

2016 ELECTION SPECIAL

TWO VISIONS, TWO AMERICAS: PLATFORMS

DEMOCRATIC & REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORMS

WHERE THEY STAND ON THE ISSUES

Compiled By *Decision* magazine

Many decisions are made at the president's desk, but the major political party to which he or she belongs wields significant power over which domestic and international policies are advanced and what becomes law. Here is a summary of the parties' positions on some of the vital issues facing the country.

ISSUE	DEMOCRATIC	REPUBLICAN
SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE	Democrats seek to repeal the 1976 Hyde Amendment so that federal funds can be used to pay for abortions. The platform says, "We will continue to stand up to Republican efforts to defund Planned Parenthood health centers." Democrats support ratification of UN efforts that affirm "the reproductive rights of women" globally.	The GOP asserts the sanctity of human life and affirms, "The unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed." The party supports a Human Life Amendment making clear that the 14th Amendment's protections apply to children before birth, and it salutes states that require informed consent, parental consent, waiting periods and clinic regulation.
MARRIAGE	Democrats applaud last year's Supreme Court ruling that "LGBT people—like other Americans—have the right to marry the person they love."	The GOP platform condemns the Supreme Court's rulings that removed the ability of Congress and the people to define marriage as the union of one man and one woman. The GOP urges the reversal of those decisions, whether through judicial reconsideration or a constitutional amendment.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM	The Democratic platform says: “We support a progressive vision of religious freedom that respects pluralism and rejects the misuse of religion to discriminate.” The party opposes a religious test to bar immigrants or refugees from entering the country.	Republicans affirm that religious freedom in the Bill of Rights protects the right of the people to practice their faith in their everyday lives. The platform endorses the First Amendment Defense Act, which would protect faith-based institutions and individuals from government discrimination.
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FEDERAL JUDGES	The platform says: “We will appoint judges who defend the constitutional principles of liberty and equality for all, and will protect a woman’s right to safe and legal abortion.”	The GOP platform states: “A critical threat to our country’s constitutional order is an activist judiciary that usurps powers properly reserved to the people through other branches of government.” The GOP supports the appointment of justices and judges who respect the constitutional limits on their power and respect the authority of the states.
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NATIONAL DEFENSE	The Democratic platform says that while the military is crucial, decreased military spending is necessary. The party also favors reducing excessive spending on nuclear weapons. The platform notes that it is “proud of the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell and the opening of combat positions to women.”	The Republican platform favors building and maintaining a strong military as the path to peace and security. The party seeks to restore the nation’s military might and to rebuild troop numbers. The GOP would abandon treaties that benefit adversaries and would modernize the U.S. nuclear arsenal.
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<p>TERRORISM</p>	<p>The Democratic platform uses firm language to say we “must defeat” global terrorism, though noting a preference for “diplomacy and development, to confront global threats and ensure war is a last resort.” The party favors improving international intelligence capabilities to defend against external and homegrown threats.</p>	<p>The GOP asserts that the Iran deal does not have treaty status and has only emboldened the regime in Tehran in sponsoring terrorism. The platform says, “We must stand up for our friends, challenge our foes, and destroy ISIS.” It calls for governmental aid to Christian communities under genocidal attack in cities like Erbil.</p>
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<p>HUMAN RIGHTS</p>	<p>The Democratic platform recognizes gay rights as a human right, and party leaders have tied international development funds in poor countries to adherence to the LGBT agenda. According to the platform, “We will continue to stand with LGBT people around the world, including fighting efforts by any nation to infringe on LGBT rights or ignore abuse.”</p>	<p>The GOP platform states: “To those who stand in the darkness of tyranny, America has always been a beacon of hope, and so it must remain.” The party seeks a radical rethinking of our human rights diplomacy, adopting a “whole of government” approach in which human rights issues are integrated at every appropriate level of our relationships with other nations.</p>
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<p>IMMIGRATION</p>	<p>The party platform denounces Donald Trump’s suggested ban on immigrants from countries (mostly Muslim) known to train and equip terrorists.</p>	<p>Republicans oppose any form of amnesty for those who have entered illegally. The party supports building a border wall and refusing entrance to refugees who cannot be carefully vetted, especially those whose homelands have “been the breeding grounds for terrorism.”</p>
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<p>INTERNET SAFETY AND DECENCY</p>	<p>The platform supports “a free and open internet at home and abroad.” The party would seek to strengthen cybersecurity while “protecting the privacy and civil liberties of the American people.”</p>	<p>The platform states: “The internet must not become a safe haven for predators. Pornography, with its harmful effects, especially on children, has become a public health crisis that is destroying the lives of millions.”</p>
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<p>ADDRESSING POVERTY</p>	<p>Democrats will “direct more federal resources to lifting up communities that have been left out and left behind.” The party would build more affordable rental housing units and seek to “create good-paying jobs and enhance opportunities by investing in small business, youth employment, and reentry programs for formerly incarcerated people.”</p>	<p>The GOP says that instead of government handouts that keep people dependent, “We propose ... the dynamic compassion of work requirements in a growing economy, where opportunity takes the place of a hand-out, where true self-esteem can grow from the satisfaction of a job well done.”</p>
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<p>LAW AND ORDER</p>	<p>The Democratic platform seeks to abolish the death penalty, “which has proven to be a cruel and unusual form of punishment. It has no place in the United States of America.” The party would reform mandatory minimum sentences, close private prisons, end racial profiling and train officers in de-escalation.</p>	<p>The GOP decries the creation of new “crimes” by unelected civil servants and political appointees and sees this as federal overreach. The platform emphasizes restorative justice, including guidance by faith-based institutions. It notes that the death penalty is firmly settled by the Fifth Amendment and opposes efforts to erode this right.</p>
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<p>ISRAEL AND JERUSALEM</p>	<p>The platform states: “We will always support Israel’s right to defend itself, including by retaining its qualitative military edge, and oppose any effort to delegitimize Israel. ... While Jerusalem is a matter for final status negotiations, it should remain the capital of Israel, an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths.”</p>	<p>Republicans express “unequivocal support for Israel,” pointing out that it is the only Middle Eastern country with freedom of speech and freedom of religion. The GOP recognizes “Jerusalem as the eternal and indivisible capital of the Jewish state.” The party opposes the U.N.’s treatment of Israel as a pariah state.</p>
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