



2020 Platform

as approved by the global convention on June 7, 2020

Preamble

As American patriots and Democrats living abroad, we call upon our Government to represent our values, defend our rights, and strive to uphold the fundamental dignity of all people.

We bring an invaluable point of view as Americans living on foreign soil. Our experiences abroad expose us to different peoples, laws, and customs, and teach us to have empathy and respect for those who are different. Living away from home expands our sense of the possible and gives us a better understanding of international best practices when evaluating American domestic policies. We experience challenges and situations that imbue us with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the American values of optimism, diversity, courage, and freedom. As individuals and as a community, we are resilient, resourceful, and unafraid to face the unfamiliar.

We share our experiences of living internationally so that Democrats everywhere can better fight for the egalitarian principles of our party described throughout our platform, for the benefit of all Americans and the world.

Our 2020 Democrats Abroad platform seeks to address the following:

- 1. Who we are as Democrats Abroad – what are our political priorities and what distinguishes our perspectives on them?*
- 2. What are our values as Americans – how does our philosophy, influenced from our experience living abroad, apply to all relevant issues back home?*
- 3. What should our elected officials do to address our unique circumstances and priorities?*

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Americans Abroad

Americans living outside the U.S. face a unique set of challenges in our engagement with U.S. Government officials, departments, agencies, and more broadly in our use of all services offered to American citizens. As non-resident Americans, we require fewer services than domestic residents. We place a very modest burden on our Government and pay fees for all the services provided to us by U.S. Government agencies and departments. We should not be expected to tolerate policies and regulations that impose inordinate and unjustified bureaucracy, unreasonable costs, wait times, emotional and physical hardships, or other burdens that put our well-being and that of our families at risk.

We are no different from citizens who live in the U.S., and we are an important constituency group. Like all other American constituencies, we seek a relationship with our Government that is mutually respectful and consistent with U.S. laws, traditions, and norms. We seek constructive engagement with Congress and the Federal Government in addressing our needs and meeting our obligations as U.S. citizens.

We also seek to end all discrimination against U.S. citizens living abroad in voting rights and other rights that are either denied to or restricted for U.S. citizens living abroad, in the transmission of citizenship to our children, in social security, in the availability of citizen services, and in taxation.

Fair Representation of Americans Abroad as a Constituency

There is inadequate recognition of Americans abroad as a constituency group with unique and pressing concerns in areas such as taxation, voting, citizenship transmission, family visas, and more.

In 2007, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney established the Americans Abroad Caucus. We urge Senators to do the same and to establish a Special Committee on Americans Abroad to focus on the concerns of this important constituency. Likewise, we support establishment of a Commission on Americans Abroad to undertake an in-depth study of these critical issues and report findings and recommendations to Congress.

More House members also need to recognize and prioritize Americans abroad as an important constituency by joining the Americans Abroad Caucus and supporting the establishment of a Commission on Americans Abroad.

While our support for the National Census is detailed in the Democracy and Elections plank, we favor a nonbinding census of American citizens living outside the country, to assess State Department and our need.

Our Voting Rights

As Americans abroad, we are proud of our citizenship and vigilant in guarding our right to help elect our President and members of Congress. Our right to vote in Federal elections is the primary means available to us to participate in the American democratic process. In close elections, our absentee votes from abroad can make, and have made, the difference between Democratic victory and defeat in State and Federal elections. Over time, Congress has enacted a range of legislative remedies for the problems we face in participating in the U.S. electoral process. Unfortunately, some of those solutions have not been fully implemented.

We call on all election officials of the 50 States and Washington D.C. to document and report all votes received from Americans abroad and counted (or not).

We seek additional legislation to require State election officials, at the beginning of each election year, to automatically send to citizens who reside abroad, and who have voted in the previous election, documents enabling them to register to vote and/or request absentee ballots. Further, we support the establishment of a single nationwide online system to confirm that Americans abroad are still living abroad and seek ballots for the current election year.

We call on all States and territories to simplify absentee ballot requests for U.S. military and civilians abroad and to enfranchise U.S. citizens born abroad who have reached voting age without having resided in the U.S.

We support the alignment of all States' voter registration requirements, voter registration deadlines, and ballot request and ballot return deadlines, and the right of all military and civilian voters abroad to vote for all offices and initiatives on the ballot, even if the voter is living abroad indefinitely.

Finally, we support voting by secure, verifiable, and safe electronic means, to facilitate electoral participation by Americans who live where postal services are costly, unreliable, or unavailable. Until all 50 states adopt electronic means to return ballots, we call for full and timely support from the U.S. Embassies and Consulates to collect ballots and deliver them to their destination in the U.S. in a timely fashion, without impediment.

Transmission of U.S. Citizenship

Foremost in importance for many Americans abroad is ensuring that our children born outside the U.S., whether they be biological or legally adopted or of same-sex couples in a legally recognized civil marriage, have certainty concerning their entitlement to U.S. citizenship. The right for Americans abroad to transmit their citizenship to their children born abroad is severely restricted and unfairly applied. As a result, each year thousands of children of Americans abroad are denied U.S. citizenship, and some are born "stateless," that is, without any nationality.

No child of any U.S. citizen parent should ever be stateless at birth or denied U.S. citizenship, regardless of where they were born or how they came to be the child of a U.S. citizen or the marital status of their parents, as long as one is an American citizen. We support the right of every American parent to transmit U.S. citizenship to their children and support reasonable retroactive changes granting U.S. citizenship to children born abroad to a U.S. citizen.

Moreover, we cite the 14th Amendment's provision of birthright citizenship and believe that all persons born in U.S. territories including American Samoa, or born abroad to a U.S. citizen, should be recognized as "natural-born citizens."

Naturalization of Children Overseas

Similarly of foremost importance for many Americans abroad is ensuring that our children brought into our families through adoption, in-vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, surrogacy, and other means, have certainty concerning their entitlement to U.S. citizenship. The right for Americans abroad to ensure their children born through other than traditional biological birth is tenuous and can leave families fragmented. Americans abroad are detrimentally treated compared to Americans in the United States in similar circumstances. If one parent in a married couple of two U.S. citizens is not the biological parent of the baby, then they cannot register their child as a U.S. citizen, but rather as a child born out of wedlock. If this same couple lived in the U.S., the child would automatically have U.S. citizenship bestowed. If one parent is not a

U.S. citizen and is the biological parent of the baby, while the other parent who is a U.S. citizen is not, but both parents are listed as the parents of the child overseas, then the U.S. citizen parent is prevented from “adopting” their own child, and cannot give the child U.S. citizenship. If the child is adopted, or conceived through artificial insemination, in-vitro fertilization, surrogacy, or other means, overseas, the U.S. citizen parent or parents must expend time and capital to get their child naturalized before the child’s 18th birthday. If the child were adopted or born by such means in the U.S., they would get a new birth certificate a year after adoption, and no naturalization would be required in any event. We believe that these children should be treated as natural-born citizens and accorded the same rights under the 14th Amendment as any other child born to a U.S. citizen.

Loss of U.S. Citizenship

Of specific concern to Americans abroad is the risk of de-patriation from the United States of some or all of one’s children. Reinterpretations of immigration law, guidance, and policy have led to some children of Americans abroad being de-patriated or denied U.S. citizenship, while older siblings have or retain U.S. citizenship. This results in fragmented families. In other cases, the re-examination results in all the children of Americans abroad losing their U.S. citizenship, sometimes many years after its being initially granted. We believe that families should not be torn asunder, and there should be certainty in the transmission of U.S. citizenship. Once having met the tests under law, guidance, and policy for U.S. citizenship, U.S. citizens should be entitled to all the rights and entitlements that issue from that status, including the right to transmit U.S. citizenship to all their children, and no later interpretation should jeopardize those rights and entitlements.

Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare

After our children, Americans probably worry most about our seniors and those with special needs. Several important laws and regulations relating to the U.S. Social Security system either unintentionally discriminate against Americans abroad or are simply inequitable. The social security benefits of all Americans, regardless of place of residence, should be protected.

To safeguard the retirement age income of Americans abroad we support (i) eliminating provisions that confiscate a large part of the social security retirement benefits of Americans who have lived and worked outside the U.S. and thus outside the Social Security system, (ii) eliminating cuts to supplemental Social Security Income for persons who live outside the U.S. for more than 30 consecutive days, and (iii) subjecting all Americans to the same Annual Earnings Test rules for calculating the monthly Social Security benefit. We call on the Government to reach totalization agreements with all countries that have social security programs to eliminate double taxation of income for the purpose of establishing social security benefits.

We also support access to Medicaid and Medicare for all U.S. citizens wherever they may live (detailed further in a separate Healthcare plank.)

Discriminatory practices that prevent access for Americans abroad to vital electronic channels (for example, to create a My Social Security Account or to obtain an Internal Revenue Service PIN for electronic filing) should be eliminated. The same applies to the lack of access to retirement funds (IRA and 401K accounts) — services that Americans abroad support with their tax dollars but in which they cannot participate.

Access to Citizen Services Abroad

Democrats Abroad supports the inclusion of overseas Americans and their foreign dependents in the census to assess the services and needs of this community from all U.S. Federal departments and agencies. The interests and concerns of Americans abroad are rarely considered when U.S. Government agencies reduce or, worse, eliminate services provided at U.S. Embassies and Consulates. Until such time as Americans abroad are included in the census, we call upon all U.S. Federal departments and agencies to consult with affected American communities abroad before deciding whether to close a Consulate, change Consular hours of operation, or reduce or eliminate services or change local policies, procedures, rules, and visa-fee reciprocity schedules, all of which affect American citizens and their immediate relatives abroad.

Congress must provide adequate funding of U.S. Citizen Services Sections (USCSS) and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in U.S. Embassies and Consulates so that Americans can obtain routine services such as notarization and passport renewal with little delay and little cost, and visas for their non-U.S. citizen immediate family members. The State Department should establish an independent USCSS/USCIS citizen advisory group to confer with USCSS on matters that come under their purview, as well as online resources to help USCSS/USCIS better fulfill their mission. USCSS/USCIS should improve the delivery of services to Americans abroad with minimal cost and effort. In compliance with requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act, Government facilities abroad should be accessible and barrier-free for those with disabilities.

Representation by Attorneys

U.S. citizens and U.S. legal permanent residents must have the right to in-person representation by U.S.-licensed attorneys at all U.S. Government facilities abroad and U.S. border points of entry just as such representation would be allowed if the person were in the U.S. Prohibiting such representation is discriminatory, unjustified, and disastrous, resulting in gross violations of the rights of U.S. citizens and U.S. permanent residents living abroad.

U.S. Military Veterans

We recognize and celebrate the service and sacrifice of members of the U.S. military whether in active service or retired abroad. We believe that Status of Forces Agreements should permit the use of U.S. military facilities by U.S. veterans residing abroad. We also support an increase in the weight limit on packages that may be sent or received through the U.S. military postal service by military retirees abroad.

Taxation

American citizens living abroad are subjected to discriminatory, unfair, costly, and abusive practices resulting from the U.S. Tax Code. While this subject is detailed in the separate Taxation plank, we wish to underline that certain U.S. Federal requirements that apply to all U.S. citizens irrespective of where they live – even if they are abroad indefinitely and pay taxes in their country of residence – are overly burdensome, do not reduce tax fraud, and result in many adverse and most likely unintended consequences. They include but are not limited to the requirements to report all foreign bank accounts – for some taxpayers twice, through separate channels – even if such accounts are in their country of residence; to report all income regardless of where it is earned even if they pay income and other taxes in their country of residence; to pay costly tax advisors to comply with U.S. tax-filing obligations, and to invest many hours to ensure they are in compliance. Banking services and investment choices are also often restricted or denied.

Arts and Sciences

We support ambitious public and private investments in science education, research, and technology. Policy decisions must be based on scientific, evidence-based research, and the conduct of research and the public dissemination of the results must be protected from Government interference. The arts and humanities, while different from sciences, are no less important to the advancement of our country. They contribute jobs to a thriving U.S. economy, are useful in promoting diplomatic relations and cultural exchange, and are enjoyed by millions of Americans, cultivating mental well-being and happiness. A solid education in science and the arts creates well-rounded citizens who are prepared to function in an increasingly digitized world, and who are less likely to be swayed by disinformation.

Supporting Science

We must restore scientific integrity to positions where qualified staff have been replaced by political appointees or simply lost. Positions involving science must be filled by people with scientific qualifications and relevant experience, not by campaign donors or political lackeys. Public policy must be informed by peer-reviewed science.

The Government must strive for transparency in all aspects of scientific funding and promotion. Applied sciences are important and must be funded, but a robust funding increase must also be directed towards basic science, which creates the knowledge underlying innovation. Funding must be substantially increased to the National Science Foundation (NSF), National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and other Government research agencies -- and in particular to their granting arms. Democrats Abroad also advocates for stricter guidelines for private companies using research funded by public funds regarding patents and profit.

The increasing public distrust of science and the efforts of special interests to discredit it must be addressed head on. In addition to strengthening science education, the Government should promote good research practices and coordinate scientific data-sharing, to enable the dissemination of the most accurate and up-to-date information among scientists and to the public. Because Democrats Abroad strongly supports transparency in Government, we encourage open-science practice whenever possible, including open-access publications and open data. We oppose prohibitions on using federal funds to support legitimate scientific investigation. We further call for the restoration of investigators' ability to conduct research into embryonic stem cell lines and fetal tissue using Federal funds.

We support the promotion of interdisciplinary scientific research which is often difficult to get funded through traditional means yet produces important results. To directly broaden and strengthen our country's scientific base, we support diversity among scientists, including increasing the proportion of women and further funding for scientific research at Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-serving educational institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and other minority-serving institutions. We also support international collaboration and sensible policies on immigration and knowledge exchange to bring the best science and scientists to the United States -- including students, researchers, and entrepreneurs -- which has a demonstrated positive effect on the U.S. economy.

Science Policy and Funding as it Relates to Climate Change

Scientific evidence must serve as the basis for political decisions related to climate change. The United States must participate in international climate agreements and work with other nations to not only meet but exceed goals. The Pentagon's efforts to address climate change as a national security threat must be supported.

Even with all these measures in place, climate-related disasters and displacement will inevitably increase in the coming years. The Government should prepare for this with policies that address the heightened risks of flooding, water shortages, sea-level rise, fire, and extreme weather events. Funding should be provided for development of climate-change-related disaster-mitigation technologies and orderly migration away from vulnerable coasts, forests, and bottom lands.

Investments in research on and the development of next-generation clean technology, renewable energy, and climate solutions must be increased by several orders of magnitude.

Supporting the Arts

We support freedom of expression in the arts, within the United States and throughout the world. Public funding for arts and humanities, including education, must be increased, especially for minority and under-represented groups. Funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) should be increased, as should funding, through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, for the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR).

As Americans living abroad, we often witness how the arts are supported in other countries, and we see how the arts contribute vibrancy to the cultures and robustness to the economies in our countries of residence. The U.S. must be an active participant in and contributor to the international arts community, and we support increased funding to that end. State Department programs abroad – including via the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs – should promote American artists and showcase the broad range of cultural influences in the U.S. The United States should therefore also provide greater support for Voice of America, American cultural institutions abroad such as libraries, and country-to-country exchanges and initiatives.

Arts and Sciences in Education

The K-12 curriculum must be anchored in accurate science and in the liberal arts, including the arts and humanities more generally. Due to their importance in our evolving world, climate change, human biology (including health and reproduction) and computer skills must be interwoven throughout the curriculum. Students must be given a grounding in history, art, and Government that is without an exclusively white, Christian, male orientation and which incorporates that of Native peoples, women, minorities, LGBTQ+ people, and other traditionally excluded communities, who have all played important roles in forging our modern nation. Clear-sighted introductions to areas of history that have traditionally been whitewashed should be encouraged. Students should also be introduced to art of all kinds from around our country and outside America. Education funding must be increased, especially for socio-economically disadvantaged students.

Post-secondary education in both arts and sciences must be affordable for everyone. A special emphasis must be placed on increasing the proportion of minority students in fields where they are under-represented.

Democrats Abroad calls for a national grant system to promote study abroad for students based in the U.S. as a part of their graduate education. This will allow all American students (including students who are traditionally underrepresented in study-abroad programs) to learn more about the world, and will support universities in furthering international relationships abroad, which can benefit future research, promote U.S. soft-power policy, and enable American students to learn crucial skills to succeed in a globalized workplace after graduation.

Pandemic Preparedness

COVID-19 provided the world with a wake-up call. The U.S. must ensure that it is properly prepared to handle future outbreaks. Public health agencies and public health access must be strengthened throughout the country. The U.S. must fully support international organizations such as the World Health Organization, and work in close collaboration with them to ensure a rapid international response to emerging public health threats that is based in proper science. Pandemic preparedness must be properly funded and supplied.

Children and Families

Raising a child well should not be a privilege reserved only for well-off Americans. America's children all deserve adequate nutrition, nurturing, healthcare, education, and opportunities regardless of gender, race, background, creed, or ZIP code. Families must be supported by Government policies that ensure that there are no children in the U.S. who are deprived of these basic ingredients for a healthy and productive life.

Families are defined as any two people in a legally recognized civil union or marriage and their legally recognized children. Consequently, we believe that protections for children and families should apply equally to same-sex, binary, and transgender partnerships.

Democrats Abroad supports ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, as every other of the 193 members of the United Nations has done. Many members of Democrats Abroad – living in other economically advanced countries – have had the benefit of best practices in those countries. We believe that the U.S. would benefit from adopting paid parental leave, free universal childcare, free school meals, free access to healthcare including mental health services, and family leave to care for ill dependents.

All parents deserve an opportunity to support and bond with their children after birth, and all children deserve quality childcare. We advocate to extend policies to all American workers that provide both parents with six months of paid parental leave that can be shared between the two parents.

We support programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), which should be expanded, that ensure that infants have access to necessary sanitary products such as diapers. To help the neediest families, the Child Tax Credit should also be expanded and pegged to the inflation rate. The Government must reverse restrictions on nutrition programs that make it harder for families to meet their children's dietary needs. Conditions that unduly restrict Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits for families with children must be eliminated.

All children should have access to a high-quality education in a safe and supportive learning environment. Early childhood education and universal preschool are essential elements of a modern education system. We support programs like Early Head Start and ensuring families have equal access to childcare.

Good, safe public schools should be available to every child. We also support expanded investments in early childhood education and universal preschool. Public schools must have resources and guidance to provide healthy meals to students, including breakfast. We support guidelines for the National School Lunch Program that will improve the diets of America's children, especially those who come from food-insecure homes.

The inability to afford menstrual hygiene products should never be a barrier to a child's attendance at school, as it is today for 20% of girls in the U.S. We support free menstrual products for those who need them.

Access to education must be enhanced by improvements to labor laws, community safety, healthcare, and housing assistance to ensure that all parents – regardless of income level – can provide a nurturing environment for their children.

Consumer Protection

We support the right of consumers to fair treatment under law, along with legislation to require and tax incentives to reinforce global best practices in consumer protection. We support full funding for the Bureau of Consumer Protection under the Federal Trade Commission, for the independent Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, and for all other Federal agencies whose purpose is to protect American consumers. We support their power to monitor the safety of new products and to penalize bad actors, while also stressing the importance of Congressional oversight over both Bureaus.

We support public education on consumer rights and curbing the use of forced-arbitration clauses in consumer contracts that are not negotiated. Antitrust regulations must be robustly enforced to protect smaller businesses from monopolistic ones and to prevent price-fixing of food, housing, medicine, and other products and services essential to public health and well-being. All consumer products must have clear labeling that identifies their safe use. Food-safety standards must be aligned with global best practices.

Advertising, Data, Privacy

Advertising in all media, including the Internet, must be robustly regulated for accuracy. Companies must be transparent with terms and conditions and penalized for hiding exclusions in product warranties. Companies must attest that their marketing is not misleading, confusing, or false.

We support comprehensive personal data protection legislation, comparable to the EU's General Data Protection Regulation. This new legislation would replace the current patchwork of sector-specific and state-level regulation. We support the creation of a new Federal data protection agency to oversee the implementation of the new regulation. The new agency would also be charged with preventing online harassment, fraud, theft, identity theft and other online scams. Consumers' right to privacy should be considered a fundamental freedom and should include the right to be forgotten and the right to control the way that their data is used. Companies and organizations must be required to ask for explicit consent to retain any personal data, including any identifying information or media, and to automatically delete such data after a reasonable amount of time. They should be prohibited from selling such data or using it for purposes other than those for which it was collected.

Financial Protection

Fair banking and lending practices are integral to building a sound financial foundation for families. Discriminatory practices that systematically impede the ability to generate wealth and overwhelmingly target the poor and people of color must be replaced. We support policies and programs that are anti-racist, foster upward mobility, and provide all Americans with the agency to provide for themselves, their families, and sustain their communities. It is essential that Federal and local agencies ensure that practical, non-discriminatory, and secure interactions between banks and their customers are in place.

Consumers must have thorough, transparent, comprehensible information about financial instruments and their risks. The terms and conditions of retail loans must be clear and understandable, and banks must cap fees for overdrafts, credit cards, and other consumer transactions. Commercial conflicts of interest must be disclosed. Credit card interest rates should be capped at a level no higher than 15%.

Criminal Justice

U.S. incarceration rates per capita are the highest in the world. Though living abroad, we Democrats abroad are no less concerned with the safety and well-being of our fellow Americans, for whom fair administration of justice is paramount. We demand a justice system that treats suspects and prisoners with dignity and protects the vulnerable, including immigrants and asylum seekers.

The current criminal justice system does not provide protection, safety, or justice for all Americans, regardless of socioeconomic station, as evidenced by police killings and unjustified searches, seizures of personal property, and arrests of unarmed black men. At all Government levels, policies to prevent death or severe bodily harm by the police are inadequate, unacceptable, and uneven across communities. Racial bias and profiling have led to over-policing of communities of color, often in the name of suspicious behavior related to implicit biases, “the war on drugs,” or “the war on gangs.” This over-policing accounts for disproportionately high rates of incarceration among African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans in particular, with negative socio-economic repercussions for these communities.

The militarization that often coincides with over-policing is too common in communities across America and damages African American, Hispanic, and Native American communities disproportionately. The Federal Government should stop the transfer or sale of military grade weapons and equipment to local agencies and should initiate a buy-back program to get military equipment off our streets. Furthermore, the use of facial recognition and other developing artificial intelligence technologies must be tested for efficacy and only be implemented in non-discriminatory ways.

Minorities are often under-represented on police forces, and some officers come in with prejudice against them, reducing trust and respect between colleagues, law enforcement officers, and civilians and consequently hampering fair and effective law enforcement. More African American, Hispanic-American, Native-American, and other minority police officers must be recruited, retained, and provided a path to leadership roles.

Then, to create trust and promote fairness, police must be held to a higher standard of accountability. Complaints and misconduct records should be subject to stronger record retention standards and should not be systematically and independently erased. Law enforcement activities must be reviewable by body- and dashboard-cameras and overseen by well-funded, independent, community-controlled civilian boards who are empowered to recommend disciplinary consequences. State attorneys general and the Department of Justice should investigate systematic abuses, as well as ties between police forces and domestic, racially motivated, violent extremist groups, and implement changes either through collaborative reform or through consent decree. For police forces who have a history of using excessive force or deaths in custody, qualified immunity should be severely restricted.

Federal standards should be established for use of force and training on these standards implemented across the country. Adequate funding must be provided for training and periodic re-training of officers, a key component of which being to establish racial/ethnic respect. Training must deal with social problems such as poverty and homelessness, mental illness, domestic violence, sexual and gender violence, truancy, and lapses of vehicle permits and drivers’ licenses, with emphasis on non-violent approaches or violence de-escalation and other science-based techniques. Local and State Governments must work with community organizations

for promoting alternatives to calling emergency 911 numbers. When 911 is called, police should actively seek advice from community specialists either over the phone or invite community specialists on “ride-alongs.” Citizens who abuse 911 numbers to weaponize their privilege should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

The state of policing is part of a larger conversation on who gets treated as a human being, and who gets to access the justice system and for what ends. Our police and justice system has been used as a primary mechanism for reinforcing systematic racism, and thus its power targeted at criminalizing, incarcerating, and murdering African American, Hispanic, and Native American communities. To this day, we still have two systems of justice depending on who commits the act, with disproportionate criminalization and sentencing for African-American, Hispanic and Native American communities. To fix this issue, the U.S. needs to initiate Federal investigations and reviews across the United States of policing, sentencing, and incarceration data by race and ethnicity.

The United States must investigate activities of racially-motivated violent extremist groups as well as ties between these groups and all levels of Government and at all agencies. Violent hate crimes are on the rise, and for too long, white supremacist communities who advocate terror and violence have been protected on Internet platforms and social media as well as in private and public spaces, while young minority community members are arrested, charged, and convicted for far more innocuous activities.

Targeting gang membership, drug use, and truancy in communities of color has meant that young people often enter the “school-to-prison pipeline.” Then, in the “prison-industrial complex,” private prisons in substandard facilities profit from providing substandard food, healthcare, and other services to prisoners, unacceptably incentivizing incarceration.

Often “equal justice under law” is not extended to all defendants. For example, the use of qualified immunity for police officers often leads to lack of accountability – this practice should be strictly limited in cases where constitutional or human rights have been violated. Bail set above the ability to pay means that many non-violent offenders are kept in jail, thus missing work and depriving their families of income. Lack of counsel also leads to unjust convictions. Plea bargaining, one of many tools used by prosecutors to lighten the load on the court docket, encourages the innocent to plead guilty to escape an even harsher sentence.

Mandatory-minimum sentencing and three-strikes mandates, such as those prescribed in the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, limit prosecutorial and judicial discretion, and lead to unjust sentences. Cruel and unusual punishment such as extended solitary confinement is widespread. The death penalty, which is often applied capriciously, resulting in extraordinary legal expenses and the execution of innocent prisoners, must be abolished.

Eliminating injustice will require investment in community services based on research that identifies the root causes of criminal behavior. Penalties for certain narcotics-related and other “victimless” crimes must be reviewed and reduced, and more rehabilitation options must be made available. Cannabis use, both medicinal and recreational, as well as its propagation and sale, must be legalized at the Federal level. Those currently incarcerated for non-violent cannabis-related offenses must be immediately released, and the records of those convicted in the past must be expunged.

The public defender system must be adequately funded so that, regardless of socio-economic status, those accused can exercise their rights to competent counsel, due process, and a fair trial. Cash bail – which unjustly jails the poor – must be replaced with a system that presumes innocence over guilt.

So that prisoners can reintegrate into their communities when released, the goal of prison must be rehabilitation, which requires opportunities for education and job training as well as psychological counseling and mental health services. Prevention and treatment for addiction, substance abuse, and other mental health issues must be prioritized above incarceration.

We must build stronger systemic support for former prisoners to help them rebuild their lives and reduce recidivism. Once former prisoners have served their sentence, all of their civil rights should be restored, including unconditional voting rights and the right to seek and find gainful employment, which means banning “the box” that forces former prisoners to identify themselves on job applications, making them virtually unemployable.

Payment of taxpayer funds to private prison companies must be banned entirely, and prison operations returned to state and local authorities to manage in the public interest. Jail and prison operations must meet internationally recognized standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Democracy and Elections

Democrats Abroad believes in transparent democratic processes and the rule of law, and we oppose the influence of undocumented big money and gerrymandering in elections. We support efforts to combat disinformation and methods to ensure election integrity and accessibility while ending voter suppression. Voter suppression practices such as requiring in-person voting, reduced early voting, long lines, limited polling stations, voter-roll purging, and restrictions on acceptable forms of voter ID can have an exponentially detrimental effect on voter turnout. In times of crisis, these harmful practices have already resulted in voters being forced to choose between voting and health, and possible death.

We urgently demand the right to have safe, healthy, and fair elections. Americans at home must have access to mail ballots (with postage-paid return envelopes and readily accessible official ballot drop sites), and safe and easily accessible in-person voting. Americans voting from abroad must have the ability to return their ballots securely via electronic means (email or web portal).

Democrats Abroad believes there has never been a more important time to stand up for our voting rights and protect our votes and ourselves.

Protecting the First Amendment Rights of All

Democrats Abroad advocates for strong legal measures to protect civil liberties and human rights, including the First Amendment rights of all who live in the United States. These protections should prevent all levels of Government from unlawfully and violently abridging freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right to peaceably assemble, and the right to petition the Government for redress of grievances.

End Citizens United and Corporate Lobbying

With the 2010 Supreme Court decision *Citizens United v. FEC*, the Supreme Court established that no limits could be placed on independent political spending and expenditures. As long as expenditures are not paid to candidates or Government officials directly, super PACs, and dark-money organizations have now been able to funnel hundreds of millions of dollars into our politics. Further, corporate lobbying yields unfair access and outcomes for those with money to spend to influence issues. We believe that the influence of big money in politics must be curbed for fair and democratic representation to thrive.

Democrats Abroad takes the position that every organization that makes election-related expenditures should be required to promptly disclose the identities of their donors. We urge the passing of a constitutional amendment to abolish the doctrines of corporate personhood under the Fourteenth Amendment and political independent expenditures equaling exercising political speech.

Democrats Abroad supports public financing contribution programs for election activity that would reduce the influence on elected officials of private donors, corporations, and foreign entities.

Once in office, Members of Congress are provided with the research and policy positions of corporations, private donors, and foreign entities. Independent Government agencies, staffers, and committees have less funding and capacity to provide objective information. We recommend enforcing lobbyist registration for all

persons who are paid to influence Government officials, and enacting legislation to close the “revolving door” of Government and lobbyists through eliminating corporate bonuses for joining Government and reducing the ability to take lobbyist work after leaving Government. A system of financial disclosure must be developed for tracking lobbying expenditures by corporations, private individuals, and foreign entities. To minimize reliance on corporations and lobbyists, “regulatory capture” must end by reinvesting in Government agencies and staffing for research and analysis.

Anti-corruption

To restore public confidence in Government and deter rising levels of corruption in all areas of Government, we call for the Justice Department to appoint an independent special counsel to review the past practices at all levels of Federal Government regarding bribery, foreign influence, and improper use of Federal positions for personal gain.

Rigorous mandatory financial and tax-return disclosures must be implemented for all Federal candidates and office holders, and senior Government officials must divest from privately held assets that could be contrary to the public interest, and they must cease being able to trade individually held public stocks.

The Federal judiciary plays a large role in enforcing regulations and laws and must be held to high ethical standards. We call for expanded disclosure, and further limiting the acceptance of gifts, speaker fees, compensated trips, and other activities that could impair judicial impartiality.

Disinformation, Misinformation, and Media Literacy

Disinformation undermines professional journalism – including standards of accuracy, objectivity, and separation of opinion from factual reporting – and thus threatens democratic elections and ideals. A functioning democracy requires that independent professional journalism freely perform its "watchdog" role and scrutinize politicians and elections. We need balanced political reporting and urge creation of a time-limited commission to revisit the fairness doctrine and how to balance free speech and the need for an informed public.

The perpetrators of disinformation promote fraudulent news to prey on the vulnerabilities, partisan biases, or ignorance of recipients whom they hope to enlist as amplifiers and multipliers. Disinformation undermines legitimate expertise on health, science, social issues, and political life, and impedes understanding across communities.

We call for robust action to combat fraudulent news and its effects at all levels, such as strengthening privacy protections of personal data and creating national media literacy education programs for how to think critically, recognize and report fraudulent news, and create constructive content. We call for strengthened regulation and scrutiny of large social media companies, which must provide transparency in their policies and take responsibility for fraudulent news on their platforms.

Foreign interference in and influence of U.S. elections through disinformation must be identified and stopped. Democrats Abroad denounces all disinformation campaigns, data infiltration, and data tampering, especially by state actors, hacktivists, or other aligned or unaligned actors.

National Census

The National Census should include every person living in the U.S., regardless of citizenship or immigration status, and every American living outside the U.S. Democrats Abroad endorses the full and fair accounting of Americans living outside the U.S. to help Congress represent their constituents overseas, and the Executive Branch to provide appropriate levels of USCS/USCIS. Democrats Abroad endorses the fair and accurate administration of the national Census, supports keeping confidential the information participants submit, urges the omission of citizenship status questions from the current and future Census, and opposes politicization of the Census.

Voter Suppression

The voting rights of Americans have been eroded through morally corrupt methods. State and local legislators have passed legislation or enshrined procedures that create barriers to voter registration, limit or eliminate early voting, unfairly and unjustifiably purge registered voters, and impose onerous restrictions on registered voters. These practices have disenfranchised thousands of voters, especially African American, Latino, and young voters, those with felony convictions who have served their time, and absentee voters, including overseas voters.

Democrats Abroad calls for strengthening the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) and the Voting Rights Act (VRA) to restore protections for voters in States that have historically discriminated against minority communities. We support expanding existing protections to ensure that electoral policies and practices do not discriminate against minority populations by preventing them from voting. We support all measures to ensure access and ease of voting, including making Election Day a holiday, automatic voter registration, same-day registration, voting by mail, and expansion of electronic voting. We call for standardizing voter registration requirements across states, and for national requirements for computerized voter databases that are compliant with unified data security standards. We call to make absentee voting requirements uniform across states and remove onerous burdens, such as witnesses, postmarked-by dates, and costly or unavailable postal mail, that suppress the vote in some states, particularly in times of a pandemic and physical distancing. We further call for absentee ballot requests to be sent automatically to all overseas voters who voted in previous elections.

Democrats Abroad calls for USCS/USCIS at American Embassies and Consulates around the world to provide full election support without impediment to allow voters free access to the diplomatic pouch to mail ballots back to the U.S. in a timely fashion with little or low cost.

Gerrymandering and Prison Gerrymandering

Pervasive gerrymandering has rendered thousands of voters voiceless. Gerrymandering allows politicians to choose their voters and determines the outcome of many elections before any vote is cast. Redistricting maps have made Federal, State, and local elections non-competitive and undermine communities of color.

We call for independent redistricting commissions. Where lawmakers retain control over redistricting, we encourage bipartisan efforts to create district maps. A strengthened Voting Rights Act should ensure

protections when redistricting plans infringe upon or disparately affect citizens based on race and in all communities that are subjected to discrimination.

Prison gerrymandering occurs when the Census Bureau counts prisoners as residents of the prisons where they are incarcerated rather than at their pre-incarceration addresses, and state legislatures use this Census data to draw their district maps. These practices artificially inflate the voting power of the districts where prisons are located, creating unequal voting power. Many correctional facilities are in rural, largely conservative, and predominantly white areas, but many prisoners come from urban, often Democratic communities, and belong to minority groups.

Democrats Abroad believes that prison gerrymandering harms our democracy and violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. We urge the Census Bureau to stop counting prisoners as residents of prisons and urge individual states to cease prison gerrymandering.

Election Integrity and Fair Representation

Democrats Abroad believes in free and fair elections. We support all measures that create fairer election outcomes, including the National Popular Vote Compact, the elimination of caucuses in Presidential primaries, and ranked-choice voting. We urgently call for legislation mandating transparent, statistically based, verifiable Federal election audits. Democrats Abroad supports methods to minimize ballot tampering risks including support for non-hackable paper balloting systems and post-election risk-limiting audits. Democrats Abroad supports referenda statehood for all U.S. Territories and districts seeking statehood, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Email and web-portal ballot return options for Americans voting abroad

We support the full implementation of The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) which promotes accessibility for Americans voting from abroad. This includes expansion of ballot returns via email or web-portal across all 50 states as a means of improving the Uniformed and Overseas Civilian Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) ballot-return rates. Currently, over thirty states successfully allow UOCAVA voters to return ballots using email, fax, or a web-portal. While documented intrusions into local election offices and political organizations in the 2016 election cycle have amplified cybersecurity concerns, the risk of malicious tampering targeting UOCAVA ballots using email, fax, or web-portal is minimal. In fact, these methods are in many ways safer than vote-by-mail as they avoid international mail postal mishandling and delay and provide a paper ballot trail.

We seek secure email or web-portal ballot return options for UOCAVA voters in all 50 states, including those who require mailed or faxed ballot returns, and note their urgency at moments when postal systems are fragile such as during health pandemics, where physical distancing is a priority, particularly in light of the recent suspension of international mail to and from the U.S. in more than 100 countries, and its prohibitive cost from the countries where it is still available. Furthermore, USCS at U.S. Embassies and Consulates are unreliable for the purposes of voting. Many have notified citizens that the diplomatic pouch may not be accessed, others have said it is by appointment only, and to plan for a four-week wait time for the mail item to reach its intended destination. We call for full and robust support by USCS of U.S. voters abroad to access the diplomatic pouch for voting purposes with speedy and regular delivery of its contents.

Economic Policy

Democrats Abroad supports economic policy that protects, preserves, and grows our economy sustainably and inclusively. We believe that our Government should take immediate steps to reduce economic inequality, which has reached inordinate levels especially among vulnerable and historically disenfranchised groups. Our Government must support American workers to succeed and build happy and prosperous lives. We believe that a sustainable future can be achieved with the right combination of public and private investment, open markets where individuals and society can thrive, and well-designed social support systems.

Our economic engagement around the world should be defined by mutual sustainable investment, rather than zero-sum policies. We must resume our role in building economic cooperation among countries that share the best of our values.

Democrats Abroad recognizes that we live in an environmental world bound by limited resources, so we support a long-term economic policy founded on sustainability.

Response to COVID-19

Given the dramatic impact of COVID-19 on the U.S. economy, we advocate:

1) Policies to prevent mass unemployment

The COVID-19 lockdown exposed a serious weakness in the American economy, namely vulnerability to mass unemployment, with surging joblessness undoing a decade of repair since the 2008 financial crisis. Federal, State, and local Governments should institute ways to avoid future disruption, including automatic economic support programs, which are common in other countries. We should seek to ameliorate mortgage and rent payments for residential tenants and homeowners and small businesses.

2) Ensuring security of critical equipment and technology

U.S. reliance on global supply chains needs to be adjusted to consider national security. The Government should consider domestic production of certain critical equipment needed for disease outbreaks, as well as the development and adoption of advanced technologies, to protect the well-being of the American population.

3) Protecting long-term creditworthiness and economic health

This crisis has resulted in an enormous expansion of monetary and fiscal stimulus, raising U.S. Government debt to levels not seen since World War II. While these are necessary actions to prevent a depression, they raise the longer-term risk of U.S. indebtedness, which can have negative domestic and foreign policy implications. Additionally, once the COVID-19 crisis has passed, emergency interventions into companies and markets will need to be evaluated to determine a sustainable path forward for the long-term health of the U.S. economy for all Americans.

Economic Investment, Infrastructure, and Jobs

One of the greatest challenges facing the American economy is geographic divergence in prosperity. Economic opportunity and wealth have coalesced around urban and coastal centers in recent decades, leaving behind large areas of underdeveloped “left behind” regions in rural and landlocked areas. This fracturing of American identity along rural and urban lines threatens our shared sense of purpose and community.

Our divide is due to globalization policies and a long decline in Government investment in education, health services, and physical and digital infrastructure. Government investment needs to revitalize America’s economically lagging regions and transform them into self-sustaining centers of economic prosperity. In addition, the fossil fuel industry and other industries face obsolescence or downsizing because of automation and other technological changes. We need strategies for investment that will provide meaningful jobs for American workers.

We support the passage of “The Green New Deal,” a sweeping 10-year infrastructure plan to reduce America’s role in global climate change and create millions of high-wage jobs. The Green New Deal plans for the “greenification” of the U.S. economy with a goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers.

U.S. transportation infrastructure that has fallen into disrepair needs investment including highways, bridges, tunnels, and waterways, and regional and national mass transit. Infrastructure investment should use both public and private partners.

Automation and globalization have left American workers feeling threatened or betrayed. By embracing emerging opportunities using fiscal policy, workforce mobility, and a commitment to supporting and training our workforce, we can create a sustainable economy that supports American workers.

We support the United States Postal Service (USPS) as a public institution providing universal service throughout the United States. A vital communication infrastructure, the USPS offers critical services to all Americans equally, whether urban or rural, wealthy, or poor. Since its creation in the 18th century, the USPS has provided for the circulation of public, political, and personal information. In addition, the USPS has traditionally been a significant employer of both women and minorities. The importance of the USPS as a Federal agency that delivers essential mail and packages to even the most remote customers under its universal service obligation cannot be understated or replicated through the current commercial alternatives.

We support technology investment at the State and Federal level for updated and secure computer systems and Internet accessibility so that underserved communities do not suffer additional disadvantage.

Supporting Unions

Labor unions have always been at the heart of the Democratic Party. Their importance to the U.S. economy cannot be overstated: Union membership and influence have been central to the creation of the American middle class and are instrumental for reducing inequality. Thus, the ability of workers to collectively bargain for improved working conditions and wages and benefits must be strengthened.

We call upon the Government to support public and private workers, including those in the agricultural and domestic labor sectors, in exercising their right to organize and join unions; to facilitate certification of a union with a simple majority of eligible workers; to establish Federal protections to promote worker job security;

and to ratify the International Labor Organization (ILO) core conventions on freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collectively bargain, the elimination of forced or compulsory labor, and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

A Living Wage

Americans have the right to earn a living wage; Americans should not be forced to live on subsistence wages. Rectifying the minimum wage level across the country will have untold benefits, including stronger households, better social mobility, more robust U.S. consumption, and a more equal and resilient society. A higher minimum wage will especially benefit the young, minority communities, and women, who are overrepresented at the lower end of the income distribution.

The Federal Government should raise the national minimum wage for all workers to \$15/hour, indexed to inflation.

Economic Inclusion and Diversity

The concept of meritocracy needs to be reclaimed and made a reality for Americans without privilege, power, and access. Too often, our culture promotes those born with those advantages. We should aspire to true equal opportunity and remember that each of us has an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Our Government should enable individuals and families to achieve the American Dream.

Democrats Abroad opposes workplace discrimination or discriminatory hiring and firing practices on the basis of racial, ethnic, or sexual identity.

Ensuring the inclusion of women in the economy is of special concern, as economic growth is constrained by women's lower labor-participation rate. The U.S. Government should incentivize and invest in women to become full participants in the U.S. economy. Efforts should encompass promoting financial literacy, recruitment into STEM fields and leadership roles, parental leave for both partners and affordable childcare options.

Similarly, unjust discriminatory practices against minority groups throughout history have limited American prosperity and must be addressed. To ensure better equal economic opportunity, we should provide affordable access to quality higher education, safe and decent housing, and convenient public transportation. For the private sector to treat all Americans fairly, new Government incentives and legal consequences must be established. We strongly advocate for improved financial access for minority communities, who have historically been underserved by banks, for example through Government-backed grants and by facilitating access to credit.

Wage Inequality

We endorse reduction of wage inequality across all populations, between the top and the bottom as well as between genders and races. The average Chief Executive Officer now earns 287 times as much as the median worker in the same company, an increase of 940% since 1978. A strong start to reducing wage inequality is mandating greater pay-data transparency and implementing tax incentives for reducing pay gaps. We support self-disclosure of senior-management and board-member compensation and analysis of management-to-median-worker pay ratios. Wage inequality is exacerbated by education, gender, and race. We also support

self-reporting of gender and racial pay-gaps, and tax-break incentives for companies that can demonstrate significant improvement in pay gaps over a four-year time frame.

Fiscal Policy

Fiscal policy should support a growing and sustainable economy, generating prosperity that can be shared by all. The COVID-19 crisis recovery will require a large role by fiscal programs such as the Green New Deal in setting the path for strategic investment in innovative and sustainable emerging sectors. We recognize that deficit fiscal spending may be required in times of crisis and when the economy is below full employment, but we believe that fiscal policy should be conducted to preserve domestic and international confidence in the U.S. economy. We do not subscribe to trickle-down economic theory and tax-cut legislation, which exacerbate income inequality, contribute to a less resilient economy, and lead to reduced Government services when and where they are most needed.

An Independent and Inclusive Federal Reserve

Independence of the Federal Reserve is essential to maintaining the smooth functioning of financial markets, including global market confidence in the dollar as the principal reserve currency. We support the independent role of the Fed in managing the dual priorities of full employment and low inflation. While the Fed's role has been clear to smooth the functioning of financial markets, the Fed should have the equally important role of supporting all Americans in such a way that minimizes wealth inequality and ensures social mobility.

Corporate and Financial Markets Oversight

U.S. shareholder capitalism and Government deregulation have gone too far, leading to unreasonable levels of inequality and corporate control over politics and society. We support a legally enshrined broadening of board and corporate responsibility to include more stakeholders, including labor, consumers, creditors, local communities, and civil society, as well as shareholders. Corporate governance laws should be changed to reflect equitable treatment of all these stakeholders, reversing the decades-long trend to prioritize and enrich shareholders only.

We call for regulatory review of big tech, which has grown enormously in power and influence since the advent of the Internet. Big tech provides services – from social networking to information searches – that are now considered essential. Therefore, it profits from a captive consumer market, raising questions about individual freedom, privacy, and fairness. As this industry continues to grow and evolve, we call for greater public oversight, including over antitrust and tax issues (both domestic and global).

Since the 2008 financial crisis, regulation of financial markets has improved, but recent actions to roll back barriers to excessive financial risk-taking must be reversed. When the economy collapses due to financial bubbles, wealthier Americans fare better than the rest of us, sometimes even profiting from the positioning of their financial assets. Regulation must be passed to ensure the protection of the ordinary American worker, citizen, and consumer.

We advocate for more oversight over the shadow banking system as well as rating agencies, which continue to suffer from conflicts of interest. Additionally, we recommend that the Government adopt a unified and comprehensive financial regulatory framework covering all areas of finance, including formal banking, shadow banking, insurance systems, pension funds, and derivatives, so that oversight is coordinated and effective.

Education

Education is a basic human right for which the Federal Government is ultimately responsible. The core mission of public schools – besides successfully preparing students for entry into meaningful employment or higher education – is to develop critical thinking and to impart financial literacy and an understanding of how our democratic society works.

Democrats Abroad supports policies that foster the development of Americans who are engaged, responsible, and resilient, equipped with the tools required for access to the American Dream. A strong education system is also essential to America's collective strength. Our public-school system – an investment in our nation's economic future – should be the envy of the world.

Pre-K, Primary, and Secondary School

Schools have the opportunity to offer a safe space for students to grow and develop. LGBTQ+ students are more likely than heterosexual peers to suffer abuse and may lack critical support from family and friends and in the home. American students need protection from bullying and harassment and respect for their rights, without regard to their sexual orientation and gender identity, and should be protected by laws and school policies. LGBTQ+ people should be included in school curricula and resources and students should be free to form and join LGBTQ+ student groups.

Charter schools and voucher systems should not be allowed to undermine public education. Publicly funded schools must be held to high standards. We support adequate funding for all public schools, particularly for rural and inner-city schools and those with many special-needs and minority students. Funding for public schools should support improvement in school infrastructure, as much of it is in poor repair and unsafe, particularly in schools that serve minority communities. Schools also often face shortages in equipment including technological resources, have understocked or nonexistent libraries, and are using out-of-date materials. All schools must have adequate up-to-date supplies. Schools and teachers should not be forced to compete for access to needed materials and equipment.

Pre-K programs such as Head Start are essential to level the playing field for children of color and the poor. As the achievement gap grows between our nation's richest and poorest students, special attention should be paid to alleviating or eliminating factors that cause enormous disparities in the quality of education available to poor and minority students.

To facilitate learning, schools must be safe, orderly environments – and safety must include psychological safety. We oppose the militarization of our nation's schools and arming teachers with guns as a solution to school shootings. Overly strict school discipline, such as zero-tolerance policies, unnecessarily criminalizes students for minor rule infractions and often unjustly targets students of color, students with learning disabilities, and students with a history of abuse or neglect. We oppose discriminatory application of discipline and favor additional counseling and support services for vulnerable students.

We must ensure that curricula are current and include more Black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian American history, and that of other minority groups. We must ensure adequate funds for special needs, physical education, art, music, and language programs.

The utility of standardized testing must be carefully evaluated. School curricula must be focused on love of learning and the cultivation of critical thought, as opposed to passing tests. To overcome the achievement gap, more teachers of color must be hired, culturally appropriate teaching methods used, and mentorship programs increased. Secondary schools should offer education in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as well as apprenticeships.

To improve teaching standards and classroom conditions, we support increased funding and scholarships for teacher training and degrees; loan reduction or forgiveness; salaries commensurate with comparable professional areas; mentoring and support programs for new teachers; and access to health insurance, including mental health services, and pensions.

Student Loan Reform

At over \$1.6 trillion, total student-loan debt in the U.S. is larger than both auto-loan and credit-card debt. While the rate of return from attending college has shrunk, the cost has widely outpaced inflation over the past thirty years. Students who lack the means to pay for their education up front can face decades of loan payments, with many unable to pay even the interest, so that their debt grows.

Since most student loans are Federally guaranteed, lenders have loose credit requirements and schools have little incentive to suppress tuition increases. This negative feedback loop has exacerbated student loan debt to the point where millions of Americans cannot lead normal lives, and our economy is undermined.

We support simplified, automated, income-based student loan repayment plans, with payments capped as a percentage of income, and the balance forgiven after a reasonable period. Unlike other consumer debt, such as credit card and mortgage debt, student loans cannot currently be discharged in bankruptcy. We support the discharge of student loan debt in the event of bankruptcy. We further support a one-time college debt forgiveness plan.

The Federal Government must reduce the interest burden on Government-guaranteed student loans to zero and must require private student lenders to abolish prepayment penalties, to ease refinancing through third parties, and to provide pricing transparency.

Parent PLUS Loans – Federal loans with a relatively high interest rates – help parents fund undergraduate education for their children. We support eliminating Parent PLUS borrowing or capping it as a percentage of direct Federal loans.

The terms and conditions of student loans must be clearly explained before loans are granted. Federal Government Pell grants for education should be more available, indexed to inflation, and widely advertised to high school students.

College Costs

We support reforms to control the rising cost of a college education, including rules and taxes for college and university endowments, a mechanism to reward them for holding tuition and other costs down, and limiting their access to Federal student loans if they do not. We support creation of a searchable database across all colleges and universities allowing prospective students to see graduation rates, employment rates, and income levels by major field of study.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities

The Federal Government must especially support colleges and universities that play unique and vital roles in their communities, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions.

Promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

The Government should appoint an entity to assist in the creation, recognition, and adoption of college-degree equivalency-certifications across STEM areas of study, including biology and the physical sciences, computer science, engineering, and mathematics.

Environment and Energy

Climate change is the central challenge of our time. To limit the frequency of extreme weather events and maintain ecosystems, we must limit greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and achieve climate neutrality before 2050 so that temperature increase does not exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. This will require the U.S. to meet ambitious targets for reducing GHG emissions by 2030 and 2040 as well. Bold action from our Government and spirited international cooperation will be necessary to achieve these critical goals. Environmental and economic policy should work together to ensure that we evolve towards a healthy economy that has a positive environmental impact.

The climate crisis is an imminent threat to public health. Climate change is already affecting us, and its impacts will increase unless strong prevention and mitigation methods are adopted. Though it will impact poorer social economic groups and women more strongly – thus magnifying existing socio-economic inequalities – it will affect all sectors of society through excessive heat and cold, poor air quality, food and resource insecurity, spread of disease-carrying vectors, and more frequent and greater natural disasters, including floods, droughts, and inundation of water tables.

Reduction of GHG emissions must be addressed through investments in energy efficiency; a carbon tax and elimination of fossil fuel subsidies; increased use of renewable energy technologies such as wind, solar, and geothermal; and investing in energy-storage technologies, including those employing green hydrogen. The Federal Government should invest at the Federal, State, and local levels to create renewable energy projects, climate-resilient infrastructure, and energy efficient buildings, transport systems – including high-speed intercity trains – and industrial processes.

It will also be necessary to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere and safely store or transform it. Research on natural carbon sinks as well as industrial methods for removing a significant amount of CO₂ from the atmosphere should be supported. Forest management must reflect the need to sequester carbon in support of a net-zero carbon economy.

CO₂ can also be sequestered agriculturally, sustaining long-term soil health. The Government should support organic farming, permaculture, and agroforestry, all of which increase carbon sequestration in the soil.

The U.S. must rejoin the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement and work with other nations to not only meet but exceed its goals. Our country must support and implement a global commitment to eliminate finance for fossil fuel projects and to eliminate subsidies for fossil fuels. We must increase funding for emissions reduction and climate resilience in developing countries, including fulfilling existing pledges to multilateral climate funds and following peers by increasing our contribution to the Green Climate Fund. The Pentagon's efforts to address climate change as a national security threat must be supported.

Our Government should fund development of climate change-related disaster mitigation technologies and policies that address the risk of flooding, water shortages, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events. Our Government should also urge the States and private educational institutions to include climate science and solutions at all levels of education.

All the above policies should be part of a Green New Deal designed to inspire and unify the public, and to ensure the transition to a more just and sustainable society.

Energy and sustainability

Dangers from fracking, including local pollution and underreported methane emissions, are becoming increasingly obvious and well-documented. Congress and State Governments should place a ban on new fracking permits and demand stricter regulations to reduce pollution and emissions from existing fracking wells, including complete transparency on the chemicals used. Methane leaks from fracking wells and infrastructure must be reduced. There should be a ban on new permits for offshore (including Arctic Ocean) drilling. Fossil fuel drilling and pipelines should be banned from National Parks, National Forests, National Monuments, National Wildlife Refuges, and the sacred sites of indigenous peoples.

Mountaintop removal for the mining of coal and metals should be banned, and strip-mining should be subject to more stringent land-restoration requirements. As coal and other fossil fuels become a much smaller part of our energy portfolio, the Government must ensure a just transition into new occupations for workers in these industries.

Motor vehicles and airlines are major sources of carbon emissions that should be strictly regulated. Electrification and sustainable energy sources should be used to eliminate carbon from all transportation, including air transport.

Public transportation produces far less carbon emissions per person-mile than individual motor vehicles. The Government should encourage cities and states to create or expand public transportation systems and to develop more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods.

Environmental Protection Agency and Toxic Pollution

The original monitoring, analytical, and enforcement capacities of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should be restored and strengthened. The EPA should be empowered to lead and enforce efforts to monitor and remove existing environmental toxins from the environment, including chemicals and plastic, electronic, and other harmful waste. Congress should establish the “Polluter Pays” principle in law, and the EPA should be empowered to enforce it.

To support the EPA’s work, Congress must require polluters to pay for restoring degraded environments and enact strict standards reducing the amount of water used by power plants and limiting the amount of toxic pollutants they discharge.

Given the documented negative health effects of herbicides containing glyphosate, Congress must phase out their use and restrict the use of growth and other hormones, antibiotics, and artificial food additives that introduce potentially harmful biochemical agents into the food and water supply. The Clean Water Act and the Safe Water Act must be enforced in all sectors, including agriculture, to protect streams, ponds, and wetlands. Public water systems should be tested and treated for lead and other contaminants.

To prevent the introduction of new toxins into the environment, registering and testing new chemicals for toxicity must be required prior to their deployment, like requirements under the European Union’s Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemicals Act (REACH).

Other environmental and waste management protections

Congress must strengthen the Endangered Species Act and the Senate should ratify the 1992 U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity, committing to legislation that will protect land and water as called for therein.

Congress should protect primordial forests and require sustainable forest management. Coral reefs need stronger protection, and destructive fishing practices such as bottom trawling that harms them should be banned. Aquaculture should be regulated more strictly to ensure that it is sustainable and non-polluting within the local environment and healthy for consumers.

National Parks, Monuments, and Forests are a key part of our collective natural heritage. They should be protected more strongly from industrial exploitation.

Our industrial agricultural system produces waste in such volumes that it becomes an environmental problem. Runoff of excess fertilizer and pesticides from farms pollutes our drinking water, causes toxic algal blooms in our lakes, and causes dead zones in the Gulf of Mexico. Concentrated animal feeding operations or “factory farms” produce so much concentrated animal waste that some inevitably pollutes groundwater while producing methane plumes that pollute the atmosphere. The Government should support more sustainable agricultural methods that minimize the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers while building soil health. This will reduce pollution while improving the health of our agricultural workers and consumers by limiting exposure to chemical contaminants in food.

Plastic waste is a global problem that plastic producers should be responsible for. The disposal of plastic waste into nature should be prohibited, as should single-use plastics, apart from medically necessary uses. Technologies to recycle all plastics, including complex plastics, should be deployed widely. Electronic waste recycling should be mandatory. A nationwide system of recycling could be set up following the inspiration of the European Union’s Waste of Electronic and Electrical Equipment Directive (WEEE). Exporting waste to countries with weak environmental controls should be banned.

Foreign Policy

The primary goal of U.S. foreign policy should be the advancement of the interests and well-being of America and its people, key to which is strengthening alliances and alliance structures, and the encouragement and support of democracy and democratic systems around the world. America is safest and at its most prosperous when it acts abroad in accordance with its values, when it stands as a leader among allies, and when it respects commitments it has made to its partners.

Protecting America's interests requires using a combination of soft and hard powers to address evolving and diverse national and regional challenges. Effective diplomacy is essential in facilitating America's human, economic, and security goals. The Department of State, severely neglected by the current administration, requires dramatic reinvestment to restore its strength as the most effective vehicle through which U.S. influence is delivered. A purposeful military is a partner of allies, a credible force respected by geopolitical adversaries, and a critical support infrastructure that protects national interests.

Keeping America Secure

America's military must be ready to defeat threats to national security from hostile foreign powers. Readiness means assessing security vulnerabilities due to climate change and working to eliminate reliance on fossil fuels. It means prioritizing the health and well-being of military personnel and their families, and of America's veterans who served our country with honor and bravery. It means attracting and encouraging diversity in the military, so that the Armed Forces reflect the nation and make use of all available talent, including members of the transgender and LGBTQ+ communities who would like the opportunity to serve with dignity.

Readiness means rebuilding relationships with other members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and with other allies and partners around the world by re-affirming America's belief in collective defense. Readiness means ending unnecessary wars. For almost two decades, American leaders have used the post-9/11 Authorization for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) to wage a "forever war" against Islamist terrorists and others. Putting American troops in harm's way should come only in response to direct threats to national security interests and only after proper debate in, and approval from, Congress. We support a responsible drawdown of deployed forces and repeal of the AUMF.

International Organizations

Key to the advancement of American interests are international organizations and institutions historically championed by the United States and which continue to serve as the basis for a rule-based order, increasing global security and prosperity for all.

The United States must strengthen institutions such as the World Trade Organization and the World Health Organization that the current administration has attempted to derail. We call on all nations to return to full engagement with these organizations, and we oppose unilateral actions that defy U.N. directives or other treaty obligations.

Restoring Diplomacy and Alliance-based Leadership

Some of America's greatest victories have come through wars not fought, partly due to the hard work of the country's diplomatic corps – patriotic civil servants who often serve in harm's way, advancing our national

security and diplomatic interests. Recently, diplomacy has been relegated to the sidelines, and the Department of State has been hollowed out. We call for a properly funded Department of State staffed with competent professionals and functioning as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy.

We are concerned about fraying relationships with America's allies, some of whom have stood by the U.S. since our founding. A strengthened State Department will be needed to rebuild trust through formal and informal diplomatic dialogue. We call for robust reengagement in thoughtful multilateralism. The United States should seek to expand diplomatic relationships and minimize or remove outdated sanctions on nations that pose no threat to the country.

From climate change to pandemics to economic crises, global challenges require diplomatic collaboration with countries that are not necessarily long-time American allies. America must coordinate with all G20 members and others on these challenges.

However, a renewal and expansion of diplomatic activity does not mean the United States should prop up authoritarian or corrupt governments.

Preventing Nuclear Proliferation

We support caps on the number of nuclear weapons held by current nuclear powers and measures to prevent the development or acquisition of nuclear weapons by other nations. We support strengthening arms-control discussions and agreements, key to which are internationally led transparency and verification measures.

Investing in Foreign Students

While learning about American values firsthand and experiencing the free flow of ideas, foreign students bring new perspectives, often to the benefit of American foreign policy. Yet, for the first time in 15 years, foreign student enrollment has dropped in the U.S., adversely impacting American influence abroad. The United States should increase investment in public diplomacy initiatives that bring foreign students to the country.

Living Our Values

The United States should stand with those seeking to advance personal liberty, freedom of expression, and democratic political representation. We cannot tolerate hate crimes or discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, sexuality, or religion. We support the rights of vulnerable communities and believe they should be treated with equality and respect before the law.

The United States must speak in favor of foundational elements of democracy that have been in decline in some countries over the last decade, including threats to a free press, peaceful assembly, free and fair elections, and the rule of law. The United States must support moderating and progressive democratic forces when they reemerge.

America's policy toward the world must be grounded in equality and mutual respect of its people as individuals. To that end, the United States should immediately end the unjustified and discriminatory travel bans and provide increased resources for our embassies and consulates for processing and assessing visa applications.

Democrats Abroad supports the use of declassification diplomacy projects for rectifying and improving relationships with countries, where the United States wishes to improve its standing by shedding light on its past involvement.

Providing Development Assistance Abroad

It is in America's national interest to remain the leader in global development assistance. By providing assistance targeted at supporting women and girls, increasing business opportunities, expanding human rights, and responding to global security challenges, America can benefit people around the world while furthering our own security and other interests.

Democrats Abroad recognizes that it can be in the United States' interests that aid be provided through multilateral channels such as the United Nations, the Red Cross, or other assistance operations when requested by an affected nation.

We call for an immediate end to the Mexico City policy ("global gag rule") that prevents Federal funding for non-governmental organizations that provide reproductive counseling and planned parenthood services. We call for legislation protecting development funding so that there is consistency over time, and it is not easily jeopardized by changes in administration.

Addressing the Global Refugee Crisis

Upheaval, conflict, abuse of human rights, and climate change have led to refugee crises around the world. Democrats Abroad firmly believes it is in the interest of the U.S. – and in accordance with American values – to work in concert with global institutions, allies, and other governments to address the causes of these crises and reduce the human toll. America's offers of assistance to those seeking refuge and opportunity have been among the proudest moments in our nation's history. It is long past time to restore America's moral leadership in helping people fleeing harm.

State-Sponsored Destabilization Efforts

Democrats Abroad strongly condemns state-sponsored destabilization efforts, including the use of violence, cyber-attacks, corruption, lies, and falsehoods, as well as assaults on the integrity of elections. America must strengthen defense measures against these campaigns while forcefully condemning these actions.

The United States should oppose any unilateral border changes. Moreover, to ensure freedom of navigation and trade through international waters, the United States and its trading partners should reaffirm international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which we call on the U.S. Government to ratify.

Working to De-escalate Conflict and Build Peace

De-escalating regional conflict and building peace is in the U.S.'s interest, as it can strengthen our allies and bring greater stability to otherwise turbulent areas. Regional conflicts such as those in the Middle East and in Eastern Europe may be deep-rooted and longstanding, but they are not unsolvable if the United States respects the interests of all sides and commits to assisting the parties involved in these conflicts in coming to the negotiating table. By acknowledging that the parties to the conflict each deserve to live in peace and security, the United States should seek to enable all sides to reach a negotiated settlement. Democrats Abroad supports using core U.S. values of human rights and the rule of law when engaging in efforts to de-escalate regional conflicts and building peace. Multilateral engagement and dialogue are necessary to forge peaceful solutions to disputes of sovereignty and borders.

Gender and Sexual Identity Equality

True gender equality means that all people should have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities regardless of their gender, and requires that the interests, needs, and priorities of all people are taken into consideration. All people must be and treated equally, and the diversity of different groups of women and men, as well as all trans, intersex, and non-binary persons must be recognized.

Democrats Abroad underlines the fact that women – their interests, needs, and priorities – must be given equal consideration. Women are more frequently affected by gender discrimination than men, and women of color, lesbians, trans women, poor women, teenage girls, and women with disabilities are most affected by policies and practices that discriminate based on gender.

The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and International Treaties

Democrats Abroad supports the Equal Rights Amendment, which will prohibit sex discrimination by the United States Government or any State Government by enshrining sex equality in the U.S. Constitution as its Twenty-eighth Amendment. Without it, we rely only on a legally insecure patchwork of contradictory protections – created by Congress, the States, and the courts – against wage, divorce, property ownership, pregnancy, employment, and career advancement discrimination. As required by the U.S. Constitution, 38 States have ratified the ERA, the ratification of which should now be recorded by the U.S. Archivist, but that has been delayed due to legal challenges.

Adherence to international treaties that support women’s rights would be another important sign of commitment of the United States in upholding and maintaining women’s rights. We therefore support the ratification by the Senate of the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which the U.S. signed in 1980, and which has already been ratified by 165 other countries, but which the Senate has failed to ratify.

Sexual and Reproductive Justice

Democrats Abroad is committed to protecting and advancing sexual and reproductive-health rights and justice in the United States. We believe unequivocally that every human being living in the United States should have access to quality, affordable sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including birth control methods and safe and legal abortions, regardless of where they live, their economic status, or their insurance coverage. We will continue to fight against efforts to defund and otherwise restrict sexual and reproductive health services, which provide critical health services to millions of poor people.

Individuals as well as families have the right to make the decision to have a child or not. Such rights should include the right to a safe and healthy pregnancy and childbirth, the right to adopt a child, and the right to health and support services during pregnancy and after the birth of a child. They should also include adoption and social support services without discrimination, including parental leave for both parents. We oppose efforts to defund and restrict sexual- and reproductive-health services.

Pregnancy discrimination must stop. Policymakers must fully ensure that pregnant individuals are not penalized in their work and careers because of their pregnancy. Pregnancy should not be a legally permissible excuse not to hire, to justify firing, or to deny merited promotions.

Democrats Abroad recognizes that unequal provisions in childcare negatively affect gender equality in both the workplace and in the home. We support concrete comprehensive actions to permit both parents to be equally involved in all aspects of their child's life, including providing six months of parental leave.

Federal agencies and courts play a crucial role in interpreting our legal protections and civil rights. As a result, executive and judicial nominees will shape our legal rights and our ability to access them far into the future. Nowhere is this more critical today than in upholding *Roe v. Wade*. We will fight for and support the nomination of judges and Federal agency executives who have a positive record of upholding reproductive-health rights and justice.

Federal and State laws and policies such as the Hyde Amendment – which bans the use of Federal funding of reproductive-health initiatives and institutions, including restrictions on the funding of contraception and abortions, and which impede women's access to contraception and abortion – should be overturned.

We condemn and shall combat all acts of harassment, intimidation, or violence towards reproductive-health providers, their staff, and patients.

Justice and Equality in Health

Democrats Abroad strongly believes that an individual must be treated as an individual by the medical profession, and not as a member of a given community.

We oppose unscientific, discriminatory, and blanket bans on the giving of blood and plasma by men who sleep with men (MSM), which in times of crisis serves to hamper public health.

We oppose any discriminatory practice based on HIV status. This includes but is not limited to medical treatment, pharmaceutical service, insurance coverage, and any form of physical segregation in the social space or workplace.

We condemn the dangerous, non-medical practice of so-called “conversion therapy” which seeks to transform a person's sexual orientation or gender identity in contravention of long-standing scientific evidence of the immutability of these human traits, and demand that it be banned entirely for persons under the age of 18.

We support legislation that extends affordable preventive healthcare to women, and which prohibits discrimination in healthcare based on gender, and which addresses the discrimination and creates meaningful access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, including those based on gender, age, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression, race, income, disability, and other factors.

Gender-based violence, harassment, or abuse

Gender-based violence is violence that is directed at an individual based on their biological sex or gender identity or gender expression. It includes physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and psychological abuse, threats, coercion, and economic or educational deprivation, whether occurring in public or private life. This includes harassment and abuse – including female genital mutilation, violations of intersex bodily integrity, and child marriage.

Sexual violence and harassment and other sexual, physical, emotional, or psychological (including verbal) abuse, threats, or coercion, and even economic or educational deprivation based on an individual's sex or gender identity or expression is deeply rooted in harmful gender norms and inequality and exists in epidemic

proportions in the United States. This has an impact on mental and reproductive health and violates rights including, in some cases, the right to choose if, when, how, and with whom to engage in sexual activity.

Specific communities face disproportionate rates of gender-based violence, including Native American women, who are much more likely to be raped or murdered by a partner than other women in the United States. Transgender people, specifically trans women of color, are also at grave risk and need to be protected through legislation.

Through legislation such as the Violence Against Women Act, we are committed to ending gender-based violence, harassment, or abuse wherever it occurs, whether in our homes, streets, schools, communities, in the military, or anywhere else.

Wage gap and wage parity

Democrats Abroad believes strongly in equal pay for equal work. Women are paid 81% of what men are paid. When other factors such as racial bias, disability, and age discrimination are included, the wage gap can be even greater. Rooted in an array of factors, including bias against working mothers, occupational segregation, and in some cases direct pay discrimination, the gender wage gap is harmful to women's economic security and should be illegal and disincentivized with stiff penalties.

Women's representation in leadership and politics

With the goal that corporate boards and elected officials should more closely reflect the demographics of the U.S. population, which is 50% women, we endorse measures to increase the representation of women on boards of private companies and in leadership positions in Government and at all levels of the political process.

Healthcare

Understanding that healthcare is the highest concern for many Americans – including many of our families and friends living in the U.S. – Democrats Abroad advocates for high-quality, equitable, and freely available healthcare for all Americans – and for everyone living in the U.S. – which we regard as a fundamental human right. We advocate for comprehensive reform that can withstand assault from for-profit interests, especially insurance and pharmaceutical companies, and for avoiding patchwork solutions that are more vulnerable to piecemeal attack and dilution.

We support Medicare for All as the preferred method for achieving these goals. We support the most expedient process for, and transition to, Medicare for All that ensures uninterrupted healthcare coverage. Healthcare coverage should include preventive care and holistic health-promotion; reproductive health and abortion services; pre- and post-natal care; pediatric and gender-affirming care; dental, vision, and mental healthcare; rehabilitation; end-of-life palliative care; and addiction recovery–related services. We support retraining and a just transition for healthcare administrators whose jobs might be at risk from such reform. And as we transition to a more just healthcare system, we call for resources in the immediate future to address the opioid crisis.

With healthcare costs continuing to rise in the U.S., many American families, even those with healthcare insurance, live on the brink of financial disaster due to high premiums and unpredictable out-of-pocket costs at point of care. High unemployment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the inherent vulnerability of employer-based insurance. Even before the pandemic, improvements made by the Affordable Care Act (ACA) had been undermined by for-profit interests, and many Americans remained uninsured or underinsured – a number that is seeing a substantial increase due to pandemic-related job losses.

Medical debts are reported to be the leading cause of personal bankruptcies in the U.S. Horror stories abound of Americans having to appeal to family, friends, and the wider public through crowdfunding campaigns as an emergency source of life-saving financial aid. We lament the situation of Americans living abroad with pre-existing conditions who often find themselves becoming healthcare refugees, unable to return to the U.S. because they cannot afford healthcare or would be priced out of healthcare insurance. We support research into and advancement of reciprocal healthcare agreements internationally so that Democrats Abroad members can enjoy uninterrupted and accessible health coverage not only in their home countries, but also on return visits to the U.S. We also support research into Medicare reimbursements for those who were taxed based on citizenship and encourage the viability of Medicare portability.

Democrats Abroad believes that such access to high-quality, equitable, and affordable healthcare would be best enabled by a single-payer system. Thorough research into Medicare for All by a broad range of organizations and entities has shown that it is the best way to control costs. Single-payer healthcare has a proven track record of providing better value for money to its beneficiaries than the private healthcare system that currently exists in the U.S.

We have seen how well Medicare has controlled costs better than private insurance; that it has lower administrative costs than private plans. We have also seen how private healthcare market forces have not led to competition as advertised, but instead have resulted in collusive industry practices and the rise of healthcare monopolies. These facts are supported by research and the burdensome experience of Americans.

Democrats Abroad is in a unique position to advocate for comprehensive healthcare reform, as many of us have the good fortune to live in countries with single-payer healthcare or other systems that provide universal coverage. Many of our members have personal experience of how universal coverage improves physical, financial, emotional, and psychological health. U.S. citizens living abroad can therefore speak to the peace of mind that results when health needs do not evoke the question of how to pay for necessary medical services.

The U.S. spends more per capita on healthcare than any other industrialized nation on Earth, yet – despite world-class care in many instances – we have worse health outcomes overall. Controlling healthcare costs is critical to achieving universal coverage. We advocate a range of strategies to reduce costs, including allowing the Federal Government to directly negotiate drug prices with pharmaceutical companies, and single-payer healthcare insurance to streamline administrative costs. We urge oversight and regulation of the collusive practices and the rise of monopolies in the healthcare industry.

We believe in and advocate for Medicare for All to ensure that all those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable are given peace of mind with unimpeded access to coverage. This especially includes those who are impoverished; women; and black, brown, poor-white, undocumented, and indigenous peoples, as it is understood that the intersection of these identities leads to poor health outcomes. We believe in and commit to funding and research for those most marginalized, especially women of color, and to work with healthcare practitioners and institutions with specific, actionable steps that will safeguard the lives of those most at risk. We support the establishment, maintenance, and supply of hospitals and clinics in underserved areas, specifically communities of color, rural communities, and economically disadvantaged communities. We note that marginalization and social exclusion inflicts biological stress. This can be triggered by extreme illness during childhood, maternal stress during fetal development, nutritional stress, or extreme psychological stress brought on by – for example – racism. Past discrimination and current biases in healthcare have also contributed to disproportionately high infection and mortality rates in these communities. We support strategies to eliminate ethnic health disparities and racial bias in healthcare delivery, as well as solutions that promote wellness. We support universal and targeted interventions to reduce the gap in racial health disparities, supported by tracking, evaluation, and action based on disaggregated racial data. The COVID-19 experience has also shown that better health outcomes for minority communities can be achieved by improved cultural and linguistic competency. We also note the intersection of poverty and class, and that economic disadvantage in housing, education, income, and exposure to environmental toxins leads to disproportionately worse health outcomes.

Democrats Abroad believes in ensuring uninhibited funding for any reproductive health service related to a woman's right to choose. As women face increasingly harsh judicial and regulatory pressures, comprehensive healthcare should include the right to pregnancy planning, and childbirth and support services during pregnancy and after the birth of a child. Medicare for All would ensure that existing means-testing programs would be replaced by comprehensive reproductive rights that all women can access, no matter their income level. Democrats Abroad also supports maternal care that ensures that the crisis of maternal mortality is addressed immediately, especially for black women, who are twice as likely to die in childbirth as white women. While Medicare for All will ensure equitable maternity care, we support all measures that urgently address maternal morbidity, especially for those who are most vulnerable.

Democrats Abroad also believes in a system that will ensure healthcare provision protections and equitability of access for transgender, non-binary, and intersex individuals. This includes specific daily healthcare needs, including gender-specific and non-specific care. With the provision of equitable access to care through socially inclusive service, Medicare for All would end potential discriminatory and complicated means-testing schemes, and would cover gender transition services, the ability to negotiate the price of needed pharmaceuticals, and mental health support services.

Democrats Abroad supports holistic measures to ensure pandemic and disease preparedness and to learn from mistakes and accommodate potential future needs. This includes support for the World Health Organization for disease prevention and harm reduction, especially as it applies to public health. We also support the attainability of crucial provisions for all healthcare staff, such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), critical care interventions, and life-sustaining and/or life-saving equipment -- for example, ventilators. These must be readily available in all circumstances that require them as assessed and deemed medically necessary by healthcare practitioners, without negative political and/or societal consequence. There must be capacity for nimble medical staffing and support to ensure optimal measures (in such things as nurse-to-patient ratios) for positive patient outcomes and minimal morbidity and mortality. We urge the funding of research through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and support oversight of research through institutional review boards, as well as the maintenance and improvement of regulations pertaining to the ethics of healthcare and research. Democrats Abroad advocates for and prioritizes all evidence-based policies that are shown to increase patient safety, outcomes, and quality of life.

It is imperative for the U.S. to drastically improve its healthcare system both to protect our own citizens from pandemics and to do our part in global response. We must study best practices in other countries, including effective deployment of digital technology while ensuring privacy and confidentiality, stronger testing and tracking capabilities, and stockpiling personal protective equipment as well as medical equipment and supplies.

Immigration Policy

Democrats abroad live and breathe the gift of living across borders. We understand deeply how immigration benefits societies and results in resilient communities in the United States and around the world.

We have watched in horror and despair as the U.S. Government has disregarded human rights and made xenophobia, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and cruelty central to immigration policy. We recall when the U.S. succumbed to such bigotry with the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882), Mexican repatriation (1929–36), and turning away refugees during World Wars I and II.

Once, the Democratic party led transformative legislation to change course, restore justice, and extend opportunity to immigrants across the globe with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. Striving for a “more perfect union” reflects both the foundational creed of the United States and Democratic Party principles. We must now act again to protect the rights of current and future immigrants.

We support four overall goals: 1) removing discriminatory and unjust systems; 2) reuniting families; 3) attracting immigrants with needed knowledge and skills; and 4) welcoming those fleeing catastrophe, violence, or oppression.

Removing Discriminatory and Unjust Systems

People in the U.S. should be treated equally under the law. Immigration status must not be a license to violate our constitutional principles or basic human rights.

Immigration policy must not discriminate based on protected characteristics such as sex or sexual orientation; gender or gender identity; race or ethnicity; and national origin or religion, like the registration of Muslim men after 9/11 and the 2017 so-called “Muslim ban.” We condemn any policy of eugenics, white nationalism, or white supremacy. “Country caps” should be re-evaluated to reflect current immigration patterns and not misused to restrict demographic change.

Those who qualify for Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) otherwise known as ‘Dreamers’ were brought to the U.S. as children and grew up as Americans. They should have a swift path to citizenship.

Many immigrants, including children, are being kept in unsafe and unsanitary conditions, often in privately-run immigration detention centers with little to no oversight, resulting in mismanagement, exploitation, and blatant violations of human rights. Convicted criminals should be imprisoned through the criminal justice system, not the immigration system, but we should never imprison anyone solely for lack of paperwork. No child should ever be held in a detention center. Immigrants should be released to sponsors or, in a worst-case scenario, entered a tracking program as their immigration case is being processed.

Deportation can be a death sentence for some. There should be an immediate moratorium on all deportations and a review of those previously authorized, with hearings to allow revocation of any unjust deportation orders. Those at risk of being deported should have access to the immigration courts with a right to legal representation and a right to appeal.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has become increasingly militarized in ways that make us less safe. The U.S. Government already has many agencies for detaining dangerous individuals. There is no need for ICE to carry out raids within the U.S., to operate without warrants, or to use military-grade weapons and

vehicles. ICE field operations should be abolished, and the U.S.-Mexico border should cease to be a militarized zone. The wall – which is a waste of time and resources, harms the environment, leads immigrants into hazardous crossings, and exacerbates violence and exploitation – should be eliminated.

Immigrants may have difficulty communicating with border officials and can find themselves in lengthy and traumatizing detention proceedings due to inadequate services. Welcome centers should be established at border stations with interpreting services and legal assistance as well as aid for the disabled.

Invalid or lapsed immigration status should not be a crime; the immigration system has sufficient deterrents already, including fines or delays in normalizing status.

“Sanctuary cities” and other sanctuary spaces (e.g., hospitals, houses of worship, court systems) should be off-limits for immigration enforcement. The U.S. Government must stop retaliating against communities for enacting sanctuary-city policies that make them safer by encouraging immigrants to feel free to contact the police.

Reuniting Families

Families belong together; reunited families create stable communities. Immigration policy that separates family members creates trauma, compromising mental health, and prevents immigrants from building a stable life in the U.S. Children should never be separated from parents or caregivers and guardians. Every effort must be made to reunite families who have already been separated and, if children cross the border alone, to identify family members for placement.

We must also remove barriers that prevent or delay immediate relatives of U.S. citizens from obtaining lawful permanent residence. Among these barriers are the “three- and ten-year bars,” provisions of the law that prohibit applicants from returning to the United States if they depart after having previously been in the country illegally. Many people who qualify for green cards through immediate relatives are caught in a Catch-22: under current law they must leave the country to apply for their green card abroad, but as soon as they depart, they are immediately barred from re-entry. Three- and ten-year bars should be eliminated.

Americans are suffering from unacceptable multi-year administrative delays in processing requests for family visas. Thus, Americans who wish to return to the U.S. accompanied by their families are unable to do so. Visas for family members of U.S. Citizens and permanent residents should have lower income requirements, reduced fees, be easier to obtain and issued in less than a year.

Marriage equality is the law of the land. Treating the children of legally married same-sex couples as born “out of wedlock” for purposes of denying them citizenship is illegal and unconstitutional. Children born to married same-sex spouses where one is a U.S. citizen should be recognized as citizens from birth like any others.

Attracting Immigrants with Needed Knowledge and Skills

For immigrants with needed knowledge and skills – from farm workers to caregivers and nurses to engineers, and including students, knowledge experts, and entrepreneurs – the U.S. should have an active recruitment and retention campaign, including a path to citizenship.

Many student and work visas are expensive, difficult to obtain, and do not create an easy path to citizenship. If they permit work, many restrict the types one can do. These circumstances create an immigration

experience fraught with anxiety and prone to exploitation. Recent graduates are left with no options at the conclusion of their Optional Practical Training (OPT) job.

Unacceptable and unpredictable delays in the processing of applications and renewals create extreme stress regarding staying in the United States and the ability to travel abroad. Clearer and more humane policies are needed to enable both staying in the United States or being able to travel while awaiting a determination.

Simplifying immigration visas, allowing and encouraging work, and providing a path to citizenship for students and workers would create a vibrant and resilient economy while enriching communities.

Welcoming those Fleeing Catastrophe, Violence, or Oppression

The U.S. was once a beacon of hope, welcoming those fleeing catastrophe, violence, or oppression worldwide, and we must become that beacon again. Furthermore, the global and interconnected world we live in has been largely shaped by the U.S. since WWII, and the U.S. should accept responsibility for its global role by providing safe harbor for those harmed as a result of our actions and policies.

America's strength is often drawn from those who struggled the hardest to get to the U.S. Asylum seekers and refugees should be welcomed while their claims are adjudicated, not turned away, incarcerated, or sent to third countries to wait.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) should continue to be an option for those fleeing natural disasters, armed conflicts, and other catastrophes. If the home country remains dangerous with the expiration of this status, there should be a way to stay in the U.S. TPS, however, is an inadequate response to the climate change crisis that is projected to displace tens of millions. The U.S. must enact new policies to protect climate-displaced persons and accommodate the reality that they may never be able to return. Victims of crime who find themselves in the U.S. should not be afraid to contact the police or the U.S. Government. On the contrary, they should know that they will not be deported for reporting crimes against them.

Media and the Internet

The ability to freely send and receive all types of information via electronic media – whether for work, education, cultural enrichment, or leisure – has become central to the lives of most Americans. The Internet has expanded the ways in which individuals communicate with one another, leading to the creation of new communities and bringing members of existing communities closer together. Because of this, we support faster and more resilient connectivity, such as the deployment of 5G mobile networks.

However, many Americans have been left on the other side of the digital divide, unable to take advantage of the flood of communication and content. None of the incredible advancements in communications and media make a difference for those in underserved communities. We support measures to improve access to the Internet and increase media literacy training for all ages across the country, especially in disadvantaged communities.

Some Internet platforms abuse these vital societal arteries. Democrats Abroad calls for lawmakers to combat this danger and guarantee access to free-flowing and fair media for all.

Digital rights are human rights. This understanding corrects the imbalance of power between technology companies and consumers and ensures that consumers can be compensated for their data, which is at the heart of many digital business models.

Internet platforms have reduced inefficiencies and provided many benefits for society, but some have made misjudgments in their fervor to be content-agnostic. The United States and the rest of the world have seen a rise in the propagation of illegal, hateful, or otherwise harmful content. Many companies that rely on monetizing attention have unduly profited from harmful content. Platforms must stop hiding under “safe harbor” legislation that currently protects them. We support regulation to hold them legally responsible for illegal, hateful, or otherwise harmful content and promote aggressive steps to assure its removal.

The dominance of some digital platforms necessitates Government action to ensure that these platforms treat content providers fairly. We call for net neutrality regulation and we support a new fairness doctrine so that content providers can operate on a level playing field rather than be buried under algorithms that offer preferential treatment to content produced by the platform itself. If needed, regulators should invoke antitrust measures to mitigate the anti-consumer effects of Internet and media consolidation.

Telecommunications companies that enable connectivity to Internet platforms must ensure that legal content is not blocked. If they choose to prioritize certain types of content to better manage congestion, such as over mobile networks, this possibility must be offered on fair terms to all customers without regard to size or ownership or conflicts of interest. News media hold a particularly important role in our democracy. We call for increased funding for public news media outlets to offer alternatives to those with commercial interests. Commercial incentives of news production can make viral content attractive, but news entities, especially local news, must ensure the integrity of the information disseminated. At the same time, elected officials must refrain from undermining news outlets, which can cause as much damage as misinformation itself. Finally, responsible whistleblowers who share information with the press in a careful way are critical to maintaining our Government in check and must be protected.

Military and Veterans

History, especially the last century, has taught us about the futility of armed aggression, about its inability to solve problems, about its utter inhumanity. It inevitably involves civilian casualties that jeopardize the relations necessary for finding real solutions. Diplomatic efforts must always be favored first in resolving international crises. Democrats Abroad supports a strong defense of the United States and its vital security interests, but we advocate that military force be used as a last resort.

Military Policy

Our armed forces – especially leadership at the most senior levels – must become more equitable, better reflecting the gender as well as ethnic and religious composition of our country. All capable Americans – including transgender people – should be encouraged to join the United States military, and we support gender-equality initiatives such as those that led to opening Army Infantry, Armor, and Special Operations Units to women. We denounce the continued prevalence of sexual assault in the military, which an astounding 25% of military women report. The Department of Defense must protect military sexual-assault survivors and remove sexual-assault prosecutions from the chain of command, preferably to civilian jurisdictions. Additional funding for outreach, recruitment, training, and retention of young people in our armed forces must be provided.

Supporting our Troops, Military Families, and Veterans

We fully support the members of our armed forces, whose service and dedication deserve our deepest respect and gratitude, as do the contributions and sacrifices of their families. Our service members must have abundant, high-quality training and resources both to meet traditional challenges and to conduct anti-terrorist operations, peacekeeping missions, and emergency humanitarian actions. There is no place for endless war.

To recruit and reward high-quality service members, Congress should increase pay and benefits for veterans, active, and retired military. The needs of our disabled veterans, in particular, require more attention. While military spending cannot be unlimited – and waste, fraud, and abuse must always be combated – any budget reductions should not adversely affect our military members and their families. Gender-neutral uniforms enhance unity and support our task readiness.

We call for strong measures to facilitate the military-to-civilian transition. When a convicted war criminal receives a presidential pardon, it countermands good discipline and jeopardizes our system of military justice, and this action deserves our condemnation.

We adamantly denounce any diversion of military construction funds appropriated by Congress and vehemently oppose the use of any military funds to build a border wall.

Honoring our Veterans and our Troops

Veterans and retired military should receive benefits whether at home or abroad. We call for the provision of full healthcare for veterans, their domestic partners, and their children and for reimbursement of any costs incurred by receiving emergency care outside the United States.

Accompanying dependents must be provided with high-quality educational opportunities to facilitate a change of duty station and to enable later access to institutions of higher learning. Military dependents must be exempt from taxes on survivor benefits.

Immigrants must be granted the American citizenship that was promised them in return for military service; we condemn their unjustified deportation, and we condemn denying citizenship rights to dependents of U.S. personnel deployed overseas. The predatory abuses of some profit-oriented colleges and universities calls into question the recognition and continued funding of their undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

We call for strong measures to facilitate the military-to-civilian transition, including guaranteed funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), including the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), which must never be privatized. Such funds must never again be sequestered. We call for increased Veterans Administration funding and resources to address veteran homelessness, including collaboration with community-based nonprofit groups providing transitional housing; we specifically support efforts to improve the plight of African American, Native, Hispanic, and female veterans who disproportionately experience homelessness. We call for compensating African American veterans or their dependents for benefits denied them despite their service in World War II.

We applaud measures and institutions that encourage veteran employment and support increased VA funding to that end.

We salute the continued success of the post-9/11 GI Bill in extending benefits to an increasing number of veterans and active military personnel, including access to education and support services for career advancement for spouses and other family members.

We call for re-evaluating and curtailing recognition of undergraduate and graduate degree programs at some for-profit colleges and universities.

We call for linking VHA medical requirements to contingency planning for U.S. military combat commands and for expanding VHA funding to strengthen its network of medical centers and state-supported nursing homes. Increased VHA funding should focus on returning soldiers' mental healthcare and reducing wait-times for veterans seeking medical attention. Healthcare delayed is healthcare denied and can contribute to suicide.

We favor awarding the Purple Heart, along with relevant additional care and benefits, to all injured military personnel suffering from properly verified mental or brain injury incurred during military service, including post-traumatic stress (PTS), the treatment of which should include the use of medical marijuana instead of opiates.

We salute the widely available treatment for military sexual trauma (MST) for all genders. We call for curtailing the heightened documentation threshold currently necessary to determine eligibility for disability compensation for post-traumatic stress (PTS) based on MST. Compensation for MST is a rightful veteran benefit.

We call for quality healthcare and compensation for all veterans who suffer from cancer due to military service-related radiation or chemical exposure.

We recognize every veteran's right to an appropriate military funeral, and we support increased funding for national cemeteries.

We call for the renegotiation of collective bargaining agreements at the VA as ordered by the Office of Personnel Management, and we call for enabling employees to report mismanagement, employee abuse, and any other abuse. We support efforts to secure VA employee rights, and we call for the withdrawal of executive orders curtailing representational work during official time and requiring unions to rent space.

Government Policies Affecting Military and Veterans

Serving those who have served is our guiding principle. This obligates our nation to look after them upon their return to civilian life.

The U.S. must never again be the first to use a nuclear weapon. We support the reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons and the negotiation of treaties to that end. We also support U.S. ratification of the Ottawa Treaty on anti-personnel mines.

We call for comprehensive review of the worldwide network of U.S. military bases to assess their utility to protecting U.S. vital interests, bearing in mind however that the effects of any base closure must include those on American veterans residing nearby.

The outsourcing of critical security and military functions to private contractors should be curtailed. If not, they must be subject to stronger oversight.

International Traffic in Arms Regulations issued by the Department of State's Directorate of Defense Trade Controls must be strictly observed.

Unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) used as attack platforms often bring disastrous consequences both for civilian populations in target areas and for their remote operators. This practice must be re-evaluated on moral and ethical grounds.

The environmental burden from military facilities both at home and abroad must be reduced or eliminated.

National Security

All Americans, no matter where we live, should be able to live in peaceful communities, free from the threat of violence and terrorism, but securing America is a complicated and ever-evolving mixture of policy priorities, technology, and law enforcement that involves coordination across a number of agencies. Democrats Abroad stresses the need for evidence-based implementation of security measures to ensure respect for human dignity, civil liberties, and the rule of law. We also support increased congressional oversight of defense spending and the appropriate use of technology.

Borders

Ensuring the integrity of our nation's borders is important, and we support providing the appropriate agencies with the necessary resources and technology to secure them, but such measures should not include ineffective solutions that frivolously waste our nation's resources, such as border walls. Further, we believe that enforcement of immigration laws should be conducted with compassion and without mass detentions, the separation of children from their parents, or the denial of access to adequate food and medical services.

Gun Violence

Democrats Abroad supports strong gun control. Members of Democrats Abroad are keenly aware of the unique "American-ness" of gun violence, a public health issue with more than 15,000 deaths in 2019. Research on policies to prevent gun violence should include funding research through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), other public health agencies, and universities.

Gun control measures should include banning the manufacture or import, sale, and possession of high-capacity magazines and bump stocks and of military-style semi-automatic weapons, programs to manage those already in private hands, and strict control of other weapon peripherals and ammunition that are allowed to be sold.

We also endorse other common-sense gun-control legislation such as periodical mandatory training for guns owners in the proper handling of firearms, as well as thorough, universal background checks – with no exceptions for friends, neighbors, or family members. Stricter prohibitions on firearm ownership should be established for the mentally ill, as well as for domestic abusers, convicted offenders of violent crimes, and other high-risk individuals. Better coordination between local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies is required to strengthen enforcement of gun control laws.

"Stand your ground" and "open carry" laws must be repealed.

Terrorism

It is the responsibility of the U.S. Government to protect Americans from the risk of terrorism. Terrorism is not a monolithic threat, however, and requires a multi-faceted approach. While supporting efforts to eliminate state-sponsored terrorism and attacks that originate from cells funded and trained overseas, we note that terrorist attacks originating from domestic hate groups and individuals have increased dramatically in the last decade. We support devoting more law enforcement field agents and resources to combat white

nationalist, racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Government groups and propaganda. Funding cuts for countering domestic terrorism must be reversed, and the Department of Homeland Security staffed with qualified professionals who understand the diversity of threats our nation faces.

Balancing Civil Liberties while Protecting against Cyber Threats

Democrats Abroad has members who have experienced being surveilled and understand the danger in mass surveillance. We believe that when it comes to policy on digital communications, balance is needed between cyber security and protection of private communications.

Private speech is vital to our democracy and must be protected. Placing backdoors into hardware or software increases the likelihood that authoritarian governments, illegitimate non-state actors, and criminals can compromise our communications.

Future-Proofing our Defense Capabilities: Climate Change and Public Health

The 2019 U.S. Worldwide Threat Assessment highlighted climate change as one of the principal worldwide threats to America's national security. A domestic climate-defense infrastructure program is also urgently needed to address demographic and economic implications of continuing climate change. With respect to sea-level rise, this must include addressing key vulnerabilities in coastal communities including major metropolitan areas such as New York, Miami, and Los Angeles.

Democrats Abroad also calls for the establishment of national stockpiles of critical medical equipment and reagents that will enable rapid population screening for disease during a pandemic, as well as provide sufficient personal protection for frontline medical staff and their patients.

Social Welfare

Democrats Abroad believes that every citizen has the right to pursue self-fulfillment through their labor, and that equal access to opportunities is the best way to ensure economic growth and progress. We support policies to provide a baseline of support and security so that all Americans have their essential needs met, including housing, healthcare, food, and clean water. We further affirm every American's need for other essentials of a safe and secure life, such as legal and environmental security, community inclusion, information technology, transportation, educational resources, and employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

Social Security

Social Security is the most successful and effective welfare program in U.S. history. Its universality has ensured that it is politically stable. Its evident success in improving the general well-being and economic solvency of our communities makes it a model for future programs. To maintain Social Security's viability for the future, we support fully funding the Social Security Administration and oppose attempts to cut benefits or make them income- or wealth-tested or otherwise more difficult to access.

For Americans living outside the U.S., we urge the following adjustments:

- Negotiate and implement totalization agreements with countries that have similar pension programs if no such agreement is already in place;
- Eliminate the provision that cuts off Supplemental Social Security Income after 30 consecutive days outside the country; and
- Replace the harsh Foreign Work Test, applicable only to Americans abroad, with the Annual Earnings Test, so that all Americans are subject to the same rules.

Unemployment Benefits

Every so often, an economic crisis leads to loss of employment for hardworking Americans. More often, some Americans lose their employment through normal economic activity as businesses change or fail. The necessity to help people as they transition through economic uncertainty to better opportunities has long been accepted. We urge reforms to broaden the reach of unemployment benefits to all workers and to make applications more streamlined and benefits equal to what is needed to access necessities and survive with dignity.

Given the context of the COVID-19 situation, we urge the extension of the economic safety net until the economy has recovered, such as continued payroll protections and expanded unemployment insurance. We also support increasing availability and access to nutritional support programs and policies that mitigate evictions, foreclosures, utility shut offs, and homelessness.

Basic Needs

Housing and rental assistance, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other programs create opportunities for people in difficult circumstances while increasing the wellness of our communities. Yet for decades they have been ridiculed and stigmatized, underfunded and fragmented, and bureaucratically walled off from the very people they should help by burdensome requirements such as work requirements for SNAP recipients. We support greater access to these programs for all citizens in need.

Housing Policy

Homelessness, which afflicts over half a million Americans, and racial disparities in homeownership require urgent attention. Access to adequate and affordable housing should be an inalienable right, as it is a crucial

pillar of American economic strength. We are committed to eliminating homelessness in the U.S. We support directing Federal funds to State, local, and community programs for the homeless, specifically for construction of lower-income permanent housing, for housing vouchers with preference for those currently homeless or at great risk, and for mental health and related services for the homeless.

Homeownership has long been the most important way to build wealth for most Americans, but racial disparities remain shockingly wide. The 2008 housing crisis highlighted the collective impact of discriminatory practices employed against minority groups throughout U.S. history. We support solutions to tackle supply constraints on housing, including State and local programs focused on increasing minority homeownership.

The Future of Welfare

We believe in the intrinsic worth and potential of every person. If the U.S. is to be a land of opportunity for all, we must provide a basic standard that does not deprive citizens of opportunities, respect, and dignity. We believe in social welfare that helps diverse individuals, families, and communities thrive and strive.

It is our belief that it is the duty of the Federal Government to create quality jobs and guarantee work for every individual seeking employment. In an era of economic uncertainty and high unemployment, it is more important than ever that Congress enact a Federal jobs guarantee. We support a guarantee that provides a family-sustaining wage, adequate family and medical leave, paid vacations, and retirement security.

In addition to the Federal jobs guarantee, we support the implementation of other options such as universal basic income and a Federal wage guarantee to provide a baseline of security and opportunity for all Americans to navigate life with confidence and dignity. The following principles should guide the development of welfare programs and policies:

- Evidence-based and Results-Driven: Programs should be guided by evidence during planning, operation, and revision, with success evaluated frequently at the local level using economic and human-wellness metrics such as health, individual achievement, and community and environmental well-being.
- Automatic and Proactive: Current approaches tend to be fragmented across many agencies, which puts a considerable bureaucratic burden on citizens who are poorly equipped to shoulder the extra administrative effort. Programs should be automatic and proactive to ensure that nobody falls through the cracks.
- Universal vs. Needs-based: Universal programs should be the default – rather than, for example, wealth- or income-tested or needs-based ones – because they are more easily made automatic and proactive. Universal programs tend to require less administrative overhead. They provide a sense of solidarity and equality, and for that reason are often more politically and economically sound. Needs-based programs should be limited, such as for persons with specific disabilities, disaster relief, and other exceptional cases.
- Proactive Needs-Based Programs: People who are in need should not have to jump through hoops to get help. Effective care for people in need ensures that everyone is valued as a member of the community. These programs must proactively find and support people with individual or special needs.

Affirm Action Against Discrimination

Historically, marginalized communities and, in particular, communities of color, have not fully benefited from legislation that was meant to address poverty and inequality. Until these systemic injustices are addressed, many of the underserved will continue to face inordinate hurdles in life. We applaud efforts to establish a permanent Health and Human Services Infections Disease Racial and Ethnic Disparities Task Force, which would monitor inequities in the delivery of healthcare. We support equal access to all programs.

Taxation

Democrats Abroad is committed to an equitable tax policy for all Americans that boosts economic opportunity and supports programs essential to national, community, or individual security and well-being while raising revenue from those most able to pay.

The U.S. tax system causes enormous personal and financial hardship for Americans living abroad. Americans abroad are unofficial ambassadors for American culture and values, and promoters of U.S. interests and business enterprises. This is a meritorious service to the nation and not one that should be punished with discriminatory tax treatment and onerous tax and financial-account reporting requirements.

We urge Congress to reform U.S. tax policy to level the playing field for Americans abroad, clarify and simplify our filing requirements, and eliminate loopholes exploitable for tax avoidance.

We support the establishment of a Commission on Americans Abroad to address, among other things, issues in existing and proposed tax laws that harm non-resident citizens, and regulations that prohibit or penalize them from making retirement investments in their countries of residence. We also support expansion of the leadership, membership, and undertakings of the Congressional Americans Abroad Caucus for the same purpose.

Citizen-Based Taxation (CBT) vs. Residence-Based Taxation (RBT)

The long-standing U.S. system of Citizen-Based Taxation causes enormous personal and financial hardship for Americans living abroad, who are required to file annual U.S. tax returns reporting all earned and unearned income worldwide.

Because Americans abroad must meet tax requirements of their country of residence as well as the U.S., CBT can result in their being double-taxed, or forced to satisfy regulations that are out of alignment (by, for example, being taxed in the U.S. on income that is sheltered in their country of residence in a tax-deferred account). Furthermore, some – such as retirees with foreign-earned pensions, and vulnerable citizens living on foreign government social welfare – are even subjected to punitive tax treatment of income generated outside the U.S. Relief in the current tax code – excluding a certain level of foreign income earned by Americans abroad, and credit for foreign taxes paid – often does not zero out taxes owed to the U.S.

The U.S. is distinctly in the minority in using CBT to require its citizens living abroad to report and pay taxes on their worldwide income. In contrast, Residency-Based Taxation taxes citizens and residents where they reside and where they receive or earn income. In such a system, Americans abroad would pay taxes in their country of residence and – unless it were U.S.-sourced income – would not have to report or pay tax again on such income in the U.S. It would be fair and simple.

We support Residence-Based Taxation, which – if enacted by Congress – would remedy most tax problems faced by Americans abroad while preventing the use of either real or fraudulent offshore residence for tax avoidance. Adoption of RBT would recognize the legitimate participation of Americans abroad in other economies, while not affecting the taxation of their U.S.-sourced income.

In the absence of the adoption of RBT, we support an increase in the amount of the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion and its expansion to include unearned income, social welfare, investment income, and capital gains already taxed locally.

Additionally, we call for the U.S. Government to raise this income exclusion from around \$100,000 to \$1.75 million so that double taxation would be eliminated for nearly all citizens outside the U.S. Those who fall under this exclusion should need only to submit a one-line tax return stating this, accompanied by a copy of their tax return from their country of residence.

Further, given that citizens outside the U.S. have not benefited from years of mortgage interest deduction tax credits, citizens outside the U.S. should not pay U.S. taxes on “profits” from home sales where they reside.

Reporting Requirements

Because filing tax declarations for income generated abroad is inordinately complex and confusing, most Americans abroad are forced – at considerable personal expense – to engage specialist tax-return preparers who understand both (or all) the tax jurisdictions applicable to the American clients they deal with. This is an unfair burden borne by Americans abroad.

Additionally, mandatory foreign-financial-account reporting required by the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) and the Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts (FBAR) – designed to discourage and apprehend those who would use offshore accounts to cheat on their taxes – compounds the burden borne by Americans abroad, especially in countries where it is illegal for the banks to facilitate such reports. Compliance can require many hours from each American taxpayer as well as the payment of fees for consulting experts. FATCA and FBAR are overly broad in their application, affecting every single American abroad with a bank account in their country of residence. And much of the effort is redundant, as FATCA and FBAR require reporting the same accounts.

Such multiple financial-account reporting is also ineffectual. Wide research has shown that those who use foreign accounts to avoid U.S. tax typically keep income and assets in anonymous shell companies that they do not report. Realistically, no American living abroad hides assessable income in accounts in the country where they live and already pay tax.

The current system of mandatory financial-account reporting has reduced or eliminated the access of many Americans abroad to even ordinary banking services and financial products where they reside. Banks unwilling to comply with U.S. account-reporting demands have “locked out” Americans abroad by refusing services, including the opening and maintenance of regular checking accounts. Detailed surveys have proven that many Americans abroad are routinely refused access to even the most mundane banking services.

Adverse tax treatment, in conjunction with SEC restrictions, also causes unfair and unjustified saving and investment challenges for Americans abroad.

We support reform to exempt law-abiding Americans abroad – and their banks – from FATCA and FBAR reporting on accounts in their bona fide country of residence.

The 2017 Tax Reform

Further prejudice to Americans abroad resulted from the 2017 tax reform, which purported to lower taxes for working-class Americans but made filing for many Americans abroad even more complex, arduous, and costly.

The 2017 law introduced two new taxes for Americans abroad who depend on their foreign-registered businesses to earn income that supports their families and allows them to save for the future. These new taxes force many Americans abroad to undertake costly business restructuring or close their businesses entirely and find a new means of providing for themselves and their families.

The 2017 law also placed a new tax upon some of the relocation benefits received by U.S. service personnel and diplomats accepting U.S. Government international assignments. This is not the first time that laws enacted without consideration for the impact they would have on Americans abroad have caused serious harm.

We support relief for Americans abroad from the punitive new taxes enacted as part of the 2017 tax reform.

IRS Support

Lapses in financial-account reporting and/or filing erroneous tax returns can result in heavy penalties that are far out of proportion, especially when the lapse is attributable to ignorance of the reporting requirements. Such ignorance most often results from IRS neglect and poor or nonexistent communication to Americans abroad.

We support improvements to communication between the IRS and Americans abroad, including email communication and IRS staff support in foreign countries where many Americans reside.

Tax Code Priorities for our 21st Century Economy

We reject the “trickle down” economic-stimulus theory used to advance tax-cut legislation in 2001, 2003, and 2017. The repeated failed promise that “tax cuts pay for themselves” has ballooned budget deficits, dramatically increased the national debt, and exacerbated income inequality.

We support reshaping tax policy to focus on the country’s national priorities, including supporting the normal functioning of our Government’s activities domestically and abroad; facilitating investment in critical infrastructure, education, and healthcare; empowering our workforce to succeed in a rapidly evolving economy; and supporting families.

We support progressive taxation policies that will effectively reverse extreme income and economic inequality, including and not limited to taxes on wealth, such that a tiny minority of high-net-worth Americans will no longer command a disproportionate share of the U.S. economy, and such that it includes provisions that protect non-resident Americans from the unintended consequences of its implementation. This progressive tax should effectively balance incentives for individuals and corporations while ensuring that businesses and the wealthiest among us pay their fair share.

We also support an inheritance tax on the generational transfer of wealth accumulated within the U.S., so that a portion of it can be reinjected into the economy of the community that facilitated wealth-giving success.

We support a fundamental realignment of energy taxes, phasing out tax benefits and subsidies supporting electric power sourced from fossil fuels, and introducing a “carbon cost” mechanism to accelerate the

transition toward green alternatives, perhaps dividing the revenue directly back into communities or to individual taxpayers.

We support simplified individual and corporate tax codes, with less reliance on subsidies and loopholes. To incentivize investment and employment, support for growth industries must be balanced against mechanisms (e.g., exit taxes, retraining) to help reposition declining communities as communities in transition.

We call for the elimination of the Windfall Elimination Provision for retirees in the Social Security law as it affects U.S. citizens living outside the country. U.S. citizens who were employed by Governments abroad and those who held Government jobs in the U.S. (teachers, police officers, fire fighters) have seen their Social Security pensions reduced by 40%. This is unfair penalization of those who worked at regular jobs in the U.S., paid social security taxes, and later held Government jobs with a separate pension system. Pensions from years of work in two systems are not a windfall and do not justify such drastic reduction.

Trade

We live in an increasingly interconnected global community, and America's economy is dependent upon effective trade between nations. Trade provides materials and customers for millions of American jobs, and, thanks to the growing accessibility of online commerce platforms, remains the largest market for American small businesses. Without well-regulated and inclusive trade, the American economy and U.S. leadership across the globe would suffer. The United States should continue to lead the world in ensuring that trade amongst nations is mutually beneficial and remains in concert with American values of utilizing a rules-based order.

However, Democrats Abroad recognizes that for millions of Americans, global trade has failed to live up to its promises. Insufficient mechanisms for addressing international trade disputes and corporate tax dodging have detracted from the advantages of globalization. Outsourcing supply chains has devastated American workers and communities and led to human rights abuses in countries without strong labor and environmental protections. We believe it is important for the United States to support free and fair trade, but within the scope of considering the domestic workforce, human rights, and the environment.

We support free trade agreements to the extent that they promote the economic interests of American workers. We support legal and economic incentives to increase export opportunities for small and medium-sized United States businesses in order to stimulate (i) their economic growth, (ii) the employment of more workers, and (iii) their social responsibility in matters of labor rights and fair trade. United States companies that shift production lines and capital investment overseas to evade fair, reasonable, and safe standards of employment should face penalties.

We strongly favor trade agreements that empower and respect the rights of indigenous people. We oppose trade agreements with countries and companies that fail to uphold basic human rights conditions and environmental standards. The United States should take action to review past trade agreements to reassess their adherence to promoting environmental and social responsibility. In instances where previous agreements do not meet the need for robust environmental protections, the Government should work with foreign leaders and Congress to update these agreements in line with the tenets of the Paris Climate Accord.

The United States should take measures to identify and challenge trade that involves low-cost items flooding our domestic markets. Flooding American markets endangers the financial viability of domestic producers and has been known to devastate entire communities. We find it appropriate to deploy retaliatory sanctions against foreign countries that demonstrably have participated in (i) cyberespionage against United States businesses, (ii) extensive use of state support and investment restrictions, or (iii) policy interventions intended to manage the value of its currency.

To further protections against dumping and other unfair trade practices, the United States must resume meaningful engagement in the World Trade Organization. This includes ending the practice of refusing to nominate or approve of World Trade Organization Appellate Court Justices from taking office. This court, whose establishment the United States advocated for, must be reinstated and utilized to return the world to a rules-based economic system.

Those who are negotiating trade agreements on behalf of the United States must have the best interests of the American people at heart. A Democratic administration must restore the ranks of the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to its stature prior to the current administration and ensure that those negotiators are experienced civil servants and not corporate lobbyists. Additionally, these negotiators must meaningfully engage with the Labor Advisory Committee for Trade Negotiations and Trade Policy (LAC) to

ensure that American workers are effectively heard in the trade negotiation process, and should be consulted early in the negotiating process to effectively integrate their concerns. USTR has served as an effective body to coordinate and negotiate trade relations across a robust Federal Government, and to best serve the American public, it must be restored to its former esteem, effectiveness, and culture of service.

American trade relationships must be led by American values of fairness, honesty, and mutual benefit. The United States must renew its commitment to practice trade honestly, and to reverse the trend of implementing inexplicable tariffs against our allies. Restoring trust amongst trade partners and honoring existing commitments will empower the United States to build relationships with new trading partners and expand markets for American producers and consumers. Leading with American values will return the United States to its essential status as the most valued market and ally for nations across the world.