

The Platform of Democrats Abroad 2004

ISSUES AFFECTING OVERSEAS AMERICANS

LIKE our compatriots at home, Americans living overseas seek to address the nation's deepening problems under the Bush Administration. But we also face distinctive challenges. Democrats Abroad seek constructive solutions to the following:

1. *Census of Americans Living Overseas:* The U.S. Census Bureau counts aliens, convicted felons and persons committed to mental institutions, all of whom mainly do not have the right to vote. Yet Americans living abroad, who do have the right to vote, are not counted. An accurate count of all Americans living abroad is vital to our national interest. We:

APPLAUD the Census Bureau test of census-taking procedures in France, Mexico and Kuwait this year, but DEPLORE the lack of sufficient funding to adequately conduct this test. FAVOR the full funding and completion of the trial census in 2004 and in 2006.

FAVOR the passage of the Maloney Census of Americans Abroad Act to assure that overseas Americans are included in the 2010 census.

2. *Voting and Representation from Abroad:* The 2000 election put overseas voters at the center of national attention in its ultimately flawed result. Absentee voting laws are enacted in 55 separate voting jurisdictions. The Help America Vote Act is a good first step in correcting many of the difficulties that overseas Americans face when attempting to vote. But in an age of modern communications technology, more must be done to assure that ALL Americans have the right to vote and have their votes accurately counted. We:

FAVOR the immediate and full implementation and funding of the Help America Vote Act of 2002 and similar legislation.

FAVOR the full implementation by all states of section 742, including the creation of a central office in each state to receive, as well as to send ballots.

FAVOR state review and elimination of any remaining notarization requirements for registering and voting from abroad.

FAVOR national standards to ensure that all absentee ballots are counted and reported.

FAVOR the creation of federal and state voting laws allowing all U.S. citizens who were born overseas, but who have never lived in the U.S., to vote in whatever state that one U.S. citizen parent or guardian was or is a resident and eligible to vote in federal elections.

FAVOR legislation to fully allow a U.S. parent to pass on U.S. citizenship to children born overseas without any U.S. residency requirement.

3. *Governmental Services and Benefits:*

Overseas Americans are often the last thought of and the first affected by "one size fits all" changes to American laws providing essential governmental services. Payment of Social Security, Medicare and other taxes by overseas Americans does not result in receiving benefits under these programs. We:

FAVOR extended operating hours of consulates to reduce the time and effort for overseas Americans to obtain passports and other services and FAVOR making all U.S. Government facilities overseas barrier-free for those with disabilities.

APPLAUD the citizen services of U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world.

FAVOR full funding of embassies and consulates. FAVOR streamlining of procedures to approve permanent residency for non-American spouses and acquired close family members of U.S. citizens.

FAVOR U. S. government efforts, by bilateral treaties or other multi-national means, to assure to the maximum practicable extent that the spouse of any U.S. citizen who has received a valid foreign work permit should also receive a valid U. S. work permit.

FAVOR legislation to change Social Security statutes to eliminate and reduce economic hardships caused by current rules on payment of non-Social Security pensions (WEP).

FAVOR the negotiation and full implementation of totalization agreements with all nations, to allow American citizens on fixed incomes the option of crediting the U.S. Social Security payments made into equivalent programs of their country of residence.

FAVOR enabling United States citizens abroad to make voluntary contributions to their Social Security accounts, no matter where the funds are earned.

FAVOR U.S. government payment of unemployment benefits to individuals who would otherwise be eligible for such benefits if living in the U.S.

FAVOR legislation to require the equal and

PREAMBLE

WE ARE AMERICANS who live abroad, across the border in Canada or Mexico, in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Asia, Australia and the Pacific. Although we remain uncounted, estimates suggest that we are at least seven million strong. We are men, women and children; students, teachers and business people; missionaries, journalists, artists, retirees, members of the Peace Corps and Foreign Service, U.S. Government personnel, international civil servants and spouses of foreign nationals. We are the servicemen and women around the world who stand ready to defend human rights, freedom and world peace, from the Balkans to Korea.

Living abroad, we experienced the giant wave of global sympathy and solidarity that followed the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001. We have also watched in horror as America's image has eroded dramatically in the wake of the Bush administration's abandonment of international agreements, its primitive rhetoric asserting that nations are "with U.S. or against U.S.," and its policy of unilateral pre-emptive war dressed up in bogus claims about weapons of mass destruction and the dangerous fantasies of neo-conservative armchair warriors.

We have been shocked to see the budget surpluses of the Clinton administration turned into an unprecedented runaway national debt. The Bush administration has financed two wars with three tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, who have been asked to sacrifice nothing as young Americans die abroad and state budget monies for health and social services dry up.

We have seen the systematic gutting of education and child welfare programs by an administration that said it would leave no child behind. We have seen the destruction of gains in the fight to preserve America's natural wonders and preserve a clean and healthy environment for ourselves and for future generations.

We have seen not just women's reproductive rights, but all our civil liberties, under unceasing attack. We have seen an administration that shrouds its shame in secrecy, while demanding for itself the power to invade our bedrooms, our financial and medical records, even our library records.

As we who are Democrats Abroad unite behind our party's nominee, we put ourselves on record with the resolutions set out here.

vigorous enforcement of all labor and employment laws to Americans citizens and "green card" holders working overseas for U.S. government agencies and contractors. FAVOR implementation of the Americans With Disabilities Act for Americans employed overseas by American companies in the areas of hiring, firing and promotions of employees.

4. *Medicare.* Many of the 7 million Americans living abroad are otherwise eligible for Medicare but, since Medicare benefits are not available abroad, are left without access to adequate health care. We believe medical coverage wherever one resides is a right, not a privilege. We:

FAVOR that Medicare and Medicaid use be extended to all eligible U.S. citizens wherever they live in the world with the aim of ensuring provision of local health services for overseas Americans.

FAVOR a two-year demonstration project in the state of Jalisco, Mexico because of its substantial American population.

5. *Fair Taxation:* The United States taxes its citizens' income regardless of where the income is earned or used. Virtually all other nations tax based upon the residency of the taxpayer. The failure of the U.S. to adhere to international standards causes an unfair tax burden to fall on overseas Americans. We:

FAVOR legislation to require that overseas American taxpayers pay U.S. tax and file returns only on income earned from U.S. sources or income repatriated to the U.S.; barring the Congress's inability to secure such legislation FAVOR the retention of Section 911 of the U.S. Tax Code allowing the foreign income exclusion. FAVOR the negotiation of more estate tax treaties with countries imposing estate tax on expatriates to avoid double taxation.

OPPOSE as unfairly burdensome the limitation of foreign tax credits for Alternative Minimum Tax purposes, the longer depreciation periods for assets placed in service abroad, the excise tax imposed on foreign insurance for Americans resident abroad, and the imposition of capital gains tax on currency fluctuation gains on foreign assets of U.S. citizens abroad.

DEPLORE recent efforts to eliminate Section 911.

6. *Impact of the Patriot Act:* Among other problems with the Patriot Act, the act has caused gratuitous hardships for overseas Americans seeking to freely move to and from the United States with their family members. We: FAVOR revision to the Patriot Act to permit the free movement of spouses and close family members of American citizens to and from the U.S. and to allow all U.S. citizens, unless barred by court order, free entry into and exit from the United States without harassment.

FAVOR, as beneficial to American businesses overseas and the U.S. tourism industry, a reexamination of restrictions imposed on those seeking U.S. travel visas, particularly those from friendly and allied nations.

DEPLORE the disastrous effects of the Patriot Act on foreign students in the United States.

AMERICAN FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY

The events of September 11, 2001 changed the world. However, Democrats Abroad deplores the Bush Administration's decisions to turn away from international cooperation, legal processes and an effective war on terrorism. Their decisions are morally, legally and politically wrong, and harm the United States more than any other nation. The following areas address our concerns:

1. *International Treaties and Obligations:* The U.S. must return to the stage where the U.S. is a reliable partner cooperating with our allies and potential allies. We should fully honor all past treaty commitments and sign important treaties fostering human rights and global cooperation. We:

FAVOR multilateral diplomatic solutions to international conflicts.

OPPOSE U.S. withdrawal from international treaties already agreed to.

FAVOR U.S. respect for its obligations to the United Nations and its specialized agencies, including the payment all past arrears and current dues and assessments.

FAVOR U.S. approval of and participation in the International Criminal Court.

FAVOR multi-lateral action to restrict the manufacture, sale and distribution of small arms and anti-personnel land mines.

FAVOR the clearing of anti-personnel land mines in all areas of past conflicts and the ratification of the International Anti-Landmine Treaty, with the exemption the Demilitarized Zone of the Korean peninsula.

DEPLORE all forms of genocide, including past, unrecognized and ignored genocides.

DEPLORE the continued occupation of Iraq, a military operation both illegal under international law and contributing to dangerous precedents for future conflicts. We SUPPORT the continued development of the constructive capabilities of our armed forces to provide a positive civil and humanitarian influence in peacekeeping engagements.

2. *Debts and Sanctions:* Poor nations are burdened by debt and nations suffer needlessly from sanctions. We:

FAVOR debt relief for poorer nations to address the massive inequalities deforming our global relationships, as long as such relief translates into social, economic and health improvements for citizens and follows a full accounting of where such funds were used or misused rather than the sustenance of corrupt regimes. FAVOR the lifting of U.S. sanctions against Cuba and the establishment of normal relations between the two countries.

OPPOSE, as counter productive and furthering the appeal of terrorist organizations, any use of U.S. unilateral sanctions to further purely political agendas or which result in inhumane and widespread suffering among the citizens of the affected nation.

3. *Foreign Aid:* U.S. foreign aid should seek to assist nations implementing democratic reforms and improving human rights. Aid should target health, hunger, family planning, local-income generation, social and economic infrastructure, education and the promotion of democracy and human rights, particularly those of women. We: FAVOR fully funding of United Nations/non-governmental organizations' programs combating AIDS and other communicable diseases throughout the world.

FAVOR, as reducing morbidity/mortality rates

and unwanted pregnancies, the full funding of international health and family planning programs around the world.

DEPLORE the "Global Gag Rule" and its proposed extensions, which censors the provision of family planning and public health information around the globe, resulting in the denial of healthcare to impoverished women (causing approximately 1,600 pregnancy- and childbirth-related deaths each day), the spread of HIV/AIDS, and the restriction of scientific research into women's reproductive health issues. We call for its immediate reversal to allow U.S. foreign aid again to support these vital public health needs globally.

FAVOR the separation of foreign aid from military, anti-terrorism and law enforcement assistance.

OPPOSE tying aid to trade agreements and other forms of corporate welfare for U.S. firms.

OPPOSE U.S. arms sales to dictatorial governments and nations that abuse the rights of their citizens.

4. Nuclear Weapons and Missile Defense: Nuclear weapons continue to endanger all of us. The terrifying possibility that terrorist groups and rogue states have obtained weapons, "dirty bombs" or missiles has increased. So have tensions in nuclearized regions of the world. We: FAVOR implementation of comprehensive arms control agreements and the ratification of a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. FAVOR international cooperation to immediately halt all efforts to acquire weapons of mass destruction. FAVOR the dismantling of the Bush administration's ballistic missile defense programs, in close consultation with our European and Asian allies, and with Russia and China.

FAVOR full funding and implementation of the Nunn-Lugar Act to safeguard nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union from falling into the hands of others.

FAVOR strengthening of global missile technology control regimes

DEPLORE cozy alliances with authoritarian regimes that spread nuclear technologies to terrorist and theocratic governments.

5. Military Forces: Democrats Abroad fully supports the men and women of our armed forces. They deserve and receive our deep respect and profound thanks for the work they do to keep our nation secure. We: FAVOR the modernization and effective maintenance of our Armed Forces. OPPOSE any attempt to cut salaries and reduce essential services to our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and their family members. FAVOR a new GI Bill for American's Armed Forces that will guarantee college tuition at a state college or state university to all veterans, reinstate all veterans benefits cut by the Bush administration and guarantee to activated reserve and National Guard personnel identical pay and benefits to active regular forces. FAVOR a full accounting of and the proper respect for the deaths and casualties of our forces in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. DEPLORE the failure of President Bush and other high officials of the government to attend any funerals of members of the armed forces who lost their lives in the Iraq war.

6. The Bush Doctrine of Pre-emptive War. Democrats Abroad believes that the "Bush doctrine" of pre-emptive attacks on sovereign nations contravenes international law absent a clear, imminent and present threat to the national security of the United States, and threatens our relationship with the United Nations and our allies. We: APPLAUD the capture of Saddam Hussein by our troops and recognize the sacrifices of our nation and our armed forces in contributing to the foundation of a democratic Iraq. DEPLORE the U.S. use of the doctrine of unilateral pre-emption in Iraq and the incorporation of the Bush doctrine of pre-emption into the national security strategy, and regret the resulting loss of American and Iraqi lives, cultural losses and the on-going chaos in Iraq. FAVOR Senate, House and Democratic National Convention censure of President Bush for his exaggerations and lies to the American people to justify his pre-emptive war in Iraq. FAVOR an express revocation of the Bush doctrine of pre-emption and a commitment by the United States to honor our obligations to the United Nations and NATO under international law. FAVOR the creation of an international coalition to supervise the timely transfer of power to a democratic government representing the people of Iraq, and the provision of U.S. technical and financial support to ensure a stable Iraq in the future. DEPLORE the loss of credibility of the United States in the international community due to

the White House's manipulation of intelligence data to justify its pre-emptive attack of Iraq, in particular the Bush Administration's claims about the existence and potential U.S. use of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq. FAVOR the establishment of an impartial and transparent Independent Special Counsel, who shall U.S. use a judicial process free from political manipulation, to investigate how the Bush Administration reached its decision to attack Iraq and its pre-war intelligence failures.

7. The Middle East and Terrorism: Terrorism is a worldwide scourge and the attacks upon the United States warrant vigorous and unrelenting response. But government policy decisions require a full and public review, including the widest possible disclosure of documents, to ensure that our intelligence system works, that our leaders pay attention to what is really happening in the world and that public policy is not driven by ideology or special-interest profiteering. U.S. actions against terrorism must employ not only military means but effective intelligence and police coordination as well as the "soft power" techniques of persuasion and moral example to regain the support of citizens and nations around the world. We: OPPOSE not only terrorism but the conditions that terrorists exploit to spread chaos and confusion. U.S. policy toward the Middle East must promote peace, self-determination and human rights and our policy must use internationally-recognized legal processes to investigate and prosecute terrorists in national and international courts. DEPLORE the Bush Administration's failure to ensure a complete and public inquiry into the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks and its failure to cooperate fully with the September 11 Commission. FAVOR a thoroughly public inquiry into the September 11 attacks by an independent Commission with full powers to compel witness testimony and subpoena all documents, including White House documents. DEPLORE the Bush Administration's misuse of the "war on terrorism" as a reason for the invasion of Iraq, the erosion of our civil rights and liberties, and the creation of a climate of fear and insecurity for political ends. FAVOR multinational cooperation among police, intelligence and Treasury officials to combat the true terrorist threat, namely Al Qaeda and the remaining Taliban. FAVOR the U.S. working more closely with the United Nations to reduce the direct U.S. involvement in Iraq and create a stable government for that country. FAVOR open bidding on all contracts for rebuilding Iraq, including permitting France and Germany to compete for contracts. FAVOR the peaceful rebuilding of Afghanistan including the elimination of the harvesting and export of heroin from that nation. FAVOR, as a top priority to counter terrorism and bring peace and democracy to the Middle East, an even-handed U.S. policy toward the Israel-Palestine peace process by deploring extremism and violence on both sides and encouraging both sides to implement proposals, such as those made in Geneva, as the basis for a fair and lasting peace. OPPOSE the building of any security walls or fences in Israel, the West Bank or the Gaza Strip that do not follow international recognized or agreed-upon borders.

AMERICAN DOMESTIC ISSUES

A. Health Care. Health care is a basic human right, and is at the core of the Democratic Party's compact with the American people. Fifty years after Harry S. Truman put Universal Health Insurance in the Democratic Party Platform we must find the will to accomplish what every other industrial nation has managed to achieve. We: DEPLORE that 42 million Americans currently lack health insurance and another 70 million have such minimal coverage that they cannot afford to become ill and that each day 1,300 U.S. infants are born without health coverage. DEPLORE that Medicaid, Medicare, and the Children's Health Insurance Program, which provide the only safety net for millions of uninsured children, working poor, chronically ill and elderly, have been repeatedly crippled by federal budget cuts, and that more cuts are planned. FAVOR the immediate implementation of Universal Health Care for every man, woman and child, based upon the effective national health-care programs in other industrialized democracies. OPPOSE any actions to privatize Medicare. FAVOR the repeal of the first steps toward privatization included in the President's Medicare bill of 2003.

FAVOR a Patients' Bill of Rights and believe that all Americans are entitled to legal protection regarding medical treatment.

FAVOR federal health-care coverage for contraception, sex education, and pre- and post-natal care.

FAVOR fair prescription drug prices and believes that the Federal Government should not be restricted from negotiating drug prices on behalf of its poor or elderly citizens.

FAVOR the Supreme Court's Olmstead decision establishing that the Americans with Disabilities Act requires states to offer disabled people services in community-based settings in order to ensure them the basic equality and rights that they deserve.

FAVOR measures to allow disabled veterans who have fought to protect America their right to receive both retirement and disability benefits. We: FAVOR additional grants to all nursing homes to ensure better wages, proper training and better recruitment for health-care workers, penalties against those that provide poor care, and rewards to those facilities providing excellent services.

B. Education, Arts and Sciences. Democrats Abroad believes that America should build excellent public schools, including innovative magnet and charter schools. Well-funded local public schools are the foundation of a broad national commitment to lifelong education for everyone. This commitment requires strong funding of the arts, sciences and humanities, unflinching defense of artistic and literary freedom, expanded support for public broadcasting, improvement of teacher salaries and a greater investment in making higher education accessible to all. Democrats Abroad recognizes that the present level of average tuition in colleges and graduate schools places a financial burden upon students and their families. This debt burden prevents graduates from pursuing socially constructive but less remunerative employment, and imposes a financial cloud on the futures of these students. We: FAVOR restoration and increase of funding in the states to hire additional teachers and provide classroom facilities to bring down the size of classes which are rising again in the face of cutbacks. This is an urgent priority in the early years of school, but should be extended to include all grades through graduation. FAVOR Internet access, technology and training for all public schools provided at low cost to empower students drawn from all backgrounds to join the information and technological revolution and work to develop programs specific to internet outreach in minority and economically disenfranchised communities. FAVOR the right of students to be taught English language skills as quickly as possible so that they can succeed in school and prosper later. Bilingual language programs should be designed to enable all students to master English first and then another language. FAVOR legislation to provide full funding through bonds to build and renovate public schools throughout the country. FAVOR, given the shocking gun violence in our schools, legislation controlling the availability of firearms and school programs to promote non-violence and to teach children about the dangers of guns. FAVOR strengthened programs to provide additional financial aid and greater tax credits for students in higher education. FAVOR a free year of college tuition for the first year in order to a) allow students to concentrate on their studies, while b) giving them an appropriate amount of time to explore their opportunities for financial aid. FAVOR a ten-year limit on individual student loan reimbursements and the transfer of the responsibility of the remainder to the government. FAVOR full funding to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting for enhancements of our national public radio and television, and to the National Endowment for Humanities for the purpose of preserving and promoting public service. FAVOR increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts to promote and increase opportunities for artistic endeavor. FAVOR freedom of expression in the arts. FAVOR increased funding for the National Science Foundation and further tax credits that help businesses invest in emerging technologies. FAVOR full funding of all government-mandated education programs such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). DEPLORE anti-immigrant sentiment and support the assimilation of immigrant students into our schools with bilingual education. OPPOSE any constitutional Amendment to authorize organized prayer in public schools. OPPOSE school vouchers and variations like tax

credits for attending private schools. DEPLORE the use of children as a political tool in passing the No Child Left Behind Act, which serves the interests of private companies more than children, and accelerates the move towards school privatization.

FAVOR the adoption and funding of high quality universal early childhood education programs such as Head Start.

FAVOR the adoption of federal mandates that empower and support states and local districts to be innovative in their use of alternative-school models, such as charters and magnets. OPPOSE the further extension of copyright terms by the Congress. Systematic retroactive term extensions have eroded the invaluable national treasure of our public domain in ideas and literature.

C. Economy and Tax Issues. As Democrats, Democrats Abroad believes that the federal government must be an active and responsible steward of our nation and its economy. It is the federal government's responsibility to 1) manage the nation's budget in a fiscally prudent manner that ensures adequate revenue for 2) building and maintaining the public infrastructure on which the economy depends and 3) ensuring that every child and every working family has a real opportunity to succeed. We believe that the federal government must 4) do what is necessary to ensure that corporations behave responsibly toward all their shareholders and 5) uphold the principles of free and fair trade as befits America's position in the global economy.

1. Managing the Nation's Budget. In 1993, Democrats enacted the largest deficit reduction plan in U.S. history without a single Republican vote. Now the Bush Administration has turned President Clinton's historic surpluses into a multi-trillion dollar series of deficits, with no end in sight. Given that the federal government's fiscal deficit directly threatens America's prosperity and economic stability, and that tax breaks for the rich, together with military spending for an unnecessary preemptive war are responsible for the deficit, Democrats Abroad proposes that the restoration of fiscal responsibility be among the highest priorities of the Democratic Party. We:

FAVOR the immediate revocation of those parts of the Bush tax cuts, such as the capital gains and dividend tax cuts, that only aid the rich and OPPOSE making permanent the tax cuts recently enacted.

2. Maintaining the Nation's Infrastructure.

America's cities are vital to the economic health of the nation. We: FAVOR efforts to revitalize cities by providing tax incentives to create jobs and housing in economically-deprived areas, enterprise zones and the modernization of the public-housing system, and coordinated efforts by housing, education, social services and employment departments to maximize their effectiveness in these areas.

FAVOR, because America's public transportation systems have not kept up with demand and have fallen below world standards, Federal assistance for the development and modernization of integrated urban-transport systems, including a comprehensive overhaul to the national rail network by investing in Amtrak and the introduction of modern high-speed systems to offset road use and over-intensive air travel over short and middle distances.

FAVOR Federal support for independent research into alternative fuels and new transport systems.

FAVOR, because access to information technology is essential for participation in the modern economy, increased funding for the National Science Foundation, tax credits that help businesses invest in emerging technologies, and programs that wire schools and libraries to the Internet, especially those in the poorest neighborhoods.

FAVOR the use of electronic-benefit transfer mechanisms for federal benefit programs.

3. Ensuring Opportunity for All. Eliminating poverty should be one of America's top priorities, but under the Bush administration, the poorest Americans have lost jobs and suffered declining real incomes. We:

FAVOR raising the minimum wage to \$6.15 an hour immediately and to \$6.65 within two years, and FAVOR implementation of a true living wage with exceptions for small businesses, expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, and more active efforts by the IRS to inform eligible Americans of how to obtain this credit.

OPPOSE attempts to deny the credit to working families to pay for tax credits for the wealthiest Americans.

FAVOR a re-examination of the nation's welfare system based on lessons learned, with special reference to the growing number of single-parent families. To better assist these

families, we SUPPORT the full funding of existing measures and also strong provisions for families unable to meet requirements for continued assistance with particular reference to the continued education of mothers and children.

FAVOR the implementation of the Federal Case Registry and the National Directory of New Hires to support the tracking of "deadbeat" parents.

FAVOR initiatives to improve child care for low-income working families by expanding the Child Care and Development Block Grant, together with scholarships and training for child-care providers, resource and referral for parents, monitoring and inspection of providers and networks for family day-care providers.

FAVOR retention and enhancement of the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act to provide employees with 24 hours of unpaid leave per year to participate in school activities directly related to the educational development of their children, or to accompany their children or elderly relatives to routine medical and dental visits.

FAVOR providing tax incentives for businesses to provide and develop programs that provide on-site child-care centers for working mothers, compensated health-care coverage, flexible work schedules, job sharing, and student internship and apprenticeship programs.

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FAVOR policies that help working families achieve better working conditions including support for efforts of unions in the collective-bargaining process, support for dislocated-worker programs providing education, training and employment opportunities for those who see their jobs moved overseas, as well as for the disabled who may see new opportunities for employment arise in the new economy. FAVOR measures that encourage small, minority- and women-owned businesses and favor stronger measures to ensure equal pay for equal work through federal initiatives to address the wage gap between men and women and explore ways to eliminate it from the workplace across the United States, and through a strengthening of the Equal Pay Law to increase the minimum wage to help low-paid working women, and thereby improving child care for low-income families.

OPPOSE, as resulting in lower standards of worker safety, the slashing of funding of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OPPOSE the hiring of permanent workers to replace lawful strikers and continue to OPPOSE state Right-to-Work laws.

FAVOR the creation and full funding of a National Volunteer Corps encouraging all Americans, regardless of age and background, (particularly those 18 and over, and many retirees) to participate in infrastructure development, environmental protection and cohesive support of their communities' education and social needs as well as peace building and other development efforts overseas.

4. Enforcing Corporate Accountability. Enron and other major corporate scandals have demonstrated severe deficiencies in corporate responsibility, not only to shareholders but to other stakeholders, such as employees and local communities. We:

FAVOR legislation that mandates more open accounting practices to better inform investors and other stakeholders and rebuild confidence in our corporations.

FAVOR tough laws to hold accountable any company or institution that denies its employees their hard-earned retirement benefits through mismanagement or fraud.

FAVOR fully portable pensions.

FAVOR tax credits to help families save for retirement, including the right of every American to set up a tax-deferred IRA or 401(k) retirement savings account.

FAVOR initiatives to make it easier for small business to start private pension plans for their workers.

5. Supporting Free Trade. The United States has long been committed to free and fair trade as a means of improving people's lives worldwide. Democrats Abroad recognizes the appeal that trade barriers and other restrictions might have to reduce job losses at home, but these may only result in increased costs to consumers and no job gains. Indeed, we recognize that there is no empirical evidence that increasing the price American consumers pay for imports through tariffs or other trade barriers has any positive impact on United States employment; that trade benefits multilateral relations; and that protectionism undermines the standard of living of consumer and workers. Thus, we

OPPOSE imposition of new trade barriers or tariffs or other trade distorting measures. OPPOSE trade distorting currency manipulations by any country.

D. Legal and Electoral Systems. The Bush administration has overseen growing disrespect for law and the democratic process; official disregard of international treaties; state-based electoral fraud and disenfranchisement; an epidemic of corporate crime and insider trading on Wall Street; lawless right-wing judicial activism in the federal courts; and rising violent and gun-related crime rates on the streets. Democrats Abroad seeks a restoration of respect for the Constitution, our nation's laws, fair democratic process, and the mechanisms of justice. Rather than amend the Constitution to take away millions of Americans' right to marry the person they love, we support amending the Constitution to guarantee everyone's right to vote and to have their vote counted.

1. Fair Elections. Free, fair and verifiable elections are the inalienable right of every American. We:

FAVOR strong enforcement of the McCain-Feingold Act and ultimately the public financing for all federal elections--for president, Senate and the House of Representatives.

FAVOR a constitutional amendment that will establish the right of all American citizens, wherever they live, to vote and to have their votes verifiably counted.

FAVOR a constitutional amendment to abolish the electoral college thereby allowing the election of the president and vice president by proportional popular vote, relative to the congressional strength of each state.

FAVOR Federal legislation making Election Day a national holiday in every even-numbered year.

APPLAUD AND FAVOR state initiatives that allow same day registration, eased mail voting and early/weekend voting in elections.

FAVOR suspending the U.S.e of all electronic ("touch screen") voting machines until all security ("hacking") problems are solved and an accurate paper trail is assured with their U.S.e.

FAVOR that all citizens, regardless of domicile, are properly and proportionally represented. FAVOR the right of residents of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam and the Virgin Islands to vote for president.

FAVOR the right of the District of Columbia to have full voting representation in the Congress of the U.S. and applaud the work of DC Vote. APPLAUD the gradual metamorphosis of political parties to engage a greater number of motivated participants. Recognizing the essentially corrupting influence of large and concentrated sources of funding upon the electoral process.

FAVOR efforts to mobilize and empower individuals while limiting the influence exerted by consolidated special interests.

2. Criminal Justice. A criminal-justice system that seeks merely to punish cannot reduce crime in our nation. Identifying and correcting the root causes of crime, from inner-city despair to boardroom greed, requires the best efforts of civic, political, judicial and police professionals at all levels. We need to promote the fair and rational application of law, reduce the risks and means of violence in our society, and promote the goal of rehabilitation for those already ensnared in criminality. We:

APPLAUD the action of Illinois Governor George Ryan in January 2003 who, in order to investigate inequalities and inaccuracies in the state's application of capital punishment, commuted the sentences of all 171 inmates on Illinois's Death Row.

FAVOR abolition of the Death Penalty and ratification of the 1989 UN Second Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We call on Congress to vote an immediate moratorium on executions for all of the more than 3,000 inmates on death rows in the U.S.

FAVOR juvenile justice programs at the Department of Justice that help at-risk children and legislation to ensure that all children have a community center where they can go after school.

FAVOR strengthening all areas of crime prevention: expanding law enforcement and community policing; increasing drug control, prevention and rehabilitation programs; aggressively pursuing criminals; and protecting victims rights.

FAVOR the immediate repeal of all "three-strikes-you're-out laws" that send people to prison for life for shoplifting and that prevent judges from exercising their judgment in ordering sanctions that fit the crime.

FAVOR introduction of Federal alternative sentencing guidelines to promote rehabilitation in the community for non-violent offenders.

OPPOSE efforts to incarcerate juveniles with adults before trial.

FAVOR a far more aggressive approach to reducing gun violence in America.

FAVOR, to fill exploited gaps in reporting, legislation to amend the Brady Act and full funding to require states to forward all records on prohibited gun purchasers to The National Instant Criminal Background Check System.

FAVOR passage of the Children's Gun Violence Prevention Act.

FAVOR legislation to limit the purchase of firearms to one every three months, to raise the age of the youth-handgun ban from 18 to 21, to ban the possession and sale of semi-automatic assault rifles, to halt the importation and manufacture of large capacity ammunition magazines, to impose background checks for explosives purchases, to develop programs to help law enforcement agencies trace crime guns to their source, to authorize repeat inspections of gun dealers involved in illegal gun trafficking and to require immediately that all guns be manufactured with a safety lock or other safety devices.

DEPLORE Attorney General Ashcroft's coddling of the gun lobby. We demand that Attorney General Ashcroft, in his final months in office, apply the same aggressive approach to enforcing gun laws that the U.S. uses in his actions against certain categories of other criminals, especially those suspected of ties to terrorism.

CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. *The Rule Of Law At Home And Abroad.*

Democrats Abroad believes that the United States must re-claim its long-standing tradition of being a beacon for democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout the world. We further believe in the preservation of the values of our Constitution and its Bill of Rights and the protection they offer to any persons within the jurisdiction of the United States. We:

DEPLORE the U.S. military's incarceration in Guantanamo Bay of "enemy combatants" as young as 13 years old, without the guarantees provided by the Geneva Convention to prisoners-of-war.

OPPOSE the use of "military tribunals" or "commissions" as proposed by the Bush Administration to try the Guantanamo detainees. FAVOR the enactment by Congress of comprehensive legislation governing military tribunals to ensure U.S. and international standards of fairness are met.

FAVOR an immediate revocation of those provisions of the Patriot Act that unduly threaten civil liberties and conflict with the principles of the Constitution, specifically secret detections, subjecting political organizations to criminal action for political advocacy, and those allowing the deportation, detention or refusal of re-admission to legal immigrants for such reasons as engaging in free speech.

2. *Tackling Discrimination.* Democrats Abroad opposes all discrimination based on race, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation. We believe that racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination continue to be a serious problem in the United States and must be addressed forcefully and decisively. We:

APPLAUD the recent Supreme Court ruling in favor of affirmative action and support the revision of affirmative action programs to bring them closer to their original goals.

FAVOR the ratification by the United States of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an international bill of rights for women that has been ratified by 165 countries around the world.

FAVOR the re-opening of the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach to ensure that women's rights receive the coordinated, serious attention they deserve, and urge vigorous enforcement of laws protecting women and girls, such as those prohibiting forced child marriages, those providing effective HIV/AIDS programs, and those protecting women's safety.

APPLAUD the passage of the Federal Hate Crimes Bill as a step towards protecting all Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation.

FAVOR the lifting of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which discourages gays and lesbians in the U.S. military from openly acknowledging their sexual orientation.

APPLAUD the United Nations for enacting rules to grant UN staffers benefits for their gay or lesbian partners when their home country recognizes same-sex marriages or domestic partnerships.

FAVOR the legal recognition in all 50 States of equal civil marriage rights between any two consenting adults, whether gay, lesbian or heterosexual.

OPPOSE the Bush Administration's efforts to amend the Constitution to deny any state the authority to grant legal rights to same-sex couples, and in particular, strongly opposes the Federal Marriage Amendment presently before Congress, which seeks to amend the Constitution to legally define marriage as a "union between a man and a woman."

FAVOR the revocation of the Defense Of Marriage Act of 1996, which bars same-sex couples from receiving any of the federal protections afforded married couples, including Social Security, Medicare, family leave, health care, disability, and military service, and which opened the door for individual States to pass laws denying recognition of same-sex civil marriages from other States.

FAVOR legislation such as the Permanent Partners Immigration Act of 2003, which would extend to same-sex couples the same immigration rights as married couples, thereby giving couples and families wishing to return home to the United States the right to bring with them their same-sex partners and family members.

3. *Reproductive Rights.* Democrats Abroad believes unequivocally in a woman's right to bear children, practice birth control and obtain safe, legal abortions regardless of economic, religious or racial status. We believe that a decision on whether to terminate a pregnancy is a private matter outside the scope of government intervention. We further believe that all women should have unfettered, free access to information from doctors and others regarding reproductive choices. We:

DEPLORE the serious erosion of a woman's right to choose as guaranteed by *Roe v. Wade*, and condemn any and all attempts at restricting a woman's right to safe, legal, affordable abortion procedures.

4. *Children's Rights.* Democrats Abroad believes that children are in special need of legal protection in our world today, and that their personal, social and political rights must be guaranteed. We further believe that the American workplace must become more family-friendly so that no family will ever have to choose between work and family emergencies. We:

FAVOR the immediate ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obliges its signatory States to ensure adequate protection of children within their borders, and recognizes the principles of the child's best interest, of equality before the law, of the rights and responsibilities of parents, and of subsidiary state assistance to families.

FAVOR the full implementation of the International Labor Organization convention on Children's Rights, particularly those sections related to minimum working age and the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.

FAVOR, when a child must work from economic necessity anywhere in the world, mandatory safe working conditions, health care and compulsory quality education.

FAVOR legislation guaranteeing maternity and paternity leave for all parents, and legislation similar to the Family Medical Leave Act guaranteeing leave for parents in case of family emergencies.

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

Democrats Abroad support strong national leadership to protect and preserve America's and the world's environment and natural resources. Understanding the world's interdependence, particularly with regard to environmental issues, we support international cooperation to achieve a better environment for all people, including Americans. We reject the old false choice between economic growth and environmental protection and instead see each working together, and in many cases, improving the other. Democrats will lead the effort to ensure a healthy planet and a healthy America for generations to come. We:

FAVOR a review of all our domestic environmental policies for discrimination against those at lower socioeconomic levels, e.g. landfills and other environmental hazards being placed in minority and low-income communities with attendant health risks.

1. *Climate Change.* Democrats recognize the overwhelming scientific data indicating that human activity, particularly in the industrialized world, has contributed to dangerous levels of global warming. We:

DEPLORE the Bush Administration's outright renunciation of the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change in its entirety and its unilateral and irresponsible approach to global warming and climate change, despite the fact that the United States is the world's leading contributor to greenhouse gas emissions.

FAVOR working multilaterally with other nations by affirming our commitment to the Kyoto Protocol and the Clean Power Act that mandates

drastic reductions in CO2 emissions from power plants. We note that a recent study authored by the National Academy of Sciences indicates that the global climate could be imperiled past the point of return within 7 years. We insist and FAVOR that this study be treated with appropriate gravity and accepted as the basis of a rapid change to our environmental policies.

2. *Energy and Independence from Foreign Oil.* We recognize our dependence on foreign oil and gas to meet our tremendous energy wants and the resulting economic, political, and environmental consequence. We:

FAVOR Congressional action to close the "Sports Utility Vehicle loophole" by classifying light trucks as ordinary cars, in order to increase fuel economy standards and thereby save millions of barrels of oil a day.

FAVOR reducing reliance on foreign fuels by supporting national energy policies such as funding research for cleaner fuels and tax incentives that promote conservation, use of alternative and renewable fuels and energy sources, and energy efficiency for businesses and individuals.

FAVOR offering Americans improved and diversified transportation choices while freeing them from traffic, smog-choked cities, and the reliance on foreign oil by investing in infrastructure such as new roads, bridges, light rail systems, cleaner buses, national passenger rail (Amtrak), high-speed trains, and other public transportation options.

APPLAUD the Kingdom of Denmark for committing to the target of generating 50% of energy supply from wind power by 2030, and support following this example for renewable energy generation.

FAVOR The Renewable Portfolio Standard, requiring electric utilities to generate 10-20% of energy from renewable sources.

3. *Public Lands.* America's National Parks, Forests, Grasslands, and Wildlife Refuges are our national treasures to protect wildlife and pass down our natural heritage to future generations. We:

DEPLORE the Bush Administration's rollback of regulations and rules to protect more than fifty million acres of publicly owned land such as our National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges and National Parks for the private benefit of big timber and energy corporations.

FAVOR a moratorium of further releases of public lands, like the Florida Everglades, the Alaska Wilderness areas, and the Rocky Mountain West, to private business interests. FAVOR a full review by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, the EPA and other interested agencies, to find an objective, healthier balance between competing national environmental and economic interests.

FAVOR, as preserving our untouched forests, the "Roadless Rule" including the Tongass, from logging and development.

OPPOSE drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and off the coasts of Florida and California for oil and gas.

4. *Clean Air, Water and Land.* To protect the health of the American people and improve our and future Americans' quality of life, we deplore the Bush Administration's attempts to relax pollution rules that require old, polluting plants to upgrade their facilities' pollution-controls before they can expand further. We:

FAVOR the strengthening of the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act.

FAVOR the worldwide timetable established by the Montreal Protocol to phase out manufactured chemicals that destroy the ozone layer and the enforcement of regulations that require polluters to pay for cleaning up the environment they degrade.

FAVOR Agenda 21, the Global Environmental Program for the Next Century, adopted at the UN Summit in Rio de Janeiro and the principles of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

FAVOR revitalizing and full funding of the Superfund Hazardous and Toxic Waste Clean-up Program.

FAVOR the approval of the residential solar panel federal tax credit.

SUPPORT the mandatory labeling of genetically-modified food. We are concerned with the long-term unknown health effects. We also believe that the consumer has the right to choose what she eats, and the only way to exercise that choice is to know what is in the food.

SUPPORT efforts to continue the development of sustainable agriculture, which benefits family farmers, smaller farming concerns, environment protection and public health.