to increase our war fighting capabilities; and ensuring that our troops can dominate the battlefield of the future.

We honor America's veterans; they put their lives on the line to protect our way of life and promote our values around the world. Today's Democratic Party will stand by America's duty to our veterans. President Clinton and Vice President Gore have fought hard to protect veterans' benefits; to expand disability benefits for Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange; aggressively responding to veterans of the Persian Gulf War suffering from undiagnosed illnesses; promoting veterans employment; and improving and strengthening the medical system of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Reducing the threat of weapons of mass destruction. Strengthening our security also requires an aggressive effort against weapons of mass destruction -- nuclear, chemical, and biological -- and their means of delivery. From the nuclear weapons programs in Iraq and North Korea to the Sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway, our nation has seen that this threat is clear and present. To meet it, we must seize the opportunities presented by the end of the Cold War to cut weapons of mass destruction stockpiles while working to prevent lethal weapons and materials from falling into the wrong hands.

President Clinton and Vice President Gore have pursued the most far reaching arms control and non-proliferation agenda in history. They negotiated an agreement to end the targeting of Russian nuclear missiles on American cities and citizens. They secured ratification of START II which, along with START I, will reduce Russian and American arsenals by two-thirds. They prevented the breakup of the Soviet Union from yielding three new nuclear weapons states, by convincing Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan to give up the nuclear weapons left on their territories when

the Soviet Union collapsed. They secured the indefinite and unconditional extension of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They acted to freeze North Korea's nuclear program.

The Democratic Party supports efforts to sign a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty this year and to bring it into force as soon as possible. We support immediate ratification of the Chemical Weapons Convention -- delayed too long by the Dole Senate. We support full funding of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program to eliminate former Soviet nuclear and chemical weapons and support funds to ensure that nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union are secure and do not fall into the wrong hands. We support vigilant efforts, in cooperation with the Republic of Korea, Japan, and others, to ensure North Korea fully abides by its agreements to dismantle its nuclear program, and we support the Administration's vigorous efforts to prevent Iraq, Iran, and other dangerous states from acquiring or developing weapons of mass destruction.

The Democratic Party is committed to a strong and balanced National Missile Defense (NMD) program. The Administration is spending \$3 billion a year on six different systems to protect our troops in the field and our allies from short and medium range missiles. To prepare for the possibility of a long range missile attack on American soil by a rogue state, the Clinton Administration is committed to developing by the year 2000 a defensive system that could be deployed by 2003, well before the threat becomes real. The Democratic Party opposes the Republican NMD plan -- spending up to \$60 billion on a revival of the Star Wars program that would force us to choose a costly system today that could be obsolete tomorrow. The Republican plan would waste money, weaken America's defenses and violate existing arms control agreements that make us more secure. It is the wrong way to defend America.

Meeting new challenges. Today's Democratic Party knows that stronger security requires vigorous efforts to address the new dangers of this era. Chief among these are the interwoven threats of terrorism, drug trafficking, and international crime. We have seen the terrible toll they have exacted -- the murder of American soldiers in their barracks in Saudi Arabia and of innocent civilians on buses in Israel; corruption and crime from the former Soviet Union to Latin America. We know these vicious criminals may come from within or without and pay no heed to borders; we have seen firsthand the awful, evil work of the forces of terror at the World Trade Center and in Oklahoma City. And we know all too well the havoc drugs wreak when they cross our borders and flow through our neighborhoods.

The Clinton-Gore Administration has mounted the most aggressive effort in American history to combat terrorism, drug trafficking, and international crime. We captured and convicted the perpetrators of the World Trade Center bombing. We enacted a strong new anti-terrorism law, in spite of foot dragging by the Republican Congress; now, President Clinton and Democrats are fighting to take further steps to protect American citizens. We convened an historic summit of Mideast leaders at Sharm el-Sheik to coordinate anti-terrorism efforts, and made anti-terrorism a centerpiece of the 1996 G-7 summit. We imposed or maintained strong sanctions against states that sponsor terrorism, including Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Sudan, and made clear to Syria that normal relations depend on concrete steps to end its support for groups involved with terrorism. We opposed irresponsible cuts to U.S. intelligence programs and supported efforts to reorganize and strengthen the full range of intelligence agencies and programs. We opened FBI centers to provide anti-crime and anti-terrorism training. We

made Colombia ineligible for most American assistance after that country's leadership failed to cooperate with American anti-narcotics efforts.

Our three front war on terrorism -- abroad, through greater cooperation with our allies; at home, by giving law enforcement the most powerful tools available to fight terrorism; and in our airports and on airplanes, through tough air travel security measures -- is producing results. President Clinton asked the Vice President to chair a commission on the future of air traffic security and safety. We will work to increase the security of our air travel system, the safety of our airplanes, and the safety and security of our air traffic control system.

Today's Democratic Party is determined to keep the war on global terrorism, narcotics, and crime at the center of our security agenda. We will seek increased cooperation from our allies and friends abroad in fighting these threats. We will continue to work aggressively to shut off foreign drug flows, eradicate foreign drug crops, and assist countries that demonstrate active cooperation.

Promoting peace and democracy. Today's Democratic Party knows that peace and democracy are products of decisive strength and active diplomacy. That diplomacy must protect our interests while also projecting our values. The Republican Party too often has neglected diplomatic opportunities, slashed the budgets necessary for diplomatic successes, and overlooked the importance to our own security of democracy and human rights abroad. At its core, the Republican Party is locked in a Cold War mentality, and lacks a coherent strategy to nurture and strengthen the global progress toward peace and democracy.

The Democratic Party believes a key to strengthening peace is stable and peaceful relations among the world's major powers. That has been the driving force behind much of the Clinton-Gore Administration's work, from its peace initiative in Bosnia to new security agreements with Japan. We are committed to promoting democracy in regions and countries important to America's security, and to standing with all those willing to take risks for peace, from the Middle East to Northern Ireland, where President Clinton was the first U.S. president to engage directly in the search for peace, including making an historic visit to Northern Ireland. And we are committed to doing it with all the tools we have: with diplomacy where possible, with force where necessary, and working with others where appropriate -- our allies, willing partners, the U.N. and other security organizations -- to share the risks and costs of our leadership.

Europe and the former Soviet Union. Today's Democratic Party knows that the security of Europe remains a vital American interest, and that we must remain engaged in Europe, a region in which we have fought the two world wars and the Cold War this century. It is our vision to see, one day, a community of free, democratic, and peaceful nations, bound by political, security, cultural, and economic ties, spanning across North America and Europe. We applaud the Clinton-Gore Administration's efforts to foster a peaceful, democratic and undivided Europe -- including expanded support for reform in former communist states; dramatically increased assistance to Ukraine; the Partnership for Peace program of military cooperation with Europe's new democracies; its steady, determined work to add new Central European members to NATO in the near future; and its efforts to resolve regional disputes such as between Greece and Turkey. We support continued efforts to secure a just and lasting peace in Bosnia, Northern Ireland and Cyprus. We are committed to the success of independence in Ukraine and the Baltics. And we support the continuing evolution of a prosperous and peaceful Russia.

And as part of our effort to support we will pursue a relationship in which we seek cooperation when we can, and frankly express disagreements where they exist, such as on Chechnya.

Asia. We know that many of America's most pressing security challenges and most promising commercial opportunities lie in the Asia Pacific region. The Democratic Party applauds the important new security charter with Japan, the Administration's close cooperation with the Republic of Korea toward the goal of a unified and non-nuclear peninsula, and the deployment of an American naval task force to the Taiwan Straits to ensure that China's military exercises did not imperil the security of the region. The Party supports the Administration's policy of steady engagement to encourage a stable, secure, open and prosperous China -- a China that respects human rights throughout its land and in Tibet, that joins international efforts against weapons proliferation, and that plays by the rules of free and fair trade. Today's Democratic Party strongly supports continued American troop presence in East Asia and efforts to promote increased regional security. And we are committed to building long-term relationships with India, Pakistan, and others in South Asia in order to advance America's diverse interests in that region, from democracy and commerce to nuclear non-proliferation.

The Middle East. President Clinton has overseen a remarkable record of achievement toward peace and security in the Middle East -- the Israeli-Palestinian accords; the peace agreement between Israel and Jordan; new regional security and investment summits; Israel's increased acceptance throughout the Middle East and the world; the dual containment of Iraq and Iran. The Democratic Party is committed to help build on this record, knowing that peace and security are indivisible, and supports the efforts by the Clinton-Gore Administration to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace among Israel and all its neighbors, including Lebanon and Syria. The Democratic Party remains committed to America's long-standing special relationship with Israel, based on shared values, a mutual commitment to democracy and a strategic alliance that benefits both nations. The United States should continue to help Israel maintain its qualitative edge. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and should remain an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths. We are also committed to working with our Arab partners for peace to build a brighter, more secure and prosperous future for all the people of the Middle East. To that end, we seek to further and enhance our close ties with states and peoples in the Arab and Islamic world committed to non-aggression and willing to take risks for peace.

Latin America and the Caribbean. The Clinton-Gore Administration forged an historic partnership with the democracies of the Western Hemisphere, as reflected in the 1994 Summit of the Americas. Today, every country in the Hemisphere is a democracy except Cuba. Because democratic stability and prosperity in the countries to our south are in our interest and theirs, President Clinton took bold steps to bolster Mexico's economy when it was threatened by crisis; worked to resolve internal and border conflicts in the Hemisphere; joined with regional partners to combat narcotics trafficking; and tightened the tough sanctions against the repressive Castro regime and those who support that regime, while reaching out to the people of Cuba in their quest for democracy, human rights, and freedom. The Democratic Party is committed to further consolidating democracy, stability, and open markets throughout the hemisphere.

Africa. The Clinton Administration championed South Africa's democratic transition; supported Africa's many emerging democracies and led international efforts to speed the return of democracy in Nigeria; helped

save countless lives in Somalia, Rwanda, and elsewhere through conflict resolution, removal of landmines, and humanitarian relief; and took steps to help sub-Saharan Africa's 700 million people develop into strong economies and markets. The Democratic Party believes that continuing to help the people of Africa nurture their continent's extraordinary potential and address its serious problems is both the right thing to do and profoundly in America's interest.

Promoting democracy. America remains a beacon of hope to all who cherish democracy and human rights, and America's security benefits from the enlargement of the community of market democracies. The Clinton-Gore Administration has actively promoted the consolidation and spread of democracy and human rights: in Russia and throughout the former Soviet Union, Central Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. President Clinton directed Vice President Gore to lead bi-national efforts to establish trading relationships to help promote democracy in three strategic areas: Russia, South Africa, and Egypt. The Democratic Party supports the aspirations of all those who seek to strengthen civil society and accountable governance. To this end, we support the MacBride Principles of equal access to regional employment in Northern Ireland. We are committed to the human rights and well-being of Jewish people and other minorities in the countries of the former Soviet Union. We support continued funding for the National Endowment for Democracy, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the Asia Pacific Network, Radio Marti and other efforts to promote democracy and the free flow of ideas. We recognize the Information Age offers new opportunities and responsibilities for our democracy and diplomacy that we must seize and meet.

Resources for diplomacy. There is a price to be paid for America's security and its leadership in world affairs -- and the Republican Party now refuses to pay that price. Even though less than one percent of the federal budget goes to foreign policy spending, the Republican Party has savaged our diplomatic readiness, defaulted on treaty obligations to pay dues to the United Nations, slashed assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable populations on earth, and pushed the United States to dead last among developed nations in the global fight against starvation, infant mortality, natural disasters and environmental degradation and other worldwide problems. The Democratic Party is committed to resist these irresponsible cuts that undermine our security and America's ability to lead. We are committed to strengthen our security and express our values, by strongly supporting the Clinton-Gore Administration's work to ensure adequate resources for American foreign policy.

Community

Across America, in far too many places, the bonds of community that tie us together and remind us that we rise or fall together, have too often frayed. Today's Democratic Party believes we must reawaken the strong sense of community that has helped America to prosper for 220 years. America is uniquely suited to lead the world into the 21st century because of our great diversity and our shared values. We must never let our differences divide us from each other; instead we must come together on a new common ground, based on the enduring values we share. When Americans work together -- in our homes, our schools, our houses of worship, our civic groups, our businesses, labor unions and professional associations -- we can meet any challenge, and realize every dream.

Putting families first. The first and most sacred responsibility of every parent is to cherish our children and strengthen our families. The family is the foundation of American life. After 12 years of all family-values-talk and no family-values-action by the Republicans, President Clinton took office determined to put families first. We support the fundamental themes of the Families First Agenda -- promoting paycheck, health care, retirement, and personal security; creating greater educational and economic opportunity; and requiring greater responsibility from individuals, businesses, and government.

Standing up for parents. In the first month of Bill Clinton's Presidency, the Democratic Party ended eight years of Republican gridlock and enacted the Family and Medical Leave Act. Americans blessed with a new child or troubled by a family health crisis can no longer be forced to choose between their families and their jobs. A bipartisan panel reported that 12 million workers have already been able to live up to their family obligations without risking their jobs. And almost 90 percent of businesses found that complying with this law cost them little or nothing. Despite how important this is to American families, Senator Dole led Republican opposition to it and still insists it was wrong. This law is good for families, it is good for America, and it would not be the law today without the Democratic Party. President Clinton fought for and secured tax credits to encourage adoption, and stood firm against Republican attempts to undermine adoption assistance.

Now we want to take the next step. We believe parents should be able to take unpaid leave from work and choose flex time so they can do their job as parents: to do things like go to parent-teacher conferences or take a child to the doctor. We challenge employers to plan and schedule work to allow parents to have time with their children and to afford employees the opportunity to see their families.

Responsible entertainment. President Clinton and Vice President Gore have led the fight to help parents control what their children see on television. Because of their leadership, Congress passed a law requiring all new televisions to include a device called a V-chip that will block violent programs when it is activated by an adult. Senator Dole likes to talk about TV violence, but when it came time to act, he stood with a small minority to oppose the bipartisan V-chip bill. The President achieved a breakthrough agreement with the media and entertainment industries to develop a rating system for TV shows similar to the motion picture rating system, so parents can make informed decisions about what they want their children to watch. When parents control the remote, it is not censorship, it is personal responsibility for their children's upbringing.

We believe in public support for the arts, including the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Public and private investment in the arts and humanities and the institutions that support them is an investment in the education of our children, the strength of our economy, and the quality of American life. We support high-quality, family-friendly programming. America is the leading exporter of intellectual property built on a strong foundation of artistic freedom. We are proud to have stopped the Republican attack on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting -- we want our children to watch Sesame Street, not Power Rangers. And we echo the President's call to the entertainment industry: Work harder to develop and promote movies, music, and TV shows that are suitable -- and educational -- for children. President Clinton has revived and restored the Consumer Product Safety Commission as an effective guardian of children and

families in and around their homes. We will continue to work with industry and consumers to protect children and other Americans from dangerous toys and hazardous products.

Tobacco. Cigarette smoking is rapidly becoming the single greatest threat to the health of our children. We know that 3,000 young people start smoking every day, and 1,000 of them will lead shorter lives because of it. Despite that, Senator Dole and other Republicans continue to ignore volumes of medical research to make baffling claims that cigarettes are not addictive. They even argue with distinguished Republican experts like President Reagan's Surgeon General C. Everett Koop. President Clinton and Vice President Gore understand that we have a responsibility to protect our children's future by cracking down on illegal sales of tobacco to minors and by curbing sophisticated advertising campaigns designed to entice kids to start smoking before they are old enough to make an informed decision. The President has proposed measures to cut off children's access to cigarettes, crack down on those who sell tobacco to minors illegally, and curtail advertising designed to appeal to children. Tobacco companies may market to adults if they wish, but they must take the responsibility to draw the line on children.

Parents' responsibility. Today's Democratic Party knows that governments do not raise children, parents do. That is why President Clinton and Vice President Gore took action to order all federal agencies to make sure everything government does for children promotes responsibility from all parents, fathers as well as mothers. Now we challenge every parent to put their children first: to help them with their homework, to read to them, to know their teachers, and above all, to teach their children right from wrong, set the best example, and teach children how to make responsible decisions.

Community empowerment and cities. Today's Democratic Party understands that we cannot rebuild our poorest communities by imposing cookie-cutter solutions from Washington. We have to give communities the tools they need to create opportunity. Citizens, local government, the private sector, and civic groups must come together and take the responsibility to rebuild their communities from the bottom up.

Encouraging private sector investment, and community-based solutions. After over a decade of sustained Republican neglect and empty Republican promises, President Clinton and Democrats in Congress launched a comprehensive strategy to unleash economic growth and restore opportunity to our distressed neighborhoods. Without a single Republican vote, we created 105 Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities. This effort, chaired by Vice President Gore, is bringing jobs and businesses to our poorest urban and rural areas. Thousands of new businesses have already moved into these areas, or expanded existing operations, bringing new hope and new jobs to these neighborhoods. We reformed the Community Reinvestment Act to shift the focus from process toward results; we implemented low income mortgage purchase requirements on Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; and we created a Community Development Financial Institutions Fund. Together, these efforts are unleashing billions of dollars in new private sector lending and investment for housing and economic development in our inner cities and poorest rural areas. The President and Vice President have created a brownfields initiative to bring life back to abandoned and contaminated property by reforming outdated regulations and providing incentives for cleanup.

Over the next four years, we want a second round of Empowerment Zones to bring economic growth to more American communities; a significant expansion of the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund to spur more private sector investment in local economies; and a new tax incentive to encourage further cleanup and redevelopment of brownfields. We are committed to American cities. We believe that vast opportunities for private investment exist in America's cities. We want to leverage federal investment to maximize private sector investments in our urban centers and support a comprehensive approach to urban problems. Today's Democratic Party knows that the best way to bring jobs and growth back to our poorest neighborhoods is to harness the job-creating power of the private sector.

Helping people afford safe, secure housing. Safe, secure housing is an essential part of strong communities and strong families. We are proud that after four years of a Democrat in the White House, the percentage of people who own their own house climbed faster than it has in 30 years. Bill Clinton took executive action to make it easier and cheaper for working and middle-class homebuyers to get a home loan. We pledge to stand against Republican efforts to repeal the deductibility of home mortgage interest payments. Fulfilling his 1992 pledge, President Clinton made the low-income housing tax credit permanent, encouraging private developers to build more affordable housing. This tax credit is making it easier for families to get housing, and we will stand against Republican attacks on it.

The Clinton Administration has made sweeping changes to transform the nation's public housing system after decades of neglect. In the last four years, Democrats demolished more units of unlivable public housing than Republicans did in the previous twelve years, replacing them with lower-density developments that can serve as anchors for neighborhood renewal. In the next four years, we want to transform the worst public housing from a system that traps people in rundown, crime-ridden projects into one which gives families the freedom to choose where they live by providing vouchers to help them with housing costs. We have dramatically increased help for the homeless, and shifted focus from temporary shelters toward permanent solutions designed to move people back into the mainstream, into jobs and a home of their own.

Agriculture and the rural community. America has the most abundant agricultural economy on earth, and it must be preserved and strengthened as we enter a new century. President Clinton and the Democrats have worked hard to promote economic growth in rural areas, protect the family farm, and ensure that farmers get a fair return for their labor and investment and consumers can continue to count on safe and nutritious foods. We support changes to the Farm Bill that would improve the safety net for family farmers. In the face of Republican efforts to gut food safety, the Clinton Administration has revolutionized meat inspection and set a new standard of consumer protection. President Clinton has reinvented the Agriculture Department, reducing regulations and bureaucracy and improving service. The Clinton Administration has cracked down on food stamp fraud, and approved experiments in state after state to reform the food stamp program. President Clinton and Democrats in Congress supported new voluntary conservation programs and saved economic development programs for rural areas through the 1996 Farm Bill. We are committed to expanding agricultural exports by reducing unfair subsidies and trade barriers around the world and protecting our farmers from predatory trade practices.

Protecting our environment. Today's Democratic Party wants all Americans to be able to enjoy America's magnificent natural heritage -- and we want our people to know that the air they breathe is pure, the water they drink is clean, and the land they live on is safe from hazard. We understand we have a sacred obligation to protect God's earth and preserve our quality of life for our children and our children's children. For the 12 Republican years before Bill Clinton and Al Gore took office, protecting the environment was far from a priority. And in the last two years, 25 years of bipartisan environmental progress -- started by a Democratic Congress under a Republican President -- has come under attack from the far right. Time and again, President Clinton and the Democratic Party have stood firm against this onslaught.

The Republican Congress, under Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich, voted to cut environmental enforcement resources by 25 percent. President Clinton and Democrats in Congress said no. We believe government has a responsibility to enforce the laws that help keep toxic chemicals from our water, pesticides from our food, and smog from our air.

The Republican Congress, under Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich, let lobbyists for the polluters write their own loopholes into bills to weaken laws that protect the health and safety of our children. President Clinton and Democrats in Congress said no. We believe America's elected officials have a responsibility to protect America's families from threats to their health, and that trust must never be abdicated -- especially not by placing control of environmental safeguards in the hands of the very polluters those safeguards are meant to keep in line.

The Republican Congress, under Senator Dole and Speaker Gingrich, tried to make taxpayers pick up the tab for toxic wastes, and let polluters who caused the problem and can afford to fix it off the hook. President Clinton and Democrats in Congress said no. We believe America should insist that toxic waste cleanup is paid for by those responsible for it in the first place -- and not foisted off on the taxpayers.

In the last four years, President Clinton and Vice President Gore have taken strong action to make our air and water cleaner. They reformed the Superfund program -- in each of the last two years nearly as many toxic dumps were cleaned as in the previous decade. They dramatically strengthened Community Right-to-Know efforts, because Americans should be informed about toxic chemicals being released into the air and water so they can take steps to protect themselves and their families. They took measures to cut toxic air pollution from chemical plants by 90 percent, and after years of Republican neglect they cleaned up hundreds of nuclear weapons sites and are committed to finishing the job.

Today's Democratic Party knows that we can protect the environment and expand the economy. We believe we can create more jobs over the long run by cleaning the environment. We want to challenge businesses and communities to take more initiative in protecting the environment, and we want to make it easier for them to do it. President Clinton and Vice President Gore launched Project XL which tells businesses: If you can find a cheaper, more efficient way than government regulations require to meet even tougher pollution goals, do it -- as long as you do it right. This new approach offers business flexibility, incentives, and accountability.

Environmental protection should include more education on compliance for small and medium sized business, more strategies to increase compliance for all businesses, and tough enforcement -- including

criminal prosecution -- for those who put human health and the environment at risk.

We are committed to protecting the majestic legacy of our National Parks and enhancing recreational opportunities. We are determined to continue working to restore the Florida Everglades, to preserve our wildlife refuges, and to fight any effort to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil and gas drilling. We will be good stewards of our old-growth forests, oppose new offshore oil drilling and mineral exploration and production in our nation's many environmentally critical areas, and protect our oceans from oil spills and the dumping of toxic and radioactive waste.

The President and Vice President announced an historic partnership with the Big Three American automakers to develop the technology to produce cars up to three times more fuel efficient than those made today -- cleaner cars for a cleaner environment. We will continue to support responsible recycling, and encourage energy efficiency that makes our economy more efficient and less reliant on foreign oil. We believe that adequate investments in better mass transit, cleaner cars, and renewable energy sources are good for the environment and good for the economy.

After years in which Republicans neglected the global environment, the Clinton Administration has made America a leader in the fight to meet environmental challenges that transcend national borders and require global cooperation. The Clinton-Gore Administration led the world in calling for a global ban on ocean-dumping of low-level radioactive waste and for a legally binding treaty to phase out persistent organic pollutants such as DDT and PCBs. We will seek a strong international agreement to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions worldwide and protect our global climate. We are committed to preserving the planet's biodiversity, repairing the depleted ozone layer, and working with other nations to stabilize population growth.

Democrats recognize that sustainable development is the key to protecting the environment and promoting economic growth. That is why the Clinton-Gore Administration has reformed our foreign aid programs to focus on sustainable development. At home, Democrats know that sound economic development means sound environmental protection.

The American community. Today's Democratic Party knows that when America is divided we will likely fail, but when America is united we will always prevail. Americans will always have differences, and when we reach across those differences, we are stronger for it. And we share an abiding set of values that define us as Americans. Our task is to draw strength from both -- from our great diversity and our constant values -- to fashion the future we want for our children.

Fighting discrimination and protecting civil rights. Today's Democratic Party knows we must renew our efforts to stamp out discrimination and hatred of every kind, wherever and whenever we see it. We deplore the recent wave of burnings that has targeted African-American churches in the South, as well as other houses of worship across the country, and we have established a special task force to help local communities catch and prosecute those responsible, prevent further arsons, and rebuild their churches. We believe everyone in America should learn English so they can fully share in our daily life, but we strongly oppose divisive efforts like English-only legislation, designed to erect barriers between us and force people away from the culture and heritage of which they are rightly proud. The Clinton Administration is committed to strengthening the government-to-government relationship between the federal

government and the American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. The President will continue implementation of the Self-Governance/Self-Determination Act amendments which he signed in 1994 that will eventually open up the self-governance program to all tribal governments who wish to participate, giving these governments full control of where and how certain federal resources are spent on their reservations. We must remember we do not have an American to waste. We continue to lead the fight to end discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion, age, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation. The Democratic Party has always supported the Equal Rights Amendment, and we are committed to ensuring full equality for women and to vigorously enforce the Americans with Disabilities Act. We support continued efforts, like the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, to end discrimination against gay men and lesbians and further their full inclusion in the life of the nation. Over the last four years, President Clinton and the Democrats have worked aggressively to enforce the letter and spirit of civil rights law. The President and Vice President remain committed to an Administration that looks like America, and we are proud of the Administration's extraordinary judicial appointments -- they are both more diverse and more qualified than any previous Administration. We know there is still more we can do to ensure equal opportunity for all Americans, so all people willing to work hard can build a strong future. President Clinton is leading the way to reform affirmative action so that it works, it is improved, and promotes opportunity, but does not accidentally hold others back in the process. Senator Dole has promised to end affirmative action. He's wrong, and the President is right. When it comes to affirmative action, we should mend it, not end it.

Religious freedom. Today's Democratic Party understands that all Americans have a right to express their faith. The Constitution prohibits the state establishment of religion, and it protects the free exercise of religion. The President fought for and signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, to reaffirm the great protection the Constitution gives to religious expression, and to recognize the historic role people of faith have played in America. Americans have a right to express their love of God in public, and we applaud the President's work to ensure that children are not denied private religious expression in school. Whenever the religious rights of our children -- or any American -- are threatened, we will stand against it.

Responsibility to our community and our country. Today's Democratic Party believes every American has a duty and a responsibility to give something back to their community and their country. In the past three years, 45,000 Americans have performed national service as part of the AmeriCorps program President Clinton and the Democrats fought so hard to create -- and we applaud those Republicans who joined a bipartisan effort to preserve AmeriCorps when Speaker Gingrich's House tried to kill it.

We applaud the American spirit of voluntarism and charity. As we balance the budget, we must work even harder in our own lives to live up to the duties we owe one another. We must shrink the government, but we cannot shrink from our challenges. We believe every school and college in America should make service a part of its basic ethic, and we want to expand national service by helping communities give scholarships to high school students for community service. We challenge Americans in all walks of life to make a new commitment to taking responsibility for themselves, their families, their communities, and their country.

If we do our job, we will make the next American century as great as each one that has come before it. We will enter the 21st century with the American Dream alive for all, with America still the world's strongest force for peace and freedom, and with the American community coming together, enriched by our diversity and stronger than ever.

America's best days lie ahead, as we renew our historic pledge to uphold and advance the promise of America -- One nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APP Note: The American Presidency Project used the first day of the national nominating convention as the "date" of this platform since the original document is undated.

Democratic Party Platforms, 1996 Democratic Party Platform Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/273267>