

U.S Democratic National Convention: Platform for Deception - Democrats at Work

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"Our job is to pass the most progressive platform in the history of the Democratic Party" - [Bernie Sanders campaign statement](#)

"[This is] the most ambitious and progressive platform our party has ever seen" - [Maya Harris, Clinton policy adviser](#)

The Sanders campaign has more than enough principled reasons to resist conventional political wisdom and [carry on its campaign](#) at least into convention floor fights and street demonstrations, not least because Democrats are acting as if they want only to co-opt Sanders supporters and send the Sanders political revolution down the memory hole.

Taken together, the two comments above frame the Democrats' attempt at a "Mission Accomplished" moment for the party's platform draft for 2016. Anyone who wants to read the full text and judge it independently is asking for too much participatory democracy. The Democratic National Committee online offers [only two platforms, both from 2015](#). The Democratic National Convention online offers a [press release summarizing](#) the 30-page platform draft, but not the document itself. The apparent purpose of this approach is to persuade people that the party has taken Bernie Sanders into the fold and his followers should now fall in love and fall in line with the Democratic Party. And that's the spin the party got in early coverage from the [Washington Post](#), Associated Press, [N.Y. Daily News](#), CNN ("[Clinton campaign hails progressive Democratic platform](#)"), [The Hill](#), and others.

Conventional wisdom has it that party platforms are not to be taken all that seriously, since politicians are notorious for breaking promises, and platforms aren't binding on candidates anyway. But what about the circumstance where the party platform is made up not only of promises, but of many real and veiled threats? How seriously should we take that? Robert Reich suggests that Hillary [Clinton's lack of a progressive vision](#) for the country enhances the chances of a Donald Trump presidency.

No wonder, then, that the Democratic Party is working to create the image of a progressive party where there is none. DNC Chairwoman Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz thanked the platform committee for "a platform draft that advances our party's progressive ideals and is worthy of our great country." Platform Drafting Committee Chair Rep. Elijah Cummings said, "The draft platform we have produced in an open and transparent manner reflects our priorities as Democrats and demonstrates our vision for this nation." To support these claims, [the DNC press release](#) highlights "key progressive policies" in the platform draft, some of which are perennial promises of pie-in-the-sky coming closer to earth. It also leaves

out some things that progressives might find important. The following checklist, based on limited available information, is necessarily incomplete in the absence of the 30-page platform draft itself. And in any event, the meaningfulness of any of these platform planks (or omissions) is dependent on the will of a party that has been becoming less and less progressive for thirty years.

Jobs. It's "the most ambitious jobs plan on record," and the sky is full of pie. Focus on restoring infrastructure and revitalizing decaying communities seems encouraging, but that's about as specific as it gets.

Minimum Wage. The committee said a minimum wage of \$15 an hour is a nice idea, but rejected the Sanders proposal to actually raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The Clinton members of the committee also rejected indexing any minimum wage to inflation.

Education. For public schools, the platform "reaffirmed Democrats' commitment to supporting teachers, schools and communities." Re-thinking federal mandates, not so much. College education for all who qualify, even less. Eliminating (or just mitigating) student debt, not at all.

Death Penalty. "This is the first time in the Democratic Party's history" that it has called for abolishing the death penalty. A little late, but all the same progress from 1992, when Bill Clinton found it politically expedient to rush back to Arkansas to make sure his state killed a retarded man.

Trade: "Existing deals must be continuously re-examined and enforcement of those existing agreements must be tougher." Not tough enough now, with [TransCanada suing the US under NAFTA](#) for delaying their Keystone XL pipeline? Not a word about that. And [not a word about the pending TPP](#) (Trans-Pacific Partnership), opposed by Sanders, sort of opposed by Clinton, but supported by President Obama, so the committee felt politically hog-tied and punted (if you can imagine such contortions). The platform says, "A higher standard [undefined] must be applied to any future trade agreements." Really?

Earned Income Tax Credit. The DNC calls this "looking out for working people," and it helps, but not in day-to-day living, only once a year. Expanding it is a feel-good idea with minimal real impact.

Wall Street Reform. The platform promises expanded regulatory controls, like the ones the party refused to adopt when it could in 2009-2010. The platform hints at adopting a "modernized" Glass-Steagall Act, the one the party abolished to make the crash of 2007 possible, if not inevitable. And the party dangles the bait of breaking up too-big-to-fail institutions that threaten economic stability, a break-up the Obama administration made sure didn't happen. The platform appears to ignore "private equity" threats entirely.

Multi-Millionaire Surtax. The platform is long on rhetoric ("ensuring millionaires can no longer pay a lower [tax] rate than their secretaries"), but short on specifics. [Wealth disparity](#), in any form, is not addressed.

Expanding Social Security. The platform first promises to "fight every effort to cut, privatize, or weaken Social Security," but neglects to mention restoring cost-of-living increases. The committee adopted an amendment promising to expand Social Security, paying for the

expansion by taxing annual incomes above \$250,000 (roughly five times the [American median household income](#))

Immigration. The platform draft specifically supports “keeping families together, ending family detention, closing private detention centers, and guaranteeing legal counsel for all unaccompanied minors in immigration proceedings,” as well as “comprehensive immigration reform” without other specifics. The platform is silent on deportation, which has been higher under President Obama than any previous president.

Universal Healthcare. Reiterating its decades-old assertion that “health care is a right,” the platform promotes the Affordable Care Act as a success to build on. The committee, like the president in 2009, explicitly rejected single-payer, Medicare-for-all, despite its manifest popularity and superiority over any other available plan. The Clinton people would have none of it. Universal health care is not even serious pie-in-the-sky.

Honoring Tribal Nations. The committee “unanimously adopted the most comprehensive language ever in the party’s platform recognizing our moral and legal responsibility to honor the sovereignty of and relationship to Indigenous tribes – and acknowledge previous failures to live up to that responsibility.” That’s it, no specifics. No promise to clean up [uranium contamination on Navajo land](#), for example.

Climate Change And Clean Energy. In an apparent rebuke to the president’s “all of the above” energy non-strategy, the committee adopted a joint Sanders-Clinton proposal “to commit to making America run entirely on clean energy by mid-century.” This would actually be a radical proposal, if the party actually meant it. But the committee also flatly rejected any carbon tax to reduce greenhouse gasses and it flatly rejected any freeze on natural gas fracking, leaving the air, underground water, and earthquake-prone areas as vulnerable as ever to the largely unregulated, destructive process. The committee also [rejected a ban on fossil fuel drilling](#) on federal land or in federal waters.

Reproductive Rights. According to the DNC, the “platform goes further than previous Democratic platforms on women’s reproductive rights,” which is a measure of how weak previous platforms were. This platform defends Planned Parenthood, opposes the [1973 Helms Amendment](#) (limited US spending abroad on abortion), and opposes the [1976 Hyde Amendment](#) (limiting domestic federal expenditures on abortion).

Criminal Justice Reform. The platform draft “calls for ending the era of mass incarceration, shutting down private prisons, ending racial profiling, reforming the grand jury process, investing in re-entry programs, banning the box to help give people a second chance and prioritizing treatment over incarceration for individuals suffering addiction.” This is tantamount to rejection of Clinton-era “reform,” as well as an implied rebuke to the sitting president, who has done little to end these horrors.

Marijuana. The platform does not come close to supporting legalization, but is for “supporting states that choose to decriminalize marijuana,” without specifying how such support would be expressed (no mention, for example, of removing [the stupid federal classification of cannabis](#) as a Schedule I Controlled Substance). The committee adopted an amendment recognizing the racial disparity of the impact of marijuana laws on African Americans (and other minorities), but stopped short of saying what, if anything, to do about that injustice.

That is the last item in the full list of issues the DNC chose to highlight from the platform draft adopted (with [Cornel West abstaining](#)) on June 25. Unsurprisingly, the DNC did not offer a comprehensive list of all the platform issues, ignoring Israel, for example, although it was [reported elsewhere](#):

Israel. Israel was very much on the platform committee's mind, and the committee rejected a proposal that the US should oppose Israel's ongoing illegal occupation and colonization of the West Bank. The draft platform reflects Clinton's support for the mirage of a "two state solution" of some sort (not specified). The platform does stake out [two new positions for the party](#): first, that Palestinians "should be free to govern themselves in their own viable state, in peace and in dignity" and second, that Democrats "oppose any effort to delegitimize Israel, including at the United Nations or through the [Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions \[BDS\] Movement](#)." It's not clear how Democrats will justify both supporting Israel's illegal occupation and opposing the entirely legal BDS Movement.

Iraq And Syria. Although untouted by the DNC, the platform also calls for "more inclusive governance" in Iraq and Syria. What, you thought there was a war there or something? Seriously.

And then there's the highly uncertain, open-ended list of issues possibly important to the American people, but that go apparently unmentioned by the DNC and media coverage. Or maybe they're there and being ignored:

Assault Weapons. Contrary to what you thought you saw on TV, Democrats have no apparent platform plank dealing with assault weapons, 100-shot clips, background checks, or any other aspect of gun regulation. Not a mumbling word.

Military Budget. \$600 billion a year for what? Not worth asking.

Intelligence Budgets. Billions more, much in black budgets, and for what? You'd better not ask.

Terrorism. In the unlikely event that terrorism were actually omitted, that would be a sign of maturity and intellectual integrity, moving away from fear-mongering. It *could* happen, right?

Terror War in Yemen. Yes, the Saudis are the international war criminals fronting for US, but our hands are bloody. And the profits are good, so why bring it up in a party platform? Have you forgotten how divisive Viet Nam was?

Afghanistan. Not a word about America's longest war. Long may it wave.

Iran. Saudi Arabia. Turkey. Libya. Etc., etc. Nothing revealed.

Poverty. There are 47 million poor people in America, as Sanders repeatedly points out. They are as invisible in the Democratic platform as they are in everyday life. Why have we become a country where it's considered a tolerable response to round up homeless people and ship them off to somewhere else, anywhere else but here? The platform is as oblivious to America's poor as to the world's poor.

The omissions go on and on – what is the Democratic Party's policy toward any of the unaddressed issues out there? In favor of war in Ukraine? Itching for Naval confrontation in

South China Sea? Wanting to accept England as our 51st state? Who knows? If this is the most progressive party platform the Democrats have ever seen, then the Democrats have never seen a truly progressive platform. Not that that is any reason to stop the shuck and jive.

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