

# 2004 Democratic Party Platform

*July 27, 2004*

## PREAMBLE

As we come together to declare our vision as Democrats, we are mindful that the challenges of our times are new and profound. This November, the choice we face as Americans may have more impact on our people and our place in the world than any in our lifetimes. We approach this task with a seriousness that matches the challenges before us, but also with a profound optimism about our future – an optimism that springs from our great faith in America, and our great pride in what it means to be Americans.

We know the stakes are immeasurably high.

For the first time in generations, we have been attacked on our own shores. Our brave men and women in uniform are still in harm's way in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war against terror. Our alliances are frayed, our credibility in doubt.

Our great middle class is hard-pressed. Millions of Americans have lost their jobs, and millions more are struggling under the mounting burden of life's everyday costs.

In Washington, the President and his allies stubbornly press on, without regard to the needs of our people or the challenges of our times.

It is time for a new direction.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party bring a new vision for America – strong at home, respected abroad. An America that offers opportunity, rewards responsibility, and rejoices in diversity.

We have a plan to build a strong, respected America: protecting our people, rebuilding our alliances, and leading the way to a more peaceful and prosperous world.

We have a plan to build a strong, growing economy: creating good jobs, rewarding hard work, and restoring fiscal discipline.

We have a plan to help our people build strong, healthy families: securing quality health care, offering world-class education, and ensuring clean air and water.

And we will honor the values of a strong American community: widening the circle of equality, protecting the sanctity of freedom, and deepening our commitment to this country.

In offering this vision, we affirm our faith in the greatness of America. We recommit to the ideal of a people united in helping one another, an ideal as old as the faiths we follow and as great as the country we love. To those who are threatened, we

pledge protection; to those who are victims, we promise justice; to those who are hopeless, we offer hope. And to all Americans who seek a better future for themselves, for their loved ones, and for our country, we say: your cause is our own.

That is the America we believe in. That is the America we are fighting for. That is the America we will build together – one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

## **A STRONG, RESPECTED AMERICA**

Alone among nations, America was born in pursuit of an idea – that a free people with diverse beliefs could govern themselves in peace. For more than a century, America has spared no effort to defend and promote that idea around the world. And over and over, that effort has been marked by the exercise of American leadership to forge powerful alliances based on mutual respect with longtime allies and reluctant friends; with nations already living in the light of democracy and with peoples struggling to join them.

The might of our alliances, coupled with the strength of our democratic ideals, has been a driving force in the survival and success of freedom – in two World Wars, in the Korean War, in the Cold War, in the Gulf War and in Kosovo. America led instead of going it alone. We extended a hand, not a fist. We respected the world – and the world respected us.

As Americans, we respect and honor our veterans. We are indebted to all those courageous men and women who have answered our country's call to duty. Their service and sacrifice, their dedication and love of country advance our cause of freedom and uphold our finest traditions as a nation.

That is the America we believe in. That is the America we are fighting for. And that is the America we can be.

But the Bush Administration has walked away from more than a hundred years of American leadership in the world to embrace a new – and dangerously ineffective – disregard for the world.

They rush to force before exhausting diplomacy. They bully rather than persuade. They act alone when they could assemble a team. They hope for the best when they should prepare for the worst. Time and again, this Administration confuses leadership with going it alone and engagement with compromise of principle. They do not understand that real leadership means standing by your principles and rallying others to join you.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe in a better, stronger America – an America that is respected, not just feared, and an America that listens and leads. Our vision has deep roots in our Declaration of Independence and Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, and in the tough-minded tradition of engagement and leadership—a tradition forged by Wilson and Roosevelt in two world wars, then championed by Truman and Kennedy during the Cold War. We believe in an America that people around the world admire, because they know we cherish not just our freedom, but theirs. Not just our democracy, but their hope for it. Not just our peace and security, but the world's. We believe in an America that cherishes freedom, safeguards our people, forges alliances, and commands respect. That is the America we are going to build.

Our overriding goals are the same as ever: to protect our people and our way of life; and to help build a safer, more peaceful, more prosperous, more democratic world. Today, we face three great challenges above all others – first, to win the global war

against terror; second, to stop the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons; and third, to promote democracy and freedom around the world, starting with a peaceful and stable Iraq.

To meet these challenges, we need a new national security policy guided by four new imperatives: First, America must launch and lead a new era of alliances for the post-September 11 world. Second, we must modernize the world's most powerful military to meet the new threats. Third, in addition to our military might, we must deploy all that is in America's arsenal – our diplomacy, our intelligence system, our economic power, and the appeal of our values and ideas. Fourth and finally, to safeguard our freedom and ensure our nation's future, we must end our dependence on Mideast oil.

## **DEFEATING TERRORISM**

Today, the Bush Administration is waging a war against a global terrorist movement committed to our destruction with insufficient understanding of our enemy or effort to address the underlying factors that can give rise to new recruits. This war isn't just a manhunt. We cannot rest until Osama bin Laden is captured or killed, but that day will mark only a victory in the war on terror, not its end. Terrorists like al Qaeda and its affiliates are unlike any adversary our nation has ever known. We face a global terrorist movement of many groups, funded from different sources with separate agendas, but all committed to assaulting the United States and free and open societies around the globe. Despite his tough talk, President Bush's actions against terrorism have fallen far short. He still has no comprehensive strategy for victory. After allowing bin Laden to escape from our grasp at Tora Bora, he diverted crucial resources from the effort to destroy al Qaeda in Afghanistan. His doctrine of unilateral preemption has driven away our allies and cost us the support of other nations.

We must put in place a strategy to win – an approach that recognizes and addresses the many facets of this mortal challenge, from the terrorists themselves to the root causes that give rise to new recruits, and uses all the tools at our disposal. Agents of terrorism work in the shadows of more than 60 nations, on every continent. The only possible path to victory will be found in the company of others, not walking alone. With John Kerry as Commander-in-Chief, we will never wait for a green light from abroad when our safety is at stake, but we must enlist those whose support we need for ultimate victory.

Victory in the war on terror requires a combination of American determination and international cooperation on all fronts. It requires the ability and willingness to direct immediate, effective military action when the capture or destruction of terrorist groups and their leaders is possible; a massive improvement in intelligence gathering and analysis coupled with vigorous law enforcement; a relentless effort to shut down the flow of terrorist funds; a global effort to prevent failed or failing states that can become sanctuaries for terrorists; a sustained effort to deny terrorists any more recruits by conducting effective public diplomacy; and a sustained political and economic effort to improve education, work for peace, support democracy and extend hope.

*Improving intelligence to find and stop terrorists.* We will train and equip the military to enhance its capabilities to seek out and destroy terrorists. We will strengthen the capacity of intelligence and law enforcement around the world by forging stronger international coalitions to provide better information and communication.

We must also improve our intelligence here at home. From the failure to uncover the September 11th plot to the deeply misguided reports about Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction, we have experienced unprecedented intelligence

failures in recent years. We must do what President Bush has refused to do – reform our intelligence system by creating a true Director of National Intelligence with real control of intelligence personnel and budgets. We must train more analysts in languages spoken by terrorists. And we must break down the old communications barriers between national intelligence and local law enforcement, taking care to fully preserve our liberties.

*Cutting off terrorist funds.* We will move decisively to cut off the flow of terrorist funds. We will impose tough financial sanctions against nations or banks that engage in money laundering or fail to act against it. We will strengthen our anti-money laundering laws to prevent terrorists from using hedge funds and unregulated institutions to finance terror. We will launch a "name and shame" campaign against those that are financing terror. If nations do not respond, they will be shut out of the U.S. financial system. And in the specific case of Saudi Arabia, we will put an end to the Bush Administration's kid-glove approach to the supply and laundering of terrorist money.

*Preventing Afghanistan and other nations from becoming terrorist havens.* Nowhere is the need for collective endeavor greater than in Afghanistan. The Bush Administration has badly mishandled the war's aftermath. Two years ago, President Bush promised a Marshall Plan to rebuild that country. Instead, he has all but turned away from Afghanistan, allowing it to become again a potential haven for terrorists.

We must expand NATO forces outside Kabul. We must accelerate training for the Afghan army and police. The program to disarm and reintegrate warlord militias into society must be expedited and expanded into a mainstream strategy. We will attack the exploding opium trade ignored by the Bush Administration by doubling our counter-narcotics assistance to the Karzai Government and reinvigorating the regional drug control program.

Beyond Afghanistan, terrorist attacks from Saudi Arabia and Indonesia to Kenya, Morocco, and Turkey point to a widening network of terrorists targeting this country and our friends. Failed and failing states like Somalia or countries with large areas of limited government control like the Philippines and Indonesia need international help to close down terrorist havens.

*Increasing public diplomacy to promote understanding and prevent terrorist recruitment.* At the core of this conflict is a fundamental struggle of ideas: democracy and tolerance against those who would use any means and attack any target to impose their narrow views. The war on terror is not a clash of civilizations. It is a clash of civilization against chaos.

America needs a major initiative in public diplomacy to support the many voices of freedom in the Arab and Muslim world. To improve education for the next generation of Islamic youth, we need a cooperative international effort to compete with radical Madrassas. And we must support human rights groups, independent media, and labor unions dedicated to building a democratic culture from the grassroots up. Democracy will not blossom overnight, but America should speed its growth by sustaining the forces of democracy against repressive regimes and by rewarding governments that work toward this end.

## **KEEPING WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION OUT OF THE HANDS OF TERRORISTS**

There is no greater threat to American security than the possibility of terrorists armed with weapons of mass destruction. Preventing terrorists from gaining access to these weapons must be our number one security goal.

Containing this massive threat requires American leadership of the highest order – leadership that brings our allies, friends, and partners to greater collaboration and participation – and compels problem states to join and comply with international agreements and abandon their weapons programs. Unfortunately, this Administration's policies have moved America in the opposite direction. They have weakened international agreements and efforts to enforce nonproliferation instead of strengthening them. They have not done nearly enough to secure existing stockpiles and bomb-making materials. They have failed to take effective steps to stop the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs. We must change course now.

*Defending America against attack at all costs.* First, the world should be on notice that we will take every possible measure to defend ourselves against the possibility of attack by unconventional arms. If such an attack appears imminent, we will do everything necessary to stop it. If such a strike does occur, we will respond with overwhelming and devastating force. But we should never wait to act until we have no other choice but war. We must build and lead an international consensus for early preventive action to lock up and secure existing weapons of mass destruction and the material to manufacture more.

*Locking away existing nuclear weapons and material.* The first step is to safeguard all bomb making material worldwide. We need to find it, catalog it, and lock it away. Our approach should be simple: treat the nuclear materials that make bombs like they are bombs.

More than a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Russia still has nearly 20,000 nuclear weapons and enough nuclear material to produce 50,000 more. For most of these weapons and materials, cooperative security upgrades have not been completed. The world is relying on whatever measures Russia has taken on its own. At the current pace, it will take 13 years to secure potential bomb material in the former Soviet Union. We cannot wait that long. We will do it in four years.

*Stopping the creation of new nuclear material for nuclear weapons.* We will lead an international coalition to put an end to the production of new materials – highly enriched uranium and plutonium – for use in nuclear weapons. And we will reduce excess stocks of existing nuclear materials and weapons. We will conduct a global cleanout initiative to remove stockpiles of vulnerable highly enriched uranium at research reactors and facilities in dozens of countries around the world within four years.

*Leading international efforts to shut down nuclear efforts in North Korea, Iran, and elsewhere.* We must show determined leadership to end the nuclear weapons program in North Korea and prevent the development of nuclear weapons in places like Iran. North Korea has sold ballistic missiles and technology in the past. The North Koreans have made it clear to the world – and to the terrorists – that they are open for business and will sell to the highest bidder. But while this Administration has been fixated on Iraq, the nuclear dangers from North Korea have multiplied. The North Koreans allegedly have made enough new fuel to make six to nine nuclear bombs.

We should maintain the six-party talks, but we must also be prepared to talk directly with North Korea to negotiate a comprehensive agreement that addresses the full range of issues for ourselves and our allies. But we should have no illusions about Kim Jong Il. Any agreement must have rigorous verification and lead to complete and irreversible elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

Even as we have scoured Iraq for signs of weapons of mass destruction, Iran has reportedly been working to develop them next door. A nuclear-armed Iran is an unacceptable risk to us and our allies.

The same is true for other countries that may be seeking nuclear weapons. This is why strengthening the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty is so critical. We must close the loophole that lets countries develop nuclear weapons capabilities under the guise of a peaceful, civilian nuclear power program. We also need to strengthen enforcement and verification and make rigorous inspection protocols mandatory.

We must work with every country to tighten export controls, stiffen penalties, and beef up law enforcement and intelligence sharing. That way we can make absolutely sure that a disaster like the AQ Khan black market network, which grew out of Pakistan's nuclear program, can never happen again. We must also take steps to reduce tension between India and Pakistan and guard against the possibility of their nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands.

### **PROMOTING DEMOCRACY, PEACE, AND SECURITY**

We know that promoting democracy, human rights, and the rule of law is vital to our long-term security. Americans will be safer in a world of democracies. We will work with people and nongovernmental organizations around the world struggling for freedom, even as we work with their governments to protect our security from weapons of terror. We will restore America's credibility and commitment as a force for democracy and human rights, starting in Iraq.

We believe that upholding international standards for the treatment of prisoners, wherever they may be held, advances America's national security, the security of our troops, and the values of our people. And we believe torture is unacceptable. America should abide by its own laws and the treaties it has ratified, including the Geneva Conventions. We will also support international efforts to address the problem of landmines, while at the same time ensuring that our troops are protected.

*Winning the peace in Iraq.* More than a year ago, President Bush stood on an aircraft carrier under a banner that proclaimed "mission accomplished." But today we know that the mission is not finished, hostilities have not ended, and our men and women in uniform fight almost alone with the target squarely on their backs.

People of good will disagree about whether America should have gone to war in Iraq, but this much is clear: this Administration badly exaggerated its case, particularly with respect to weapons of mass destruction and the connection between Saddam's government and al Qaeda. This Administration did not build a true international coalition. This Administration disdained the United Nations weapons inspection process and rushed to war without exhausting diplomatic alternatives. Ignoring the advice of military leaders, this Administration did not send sufficient forces into Iraq to accomplish the mission. And this Administration went into Iraq without a plan to win the peace.

Now this Administration has been forced to change course in order to correct this fundamental mistake. They are now taking up the suggestions that many Democrats have been making for over a year. And they must – because having gone to war, we cannot afford to fail at peace. We cannot allow a failed state in Iraq that inevitably would become a haven for terrorists and a

destabilizing force in the Middle East. And we must secure more help from an international community that shares a huge stake in helping Iraq become a responsible member of that community, not a breeding ground for terror and intolerance.

As a first step, we must create a stable and secure environment in Iraq. To do this right, we must truly internationalize both politically and militarily: we cannot depend on a US-only presence. Other nations have a vital interest in the outcome, and we must bring them in to commit troops and resources. The Bush Administration has missed three great opportunities to do that. First, the President broke his promise to build a legitimate coalition in Iraq by exhausting diplomacy before resorting to the use of military force. Second, when the statue fell in Baghdad, Kofi Annan invited the United States to come to the table to discuss international support – but we rejected his offer. Third, when the President addressed the United Nations last fall, he once again refused to acknowledge the difficulties we faced in Iraq and failed to elicit support from other nations.

The President has not given our troops the clarity of mission, the equipment or the international support they need and deserve. We have a different approach based on a simple commitment: Troops come first. Our helicopter pilots have flown battlefield missions without the best antimissile systems. In a Democratic Administration, that will change. Too many of our nation's finest troops have died in attacks, because tens of thousands were deployed to Iraq without the best bulletproof vests, and there is a shortage of armored vehicles on the ground. In a Democratic Administration, that will change. Thousands of National Guardsmen and reservists have been forced to leave their families and jobs for more than a year – with no end in sight – because this Administration ignored the pressing need for a true coalition. In a Democratic Administration, that will change.

To succeed, America must do the hard work of engaging the world's major political powers in this mission. We must build a coalition of countries, including the other permanent members of the UN Security Council, to share the political, economic, and military responsibilities of Iraq with the United States.

To win over allies, we must share responsibility with those nations that answer our call, and treat them with respect. We must lead, but we must listen. The rewards of respect are enormous. We must convince NATO to take on a more significant role and contribute additional military forces. As other countries, including Muslim majority countries, contribute troops, the United States will be able to reduce its military presence in Iraq, and we intend to do this when appropriate so that the military support needed by a sovereign Iraqi government will no longer be seen as the direct continuation of an American military presence.

Second, we need to create an international High Commissioner to serve as the senior international representative working with the Iraqi government. This Commissioner should be backed by a newly broadened security coalition and charged with overseeing elections, assisting with drafting a constitution, and coordinating reconstruction. The Commissioner should be highly regarded by the international community, have the credibility to talk to all the Iraqi people, and work directly with Iraq's interim government, the new U.S. Ambassador, and the international community.

At the same time, U.S. and international policies must take into consideration the best interests of the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people desperately need financial and technical assistance that is not swallowed up by bureaucracy and no-bid contracts, but instead goes directly into grassroots organizations. They need to see the tangible benefits of reconstruction: jobs, infrastructure, and services. They should also receive the full benefits of their own oil production as quickly as possible, so as to rebuild their country and help themselves as individuals, while also reducing the costs of security and reconstruction on the American

taxpayer and the cost of gasoline to American consumers. And they need to be able to communicate their concerns to international authorities without feeling they are being disrespected in their own country.

America also needs a massive training effort to build Iraqi security forces that can actually provide security for the Iraqi people. It must be done in the field and on the job as well as in the classroom. Units cannot be put on the street without backup from international security forces. This is a task we must do in partnership with other nations, not just on our own. And this is a task in which we must succeed. If we fail to create viable Iraqi security forces – military and police – there is no successful exit for us and other nations.

The challenges in Iraq are great, but the opportunity is also significant. Under John Kerry and John Edwards, we will meet those challenges, win the peace in Iraq, and help to create new hope and opportunity for the entire Middle East.

*Africa.* U.S. engagement in Africa should reflect its vital significance to U.S. interests and the moral imperative to help a continent struggling with the scourge of HIV/AIDS and under the long shadow of chronic poverty. The HIV/AIDS pandemic in southern and eastern Africa is a massive human tragedy. It is also a security risk of the highest order that threatens to plunge nations into chaos. Chronic and debilitating hunger also threatens the very survival of communities where investment in agriculture has suffered for over a decade. We are committed to bringing the full weight of American leadership to bear against this crisis. We must also work with the United Nations and Africa's regional organizations to address Africa's persistent, disproportionate share of the world's weak, failing states and chronic armed conflicts, and to promote effective relief efforts when there is a humanitarian crisis – particularly at this moment in Sudan. We value our deepening economic ties with Africa, including Central and West Africa's rapidly rising position as a major source of non-Gulf oil. We recognize Africa's promise as a trade and investment partner and the importance of trade policies that reduce poverty and promote growth in Africa. We will continue to promote policies to support newly democratic states that have shown a commitment to economic reform and respect for human rights.

*Asia.* In Asia, we must better engage with China to secure Chinese adherence to international trade, non-proliferation and human rights standards. We are committed to a "One China" policy, and will continue to support a peaceful resolution of cross-Straits issues that is consistent with the wishes and best interests of the Taiwanese people. We must maintain our strong relationship with Japan, and explore new ways to cooperate further. And we will actively seek to enhance relations with our historic ally South Korea in order to advance our collaborative efforts on economic and security issues. We must also work with our friends, India and Pakistan, in their efforts to resolve longstanding differences.

*Europe.* Throughout the 20th century, America's most trusted and reliable allies were the democracies of Europe; together, the two sides of the Atlantic ensured that democracy and free markets prevailed against all challenges. The Bush Administration has allowed the Atlantic partnership to erode, leaving the United States dangerously isolated from its indispensable allies.

The Democratic Party is committed to revitalizing the Atlantic partnership. The international goals that the United States pursues will be easier to attain if Europe and America are working together. We will ensure that NATO remains strong, continuing to consolidate peace in Europe even as the alliance takes on new tasks in Afghanistan and Iraq. We look forward to



the evolution of the European Union and to a prosperous and unified Europe that joins the United States in meeting today's security challenges and expanding the global economy.

*Latin America and the Caribbean.* We believe that it is time to create a new Community of the Americas that reflects our close relationship with our regional neighbors. We will return U.S.-Latin American relations to a place marked by dialogue, consensus and concerted action to address common concerns. We understand that our collective security and prosperity are furthered by mutual efforts to promote democracy, generate wealth, reduce income disparities, and provide sound environmental stewardship. We are committed to strong and steady support for democratic processes and institutions in our hemisphere. We believe that democratic governments deserve our support, and that we should exercise our considerable diplomatic and moral force in support of democratically elected leaders. Mexico has made steady progress toward building a mature democracy, and we will make relations with Mexico a priority in order to best address economic, environmental and social issues of concern. We support effective and peaceful strategies to end the Castro regime as soon as possible and enable the Cuban people to take their rightful place in the democratic Community of the Americas. We will work with the international community to increase political and diplomatic pressure on the Castro regime to release all political prisoners, support civil society, promote the important work of Cuban dissidents, and begin a process of genuine political reform. Within this framework the Democratic Party supports a policy of principled travel to Cuba that promotes family unity and people-to-people contacts through educational and cultural exchanges. We will seek to reinforce democratic values in Haiti and throughout the Caribbean. We will support economic development to increase employment and economic opportunity, reducing incentives for emigration by dangerous and life-threatening means. We will increase efforts to combat drug-trafficking throughout the Caribbean and ensure that those involved in bringing drugs into the U.S. are brought to justice. We will assist in combating corruption so that funds made available for development are used appropriately.

*The Middle East.* The Democratic Party is fundamentally committed to the security of our ally Israel and the creation of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors. Our special relationship with Israel is based on the unshakable foundation of shared values and a mutual commitment to democracy, and we will ensure that under all circumstances, Israel retains the qualitative edge for its national security and its right to self-defense. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and should remain an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths.

Under a Democratic Administration, the United States will demonstrate the kind of resolve to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that President Clinton showed. We will work to transform the Palestinian Authority by promoting new and responsible leadership, committed to fighting terror and promoting democracy. We support the creation of a democratic Palestinian state dedicated to living in peace and security side by side with the Jewish State of Israel. The creation of a Palestinian state should resolve the issue of Palestinian refugees by allowing them to settle there, rather than in Israel. Furthermore, all understand that it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949. And we understand that all final status negotiations must be mutually agreed.

*Northern Ireland.* We are determined to help create a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. We support efforts by the Irish and British Governments and the political parties to break the current impasse, and we stand ready to assist in any way to achieve full implementation of the Belfast Agreement.

*Russia.* Democrats will pursue a Russia policy that recognizes that country's importance and advances the core U.S. security interests at stake in Russia's historic transformation, beginning with cooperative work to secure vulnerable stockpiles of nuclear weapons and materials. We reiterate that respect for human rights, the rule of law and Russia's fledgling democratic institutions and independent media outlets are essential to Russia's continued integration into international institutions and the global economy.

*Global health.* Addressing global health challenges – including the AIDS pandemic – is a humanitarian obligation and a national security imperative. We are committed to a coordinated effort to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States and in all other regions throughout the world. Epidemics can decimate societies and contribute to failed states which can become bases for terrorists and other criminal elements. And a strong global public health system is essential to effectively combating bio-terror threats. Our global health policy will bring the best of our scientific knowledge, financial resources, management skills, and compassion to the challenge of improving health conditions around the world. And we will restore America's leadership in global health by rejecting policies driven by ideology instead of science.

*International development.* We understand that promoting international economic development is a strategic imperative of the United States. We will use American economic power to extend security and prosperity – which leads to peace – around the world. And we will work with poor countries to help stabilize and diversify their economies, including through the consideration of sensible debt relief measures where appropriate. We will support efforts to reach universal basic education and the other Millennium Development Goals.

*Supporting America's foreign affairs community.* We are committed to the best training, facilities and support for America's diplomats, the men and women of America's foreign affairs community, who represent our country and work to promote our values around the world.

## **STRENGTHENING OUR MILITARY**

We need a new military to meet the new threats of the 21st Century. Today's American military is the best in the world, but tomorrow's military must be even better. It must be stronger, faster, better armed, and never again stretched so thin.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party will send a clear message to every man and woman in our armed forces: We guarantee that you will always be the best-led, best-equipped and most respected fighting force in the world. You will be armed with the right weapons, schooled in the right skills, and fully prepared to win on the battlefield. You will never be sent into harm's way without enough troops for the task, and never asked to fight a war without a plan to win the peace. You will never be given assignments which have not been clearly defined and for which you are not professionally trained.

The Bush Administration was right to call for the "transformation" of the military. But their version of transformation neglected to consider that the dangers we face have also been transformed. The Administration was concerned with fighting classic conventional wars, instead of the asymmetrical threats we now face in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the war against al Qaeda. To rise to those challenges, we must strengthen our military, including our Special Forces, improve our technology, and task our National Guard with homeland security.

*Expanding active duty personnel.* As a first step, we will expand America's active duty forces. The war in Iraq has overextended our armed services. The vast majority of the Army's active duty combat divisions are committed to Iraq—currently there, preparing to go, or recently returned. That is a dangerous and potentially disastrous strain that limits our capacity to respond to other crises.

To pick up the slack, we've called up our Guard and Reserves at historic levels. Some have been on the ground in Iraq for as many as 15 months, much longer than was expected or promised. Many of these units are being pushed to the limit and stretched far too thin. The Administration's answer has just been to stretch further. They have extended tours of duty, delayed retirements, and prevented enlisted personnel from leaving the service – effectively using a stop-loss policy and recall of Individual Ready Reserve members as a back-door draft.

We will add 40,000 new soldiers – not to increase the number of soldiers in Iraq, but to sustain our overseas deployments and prevent and prepare for other possible conflicts. This will help relieve the strain on our troops and bring back more of our soldiers, guardsmen and reservists. We are dedicated to keeping our military operating on a volunteer basis. We are committed to management reform both to ensure that our defense funding is spent effectively and to help pay for these new forces.

*Doubling Special Forces capability.* Next, we need to create a "New Total Force," a military prepared to defeat any enemy, at any time, in any place. We will double the capacity of our Special Forces, the troops who took the fight to the Taliban with remarkable creativity after September 11th. These troops conduct counter-terrorism operations, perform reconnaissance missions, and gather intelligence. They also train local forces and build the relationships that are vital for our victory in the war on terror.

We will increase our civil affairs personnel – those who arrive on the scene after the major conflict ends to work with local leaders and officials to get the schools back in shape, the hospitals reopened, and the banks up and running. We also need more military police, because public order is critical to establishing the conditions that allow peace to take hold.

*State-of-the-art equipment.* Third, we need the best possible equipment. We can't have a 21st century military unless we're using 21st century technology and preparing our forces for 21st century threats. That means educating, training, and arming every soldier with state-of-the-art equipment, whether body armor or weapons. It also means employing the most sophisticated communications to help our troops prevail and protect themselves in battle. Every soldier in every unit should have access to technology that can mean the difference between life and death. We will make sure every soldier does.

And we will build and train new forces equipped with the most-sophisticated technology to specialize in finding, securing, and destroying weapons of mass destruction and the facilities that build them.

*The best training.* Fourth, we must match our commitment to innovation with a commitment to the training, education, and facilities necessary to make the most of it.

*Standing up for military families.* Fifth, we will make sure that America's commitment to the men and women of our armed forces (our active duty, our reservists, and our national guard) and their families is ironclad. We will enact a Military Family Bill of Rights to ensure that our men and women in uniform and their families receive the benefits and respect they deserve:

competitive pay and quality housing, decent health care and dental care, quality education for their children, and timely deployment information. And we will ensure that America will care for them and their families if the worst should happen.

*Better use of the National Guard.* Finally, we need to make better use of a key asset in homeland defense – our National Guard. The National Guard has served in every war, and they're serving now. They were the first ones called to line city streets, guard bridges, and patrol our airports after September 11th. We will make homeland security one of the Guard's primary missions, and assign Guard units to a standing joint task force commanded by a General from the Guard.

## **ACHIEVING ENERGY INDEPENDENCE**

No strategy for American security is complete without a plan to end America's dependence on Mideast oil. Today, the American economy depends on oil controlled by some of the world's most repressive regimes. This leaves our economy dangerously vulnerable to nations that do not share our interests. America too often is silent about the practices of some governments because we depend on oil they control.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe a strong America must no longer rely on the cooperation of regimes that do not share our values. We believe a strong America must move toward energy independence.

In the Bush Administration, energy independence doesn't get a thought. Their energy policy is simple: government by big oil, of big oil, and for big oil. This Administration let oil industry lobbyists and executives write our nation's energy policy in secret. They even went to the Supreme Court to stop the public from learning what they were doing. They've done nothing as gas prices have soared to record levels. Even the Administration's own economists have found that their energy plan will do nothing to reduce gas prices. This President's approach to energy policy leaves America shackled to foreign oil, dependent, vulnerable, and exposed.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe in a better, stronger, more independent America. We are committed to achieving energy independence, and we know we can do it. Our ingenuity and determination built the cars we drive and the bridges we use. It electrified rural America in the 1930s, and took us to the moon in the 1960s. Our resolve helped conquer polio.

It's this simple: When we see a problem, we roll up our sleeves and solve it. And that's what we pledge to do now.

Achieving energy independence will improve our ability to protect our values and interests in the world. It will reduce energy costs for our families. It will create high-paying new jobs. And it will improve our environment and make our people healthier.

*Harnessing American ingenuity to create renewable energy.* Our plan begins with commonsense investments to harness the natural world around us—the sun, wind, water, geothermal and biomass sources, and a rich array of crops—to create a new generation of affordable energy for the 21st century. By mobilizing the amazing productivity of America's farmers, we can grow our own cleaner-burning fuel. We support tax credits for private sector investment in clean, renewable sources of energy, and we will make ethanol credits work better for farmers. And we will ensure that billions of gallons of renewable fuel are part of America's energy supply while striving for strong, national renewable energy goals.

*Creating the energy-efficient vehicles of tomorrow.* We support creating more energy-efficient vehicles, from today's hybrid cars to tomorrow's hydrogen cars. We support the American people's freedom to choose whatever cars, SUVs, minivans, and trucks they choose, but we also believe American ingenuity is equal to the task of improving efficiency. We support improving fuel standards, and because of the challenges this poses, we will offer needed incentives for consumers to buy efficient vehicles, and for manufacturers to build them. We are also committed to developing hydrogen as a clean, reliable domestic source of energy. Our economy cannot convert to hydrogen overnight, so we will fund research to overcome the obstacles to hydrogen fuel and continue our other efforts to achieve energy independence.

*Moving beyond OPEC.* We can improve our energy security in other ways. We will seek more diverse sources of oil around the world and here at home. We support balanced development of domestic oil supplies in areas already open for exploration, like the western and central Gulf of Mexico. We support the expansion of new infrastructure to develop supplies from non-OPEC nations like Russia, Canada, and nations in Africa. We will increase efficiency of natural gas use, develop the Alaska natural gas pipeline, and enhance our nation's infrastructure to help supply natural gas more effectively.

*Electricity.* We will work to create new technology for producing electricity in a better, more efficient manner. Coal accounts for more than one-half of America's electric power generation capacity today. We believe coal must continue its important role in a new energy economy, while achieving high environmental standards. Working with the coal industry, we will invest billions to develop and implement new, cleaner coal technology and to produce electric and hydrogen power. We will also work to make sure that our people have access to an affordable, secure, and reliable supply of electricity at all times. We support mandatory, enforceable reliability standards. We also support public-private partnerships to make our power systems more flexible, resilient, and self-healing—and more environmentally friendly than ever before.

*Government as a role model.* The federal government is the largest single consumer of energy in the world. We will cut the federal government's energy use and challenge local governments, corporations, universities, small businesses and hospitals to do the same.

*Our commitment to conservation.* A balanced energy policy must create real incentives for energy conservation in our homes, our offices, our factories, and our infrastructure, saving money and improving security even as it creates good jobs and rebuilds our communities.

With sixty-five percent of the world's oil reserves in the Middle East, we cannot drill our way to energy independence. But we can create, think, imagine, and invent our way there. And we will create jobs, help our environment, and build a stronger country as we do.

## **STRENGTHENING HOMELAND SECURITY**

The first and foremost responsibility of government is to protect its citizens from harm. Unfortunately, Washington today is not doing enough to make America safe.

We have made some progress since the terrible attacks of September 11th. We have taken steps to secure our airports. After resisting Democratic efforts for months, the Administration finally agreed to create the Department of Homeland Security.

But we have not done nearly enough. Our intelligence services remain fragmented and lack coordination. Millions of massive shipping containers arrive at American ports every year without being searched and without even a reliable list of their contents. Our borders are full of holes. Our chemical plants are vulnerable to attack. Across America, police officers, firefighters, and other first responders still lack the information, protective gear, and communications equipment to do their jobs safely and successfully.

The Bush Administration, full of tough talk about terror, has no coherent plan for domestic defense. John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe America can do better. We believe America must do better. We believe America will do better.

*A comprehensive strategy to protect America.* We need a new strategy for homeland security that addresses five major challenges. We need to improve our ability to gather, analyze, and share information so we can track down terrorists and stop them before they cause harm. We need to do a better job securing our airports, seaports, and borders. We need to harden likely terrorist targets. We need to improve domestic readiness. Finally, we must win the war on terror without losing the values of freedom and justice for all that make us so proud to be Americans.

*Better intelligence.* The war on terror begins with good intelligence. Shockingly, many of the same flaws in intelligence-sharing that allowed terrorists to slip in and out of America before September 11th still exist. The government has missed its own deadlines for upgrading and integrating security databases, and still fails to share information with the state and local law enforcement agencies on the frontlines. This must change.

We will ensure that our watch lists are accessible when and where they are needed. We will also give security clearances to appropriate state and local officials so they can get critical information at the critical times. Our intelligence apparatus needs significant reform, and so creating a true Director of National Intelligence is critical.

*More secure borders.* We will improve security at our borders and entry-points to block the individuals and weapons that would harm us. We will strengthen container security rules, improve the detection equipment in our shipping systems, ensure that private companies are providing adequate information about the goods they are shipping, and work with other nations to increase inspection levels abroad.

We will put an end to political delays in adopting tighter controls on air cargo, tons of which goes uninspected every day. We will increase perimeter inspections at U.S. airports and work with international aviation authorities to make sure the same standards are in place overseas. Working with our Northern and Southern neighbors, we will strengthen controls at border crossings, and use modern technology and better staffing to improve the quality of border inspections while enhancing commerce.

*Hardened targets.* We will launch a major effort to harden our most vulnerable targets – from chemical and nuclear plants to rails and tunnels – and better protect them from attack. Security upgrades at some nuclear weapons facilities are a shocking three years behind. That is unacceptable, and we will fix it. We must better protect nuclear facilities and waste sites which today

are too vulnerable to attack. We will improve transit rail and subway security, by adding chemical release detectors to deter attacks like we saw in Tokyo, and taking other steps.

There are more than 100 chemical plants where an attack could endanger more than one million people, and the FBI has warned that al Qaeda may target our chemical industry. The Bush Administration was actually moving toward a commonsense solution that would set minimum standards for safety at chemical plants. But dangerously true to form, after heavy lobbying by the chemical industry, they backed down. We will make these plants secure; by requiring more guards, more fencing, and the use of less dangerous chemicals when possible.

*Domestic readiness.* We need to improve domestic readiness so people on the frontlines have the training and equipment to respond to any attack with all the speed, skill, and strength required.

Our first responders are the first ones up the stairs in the event of the emergency, and it is wrong that today they are last in line when it comes to this administration's budgets. Under the Bush Administration, police departments in small cities have lost more than 15 percent of their full-time paid police and employees. And today, two-thirds of our nation's fire departments are not fully staffed. We can do more for the heroes of 9/11 and we can do more for our fellow citizens. And we will. We will provide direct assistance to our police officers and firefighters on the frontlines. They'll have the equipment and manpower they need to protect us. We will also ensure that front line workers throughout our transportation system receive the security training necessary to respond to terrorist threats. We also need to modernize our emergency warning system to provide localized warnings, treat the fighters on the frontlines as partners, and give families all the information they need. This Administration may think that homeland security is about changing the alert from yellow to orange. They're wrong; the colors of safety are firefighter red, EMT white, and police officer blue.

We will dramatically improve our ability to respond to a biological attack. We will appoint one individual to oversee all bioterrorism programs, budgets and strategic priorities. We will set national benchmarks for state and local preparedness so community leaders aren't flying blind. We will harness America's bioscience genius to increase drug and vaccine development. We will revitalize our public health system, improving monitoring capabilities and coordination. And we will strengthen hospitals, which today cannot prepare for a bio-terrorism emergency because they are overwhelmed by the everyday emergencies of people without insurance.

We also will encourage all Americans to do their part to make America safer. We support the development of a new community defense service grounded in neighborhoods and comprised of ordinary Americans from across the country. Like a 21st Century Neighborhood Watch, members would work within their communities to make a contribution—helping health professionals, assisting with evacuation plans, and standing ready in emergency.

*Crime and violence.* While terrorism poses an especially menacing threat to our nation, a strong America must remain vigilant against the scourge of homegrown crime as well. We are proud that Democrats led the fight to put more than 100,000 cops on the beat through the COPS program, and we will continue our steadfast support for COPS and community policing. To keep our streets safe for our families, we support tough punishment of violent crime and smart efforts to reintegrate former prisoners into our communities as productive citizens. We will crack down on the gang violence and drug crime that devastate so many communities, and we will increase drug treatment, including mandatory drug courts and mandatory drug testing for parolees

and probationers, so fewer crimes are committed in the first place. We support the rights of victims to be respected, to be heard, and to be compensated. We will help break the cycle of domestic violence by punishing offenders and standing with victims. We will protect Americans' Second Amendment right to own firearms, and we will keep guns out of the hands of criminals and terrorists by fighting gun crime, reauthorizing the assault weapons ban, and closing the gun show loophole, as President Bush proposed and failed to do.

*Guarding liberty.* We must always remember that terrorists do not just target our lives; they target our way of life. And so we must be on constant guard not to sacrifice the freedom we are fighting to protect. We will strengthen some provisions of the Patriot Act, like the restrictions on money laundering. And we will change the portions of the Patriot Act that threaten individual rights, such as the library provisions, while still allowing government to take all needed steps to fight terror. Our government should never round up innocent people only because of their religion or ethnicity, and we should never stifle free expression. We believe in an America where freedom is what we fight for – not what we give up.

Together, we can make America safer, stronger, and more respected. We can do it in a way that safeguards all the greatness of America by protecting our people, securing our homeland, and reinforcing our values – faith and family, duty and service, individual freedom and a common purpose to build one nation under God. We can do it in a way that keeps faith with the best measures of American leadership around the world – the builder of alliances, the defender of freedom, the champion of human rights. We can do it, and we will.

## **A STRONG, GROWING ECONOMY**

The great promise of America is simple: a better life for all who work for it. No matter who you are, where you come from, or what you believe, as an American, you live in a land that offers you all the possibilities your hard work and God-given talent can bring.

The opportunity to build a better future starts with a good job. It has always been that way. From the time when most people worked in the fields, through the Industrial Revolution and into the Information Age, the opportunity for work, the rewards from work, and the dignity of work have made Americans successful and America strong.

## **CREATING GOOD JOBS**

We offer America a new economic plan that will put jobs first. We will renew American competitiveness, make honest budget choices, and invest in our future.

A strong America keeps the promise of opportunity for all and heeds the warning of special privileges for none. That's the America we believe in. That's the America we're fighting for. And that's the America we can build together.

In President George Bush's America, unfortunately, too often you need special privileges if you want opportunity. This White House values wealth over hard work, lavishes special treatment upon a fortunate few at the expense of most businesses and working people, and defends policies that weaken America's competitive position and destroy American jobs. Instead of



meeting the challenge of globalization by strengthening our workers' ability to compete and win, this Administration uses globalization as an excuse not to fight for American jobs.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe in a better America—a strong America.

We believe that a strong America begins at home, with good jobs that support families and an equal chance for all our people.

We believe in progress that brings prosperity for all Americans, not just for those who are already successful. We believe that good jobs will help strengthen and expand the strongest middle class the world has ever known.

We believe the private sector, not government, is the engine of economic growth and job creation. Government's responsibility is to create an environment that will promote private sector investment, foster vigorous competition, and strengthen the foundations of an innovative economy.

We believe Americans are the smartest, toughest competitors in the world. Our products and ideas can compete and win anywhere, as long as we're given a fair chance. And our companies can keep and create jobs in America without sacrificing competitiveness.

We will fight for American jobs and we will fight for American workers. Under John Kerry and John Edwards, we will revive America's manufacturing sector, create new jobs and protect existing ones by ending tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas and cutting taxes for companies that create jobs here at home; by fighting for free, fair and balanced trade; by encouraging investment in small businesses and helping companies deal with rising health care costs; by promoting new technologies, like energy, that will lead to the companies and jobs of tomorrow; and by ensuring that people of every age learn the skills to succeed in today's economy.

*Tax reform to create jobs.* Today's tax law provides big breaks for companies that send American jobs overseas. Current "deferral" policies allow American companies to avoid paying American taxes on the income earned by their foreign subsidiaries. John Kerry and John Edwards will end deferral that encourages companies to ship jobs overseas, and they will close other loopholes to make the tax code work for the American worker. They'll use the savings to offer tax cuts for companies that produce goods and create jobs here at home. Under John Kerry and John Edwards, 99 percent of American businesses will pay lower taxes than today.

*A plan to reinvigorate manufacturing.* Manufacturing has lost 2.5 million jobs under President Bush in its worst jobs crisis since the Depression. John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democrats will launch a concerted effort to revitalize American manufacturing. The measures outlined above are important components of our overall strategy. In addition, based on the model that has helped launch some of America's most successful companies, we will establish new investment corporations to give small and medium-sized businesses access to capital. And we will support the growth of high-technology "clusters" that invest in new industries around research institutions.

*Free and fair trade that creates American jobs.* Exports sustain about 1 in 5 American factory jobs. Open markets spur innovation, speed the growth of new industries, and make our businesses more competitive. We will make it a priority to knock down barriers to free, fair and balanced trade so other nation's markets are as open as our own.

We will stand up for American workers and consumers by building on President Clinton's progress in including enforceable, internationally recognized labor and environmental standards in trade agreements. We will aggressively enforce our trade agreements with a real plan that includes a complete review of all existing agreements; immediate investigation into China's workers' rights abuses and currency manipulation; increased funding for efforts to protect workers' rights and stop child labor abuse; new reforms to protect the innovations of high-tech companies; and vigorous enforcement of U.S. trade laws. We will use all the tools we have to create new opportunities for American workers, farmers, and businesses, and break down barriers in key export markets, like the Japanese auto market and the Chinese high-technology market. We will effectively enforce our trade laws protecting against dumping, illegal subsidies, and import surges that threaten American jobs.

New trade agreements must protect internationally recognized workers' rights and environmental standards as vigorously as they now protect commercial concerns. We will build on and strengthen the progress made in the Jordan agreement to include strong and enforceable labor and environmental standards in the core of new free trade agreements. And no trade agreement should stop government from protecting the environment, food safety or the health of its citizens. Nor should an agreement give greater rights to foreign investors than to U.S. investors, require the privatization of our vital public services, or limit our government's ability to create good jobs in our communities.

*Investing in technology to create good jobs.* We will invest in the technologies of the future, from renewable energy to nanotechnology to biomedicine, and will work to make permanent the research and development tax credit. We will achieve universal access to broadband services, which could add \$500 billion to our economy, generate 1.2 million jobs, and transform the way we learn and work. And we will put science ahead of ideology in research and policymaking.

*Enhancing Our Transportation System.* Our nation's transportation network is an integral part of our economy and an engine for economic expansion that must be strengthened. We are committed to vigorous federal highway and transit initiatives that put Americans to work, relieve traffic congestion, and foster long-term projects at state and local levels.

*Free markets and honest competition.* Economic growth and job creation depend on free markets and competition, but competition and free markets depend on trust, transparency, and integrity. We are committed to requiring honesty in corporate accounting effective corporate governance, a fair shake for small investors and worker pension funds, a level playing field and competitive bidding practices for those who wish to transact business with the government, and vigorous prosecution of criminal conduct in executive suites.

*Promoting small businesses.* Small businesses and entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of our economy. We will encourage small business growth with a plan to make it easier for small businesses to secure capital and loans. We support tax credits and energy investments that slash overall operating costs for small businesses and encourage them to grow and expand here in America. For America's 350,000 small manufacturers, which account for over half the total value of U.S. industrial production and employ 11 million people in high-skill, high-wage jobs, we will double funding to use technology to grow.

We will help businesses cope with the skyrocketing cost of health care by reforming our health care system and cutting taxes to help small businesses pay for health insurance. Retiree health costs impose major burdens on many employers, particularly manufacturers, and we will push for reform so that companies are not forced to choose among retirees, current workers, and their own ability to compete.

*Fiscal Relief in an economic downturn.* When states are thrust into a fiscal crisis due to a national economic downturn, we should support Federal fiscal relief to states as an effective tool to jumpstart growth and job creation, and to prevent harmful tuition and tax increases, as well as painful cuts to vital education, health, homeland security, and other critical services; and to prevent underfunded mandates.

*Standing up for workers.* We will ensure that the right to organize a union exists in the real world, not just on paper, because that's how we create more jobs that can support families. That means reforming our labor laws to protect the rights of workers (including public employees) to bargain contracts and organize on a level playing field without interference. It also means barring the permanent replacement of legal strikers. And we will of course reverse this Administration's cuts in wages for working people by restoring overtime protections for hard-working Americans. We will strengthen health and safety protections as well.

*Lifelong learning.* We will make sure that Americans are the best-skilled, best-trained workers in the world. In addition to reforming K-12 education, we will expand training and opportunities for Americans of all ages. We will support regional skills alliances, workforce development conducted at community colleges, and other initiatives that prepare workers for high-skills jobs that offer family-sustaining wages and benefits. And we will support high-quality distance learning so that Americans everywhere can use a keyboard to learn from experts anywhere.

Unlike the Bush administration, we will always stand by workers who lose their jobs as the economy changes. We will require companies to give employees at least three months notice before a planned shutdown. We will expand efforts to help manufacturers, workers, the long-term unemployed, and communities hurt by imports, including extending trade adjustment assistance to workers in the service sectors and making health insurance more affordable for workers who lose their jobs due to trade. Through our jobs plan, we will bring hope and jobs back to the cities and small towns devastated by the shuttering of factories.

## **STANDING UP FOR THE GREAT AMERICAN MIDDLE CLASS**

The heart of the American promise has always been the middle class, the greatest engine of economic growth the world has ever known. When the middle class grows in size and security, our country gets stronger. And when more American families save and invest in their children's future, America grows stronger still.

But in President George Bush's America, where everyday costs are soaring and ordinary incomes are sinking, the middle class is struggling, and our economy is suffering.

Today, the average American family is earning \$1,500 less than in 2000. At the same time, health care costs are up by nearly one-half, college tuition has increased by more than one-third, gas and oil prices have gone through the roof, and housing costs

have soared. Life literally costs more than ever before – and our families have less money to pay for it. Three million more Americans have fallen into poverty since 2000. Average family debt is higher than ever. And as they lose the struggle to make ends meet, one out of every seven middle class families may be bankrupt by the end of the decade.

President Bush and the Republicans in Congress have ignored the middle class since day one of this Administration. They have catered to the wealth of the richest instead of honoring the work of the rest of us. They have promised almost everything and paid for almost nothing. And the middle class is shouldering more taxes, earning less money, and bearing higher costs. The bottom line for the middle class under President Bush and the Republican Party is this: Instead of working hard to get ahead, the middle class is working hard just to get by.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe in a stronger, more prosperous America for all our people. We believe in an America where the great American promise of upward mobility is alive and well. We believe in an America where the middle class is growing, our economy is thriving, and America is strong. And we have a plan to build that America.

*Cutting taxes for middle class Americans.* First, we must restore our values to our tax code. We want a tax code that rewards work and creates wealth for more people, not a tax code that hoards wealth for those who already have it. With the middle class under assault like never before, we simply cannot afford the massive Bush tax cuts for the very wealthiest. We should set taxes for families making more than \$200,000 a year at the same level as in the late 1990s, a period of great prosperity when the wealthiest Americans thrived without special treatment. We will cut taxes for 98 percent of Americans and help families meet the economic challenges of their everyday lives. And we will oppose tax increases on middle class families, including those living abroad.

*Helping families cope with rising costs.* We must help Americans deal with the staggering increase in everyday costs of living, from insurance premiums to child care to the price of gas.

Today, thousands of businesses that would otherwise provide raises are using that money to pay climbing health care premiums. That is cutting wages for working people. Reforming health care, offering tax credits to pay for it, and cutting health costs will raise wages for working people.

College tuitions rose by 35 percent between 2000 and 2003, and this year, 220,000 Americans were priced out of college by its high costs. We will make college affordable for every qualified student with a tax credit for four years of college.

Child care costs are rising twice as fast as inflation, and millions of working parents worry desperately how to care for their children between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. each day. Other families must care not only for their children, but also for loved ones who are older or have disabilities. We will increase tax credits to pay for child care and eldercare, and make sure those credits are available to lower-income families and stay-at-home parents. We will expand after-school opportunities, help schools stay open until 6 p.m., and offer good transportation so young people can take advantage of it. We support expanding family and medical leave to help parents meet the growing challenge of balancing work and family responsibilities.

The price of gas is at an all time-high, placing an enormous burden on millions of Americans who have no choice but to drive to work. We will help cut costs in the short-run by halting additional stockpiling of oil reserves and working more effectively to ensure that OPEC increases production. For the long-run, we offer a detailed plan for energy independence.

*Protecting retirement security.* We must protect the retirement security of America's workers and their families. Workers should never lose all their savings because their employer locked those savings into the company's own stock. We will bar that practice. We need to require honest information and full disclosure, and protect older workers from unfair treatment when their benefits are converted to cash balance plans. At the same time, we will strengthen and promote both defined-contribution and defined-benefit pension plans, and increase the portability of retirement savings and help all families save.

We are absolutely committed to preserving Social Security. It is a compact across the generations that has helped tens of millions of Americans live their retirement years in dignity instead of poverty. Democrats believe in the progressive, guaranteed benefit that has ensured that seniors and people with disabilities receive a benefit not subject to the whims of the market or the economy. We oppose privatizing Social Security or raising the retirement age. We oppose reducing the benefits earned by workers just because they have also earned a benefit from certain public retirement plans. We will repeal discriminatory laws that penalize some retired workers and their families while allowing others to receive full benefits. Because the massive deficits under the Bush Administration have raided hundreds of billions of dollars from Social Security, the most important step we can take to strengthen Social Security is to restore fiscal responsibility. Social Security matters to all Americans, Democrats and Republicans, and strengthening Social Security should be a common cause.

*Expanding the middle class.* The dream of the middle class should belong to all Americans willing to work for it. We still have work to do as long as millions of Americans work full-time, fulfill their responsibilities, and continue to live in poverty. We will offer these Americans a ladder to the middle class. That means raising the minimum wage to \$7.00, increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit and extending child credits so that parents who work full-time don't have to raise their children in poverty. It means working to eliminate hunger in our rural and urban communities. It means using our tax code and savings incentives to help families build their savings, become homeowners, and start businesses. And it means continuing on the path of welfare reform. We must match parents' responsibility to work with the real opportunity to do so, by making sure parents can get the health care, child care, and transportation they need. And we must expect increased responsibility from fathers as well as mothers by increasing child support enforcement and promoting responsible fatherhood together with religious and civic organizations.

*Strengthening our cities.* We will invest in the businesses, schools, and hospitals that metropolitan areas need to thrive. We will support quality housing opportunities and a balanced housing policy for all Americans, defending good rental housing and extending the American Dream of homeownership to more families. At a time when so many families are losing their homes and life savings to unscrupulous lenders, we will rein in predatory lending and expand access to mainstream financial services for urban families. And we will redouble our nation's commitment to closing the "digital divide."

*Revitalizing rural and small-town America.* Small towns are at the heart of America, but today, they are often losing people, jobs, and hope. We will use new technologies like distance learning and telemedicine to link our towns with cutting-edge advances and bring back investment to our small towns. We will ensure that American farmers have a strong safety net and can achieve profitability in the marketplace, and we will support incentives for farmers to use conservation practices and sustainable

farming methods. Americans should be able to make the choice to raise their children in the towns and rural communities where they grew up.

*Fiscal discipline.* We must restore responsibility to our budget, or we will strangle opportunity for the next generation of middle class Americans. Over the last three years, record surpluses have turned into record deficits. Not once has this Administration tried to balance new spending with new savings or pay for new initiatives – including its enormous tax breaks for the wealthy. Today, we face unsustainable foreign borrowing and rising interest rates.

Fiscal discipline helped create 23 million new jobs in the 1990s. Fiscal discipline frees up money for productive investment. And over time, fiscal discipline saves families thousands of dollars on their mortgages and credit cards.

We will roll back the Bush tax cuts for those making more than \$200,000. We will restore commonsense budget rules that this Administration has abandoned, like "Pay-As-You-Go" rules that require the government to pay for new initiatives. We will commit to living within tough budget caps—real and enforceable limits on what the government can spend. We will enact a Constitutional version of the line-item veto to make it easier to root out pork-barrel spending. And we will make our government more efficient by cutting the waste of taxpayer dollars in the federal budget, from unneeded travel budgets to crony contracting. We are committed to cutting the deficit in half over the next four years.

*Ending corporate welfare.* Many American corporations today pay less than ever in taxes because of tax loopholes secured by powerful lobbyists. We will end corporate welfare as we know it. We will eliminate the indefensible loopholes in our tax code—from tax deals that have no purpose but avoiding taxes to the very shelters that Enron used to drive so many lives toward financial ruin. And we will eliminate the corporate subsidies that waste taxpayer dollars and undermine fair competition.

The Democratic Party understands that working people built modern America. We understand that today's global economy requires new rules, new skills, and new approaches, and we believe that the time-honored values of equal opportunity, fair play, and good rewards for hard work still apply. That's how we give all our people the chance to succeed. That's how we keep on building the America we believe in. That's how we keep the promise of America.

## **STRONG, HEALTHY FAMILIES**

Family is the center of everyday American life. Our parents are our first protectors, first teachers, first role models, and first friends. Parents know that America's great reward is the quiet but incomparable satisfaction that comes from building their families a better life. Strong families, blessed with opportunity, guided by faith, and filled with dreams are the heart of a strong America.

## **REFORMING HEALTH CARE**

We believe not just that a strong America begins at home, but that a strong America begins *in* the home. And just as government's first responsibility is the health and safety of its people, parents' first responsibility is the health and safety of their children. We believe that health care is a right and not a privilege.

Today, a family's ability to ensure that all its members get the quality health care they deserve is challenged like never before. For the most fortunate, America offers the best health care in the world. But tens of millions of Americans pay too much and get too little from our health care system, and tens of millions more have no health insurance at all.

Skyrocketing health care costs not only hurt our families; they hurt our economy. American businesses pay more than their competitors for health care, reducing their competitiveness. American incomes suffer because raises are stifled by rising insurance premiums.

We will attack the health care crisis with a comprehensive approach. Our goal is straightforward: quality, affordable health coverage for all Americans to keep our families healthy, our businesses competitive, and our country strong.

In President George Bush's America, drug company and HMO profits count for more than family and small business health costs. Health care costs increased four times as fast as wages in the last year alone. Prescription drug spending has more than doubled during the past five years. Nearly 82 million Americans went without health care coverage at some point in the last two years. And the President has done nothing to bring costs down or lift these burdens. The few small proposals he has offered would further divide our health system between one that is affordable for the healthy and wealthy, and one that is unaffordable for the elderly, the sick, and increasingly, for America's broad middle class.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe in a better, stronger, healthier America. Our resolve to fix the health crisis is stronger than ever. In the wealthiest country in the world, every expectant mother should get quality prenatal care; every child should get regular check-ups; every senior should be able to get safe, affordable prescription drugs; and no hardworking family should ever lose everything because illness strikes a loved one.

*Ensuring health care for children.* The job begins with our children. It is a disgrace that nearly

8.5 million children still lack health insurance. We will strengthen Medicaid for our families and expand the children's health program created under President Clinton so no child goes without medical care.

*Expanding coverage.* Under the leadership of John Kerry and John Edwards, we will offer individuals and businesses tax credits to make quality, reliable health coverage more affordable. We will provide tax credits to Americans who are approaching retirement age and those who are between jobs so they can afford quality, reliable coverage. We will expand coverage for low income adults through existing federal-state health care programs. And we will provide all Americans with access to the same coverage that members of Congress give themselves.

*Cutting health care costs.* At the center of our efforts will be a plan to reduce health costs. We will lift a financial burden on families, businesses, and the self-employed by picking up the tab for the highest-cost medical cases. That will save America's families up to \$1,000 on their premiums.

We will improve the quality of care and the efficiency of the medical system by using American technological know-how to cut billions of dollars wasted in administrative processing and paperwork. Today, about a quarter of all health-related spending is not even medical. We can do better. We will ensure that all Americans have secure, private electronic medical records by 2008,

and we will give medical providers incentives and resources to simplify their paperwork so patients spend more time with doctors and less time filling out forms. We recognize that our health care system is substantially strengthened by the daily efforts of the men and women in a variety of health professions and we support fair treatment for all health professionals.

We will enact a real Patient's Bill of Rights to put doctors and nurses back in charge of making medical decisions with their patients – instead of allowing HMO bureaucrats to decide what a patient needs.

*Helping seniors by protecting Medicare and cutting prescription costs.* We oppose privatizing Medicare. We will not allow Republicans to destroy a commitment that has done so much good for so many seniors and people with disabilities over the past 39 years. Instead, we want to strengthen Medicare and make it more efficient.

We will ensure that seniors across the country, particularly in small-town and rural America, no longer suffer from geographic discrimination.

We will end the disgrace of seniors being forced to choose between meals and medication. Today, our seniors are paying too much for prescription drugs, while options abroad are far cheaper and just as safe. We will allow the safe reimportation of drugs from other countries.

The current Medicare drug program serves drug companies more than seniors. It allows these companies to change the price of prescriptions more frequently than seniors can change their plans. It does virtually nothing to bring down prescription drug costs. It forces seniors into HMOs. Elderly Americans deserve a real prescription drug benefit – one that uses the government's purchasing power to lower costs and ensures access to new therapies for their illnesses.

We will cut the waste and abuse that cost Medicare billions each year, using competitive bidding to lower the costs of buying medical equipment, educating providers to file claims more efficiently, and increasing penalties for those who bilk the system.

*Dignity for all.* We will ensure that elderly Americans and people with disabilities can live in dignity, with quality options for long-term care. We need to expand alternative care options and provide better assistance for those who give care. No one should be kept in a nursing home or institution if they prefer living in dignity elsewhere and can do so. And we will ensure that no person with a disability has to choose between quality health care and the dignity of work. We will also work to ensure that people with HIV and AIDS have the care they need, and we will support the community-based prevention programs, built on experience with real life, that President Bush has cut. We are committed to passing the Wellstone mental health parity legislation, ending discrimination against Americans with mental illnesses, and ensuring equal treatment for mental illness in our health system.

*Eliminating health disparities.* Millions of African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, and American Indians continue to live sicker and die younger in America. Cultural and language barriers remain a particular problem for immigrant communities. We will fight racial and ethnic health care disparities by increasing research and training in the medical profession, breaking down language barriers, and ensuring good health care for all Americans. We will encourage and support enabling more minority students to enter the sciences. We will also work to ensure that women have access to the best



medicines and state-of-the-art prevention and detection techniques to stop diseases early. We will also support prevention of illness through better nutrition and exercise.

*Investing in science to battle disease.* We will push the boundaries of science in search of new medical therapies and cures. The Bush Administration has put ideology over science, skewing information about everything from women's health to scientific research. Americans deserve access to the best evidence available about illnesses, therapies, and cures. From new therapies to prolong life for people with AIDS, to new openings in the battle to cure cancer, the possibilities of medical research fill us with hope. We will secure more funding for aggressive biomedical research seeking affordable and effective therapies based on real science.

President Bush has rejected the calls from Nancy Reagan, Christopher Reeve and Americans across the land for assistance with embryonic stem cell research. We will reverse his wrongheaded policy. Stem cell therapy offers hope to more than 100 million Americans who have serious illnesses – from Alzheimer's to heart disease to juvenile diabetes to Parkinson's. We will pursue this research under the strictest ethical guidelines, but we will not walk away from the chance to save lives and reduce human suffering.

*Honoring our veterans.* Finally, we will never forget the debt America owes our veterans. Patriotism means keeping faith with those who have worn the uniform of the United States. This Administration has broken its promises to our veterans – raising their health costs and reducing their access to care. John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democrats will keep faith with our veterans. We will continue the fight for mandatory funding for veterans' health care and we will make sure that disabled veterans and military retirees are not penalized with reductions in their pension benefits. And we will aggressively address the inexcusable backlogs in veterans' compensation and pension claims.

We believe in an America where health care is available and affordable. Where every family looks to the future with hope and excitement, without worry that the cost of health care is becoming too great to bear. Where strong, healthy families build a stronger America.

## **IMPROVING EDUCATION**

The simple bargain at the heart of the American Dream offers opportunity to every American who takes the responsibility to make the most of it. That bargain is the great source of American strength, because it unleashes the amazing talent and determination of our people. And as our people seize the opportunity to build a better life, they build a stronger country.

Today, our people compete with workers on every continent. Information flows across oceans. High-wage jobs are more dependent than ever on high-level skills.

Now, as never before, education is the key to opportunity, essential to a strong America. So we believe in an America that offers the best education to all our children – wherever they live, whatever their background. Period.

We believe in an America where every child comes to school ready to learn. Where every student is held to high standards, and every school has the resources and responsibility to meet those standards. Where every classroom has a great teacher, and

every student gets enough personal attention to foster a talent or overcome a difficulty. We believe in an America where every teenager completes a rigorous high school curriculum. Where every qualified young person who wants to go to college can afford it. And where every adult who needs additional job training can get it.

In President George Bush's America, our government ignores the shameful truth that the quality of a child's education depends on the wealth of that child's neighborhood. Our best public schools are the best schools in the world, but too many children go to schools that just don't work. Too many children who beat the odds and succeed in school can't afford to go on to college. And too many adults who need added training aren't able to get it.

For this White House, education is an easy promise – easy come, and easy go. When President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act, he said the right things – asking more from our schools and pledging to give them the resources to get the job done. And then he promptly broke his word, providing schools \$27 billion less than he had promised, literally leaving millions of children behind.

The President also gets a failing grade for higher education. Over the last three years, college tuitions have risen by 35 percent, pricing 220,000 students out of college. Yet while then-Governor Bush promised to increase college aid, President Bush tried to charge more for student loans and eliminate Pell Grants for 84,000 students.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe that a strong America begins at home with strong families, and that strong families need the best schools. We believe schools must teach fundamental skills like math and science, and fundamental values like citizenship and responsibility. We believe providing resources without reform is a waste of money, and reform without resources is a waste of time. And we believe politicians who expect students to learn responsibility should start by keeping their own promises.

*Meeting our responsibilities.* Under John Kerry and John Edwards, we will offer high quality early learning opportunities, smaller classes, more after school activities, and more individualized attention for our students, particularly students with special needs, gifts, and talents. The federal government will meet its financial obligations for elementary and secondary education and for special education.

*A great teacher in every classroom.* Continuing the fight for reform, we will make an intensive effort to put a great teacher in every classroom. Nothing has a bigger impact than a teacher on the quality of a child's education. We need to do more to attract and retain teachers, more to encourage their excellence, and more to ensure that all teachers are offering high-quality teaching. We must raise pay for teachers, especially in the schools and subjects where great teachers are in the shortest supply. We must improve mentoring, professional development, and new technology training for teachers, instead of leaving them to sink or swim. At the same time, we must create rigorous new incentives and tests for new teachers. We need new rewards for teachers who go the extra mile and excel in helping children learn. And teachers deserve due process protection from arbitrary dismissal, but we must have fast, fair procedures for improving or removing teachers who do not perform on the job.

Parents are our children's first and most important teachers, and they have a responsibility to participate in their children's education. We will help them do so by offering information and resources to better teach their children, whether reminding them about homework or attending a parent-teacher conference.

*Securing high achievement for all.* Vast achievement gaps persist in America. Nearly half of African-American, Latino, and American Indian youth don't graduate high school. We believe in the potential of every child and we will not accept this loss of talent. Because education in the earliest years of a child's life is critical, we will expand and improve preschool and Head Start initiatives with the goal of offering these opportunities to all children. Because children need safe, loving, and disciplined homes in order to learn, we will work on a bipartisan basis to reform foster care. And we will undertake a national campaign to raise graduation rates by raising student achievement, expecting more from schools, reaching out to troubled youth with mentoring and tutoring, and strengthening the basic high school curriculum. We will meet these challenges together—parents, teachers, principals, educational support professionals and paraprofessionals, along with universities, community-based and faith-based organizations.

*Making schools work for children.* We will use testing to advance real learning, not undermine it, by developing high-quality assessments that measure the complex skills students need to develop. We will make sure that federal law operates with high standards and common sense, not just bureaucratic rigidity. Instead of pushing private school vouchers that funnel scarce dollars away from the public schools, we will support public school choice, including charter schools and magnet schools that meet the same high standards as other schools. And at a time when so many schools charged with our future are relics of the past, we will build new schools and offer the technology and equipment for a 21st century education.

*Making college affordable.* With the leadership of John Kerry and John Edwards, we will make college more affordable, so that more young people get higher education, and more of those who graduate get relief from the crushing burden of debt. We will make student aid faster and simpler to get so students aren't scared off by the complicated process. We will offer generous tax credits to reduce the price of four years of college for all students, including those who pay their own way and can least afford college now. We will strengthen our aid programs for students while eliminating wasteful subsidies for lenders. At a time when all good jobs increasingly depend on advanced skills, we will strengthen technical training for those who do not attend college. Finally, we must place a special emphasis on expanding achievement in math and science. These are subjects where America has always led the world and must continue to lead in the 21st century.

*Teaching good citizenship and good values.* We must remain committed to the moral and civic dimensions of education. Education requires the engagement of the whole community in order to teach the whole child. Students should learn responsibility in our schools, and students who are irresponsible—using drugs or bringing violence into schools—must face strict discipline. We should support character education in our elementary and secondary schools and community service as a condition of graduation from high schools. We should also give back to those who give to America, in the tradition of the G.I. Bill and AmeriCorps.

The promise of America is the promise of opportunity. If we are going to keep that promise, every child should have a great teacher and every high school graduate should have the chance to go to college. Nothing less is good enough for America.

## PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

For generations, Americans of all political beliefs have understood that the protection of our environment and the stewardship of our land are vital to the strength of our nation. God gave America extraordinary natural gifts; it is our responsibility to protect them. The health of our families, the strength of our economy, and the well-being of our world all depend upon a clean environment.

But in President George Bush's government, where polluters actually write environmental laws and oil company profits matter more than hard science and cold facts, protecting the environment doesn't matter at all.

Even though 133 million Americans already live with unhealthy air, the Bush Administration bowed to energy industry lobbying and rewrote rules to allow 20,000 facilities to spew more smog, soot, and mercury into the air. Even though public water systems in many cities are polluted, they have taken environmental cops off the beat and pushed to allow more arsenic in our water. Even though the President promised more than five billion dollars for our national parks, he has delivered a fraction of that, leaving trails closed, historic structures collapsing, and our parks losing luster. And even though overwhelming scientific evidence shows that global climate change is a scientific fact, this administration has rewritten government reports to hide that fact.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe in a stronger, safer, healthier America. A strong America depends on healthy families, and healthy families depend on fresh air, pure water, and clean neighborhoods.

These are our commitments: we will make our air cleaner and our water purer. We will ensure our children can safely play in our neighborhoods, our families can enjoy our national parks, and our sportsmen can hunt and fish in our lakes and forests. We will foster a healthy economy and a healthy environment by promoting new technologies that create good jobs and improve our world. And we will work with our allies to achieve these goals and to protect the global environment, for this generation and future generations.

We reject the false choice between a healthy economy and a healthy environment. We know instead that farming, fishing, tourism, and other industries require a healthy environment. We know new technologies that protect the environment can create new high-paying jobs. We know a cleaner environment means a stronger economy.

*Cleaner air.* We will strengthen protection for our air by making our government and our markets work together. We will strengthen the Clean Air Act, by controlling all of the top pollutants and offering new flexibility to industries that commit to cleaning up within that framework. We will reduce mercury emissions, smog and acid rain, and will address the challenge of climate change with the seriousness of purpose this great challenge demands. Rather than looking at American industries only as polluters, we will work with the private sector to create partnerships that make a profit and a cleaner world for us all. At the same time, we will plug Republican-created legal loopholes and renew public enforcement of the law.

*Cleaner water and healthier communities.* We will work with communities to reduce water pollution—not only from factories, but also from large corporate farms, storm water runoff, and sewer overflows. We will bring environmental justice to low-income, rural, and minority communities, using federal resources to improve public health and spur economic development by cleaning

up polluted sites. We will restore the "polluter pays" principle to fund the cleanup of the most polluted sites, so that those who cause environmental problems pay to fix them. We will protect Nevada and its communities from the high-level nuclear waste dump at Yucca mountain which has not been proven to be safe by sound science.

*Protecting public lands.* We will use our natural resources to fuel our economy, but end Republican giveaways to special interests that exploit public lands without regard for environmental consequences. We will require companies to restore leased lands to their original state after their work is done. And we will make sure our government treats our national parks with the same respect and care that millions of families show each year when they visit.

*Honoring our hunting and fishing heritage.* We are committed to protecting the lands used by hunters and anglers, and we will open millions of new acres of land to public hunting and fishing.

We will conserve and restore the habitats where wildlife flourish, expanding use of voluntary, incentive-based programs that target private landowners.

*International leadership to protect the global environment.* We know that America's fight for a healthy environment cannot be waged within our borders alone. Environmental hazards from around the globe reach America through the oceans and the jet streams encircling our planet. And climate change is a major international challenge that requires global leadership from the United States, not abdication. We must restore American leadership on this issue as well as others such as hazardous waste emissions and depleted fisheries

This great land has been placed in our hands for safekeeping. It is our responsibility to protect it. We will exercise that responsibility with the courage to take on special interests, the creativity to promote new technologies, the determination to reassert our global leadership, and the commitment to achieve real results. That is how we will ensure that God's gifts of nature bless all of God's children for generations to come.

## **A STRONG AMERICAN COMMUNITY**

American history is the story of a diverse people striving – sometimes fitfully, but in the end, faithfully – to realize our ideals: a common dream of equality, and opportunity, freedom and community. Each step along that path has made us stronger.

This year we recall two of our country's greatest steps toward equality and inclusion – fifty years ago, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and forty years ago, the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Those great achievements of the civil rights movement strengthened America immeasurably—by breaking down the legal barriers to equal citizenship for African-Americans and expanding the circle of equal opportunity for all. This year, as we celebrate these anniversaries, we recommit to the spirit of service that secured these breakthroughs and the values they embody: all of our people should have the opportunity to fulfill all of their potential, and each of us should be as equal in the eyes of the law as we are in the eyes of God.

That is the America we believe in. That is the America we are fighting for. That is the America we will build together.

President Bush has a different vision – instead of searching for common ground to bring our people together, he has sought political advantage in driving our people apart. He has neglected the opportunity of most Americans, choosing instead to lavish

resources on those who need them least. He has rejected the American vision of greater equality, appointing judges more interested in rolling back rights than protecting them. Perhaps most striking of all, in a time of war, he has abandoned our great tradition of asking Americans to meet shared challenges in a spirit of shared sacrifice. This President has regularly governed for the benefit of special interests, not the public interest.

John Kerry, John Edwards and the Democratic Party believe in a better America, more equal, more free – *more American*. We believe in common service to our commonwealth. And we will restore the commitment to ethics in government.

Our commitment to civil rights is ironclad. We will restore vigorous federal enforcement of our civil rights laws for all our people, from fair housing to equal employment opportunity, from Title IX to the Americans with Disabilities Act. We support affirmative action to redress discrimination and to achieve the diversity from which all Americans benefit. We believe a day's work is worth a day's pay, and at a time when women still earn 77 cents for every dollar earned by men, we need stronger equal pay laws and stronger enforcement of them. We will enact the bipartisan legislation barring workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. We are committed to equal treatment of all service members and believe all patriotic Americans should be allowed to serve our country without discrimination, persecution, or violence. We support the appointment of judges who will uphold our laws and constitutional rights, not their own narrow agendas.

Voting is the foundation of democracy, a central act of civic engagement, and an expression of equal citizenship. Voting rights are important precisely because they are protective of all other rights. We will call for legislative action that will fully protect and enforce the fundamental Constitutional right of every American to vote – to ensure that the Constitution's promise is fully realized and that, in disputed elections, every vote is counted fully and fairly.

To advance these goals, and to guarantee the integrity of our elections and to increase voter confidence, we will seek action to ensure that voting systems are accessible, independently auditable, accurate, and secure. We will support the full funding of programs to realize this goal. Finally, it is the priority of the Democratic Party to fulfill the promise of election reform, reauthorize the expiring provisions of the Voting Rights Act, and vigorously enforce all our voting rights laws.

Our voting procedures are observed by people and nations around the world. Every vote must count and every vote must be counted, including absentee ballots. To achieve all of our goals, we support moving toward a census that duly counts every American. And we support the election of candidates who express the many voices of America.

Because our democracy thrives on public access to diverse sources of information from multiple sources, we support measures to ensure diversity, competition, and localism in media ownership.

We will defend the dignity of all Americans against those who would undermine it. Because we believe in the privacy and equality of women, we stand proudly for a woman's right to choose, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, and regardless of her ability to pay. We stand firmly against Republican efforts to undermine that right. At the same time, we strongly support family planning and adoption incentives. Abortion should be safe, legal, and rare.

Racial and religious profiling is wrong and we will work to stamp it out. Hate crimes desecrate sacred spaces and demean good people, and we support a strong national law to punish them.

We will extend the promise of citizenship to those still struggling for freedom. Today's immigration laws do not reflect our values or serve our security, and we will work for real reform. The solution is not to establish a massive new status of second-class workers; that betrays our values and hurts all working people. Undocumented immigrants within our borders who clear a background check, work hard and pay taxes should have a path to earn full participation in America. We will hasten family reunification for parents and children, husbands and wives, and offer more English-language and civic education classes so immigrants can assume all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. As we undertake these steps, we will work with our neighbors to strengthen our security so we are safer from those who would come here to harm us. We are a nation of immigrants, and from Arab-Americans in California to Latinos in Florida, we share the dream of a better life in the country we love.

We support full inclusion of gay and lesbian families in the life of our nation and seek equal responsibilities, benefits, and protections for these families. In our country, marriage has been defined at the state level for 200 years, and we believe it should continue to be defined there. We repudiate President Bush's divisive effort to politicize the Constitution by pursuing a "Federal Marriage Amendment." Our goal is to bring Americans together, not drive them apart.

We will honor our nation's tradition of equal justice under law. President Bush and Attorney General Ashcroft believe they can claim powers above and beyond the law of the land. As Democrats and Americans, we yield to no one in our commitment to do everything necessary to win the war on terror. But we can and must win that war without sacrificing the values we are defending. America must be strong *and* free.

As we encourage democracy around the world, we must extend democracy here at home. We support equal rights to democratic self-government and Congressional representation for the citizens of our nation's capital.

We believe that four million disenfranchised American citizens residing in Puerto Rico have the right to the permanent and fully democratic status of their choice. The White House and Congress will clarify the realistic status options for Puerto Rico and enable Puerto Ricans to choose among them.

We support full self-government for the people of Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands, and their right to decide their future status.

For all those who live under our flag, we support strong economic development and fair and equitable treatment under federal programs.

We honor the sovereignty of American Indians and reaffirm our commitment to respectful and meaningful government-to-government relations. We must renew the trust obligations that this Administration has disregarded, and must improve the education, health, and job opportunities for American Indians who too often face terrible poverty.

We honor the central place of faith in the lives of our people. Like our Founders, we believe that our nation, our communities, and our lives are made vastly stronger and richer by faith and the countless acts of justice and mercy it inspires. We will strengthen the role of faith-based organizations in meeting challenges like homelessness, youth violence, and other social problems. At the same time, we will honor First Amendment protections and not allow public funds to be used to proselytize or discriminate. Throughout history, communities of faith have brought comfort to the afflicted and shaped great movements for justice. We know they will continue to do so, and we will always protect all Americans' freedom to worship.

We pledge to stand up for our beliefs and rally Americans to our cause. But we recognize that disagreements will remain, and we believe disagreement should not mean disrespect. Members of our party have deeply held and differing views on some matters of conscience and faith. We view diversity of views as a source of strength, and we welcome into our ranks all Americans who seek to build a stronger America. We are committed to resolving our differences in a spirit of civility, hope and mutual respect.

That's the America we believe in.

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*APP Note: The American Presidency Project used July 27, 2004, the date the platform was approved at the Democratic National Convention.*

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