



2012 Party Platforms

Comparison of Disability-related Issues

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I Disability Mentions

While the Republican and Democratic party platforms included specific sections on people with disabilities, both also included mention of people with disabilities in other platform issue sections. The Republican platform included mention of people with disabilities in its sections on civil rights*, international issues*, Medicaid, and education while the Democratic platform mentioned people with disabilities in its sections on civil rights, Social Security and Medicare, voting, and poverty. The language is excerpted directly from the Republican and Democratic party platforms.

	Republican	Democratic
Americans with Disabilities	Advancing Americans with Disabilities. We renew our commitment to the inclusion of Americans with disabilities in all aspects of our national life. In keeping with that commitment, we oppose the non-consensual withholding of care or treatment from people with disabilities, including newborns, as well as the elderly and infirm, just as we oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide, which endanger especially those on the margins of society. Because government should set a positive standard in hiring and contracting for the services of persons with disabilities, we need to update the statutory authority for the Ability One program, a major avenue by which those productive members of our society can offer high quality services. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has opened up unprecedented opportunities for many students,	Americans with Disabilities. No one should face discrimination based on disability status. President Obama and the Democratic Party will continue to lead efforts to facilitate the access of Americans with disabilities to the middle class, employment opportunities, and the ability to lead full, productive, and satisfying lives. The administration and the Democratic Party are committed to assisting the approximately 50 million people in this country living with disabilities, assuring their full integration into society. This administration has committed to hiring 100,000 Americans with disabilities within the federal government by 2015, and has proposed new rules to create employment opportunities with federal contractors. We are committed to expanding access to employment for people with disabilities and removing barriers to work. The Affordable Care Act is

	and we reaffirm our support for its goal of minimizing the separation of children with disabilities from their peers. We urge preventive efforts in early childhood, especially assistance in gaining pre-reading skills, to help many students move beyond the need for IDEA's protections. We endorse the program of Employment First, developed by major disability rights groups, to replace dependency with jobs in the mainstream of the American workforce.	opening access to health insurance to Americans with disabilities who were previously excluded because of pre-existing conditions, expanding access to Medicaid, and helping Medicaid to support home- and community-based services to keep people in their communities. Further, the President issued an executive order repealing the restrictions on embryonic stem cell research and signed into law the Christopher and Dana Reeves Paralysis Act, the first piece of comprehensive legislation aimed at improving the lives of Americans living with paralysis. Democrats are committed to ensuring that Americans with disabilities can exercise their right to vote and have access to the polls. We will continue to oppose all efforts to weaken the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, and we will vigorously enforce laws that prevent discrimination. And the President and the Democratic Party will fiercely oppose the harsh cuts in Medicaid that would inevitably lead to no or significantly less health care for millions of Americans with disabilities, workers with disabilities, and families raising children with autism, Down Syndrome, and other serious disabilities.
Civil Rights*	We The People: A Restoration of Constitutional Government ... In the spirit of the Constitution, we consider discrimination based on sex, race, age, religion, creed, disability, or national origin unacceptable and immoral. We will strongly enforce antidiscrimination statutes and ask all to join us in rejecting the forces of hatred and bigotry and in denouncing all who practice or promote racism, anti-Semitism, ethnic prejudice, or religious intolerance. We support efforts to help low-income individuals get a fair chance based on their potential and individual merit; but we reject preferences, quotas, and set-asides as the best or sole methods through which fairness can be achieved, whether in government, education, or corporate boardrooms. In a free society, the primary role of government is to protect the God-given, inalienable, inherent rights of its citizens, including the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Merit, ability, aptitude, and results should be the factors that determine advancement in our society.	Civil Rights. We believe in an America where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody plays by the same set of rules. At the core of the Democratic Party is the principle that no one should face discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability status. Democrats support our civil rights statutes and we have stepped up enforcement of laws that prohibit discrimination in the workplace and other settings.

	The Ninth Amendment: Affirming the People's Rights... The Sanctity and Dignity of Human Life. Faithful to the "self-evident" truths enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, we assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed.... We oppose the non-consensual withholding or withdrawal of care or treatment, including food and water, from people with disabilities, including newborns, as well as the elderly and infirm, just as we oppose active and passive euthanasia and assisted suicide.	
Inter-national*	American Exceptionalism... Sovereign American Leadership in International Organizations. ... Under our Constitution, treaties become the law of the land. So it is all the more important that the Congress – the Senate through its ratifying power and the House through its appropriating power – shall reject agreements whose long-range impact on the American family is ominous or unclear. These include the U.N. Convention on Women's Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the U.N. Arms Trade Treaty as well as the various declarations from the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development....	
Education	Consumer Choice in Education The bulk of the federal money through Title I for low-income children and through IDEA for disabled youngsters should follow the students to whatever school they choose so that eligible pupils, through open enrollment, can bring their share of the funding with them.	
Voting		Voting Rights. We believe the right to vote and to have your vote counted is an essential American freedom, and we oppose laws that place unnecessary restrictions on those seeking to exercise that freedom. Democrats have a proud history of standing up for the right to vote. During the Obama

		administration, the Justice Department has initiated careful, thorough, and independent reviews of proposed voting changes, and it has prevented states from implementing voter identification laws that would be harmful to minority voters. Democrats know that voter identification laws can disproportionately burden young voters, people of color, low-income families, people with disabilities , and the elderly, and we refuse to allow the use of political pretexts to disenfranchise American citizens.
Poverty		Poverty. But there is still more work to do. Democrats believe that we must raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation. We will continue to fight for equal pay for equal work, a strong labor movement, and access to a world-class education for every child. We will help lift people with disabilities out of poverty. We understand that poverty disproportionately affects communities of color and we are committed to working with those most affected by poverty. We will continue the improvements in refundable tax credits for low-income families to encourage work and education while lifting families out of poverty. To enhance access and equity in employment, education, and business opportunities, we encourage initiatives to remove barriers to equal opportunity that still exist in America. We will expand the Promise Neighborhoods Program to prepare more students for college.

II Entitlements

The three major entitlement programs – Medicaid, Medicare, & Social Security - are a lifeline for people with disabilities. They are by far the largest source of health care, long term services & supports, and income maintenance for people with significant disabilities. Below are the sections where these entitlement programs were mentioned in the party platforms. The language is excerpted directly from the Republican and Democratic party platforms.

	Republican	Democratic
Medicaid	Strengthening Medicaid in the States ... Medicaid, as the dominant payer in the health market in regards to long-term care, births, and individuals with mental illness, is the next frontier of welfare reform. It is simply too big and too flawed to be managed in its current condition from Washington. Republican Governors have taken the lead in proposing a host of regulatory changes that could make the program more flexible, innovative, and accountable. There should be alternatives to hospitalization for chronic health problems. Patients could be rewarded for participating in disease prevention activities. Excessive mandates on coverage should be eliminated. Patients with long-term care needs might fare better in a separately designed program. As those and other specific proposals show, Republican Governors and State legislatures are ready to do the hard work of modernizing Medicaid for the twenty-first century. We propose to let them do all that and more by block-granting the program to the States, providing the States with the flexibility to design programs that meet the needs of their low income citizens. Such reforms could be achieved through premium supports or a refundable tax credit, allowing non-disabled adults and children to be moved into private health insurance of their choice, where their needs can be met on the same basis as those of more affluent Americans. For the aged and disabled under Medicaid, for whom monthly costs can be extremely high, States would have flexibility to improve the quality of care and to avoid the inappropriate institutional placing of	From section on Americans with Disabilities: - And the President and the Democratic Party will fiercely oppose the harsh cuts in Medicaid that would inevitably lead to no or significantly less health care for millions of Americans with disabilities, workers with disabilities, and families raising children with autism, Down Syndrome, and other serious disabilities. From section on Health Care: - We've established new Offices of Minority Health, and are helping state Medicaid programs fund home and community-based services. - Medicaid will cover more working families. - We will strengthen Medicaid and oppose efforts to block grant the program, slash its funding, and leave millions more without health insurance. From section on Puerto Rico: - We have made great progress for Puerto Rico over the past four years, including a sharp, historic increase in Medicaid funding for the people of Puerto Rico and fair and equitable inclusion in the Recovery Act and the Affordable Care Act. From section on Women: - We understand that economic issues are women's issues, and the challenges of supporting and raising a family are often primarily a woman's responsibility. That's why putting Americans back to work is Job One. That's why the Affordable Care Act especially helps women by guaranteeing they and their families won't

	Republican	Democratic
	patients who prefer to be cared for at home.	become uninsured when they lose their jobs. That's why this administration strengthened Medicare and Medicaid for millions of women and families.
Social Security & Medicare	Saving Medicare for Future Generations. The Republican Party is committed to saving Medicare and Medicaid. Unless the programs' fiscal ship is righted, the individuals hurt the first and the worst will be those who depend on them the most. We will save Medicare by modernizing it, by empowering its participants, and by putting it on a secure financial footing. This will be an enormous undertaking, and it should be a non-partisan one. We welcome to the effort all who sincerely want to ensure the future for our seniors and the poor. Republicans are determined to achieve that goal with a candid and honest presentation of the problem and its solutions to the American people. Despite the enormous differences between Medicare and Medicaid, the two programs share the same fiscal outlook: their current courses cannot be sustained. Medicare has grown from more than 20 million enrolled in 1970 to more than 47 million enrolled today, with a projected total of 80 million in 2030. Medicaid counted almost 30 million enrollees in 1990, has about 54 million now, and under Obamacare would include an additional 11 million. Medicare spent more than \$520 billion in 2010 and has close to \$37 trillion in unfunded obligations, while total Medicaid spending will more than double by 2019. In many States, Medicaid's mandates and inflexible bureaucracy have become a budgetary black hole, growing faster than most other budget lines and devouring funding for many other essential governmental functions. The problem goes beyond finances. Poor quality healthcare is the most expensive type of care because it prolongs affliction and leads to ever more complications.	Social Security and Medicare. We believe every American deserves a secure, healthy, and dignified retirement. America's seniors have earned their Medicare and Social Security through a lifetime of hard work and personal responsibility. President Obama is committed to preserving that promise for this and future generations. During their working years, Americans contribute to Social Security in exchange for a promise that they will receive an income in retirement. Unlike those in the other party, we will find a solution to protect Social Security for future generations. We will block Republican efforts to subject Americans' guaranteed retirement income to the whims of the stock market through privatization. We reject approaches that insist that cutting benefits is the only answer. President Obama will also make it easier for Americans to save on their own for retirement and prepare for unforeseen expenses by participating in retirement accounts at work. The Republican budget plan would end Medicare as we know it. Democrats adamantly oppose any efforts to privatize or voucherize Medicare; unlike our opponents we will not ask seniors to pay thousands of dollars more every year while they watch the value of their Medicare benefits evaporate. Democrats believe that Medicare is a sacred compact with our seniors. Nearly 50 million older Americans and Americans with disabilities rely on Medicare each year, and the new health care law makes Medicare stronger by adding new benefits, fighting fraud, and improving care for patients. And, over 10 years, the law will save the average Medicare beneficiary \$4,200. President Obama is already leading the most successful crackdown on health care fraud ever, having already recovered \$10 billion from health care scams. We will build on

Republican	Democratic
Even expensive prevention is preferable to more costly treatment later on. When approximately 80 percent of healthcare costs are related to lifestyle -smoking, obesity, substance abuse-far greater emphasis has to be put upon personal responsibility for health maintenance. Our goal for both Medicare and Medicaid must be to assure that every participant receives the amount of care they need at the time they need it, whether for an expectant mother and her baby or for someone in the last moments of life. Absent reforms, these two programs are headed for bankruptcy that will endanger care for seniors and the poor. The first step is to move the two programs away from their current unsustainable defined-benefit entitlement model to a fiscally sound defined-contribution model. This is the only way to limit costs and restore consumer choice for patients and introduce competition; for in healthcare, as in any other sector of the economy, genuine competition is the best guarantee of better care at lower cost. It is also the best guard against the fraud and abuse that have plagued Medicare in its isolation from free market forces, which in turn costs the taxpayers billions of dollars every year. We can do this without making any changes for those 55 and older. While retaining the option of traditional Medicare in competition with private plans, we call for a transition to a premium-support model for Medicare, with an income-adjusted contribution toward a health plan of the enrollee's choice. This model will include private health insurance plans that provide catastrophic protection, to ensure the continuation of doctor-patient relationships. Without disadvantaging retirees or those nearing retirement, the age eligibility for Medicare must be made more realistic in terms of today's longer life span. Security For Those Who Need It: Ensuring Retirement Security. While no changes should adversely affect any current or near-retiree, comprehensive reform should	those reforms, not eliminate Medicare's guarantees. The health care law is closing the gap in prescription drug coverage known as the "doughnut hole." More than five million seniors have already saved money – an average of \$600 last year – and the doughnut hole will be closed for good by 2020. In short, Democrats believe that Social Security and Medicare must be kept strong for seniors, people with disabilities, and future generations. Our opponents have shown a shocking willingness to gut these programs to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest, and we fundamentally reject that approach

	Republican	Democratic
	address our society's remarkable medical advances in longevity and allow younger workers the option of creating their own personal investment accounts as supplements to the system. Younger Americans have lost all faith in the Social Security system, which is understandable when they read the non- partisan actuary's reports about its future funding status. Born in an old industrial era beyond the memory of most Americans, it is long overdue for major change, not just another legislative stopgap that postpones a day of reckoning. To restore public trust in the system, Republicans are committed to setting it on a sound fiscal basis that will give workers control over, and a sound return on, their investments. The sooner we act, the sooner those close to retirement can be reassured of their benefits and younger workers can take responsibility for planning their own retirement decades from now.....	

There are a number of other important issues for people with disabilities addressed in the party platforms, including employment, housing, foster care & adoption, and health care. In addition, there are cross cutting issues that greatly impact people with disabilities, such as budget, tax, and regulatory policy. To learn more and read the full platforms, see:

Republican Platform: <http://www.gop.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2012GOPPlatform.pdf>

Democratic Platform: <http://assets.dstatic.org/dnc-platform/2012-National-Platform.pdf>

*The Republican party platform does not have specific sections on civil rights or international issues. Instead, civil right issues are included in its section entitled "We The People: A Restoration of Constitutional Government" and international issues are addressed in its section entitled "American Exceptionalism."