

1988 Democratic Party Platform

July 18, 1988

WE THE PEOPLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

In order to initiate the changes necessary to keep America strong and make America better, in order to restore competence, caring and incorruptibility to the Federal Executive Branch and get it working again fairly for all Americans, and in order to secure for our children a future of liberty and opportunity,

Hereby pledge our Party, our leaders, our elected officials and our every individual effort to fulfilling the following fundamental principles for all members of the American family.

WE BELIEVE that all Americans have a fundamental right to economic justice in a stronger, surer national economy, an economy that must grow steadily without inflation, that can generate a rising standard of living for all and fulfill the desire of all to work in dignity up to their full potential in good health with good jobs at good wages, an economy that is prosperous in every region, from coast to coast, including our rural towns and our older industrial communities, our mining towns, our energy producing areas and the urban areas that have been neglected for the past seven years. We believe that, as a first-rate world power moving into the 21st century, we can have a first-rate full employment economy, with an indexed minimum wage that can help lift and keep families out of poverty, with training and employment programs—including child care and health care—that can help people move from welfare to work, with portable pensions and an adequate Social Security System, safeguarded against emasculation and privatization, that can help assure a comfortable and fulfilling old age, with opportunities for voluntary national public service, above and beyond current services, that can enrich our communities, and with all workers assured the protection of an effective law that guarantees their rights to organize, join the union of their choice, and bargain collectively with their employer, free from anti-union tactics.

WE BELIEVE that the time has come for America to take charge once again of its economic future, to reverse seven years of "voodoo economics," "trickle down" policies, fiscal irresponsibility, and economic violence against poor and working people that have converted this proud country into the world's largest debtor nation, mortgaged our children's future by tripling our national debt, placed home ownership out of reach for most young families, permitted the rise of poverty and homelessness on the streets of America, reduced the buying power of working men and women, and witnessed the decline of our industrial, natural resource and mining base, the unending tragedy of family farm foreclosures, an unhealthy dependence on foreign energy and foreign capital, and the increasing foreign ownership of our land and natural resources.

WE BELIEVE that it is time for America to meet the challenge to change priorities after eight years of devastating Republican policies, to reverse direction and reassert progressive values, to reinvest in its people within a strong commitment to fiscal responsibility. If we are seriously to pursue our commitments to build a secure economic future for all Americans we must provide the resources to care for our newborns, educate our children, house the homeless, heal the sick, wage total war on drugs and protect the environment. Investing in America and reducing the deficit requires that the wealthy and corporations pay their fair share and that we restrain Pentagon spending. We further believe that we must invest in new priorities, in life-long education and training, in targeted economic development, in a healthy small business community and in retooled American industry; that it is time for the broad revitalization of home town America, involving financial institutions in the provision of

crucial credit by encouraging special commitments in exchange for bailing out those that are failing, reforming and expanding community reinvestment laws, and reversing the trend of financial concentration and deregulation, all combining to reverse the insecurity that has increasingly troubled our workers and their families in this rapidly changing society that has left some communities and regions behind. There is no good reason why the nation we love, the greatest and richest nation on earth, should rank first among the industrialized nations in output per person but nearly last in infant mortality, first in the percentage of total expenditures devoted to defense but nearly last in the percentage devoted to education and housing.

WE BELIEVE that Government should set the standard in recognizing that worker productivity is enhanced by the principle of pay equity for working women and no substandard wage competition for public contracts; by family leave policies that no longer force employees to choose between their jobs and their children or ailing parents; by safe and healthy work places, now jeopardized by seven callous years of lowered and unenforced occupational safety standards for American workers; and by major increases in assistance making child care more available and affordable to low and middle income families, helping states build a strong child care infrastructure, setting minimum standards for health, safety, and quality, and thereby enabling parents to work and their children to get an early start on their education and personal fulfillment. We believe that the strength of our families is enhanced by programs to prevent abuse and malnutrition among children, crime, dropouts and pregnancy among teenagers and violence in the family; by aggressive child support enforcement; and by emphasizing family preservation and quality foster care. We further believe that our nation faces a crisis of under-investment in our children, particularly in the early years of life. Strong, healthy babies with early opportunities that foster intellectual, emotional and physical growth begin school with an enhanced foundation for learning. There are few better investments for this country than prenatal care, infant nutrition and preschool education, and there are few more successful programs than WIC, Head Start, and prenatal care. We know what works; yet these successful programs have been starved for funds. The Democratic Party pledges to meet this urgent need by providing the funding necessary to reach those unserved children who are—and must be—our national priority.

WE BELIEVE that America needs more trade, fair trade, an Administration willing to use all the tools available to better manage our trade in order to export more American goods and fewer American jobs, an Administration willing to recognize in the formulation and enforcement of our trade laws that workers' rights are important human rights abroad as well as at home, and that advance notice of plant Closings and major layoffs is not only fundamentally right but also economically sound. We believe that we can and must improve our competitiveness in the world economy, using our best minds to create the most advanced technology in the world through a greater commitment to civilian research and development and to science, engineering and mathematics training, through more public-private and business-labor cooperation and mutual respect, through more intergovernmental partnerships, and through a better balance between fiscal and monetary policy and between military and civilian research and development. We further believe in halting such, irresponsible corporate conduct as unproductive takeovers, monopolistic mergers, insider trading, and golden parachutes for executives by reinvigorating our anti-trust and securities laws, reviewing large mergers, and discouraging short-term speculation taking place at the expense of long-term investment.

WE BELIEVE that the education of our citizens, from Head Start to institutions of higher learning, deserves our highest priority; and that history will judge the next administration less by its success in building new weapons of war than by its success in improving young minds. We now spend only two cents of every federal dollar for education. We pledge to better balance our national priorities by significantly increasing federal funding for education. We believe that this nation needs to invest in its children on the front side of life by expanding the availability of pre-school education for children at risk; to invest in its teachers

through training and enrichment programs, including a National Teacher Corps to recruit teachers for tomorrow, especially minorities, with scholarships today; to commit itself for the first time to the principle that no one should be denied the opportunity to attend college for financial reasons; to ensure equal access to education by providing incentives and mechanisms for the equalization of financing among local school districts within each state; to reverse cuts made in compensatory reading, math and enrichment services to low income children; and to expand support for bilingual education, historically Black and Hispanic institutions, the education of those with special needs, the arts and humanities, and an aggressive campaign to end illiteracy.

WE BELIEVE that illegal drugs pose a direct threat to the security of our nation from coast to coast, invading our neighborhoods, classrooms, homes and communities large and small; that every arm and agency of government at every federal, state and local level—including every useful diplomatic, military, educational, medical and law enforcement effort necessary—should at long last be mobilized and coordinated with private efforts under the direction of a National Drug "Czar" to halt both the international supply and the domestic demand for illegal drugs now ravaging our country; and that the legalization of illicit drugs would represent a tragic surrender in a war we intend to win. We believe that this effort should include comprehensive programs to educate our children at the earliest ages on the dangers of alcohol and drug abuse, readily available treatment and counseling for those who seek to address their dependency, the strengthening of vital interdiction agencies such as the U.S. Coast Guard and Customs, a summit of Western hemispheric nations to coordinate efforts to cut off drugs at the source, and foreign development assistance to reform drug-based economies by promoting crop substitution.

WE BELIEVE that the federal government should provide increased assistance to local criminal justice agencies, enforce a ban on "cop killer" bullets that have no purpose other than the killing and maiming of law enforcement officers, reinforce our commitment to help crime victims, and assume a leadership role in securing the safety of our neighborhoods and homes. We further believe that the repeated toleration in Washington of unethical and unlawful greed among too many of those who have been governing our nation, procuring our weapons and polluting our environment has made far more difficult the daily work of the local policemen, teachers and parents who must convey to our children respect for justice and authority.

WE BELIEVE that we honor our multicultural heritage by assuring equal access to government services, employment, housing, business enterprise and education to every citizen regardless of race, sex, national origin, religion, age, handicapping condition or sexual orientation; that these rights are without exception too precious to be jeopardized by Federal Judges and Justice Department officials chosen during the past years—by a political party increasingly monolithic both racially and culturally—more for their unenlightened ideological views than for their respect for the rule of law. We further believe that we must work for the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution; that the fundamental right of reproductive choice should be guaranteed regardless of ability to pay; that our machinery for civil rights enforcement and legal services to the poor should be rebuilt and vigorously utilized; and that our immigration policy should be reformed to promote fairness, non-discrimination and family reunification and to reflect our constitutional freedoms of speech, association and travel. We further believe that the voting rights of all minorities should be protected, the recent surge in hate violence and negative stereotyping combatted, the discriminatory English-only pressure groups resisted, our treaty commitments with Native Americans enforced by culturally sensitive officials, and the lingering effects of past discrimination eliminated by affirmative action, including goals, timetables, and procurement set-asides.

WE BELIEVE that the housing crisis of the 1980s must be halted—a crisis that has left this country battered by a rising tide of homelessness unprecedented since the Great Depression, by a tightening squeeze on low and moderate income families that is projected to leave seven million people without affordable housing by 1993, and by a bleak outlook for young working families who cannot afford to buy their first home. We believe that steps should be taken to ensure a decent place to live for every American. We believe that homelessness—a national shame—should be ended in America; that the supply of affordable housing should be expanded in order to avoid the projected shortfall; that employer-assisted housing and development by community based non-profit organizations should be encouraged; that the inventory of public and subsidized housing should be renovated, preserved and increased; that foreclosed government property should be restored to productive use; and that first-time home-buyers should be assisted.

WE BELIEVE that we can rebuild America, creating good jobs at good wages through a national reinvestment strategy to construct new housing, repair our sewers, rebuild our roads and replace our bridges. We believe that we must pursue needed investment through innovative partnerships and creative financing mechanisms such as a voluntary program to invest a portion of public and private pension funds as a steady source of investment capital by guaranteeing security and a fair rate of return and assuring sound project management.

WE BELIEVE that all Americans should enjoy access to affordable, comprehensive health services for both the physically and mentally ill, from prenatal care for pregnant women at risk to more adequate care for our Vietnam and other veterans, from well-baby care to childhood immunization to Medicare; that a national health program providing federal coordination and leadership is necessary to restrain health care costs while assuring quality care and advanced medical research; that quality, affordable, long-term home and health care should be available to all senior and disabled citizens, allowing them to live with dignity in the most appropriate setting; that an important first step toward comprehensive health services is to ensure that every family should have the security of basic health insurance; and that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is an unprecedented public health emergency requiring increased support for accelerated research on, and expedited FDA approval of, treatments and vaccines, comprehensive education and prevention, compassionate patient care, adoption of the public health community consensus on voluntary and confidential testing and counseling, and protection of the civil rights of those suffering from AIDS or AIDS-Related Complex or testing positive for the HIV antibody.

WE BELIEVE that the last seven years have witnessed an unprecedented assault on our national interest and national security through the poisoning of our air with acid rain, the dumping of toxic wastes into our water, and the destruction of our parks and shores; that pollution must be stopped at the source by shifting to new, environmentally sound manufacturing and farming technologies; that the federal government must promote recycling as the best, least costly way to solve the trash crisis; aggressively enforce toxic waste laws and require polluters to be responsible for future clean-up costs; that this nation must redouble its efforts to provide clean waterways, sound water management and safe drinkable ground water throughout the country; that our national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and coastal zones must be protected and used only in an environmentally sound manner; that all offshore oil drilling in environmentally sensitive areas should be opposed; and that regular world environmental summits should be convened by the United States to address the depletion of the ozone layer, the "greenhouse effect," the destruction of tropical forests and other global threats and to create a global action plan for environmental restoration.

WE BELIEVE that all Americans, producers and consumers alike, benefit when food and fiber are produced not by a few large corporations and conglomerates but by hundreds of thousands of family farmers obtaining a fair price for their product; that the disastrous farm policies of the last seven years, despite record federal spending, have forced hundreds of thousands of families from their farms while others are struggling to survive; and that a workable agricultural policy should include supply management, reasonable price supports, soil conservation and protection of rural water quality, credit and foreclosure relief, the return of federally held foreclosed lands to minority, beginning ,and restarting farmers, the development of new uses and markets for American farm products, improved disaster relief, and the revitalization of rural America through new sources of capital for rural business and new federal support for rural health care, housing, education, water supply and infrastructure. We further believe that no person should go to bed hungry and that we must renew the fight against hunger at home and abroad, make food available to those nations who need it and want it, and convene an international conference of food producing nations.

WE BELIEVE that a balanced, coherent energy policy, based on dependable supplies at reasonable prices, is necessary to protect our national security, ensure a clean environment. and promote stable economic growth and prosperity, both nationally and in our energy producing regions; that the inevitable transition from our present, nearly total dependence on increasingly scarce and environmentally damaging non-renewable sources to renewable sources should begin now; that such a policy includes increased cooperation with our hemispheric neighbors, filling the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, promoting the use of natural gas, methanol and ethanol as alternative transportation fuels, encouraging the use of our vast natural gas and coal reserves while aggressively developing clean coal technology to combat acid rain, and providing targeted new incentives for new oil and gas drilling and development, for the development of renewable and alternative sources of energy, and for the promotion of energy conservation. We believe that with these changes the country could reduce its reliance on nuclear power while insisting that all plants are safe, environmentally sound and assured of safe waste disposal.

WE BELIEVE that this country's democratic processes must be revitalized: by securing universal, same day and mail-in voter registration as well as registration on the premises of appropriate government agencies; by preventing the misuse of at-large elections, the abuse of election day challenges and registration roll purges, any undercounting in the national census, and any dilution of the one-person, one-vote principle; by ending discrimination against public employees who are denied the right to full political participation; by supporting statehood for the District of Columbia; by treating the off-shore territories under our flag equitably and sensitively under federal policies, assisting their economic and social development and respecting their right to decide their future in their relationship with the United States; by empowering the commonwealth of Puerto Rico with greater autonomy within its relationship with the United States to achieve the economic, social and political goals of its people, and by giving it just and fair participation in federal programs; by assuring and pledging the full and equal access of women and minorities to elective office and party endorsement; and by minimizing the domination and distortion of our elections by moneyed interests.

WE BELIEVE in a stronger America ready to make the tough choices of leadership in an ever-dangerous world; militarily stronger in our overall defense and anti-terrorist capabilities and in the cohesion of our military alliances; economically stronger at home and in the global marketplace; intellectually stronger in the advances of our schools, science and technology; and spiritually stronger in the principles we exemplify to the world.

WE BELIEVE in a clear-headed, tough-minded, decisive American foreign policy that will reflect the changing nature of threats to our security and respond to them in a way that reflects our values and the support of our people, a foreign policy that will respect our Constitution. our Congress and our traditional democratic principles and will in turn be respected for its quiet strength. its bipartisan goals, and its steadfast attention to the concerns and contributions of our allies and international organizations. We believe that we must reassume a role of responsible active international leadership based upon our commitment to democracy, human rights and a more secure world; that this nation, as the world power with the broadest global interests and concerns, has a greater stake than any in building a world at peace and governed by law; that we can neither police the world nor retreat from it; and that to have reliable allies we must be a reliable ally.

WE BELIEVE that our national strength has been sapped by a defense establishment wasting money on duplicative and dubious new weapons instead of investing more in readiness and mobility; that our national strength will be enhanced by more stable defense budgets and by a commitment from our allies to assume a greater share of the costs and responsibilities required to maintain peace and liberty; and that as military spending and priorities change, government should encourage the conversion of affected military facilities and the retraining of workers to facilitate the creation of new forms of communication, space development and new peacetime growth and productivity.

WE BELIEVE in an America that will promote peace and prevent war—not by trading weapons for hostages, not by sending brave Americans to undefined missions in Lebanon and Honduras, not by relaxing our vigilance on the assumption that long-range Soviet interests have permanently changed, not by toasting a tyrant like Marcos as a disciple of democracy, but by maintaining a stable nuclear deterrent sufficient to counter any Soviet threat, by standing up to any American adversaries whenever necessary and sitting down with them whenever possible, by making clear our readiness to use force when force is required to protect our essential security commitments, by testing the intentions of the new Soviet leaders about arms control, emigration, human rights and other issues, and by matching them not merely in rhetoric but in reciprocal initiatives and innovation, which takes advantage of what may be the greatest opportunity of our lifetime to establish a new, mutually beneficial relationship with the Soviet Union, in which we engage in joint efforts to combat environmental threats, explore peaceful uses of space and eradicate disease and poverty in the developing world, and in a mutual effort to transform the arms race that neither side can win into a contest for people's minds, a contest we know our side will win.

WE BELIEVE in following up the INF Treaty, a commendable first step, with mutual, verifiable and enforceable agreements that will make significant reductions in strategic weapons in a way that diminishes the risk of nuclear attack by either superpower; reduce conventional forces to lower and equivalent levels in Europe, requiring deeper cuts on the Warsaw Pact side; ban chemical and space weapons in their entirety; promptly initiate a mutual moratorium on missile flight testing and halt all nuclear weapons testing while strengthening our efforts to prevent the spread of these weapons to other nations before the nightmare of nuclear terrorism engulfs us all.

WE BELIEVE in an America that recognizes not only the realities of East-West relations but the challenges and opportunities of the developing world; that will support and strengthen international law and institutions, promote human and political rights and measure them by one yardstick, and work for economic growth and development. We believe that we must provide leadership, compassion and economic assistance to those nations stunted by overwhelming debt, deprivation and austerity, and that we must work to promote active agreements between developing and industrial countries, and the major public and commercial lenders, to provide debt relief and rekindle and sustain economic growth and democracy in Latin America, Asia, and

the poorest continent, Africa, which deserves special attention. We further believe that we must enlist the trade surplus nations to join with us in supporting new aid initiatives to fuel growth in developing countries that, though economically depressed, are rich in human and natural potential.

WE BELIEVE this country should work harder to stop the supplies of arms, from both East and West, that fuel conflict in regions such as the Persian Gulf and Angola. Deeply disturbed that the current administration has too long abandoned the peace process in the Middle East and consistently undermined in Central America, we believe that this country, maintaining the special relationship with Israel founded upon mutually shared values and strategic interests, should provide new leadership to deliver the promise of peace and security through negotiations that has been held out to Israel and its neighbors by the Camp David Accords. We support the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Lebanon with a central government strong enough to unite its people, maintain order and live in peace in the region. We are committed to Persian Gulf security and freedom of navigation of international waters, and to an end to the Iran-Iraq war by promoting United Nations efforts to achieve a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement, through an arms embargo on the combatants. We further believe that the United States must fully support the Arias Peace Plan, which calls for an end to the fighting, national reconciliation, guarantees of justice, freedom, human rights and democracy, an end to support for irregular forces, and a commitment by the Central American governments to prevent the use of their territory to destabilize others in the region. Instead of the current emphasis on military solutions we will use negotiations and incentives to encourage free and fair elections and security for all nations in the region. We will cease dealing with drug smugglers and seek to reconcile our differences with countries in Central America, enabling the United States and other countries to focus on the pressing social and economic needs of the people of that region. We further believe in pursuing a policy of economic cooperation instead of confrontation with Mexico and our other hemispheric friends; in helping all developing countries build their own peaceful democratic institutions free from foreign troops, subversion and domination and free from domestic dictators and aggressors; in honoring our treaty obligations; and in using all the tools at our disposal, including diplomacy, trade, aid, food, ideas, and ideals, to defend and enlarge the horizons of freedom on this planet.

WE BELIEVE in an America that will promote human rights, human dignity and human opportunity in every country on earth; that will fight discrimination, encourage free speech and association and decry oppression in nations friendly and unfriendly. Communist and non-communist, that will encourage our European friends to respect human rights and resolve their long-standing differences over Northern Ireland and Cyprus; that will encourage wherever possible the forces of pluralism and democracy in Eastern Europe and that will support the struggle for human rights in Asia.

WE BELIEVE the apartheid regime in South Africa to be a uniquely repressive regime, ruthlessly deciding every aspect of public and private life by skin color, engaging in unrelenting violence against its citizens at home and promoting naked aggression against its neighbors in Africa. We believe that the time has come to end all vestiges of the failed policy of constructive engagement, to declare South Africa a terrorist state, to impose comprehensive sanctions upon its economy, to lead the international community in participation in these actions, and to determine a date certain by which United States corporations must leave South Africa. We further believe that to achieve regional security in Southern Africa, we must press forcefully for Namibia's independence by calling for the end of South Africa's illegal occupation, a cease fire and elections, must end our counterproductive policy in Angola and must offer support and further assistance to Mozambique and other frontline states.

IN SUM, WE BELIEVE it is time for America to change and move forward again in the interest of all its families—to turn away from an era in which too many of America's children have been homeless or hungry and invest in a new era of hope and progress, an era of secure families in a secure America in a secure world.

WE BELIEVE the American dream of opportunity for every citizen can be a reality for all Americans willing to meet their own responsibilities to help make it come true. We believe that governments at the national, state and local level, in partnerships between those levels and in partnerships with the private sector, exist to help us solve our problems instead of adding to them. We believe in competent, pragmatic governments, accountable to the people, led by men and women dedicated not to self interest but to service, motivated not by ideology but by American ideals, governing not in a spirit of power and privilege but with a sense of compassion and community. For many years, in state and local capitals across this nation, Democrats have been successfully solving problems and helping people with exactly this kind of innovative government.

THEREFORE, THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY in Convention assembled and united, the Party of hope and change and fairness for all, hereby declares its readiness to end the stalemate in Washington by challenging, encouraging and inviting the American people—challenging them to do their patriotic best to meet their community responsibilities, encouraging them to protect and preserve their families, our most precious assets, and inviting them to join with us in leading the land we love to a brighter and still greater future of opportunity 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.

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