

Platform 2012

PREAMBLE

Democrats Abroad are Americans living in more than 160 countries. We are millions. We are teachers, entrepreneurs, businesspeople, and retirees. We are college students. We are Caucasian, African-American, Latinos, Native American, Asian-Pacific, LGBT, disabled, youths and seniors. We are men and women serving our country, in uniform and as diplomats; in the Peace Corps and as development volunteers. And we are taxpayers, both at home and in our countries of residence.

We are voters from every state across America—and the District of Columbia— and we vote with absentee ballots from more than 160 countries around the globe.

Yet no matter where we live, as Americans we care deeply about our country.

We care about fairness in tax reporting

We care about fairness in the visa application process.

We care about fairness in Social Security.

We care about fairness in elections.

We care about fairness in keeping families together.

We care about the future of our planet.

We care about the future of our children.

We care about the future of our elders.

We care about the 100%.

How America resolves its problems affects each of us as American citizens living in nations around the world. Solutions are not found in filibusters, but in constructive dialogue to resolve pressing issues, both domestic and international. Real solutions are renewable and sustainable. Real solutions are equitable and promote opportunities for all. Real solutions promote peace and security. Real solutions fight corruption.

Our strength as a nation depends on upholding our fundamental values so that we can successfully surmount our problems, and contribute to a world that offers the benefits of freedom and cooperation.

As Americans, as Democrats, and as Democrats Abroad, we stand united together to support our President, promote our democratic values, and effect the changes set forth below.

I. ISSUES AFFECTING AMERICANS ABROAD

Americans living outside the United States face distinctive problems and challenges that should be acted upon by a Democratic administration and Congress. Democrats Abroad seek constructive solutions to the following:

1. *Voting From Abroad*

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 is the primary means available to us to participate in the American democratic process. In close elections our absentee votes from abroad can make the difference between victory and defeat.

Our votes from abroad were greater than the margin of difference in each of the following elections:

9329 votes	<i>Senator Jim Webb (Virginia, 2006)</i>
3724 votes	<i>Senator Mark Begich (Alaska, 2008)</i>
3562 votes	<i>Senator Jon Tester (Montana, 2006)</i>
2311 votes	<i>Rep. Mary Jo Kilroy (Ohio 15th, 2008)</i>
1518 votes	<i>Rep. Patrick Murphy (Pennsylvania 8th, 2006)</i>
745 votes	<i>Rep. Tom Perriello (Virginia 5th, 2008)</i>
466 votes	<i>Rep. Scott Murphy (New York 23rd, 2009)</i>
312 votes	<i>Senator Al Franken (Minnesota, 2008)</i>

The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act of 2009 (MOVE) has successfully addressed many of the issues that were raised by Democrats Abroad in its 2008 platform, including allowing the receipt of ballots by email, eliminating the necessity of notarization to vote in Federal elections, and allowing the use of Federal Write-in Absentee Ballots (FWAB) in primary elections. One key element of the MOVE Act, requiring state and local election officials to report the number of votes received from overseas, however, has not been implemented by many of the states. It is important that we have accurate information as to the number of overseas voters in order to ensure that the voices from overseas in elections and on important issues relevant to those living overseas are heard. We, therefore,

CALL on the Secretaries of State of the 50 states and other election officials responsible for implementing this provision of the MOVE Act to document and report an accurate count of the number of overseas votes received and counted in their jurisdictions in the 2012 and subsequent elections.

2. *Census of Americans Abroad*

We are Americans abroad, and yet we are uncounted. Estimates of Americans living abroad range from 4.3 to 7.2 million, a huge gap based on imprecise data. An accurate count of all Americans living abroad not only would ensure that our voices be heard in Washington but also would be in the national interest. The test of census-taking procedures performed by the Census Bureau in 2004 in France, Mexico and Kuwait was not successful due to a lack of field infrastructure and incomplete research on methodologies and tools. As a result, once again Americans abroad, except for armed services personnel and government employees and their families, were not included in the 2010 Census. We:

FAVOR the development by the Census Bureau of new procedures for counting all Americans abroad, by considering new technologies and recent academic research into methodologies tailored to this challenge. Already, Americans abroad can be contacted in many ways that were unanticipated in 2004.

FAVOR the testing of the new procedures in a significant number of foreign countries by 2015 at the latest.

FAVOR the inclusion of all Americans abroad in the 2020 Census.

3. *Americans Abroad Caucus and Public Policy Impact on Americans Living Abroad*

Americans abroad have common legislative concerns, but they have no common representation in Congress. There is thus a need to have a Caucus in Congress that specifically addresses questions of policy and practice for Americans abroad. We:

APPLAUD Representative Carolyn Maloney (D-NY)'s initiative in creating the Americans Abroad Caucus in Congress, support the representatives who have joined, and urge Representatives from states with significant numbers of residents living abroad to join.

4. *Citizenship Transmission*

The right for Americans abroad to transmit their citizenship to their children born abroad is severely restricted. The periods of U.S. residency prior to the birth of a child abroad required to transmit U.S. citizenship to the child are different for an unwed American mother, an unwed American father, and an American parent married to a non-American. Many Americans abroad do not learn of the requirements of the law until it is too late. As a result, each year several thousand children of Americans abroad are denied U.S. citizenship, and some are born "stateless," that is, without any nationality or citizenship. We:

FAVOR legislation enabling every American parent to transmit U.S. citizenship to his or her children born abroad without any prior U.S. residency requirement.

FAVOR making the above change retroactive to include children under the age of 18 who were born abroad to a U.S.-citizen parent.

FAVOR a provision in such legislation guaranteeing that no child born abroad of a U.S.- citizen parent will ever again be stateless at birth.

FAVOR restoring U.S. citizenship to persons born abroad who lost it by failing to meet residency requirements in a section of the Immigration and Naturalization Act that was repealed in 1978.

5. *Social Security, Medicare and Healthcare*

Several important laws and regulations relating to U.S. Social Security either discriminate against Americans abroad or affect them unfairly. Moreover, present Medicare legislation does not allow eligible Americans abroad to receive Medicare benefits outside the United States, even those who have contributed to Social Security throughout their working lives and have thus earned the right to receive Medicare benefits. This denial of benefits can cause real hardships. We:

APPLAUD the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which will make health care more affordable for families and small businesses, and reform the health insurance industry.

OPPOSE the attempts of state governors, corporate-funded lobbyists, and doctrinaire legislators to halt the implementation of the Affordable Care Act by drastic measures not in the interests of ordinary Americans.

APPLAUD the successful efforts to ensure that the ACA does not introduce penalties for American residents of foreign countries..

FAVOR the extension of the relevant provisions of the ACA to allow voluntary access to affordable health care to Americans living abroad.

FAVOR the extension of Medicare benefits to all eligible U.S. citizens wherever they live in the world so that provision of local health services for retired overseas Americans is ensured.

FAVOR the initiation of a demonstration project to determine the feasibility and cost-savings of providing Medicare benefits to eligible U.S. citizens resident in Mexico.

FAVOR the repeal of those sections of Section 202 (t) of the Social Security Act so as to permit foreign citizens residing in any country not set forth as an exception to that Act, who are surviving spouses of American Citizens, and who would otherwise be entitled to derivative Social Security benefits, to receive said benefits in the same manner as any other Surviving Spouse without the requirement of being an American Citizen or living in the United States.

FAVOR changing laws and regulations that do not allow some Americans abroad to contribute voluntarily to Social Security.

FAVOR replacing the much harsher Foreign Work Test, applicable to Americans abroad, with the Annual Earnings Test, so that all Americans are subjected to the same rules regardless of residence.

FAVOR passage of legislation that would abolish the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) or at least change its effect on Americans abroad who receive small foreign pensions.

FAVOR elimination of the provision that now cuts off Supplemental Social Security Income (SSI) for persons who live outside the United States for more than 30 consecutive days.

FAVOR elimination of the withholding tax on Social Security.

FAVOR negotiation and full implementation of totalization agreements with all countries that have social security programs, with a view to giving Americans abroad the option of crediting to U.S. Social Security their payments to equivalent programs of their countries of residence.

FAVOR providing easy to access, affordable, quality medical care for our veterans living overseas who do not have access to regular VA hospitals.

6. Taxation

Prior to 1962, the U.S. government, like that of almost all other countries, applied the principle of "residence-based taxation," which means that income taxes are paid by individuals to the country in which they reside. Although other countries still adhere to this system, the United States in 1962 introduced "citizen-based taxation," which made American citizens residing abroad subject to taxation by the U.S. government *in addition to* the country of residence. Although the blow of dual taxation was softened somewhat by a limited foreign earned-income exclusion (Section 911 of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code) and some credit against U.S. income tax for taxes paid to a foreign government, citizenship-based taxation nevertheless continues to cause hardship for and discrimination against Americans working abroad. We:

FAVOR restoring residence-based taxation, thereby placing American citizens residing abroad in the same position as citizens of all other industrialized countries, which do not tax their nationals residing abroad.

If such a policy change cannot be adopted immediately, we:

FAVOR the retention of Section 911 and the implementation of the following changes to reduce existing tax discrimination against Americans abroad:

(A) Allow pensions earned from work abroad to qualify as foreign earned income (as was the case prior to 1963).

(B) Simplify the calculation of the foreign tax credit by allowing individual taxpayers to group all foreign income together.

(C) Require Americans abroad to pay U.S. income tax only on income derived from U.S. sources.

FAVOR reinstating the marital deduction for bequests to foreign spouses of American citizens, which was eliminated in 1988.

FAVOR eliminating artificial currency exchange gains and losses when no currency has been exchanged for purposes of reporting capital gains and losses.

SUPPORT the 2012 decision by the Internal Revenue Service to offer amnesty to overseas Americans who are delinquent taxpayers, allowing them to pay what they may owe and restore their status as tax-compliant citizens.

SUPPORT the U.S. government's serious attempts to root out fraud, money laundering, and tax evasion.

URGE the reform of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), in order to enhance FATCA's intended function as a tax evasion deterrent, by:

Defining a foreign or offshore account as an account in a country other than one's country of residence or the US, thereby recognizing the legitimate need for local banking services;

Raising the FATCA reporting threshold to \$1 million to put the focus on taxpayers with wealth sizeable enough to justify the costly and complex investment structures normally used to conceal assessable earnings;

Indexing the reporting threshold to inflation so that it goes up every year just as the Section 911 income exclusion does;

Adding a provision that excuses anyone who does not owe taxes (because of the Section 911 exclusion or any other exemption or a tax treaty) from the obligation to file form 8938, regardless of the threshold reporting;

Merging the FBAR (Treasury Form 90-22.1 Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts) reporting requirement with the developing FATCA legislation to eliminate duplication in filings.

7. Freedom of Movement

Americans abroad face undue restrictions in returning, or simply traveling, to the United States with their foreign-citizen spouses, partners and family members. We:

FAVOR simplifying and expediting procedures for obtaining permanent U.S. residence permits and citizenship for non-American spouses and close family members of U.S. citizens.

DEPLORE changes in 2011 to the I-130 form of the procedure for obtaining immigrant visas for close

relatives, which adversely impact the ability for a U.S. citizen to visit the U.S. with his/her spouse and children, separate currently intact families, and constitute a restriction of the citizen's right to freedom of movement.

FAVOR providing all U.S. citizens living abroad with equal immigration opportunities for their immediate families, without regard for the nature of their employer.

FAVOR providing the immediate family members of U.S. citizens living abroad who are seeking U.S. visitor visas (B-1 and B-2) the maximum visa validity (currently 10 years) irrespective of the reciprocity tables applicable to the family members' country of residence.

CALL FOR passage of the Uniting American Families Act. The Act, rejected by every Congress since 2000, would change immigration law to give U.S. citizens with same-sex partners the same legal treatment as heterosexual spouses, so that American citizens can be united in America with their same-sex foreign-citizen partners.

8. *Other Governmental Services and Benefits*

The interests and concerns of Americans abroad are rarely considered when American laws and regulations that provide essential governmental services are adopted or changed. We:

FAVOR consultation by the State Department with the affected local American community abroad before deciding whether or not to close a consulate.

FAVOR extending the operating hours of consulates to facilitate their access by Americans seeking to obtain various government services.

FAVOR making all U.S. government facilities abroad barrier-free for those with disabilities.

FAVOR payment of U.S. unemployment benefits to Americans abroad who would be eligible to receive such benefits if residing in the United States.

FAVOR legislation requiring the application of all U.S. labor and employment laws to American citizens and "green card" holders working abroad for the U.S. government or its contractors.

FAVOR full implementation of the Americans With Disabilities Act for Americans employed abroad by American companies.

FAVOR the renegotiation of Status of Forces Agreements that restrict the use of military facilities to those residing within the host country, with a view to permitting military retirees living in other countries to use all facilities allowed by military regulations.

FAVOR an increase in weight limit on packages that may be sent or received by military retirees abroad through the military postal system.

II. AMERICAN FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY

We applaud our President for reopening America to the world and the world to America.

CELEBRATE the sharp improvement of the world's opinion of the United States, under the leadership of President Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

1. A Global Good Neighbor Policy

We APPLAUD President Obama's frequent and meaningful visits to countries and world leaders, more in his first year than any other President.

APPLAUD President Obama's ending of the war in Iraq and setting a timeline for the withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan, and his promotion of more diplomatic humanitarian efforts.

FAVOR a constructive U.S. foreign policy that fosters engagement through international organizations, and creates opportunities for dialogue rather than limits or shuts them down.

FAVOR cooperation, negotiation, diplomacy, reciprocity and mutual respect that will widen contact and interaction with other nations.

DEPLORE rhetoric from candidates for office and members of Congress following instructions from the Republican leadership that impedes negotiation with legally elected leaders of countries with which the U.S. has differences.

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

APPLAUD efforts to make the United States a country that promotes international understanding and collaboration with other nations.

FAVOR expansion of foreign aid for health and humanitarian purposes, enhancement of institutions combating world poverty and promoting sustainable development.

2. U.S. State Department

As the U.S. representative to the world, the State Department must have the resources necessary to fulfill its mandate in the development, and implementation of U.S. foreign policy. The Department of State and foreign operations activities are integral to our national security and essential for the support of Americans resident abroad. Recently, the U.S. House of Representatives has attempted to cut funding to international Food Aid Grants, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of State and U.S. foreign operations. These cuts ignore the regional complexities and security threats that confront the United States all over the world. They would reduce or eliminate the U.S.'s ability to address humanitarian and environmental catastrophes, global pandemics, and social instability. Most Americans believe that foreign operations compromise fifteen to twenty percent of the federal budget, while they in fact comprise barely one percent. We:

APPLAUD the diplomatic work of U.S. embassies and consulates throughout the world.

FAVOR full funding of embassies and consulates, as well as increased staff and mobility.

URGE Congress to adequately fund foreign operations allocations, including funding to USAID and for American Citizens' Services.

PROPOSE instituting programs for improved interaction with local populations including the greater use of technology.

FAVOR creation of an Advisory Committee within the State Department to promote non-violence as an international organizing principle in order to foster peaceful coexistence, disarmament, and respect for international treaties.

3. International Agreements, Treaties and Obligations

It is incumbent upon the U.S. to sign and implement important treaties fostering human rights, protection of the environment, and global cooperation. We:

APPLAUD the Obama Administration in endeavoring to honor past treaty commitments.

FAVOR U.S. support of the United Nations, including payment of all dues and assessments.

OPPOSE imposition of trade barriers, tariffs, sanctions or other trade-distorting measures that are in contravention to relevant trade agreements.

FAVOR repeal of the American Service Personnel Protection Act of 2002, popularly known as the "Hague Invasion Act," with the exception of those provisions that ensure the best possible legal defense for a U.S. service member charged by the International Criminal Court in the Netherlands.

APPLAUD President Obama's establishment of a working relationship with the International Criminal Court through Presidential waivers to the Hague Invasion Act and by sending a delegation to the 2010 Review Conference.

FAVOR implementation of the long list of existing treaties involving control of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and similar weaponry, as well as manufacture, sale and distribution of small arms and anti-personnel land mines, and clearing of anti-personnel land mines in all areas of past conflicts.

4. Debts and Sanctions

The inequality in the distribution of the wealth and produce of the world has resulted in a large group of impoverished nations that are burdened by debt and frequently suffer under sanctions. We:

FAVOR debt relief to enable debtor countries to start genuine social and economic development and to help address the massive inequalities that currently distort U.S. global relationships.

FAVOR development by the U.S. government, in cooperation with multilateral and bilateral partners, of appropriate mechanisms to ensure that debt relief translates into social, economic and health improvements for citizens rather than serving to sustain corrupt regimes.

OPPOSE the use of trade and economic sanctions whenever they may be counterproductive politically, or would result in inhumane and widespread suffering among the citizens of the affected nation.

5. Foreign Aid

U.S. foreign aid plays a critical role in securing good will for the United States in the global community. America's long-term security depends on a world where poverty is eradicated and the innate dignity of individuals is protected. We encourage stability, not by force or threat, but by reaching out to the vulnerable, striving to relieve suffering, and promoting social and economic development, education, health, family planning, democracy and human rights. Where these true democratic values thrive, the U.S. is more secure and the global economy more robust. We:

APPLAUD President Obama's cancellation of the "Global Gag Rule" which caused untold amounts of harm to children, women, and communities around the world by withholding U.S. foreign aid from effective and beneficial NGO programs.

RECOGNIZE our moral obligation to assist the world's most vulnerable people—the 2.7 billion who struggle to survive on less than two dollars a day—and who suffer from desperate poverty and a crushing need for basic necessities, by enacting policies that provide aid based on their needs, in a manner that is neutral, impartial and will serve to end bias in the provision of foreign aid.

APPLAUD the generosity of the American people and their desire to end extreme poverty in the world and FAVOR joining the international community's support for the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015, particularly the dedication of 0.7% of GNP to poverty reduction.

FAVOR assisting nations that seek funding for civilian uses, social and economic infrastructure development, income generation, democratic reform and human rights improvements, particularly those that apply to women, and that target health, family planning and education.

FAVOR compliance with the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which stipulates that "no security assistance may be provided to any country, the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights agreements and treaties," with reasonable exceptions for aid to vulnerable children.

6. Control of WMDs and Similar Weaponry

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD), encompassing nuclear, biological, chemical and radioactive weapons, continue to endanger the world, as do an entire category of similar weapons of multiple and mass death, including cluster bombs, land mines, various types of missiles, and chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear (CBRN) weapons materials. The danger is not only the possibility that terrorist groups and rogue states obtain such weapons or weapons materials, but also of their use by "ordinary" states. Currently, eight "nuclear" countries around the world possess some 19,000 nuclear warheads, while many other states have the technology and the fuel cycle to develop nuclear weapons on short order. Our survival on this planet depends not on winning WMD wars but on avoiding them. We:

SUPPORT President Obama's long-term vision of "a world without nuclear weapons," and the significant steps in that direction he proposed in his landmark 2009 speech in Prague.

APPLAUD the signing of the new START treaty and President Obama's 2010 challenge to four years of non-proliferation efforts, agreed to by 47 countries.

APPLAUD the creation of a rapid response fund for emerging democracies.

FAVOR continued U.S. leadership in developing an international plan for phased reduction of nuclear weapons that will lead to their complete abolition, building on the progress made at the 2010 Nuclear

Security Summit, the largest gathering of [heads of state](#) called by a United States president since the 1945, and the follow-up 2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit.

FAVOR U.S. agreement to routine international inspections of nuclear arsenals, weapons programs and enrichment facilities of all states, including international monitoring and policing of sales and supply of CBRN weapons materials and APPLAUD the US government's progress towards this goal through the passage of the Nuclear Forensics and Attribution Act.

FAVOR full funding and implementation of the 1992 Nunn-Lugar Act, also known as the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Program, to safeguard nuclear weapons of the former Soviet Union from falling into the hands of others.

URGE a U.S. call to ratify and enforce the 1996 Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty to stop further development and testing of all nuclear weapons, including their introduction into outer space, as indicated in the U.S.-ratified 1967 Outer Space Treaty prohibiting nuclear and other WMD in outer space.

FAVOR establishment of the International Nuclear Fuel Bank under IAEA for supplying enriched fuel for peaceful nuclear purposes, as guaranteed under Article IV of the 1968 Treaty on the Non- Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

URGE passage of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, a treaty to ban the manufacture, stockpile and sale of cluster bombs, to which over 100 countries have announced their agreement, with the notable exceptions of the U.S., China, Russia and Israel.

SUPPORT the U.S.'s leading role in the clearing of anti-personnel land mines in all areas of past conflicts, and URGE the release by Israel of maps of land mines in southern Lebanon and the completion of the U.S. government's review of the Mine Ban Treaty, which began in 2009.

7. *Supporting Our Military; Honoring Our Veterans*

Democrats Abroad fully supports the men and women of our armed forces whose extraordinary service receives our deepest respect and gratitude. The U.S. spends nearly as much on its military as the rest of the world combined. This is a heavy burden on the economy and a questionable use of resources, particularly when it concerns programs we no longer need. We:

APPLAUD President Obama's repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy and the courageous military personnel who are now free to serve their country without lying about who they love.

FAVOR a severe restriction of the policy of outsourcing critical security and military functions to private contractors.

FAVOR providing our military personnel with the training and resources needed to meet the challenges they are most likely to face in today's world: peacekeeping missions, anti-terrorist operations and emergency humanitarian actions.

FAVOR military policies that minimize civilian casualties, which endanger relations essential to our goals, to the maximum extent consistent with the safety of our troops.

APPLAUD President Obama for cutting or eliminating wasteful military spending such as the F-22 fighter jet program and the missile defense program.

APPLAUD President Obama's recommendations to Congress for increases to pay and benefits for military

personnel.

URGE a thorough and critical review of the heaviest and most sophisticated programs, with a view to reducing or eliminating those that are no longer useful.

URGE a review of U.S. military bases worldwide in order to determine current and foreseeable utility, bearing in mind that closure of some bases may affect U.S. veterans in the area, which must be considered in all its aspects.

FAVOR permanent statutory funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

FAVOR a policy that entitles the Purple Heart, along with relevant additional care and benefits, to all injured military personnel and veterans suffering from properly verified mental injury incurred during military service (notably PTSD) so that mental and physical war injuries have appropriate recognition, honor and compensation.

FAVOR full healthcare for veterans, their domestic partners and children and VIEW as a sign of progress in this area the provision, in 2010, of minimum essential health care coverage by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

FAVOR facilitation and expedition to citizenship for immigrants who have honorably completed their U.S. military service.

APPLAUD the 2010 updates to the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill to extend educational benefits to more veterans and active-service members of the military and SUPPORT President Obama's 2012 Executive Order to stop the predatory abuses of the program by some for-profit colleges and to improve the services provided by the U.S. government.

APPLAUD the adoption of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which provided more than \$1.4 billion in extra funding to the VA in order to strengthen and expand its network of medical centers, state-supported nursing homes and national cemeteries.

SUPPORT the initiative of the Obama White House in collaboration with the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor in creating the Veterans Job Bank in the National Resource Directory.

CELEBRATE the rapid success of the "VOW to Help Heroes Act" of 2011, which has so far supported the employment of more than 60,000 able-bodied and disabled veterans and aims to find jobs for a total of 100,000 veterans by the end of 2013.

URGE the U.S. Congress to refrain from the sequestering of funds from the budget of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, as called for in the Budget Control Act of 2011.

FAVOR the right of every veteran to an appropriate military funeral.

8. *The U.S. and the Middle East*

President Obama's policies have kept the United States largely safe from terrorism, while strengthening America's diplomatic status and its general influence on the people of the Middle East. This region will present challenges to any American leader for years to come, and we are proud of the progress made in the past four years. The War in Iraq is over, Osama bin Laden no longer plots against American interests, and the reputation of the United States in the region is on the mend. Still, the long-term violent Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the central problems in the Middle East and improvements to this

dangerous situation will boost world stability and benefit the peoples of the region. We:

CELEBRATE the end of U.S. combat missions in Iraq and the capture of more Taliban leaders than during the entire Bush/Cheney administration.

APPLAUD President Obama's diplomatic responsiveness to both Israel and Palestine, through renewed loan guarantees for Israel, millions of dollars in aid for Gaza civilians, and the appointment of envoys to the Middle East.

SUPPORT the majority of Israelis and Palestinians in their longing for peace and belief in justice, and view the conclusion of a just resolution to the long conflict between the two parties as a necessary condition for world peace and stability.

FAVOR the development of a package of economic, social and political incentives in place of military aid as an integral part of a constructed formula, for the benefit of the Palestinian people and the State of Israel, to begin at a time certain and to continue or be suspended based on benchmarks for progress, following the conclusion of an agreement by the Palestinian people and the State of Israel to cease and desist all acts and rhetoric of violence and the development or expansion of settlements, and to publicly and mutually respect each other's right to exist.

FAVOR the U.S. serving as an honest broker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while maintaining a single standard when condemning violence, pressing Israel to stop expansion of settlements and the separation wall and both parties adhering to international law.

FAVOR an even-handed proactive U.S. commitment to a peace process, predicated on Palestinian recognition of the State of Israel's right to exist and Israel's recognition of the Palestinian people's right to an independent, sovereign and viable state within internationally recognized and secure borders, in the belief that this will lead to true peace and prosperity.

FAVOR greater U.S. involvement on the basis of a constructed formula to be facilitated by the U.S. in close cooperation with other interested nations, the UN and the European Union, as well as official, legitimately elected leaders and representatives of the Palestinian people and the State of Israel and those who have been instrumental in working for peace in the region, without interference or influence from private, self-interested U.S. lobbies.

FAVOR the establishment of a permanent ambassador assisted by a team of researchers and negotiators as a resource, stationed in Gaza, the West Bank, and the State of Israel, to assist in the resolution of relevant issues as they arise.

A. SUPPORT serious, full, constructive, and persistent United States engagement to promote negotiations and other actions that will lead to a peaceful, sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on mutual recognition and ensuring security, economic growth, and quality of life for the peoples of a sovereign state of Palestine and the sovereign state of Israel.

B. SUPPORT [the Democratic Party's] long-standing policy that a true, mutually respectful peace with safe and secure borders and governments dedicated to peace and democracy for Israelis and Palestinians can only result from direct negotiations between willing and responsible partners.

C. SUPPORT peaceful efforts to achieve separate and secure Israeli and Palestinian states, along 1967 borders with modifications, working with all parties to resolve the conflict and respecting the rights of all persons, and **OPPOSE** further Israeli settlements in disputed territory.

FAVOR the withdrawal of major U.S. troop support from Afghanistan as quickly as possible, consistent with their safety and in a manner that does not destabilize the region and place more lives in danger.

DEPLORE irresponsible statements that ignore the fact that the repercussions of a war with Iran would be even more horrific than that with Iraq, stirring up even more fury in the region and throughout the world, and isolating the U.S. diplomatically.

FAVOR a policy that deals with Iran's enrichment of uranium through diplomacy and direct U.S. talks with the government of Iran.

9. Latin America

The U.S. has had an embargo for more than four decades against Cuba, stretching over the entire period of Fidel Castro's regime. It is clear that travel restrictions combined with business and trade embargoes are counter-productive in encouraging Cuba, or any nation, to become more democratic and free. In addition, we:

APPLAUD President Obama's re-instatement of the rights of Americans to visit and assist their families in Cuba.

FAVOR normalizing relations with Cuba, and call for an immediate lifting of all trade and economic sanctions and the ban on U.S. citizens traveling to and from Cuba, which inhibits American citizens' ability to travel to and conduct business in all countries throughout the region.

FAVOR opening a dialogue with the government of Cuba that leads to a more constructive, 21st-century relationship.

OPPOSE the constant calls from Republican politicians to escalate the cost of a barrier along the border of U.S. and Mexico, without any end-point, fiscal responsibility, or evidence of effectiveness.

FAVOR creating procedures that make border crossings from the to Canada and México more people-friendly. The current procedure create increased waits and confusion at each border, quite often resulting in large annoyances to legitimate travelers. It also sends a poor message to the rest of the world.

APPLAUD the passage of the Free Trade Agreement with Colombia, which will continue to open new markets for U.S. companies while offering alternatives to the illegal drug industry for Colombians. .

10. Terrorism

Terrorism is a worldwide scourge, and attacks upon the United States must have a vigorous and unrelenting response. While recognizing this threat, it should nonetheless not be used as a cover for aggression and curtailment of civil liberties. We:

FAVOR U.S. actions against the occurrence and spread of terrorism that use "soft power" to regain the support of citizens and nations around the world.

FAVOR efforts to combat terrorism that not only address actual occurrences of terrorism, but also address conditions that terrorists exploit to spread chaos and confusion.

FAVOR U.S. policy toward the Middle East and other sources of terrorism that promotes self-determination, peace, and human rights,

FAVOR a U.S. policy based on internationally recognized legal processes to investigate and prosecute terrorists in national and international courts.

DEPLORE irresponsible rhetoric that links the words “Middle East” and “terrorism,” in recognition of the fact that terrorism originates in many non-Arab and non-Muslim contexts and that this linkage erases the many progressive actors in the Middle East from U.S. discourse and engagement.

III. AMERICAN DOMESTIC ISSUES

We applaud our Administration's accomplishments and encourage greater efforts to ensure equality of opportunity through public support

1. *Education, Arts and Sciences*

Education is a basic human right according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a public responsibility. We must pro-actively develop a population that is globally aware, globally sensitive, globally responsible and globally engaged. We therefore:

SUPPORT strengthening quality public education for all American young people based on the following enduring American values and internationally-recognized best practices:

The purpose of education is to enable all children and young people to reach their full potential as individuals and to become socially responsible citizens of our country and the world;

Equality of opportunity and non-discrimination are the foundation of our democratic society and must be reflected in all aspects of educational governance, management, finance, school facilities, teaching and support professions;

Quality primary and secondary education are the basis on which all further learning takes place and young adults are equipped with the critical thinking, skills and knowledge to make further educational and professional choices throughout their lives;

Equal access, academic freedom and quality in higher education are national priorities. A key characteristic of successful individuals and societies is the quality of higher education;

America should protect education as a public good in a period of economic austerity. We need informed citizenry to preserve and strengthen democratic values and institutions that respect them;

SUPPORT the diagnostic use of formative evaluation and assessment to encourage learning and OPPOSE the misuse of assessment regimes to evaluate teachers or schools as institutions. Evaluation of schools should celebrate community ownership and improvement.

URGE that all levels of government view teachers and their organizations as equal partners, independent but committed to the common endeavor of achieving successful education systems.

FAVOR policies that require that personnel in school leadership, governance and management have professional knowledge, specific to public service in education, and OPPOSE the outsourcing of any aspect of educational leadership. This disturbing trend de-professionalizes key foundations of our education systems and decision-making based on knowledge, experience, trust and democratic principles.

SUPPORT the strengthening of education professionals' collective bargaining rights, acquired over many years, and DEPLORE the threats to those rights that are currently posed by well-funded and irresponsible special interests.

FAVOR a concerted effort by national and state governments to undertake urgent rehabilitation and upgrades of our school infrastructure, to ensure that our nation's *educational facilities are quality construction, safe and environmentally friendly*.

FAVOR Federal assistance to states for the creation of free, universal, voluntary pre-kindergarten programs, integrated into the public education system, while ensuring that states require the licensing and certification of all preschool instructors. Early childhood care and education are intended to meet the needs of the whole child.

URGE the reform and renewal of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, based on the principle that the Federal government's first responsibility is to set the bar higher than it has ever been in terms of equality of access and service, rather than lowering it to enable 'market' forces to play.

APPLAUD President Obama's efforts to provide more federal funding for higher education and his support of community colleges, including the 2012 creation of the Community College to Career Fund. Further action must be taken to improve equal access to all forms of tertiary education and to reduce the cost of higher education.

DEPLORE trends towards privatization and outsourcing of our children's future, which undermine democratic institutions at home and internationally. An informed citizenry is the bedrock of democratic values and the institutions that respect them.

FAVOR *restoration of public funding* for education for states that have recently cut back spending and APPLAUD President Obama's insistence that the Recovery Act save the jobs of hundreds of thousands of teachers and support staff as well as contribute to the rehabilitation of poorly maintained public schools in disadvantaged areas.

OPPOSE policies that rely on corporate management practices, competition without proven benefits, or the privatization of public education, all of which thoughtlessly privilege corporate values over America's commitment to equal opportunity, alleviation of poverty, civil rights and respect for linguistic, social and cultural diversity.

FAVOR *Internet access and training in new computer-based technologies* in all public schools, which allow students from all background to engage critically in the information revolution and knowledge economy.

FAVOR more rapid *integration of immigrant workers and students* in tax-supported educational programs and schemes, and OPPOSE the short-sighted attempts of some states, such as Arizona, to eliminate English Language Learner programs.

OPPOSE any *Constitutional Amendment* mandating or permitting organized prayer in public schools.

OPPOSE the *teaching of creationism*, intelligent design or any other programs understood to comprise the notions of creationism, within the science curriculum in public schools.

FAVOR the adoption of education policies, curricula and international exchange programs for students and professionals that promote stronger *awareness and appreciation of current events, global affairs, geography, foreign cultures, international understanding and foreign languages* in order to help the U.S. in the increasingly globalized world.

OPPOSE *ineffective “choice” measures* such as school vouchers, tax-credit programs and semi-public or for-profit charter schools that divert public funds to private initiatives. Parents in disadvantaged areas, and indeed most parents, prefer the improvement of existing neighborhood public schools to re-locating their children outside local communities.

FAVOR *more objective, fact-based news coverage* on Voice of America, Armed Services radio and other U.S.-funded globally based broadcasters, not only to improve our nation’s image but also as a contribution to the liberalization of cultural values in the global commonwealth.

FAVOR more and improved funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the National Endowment for the Humanities as these organizations are critical to the encouragement of cultural and creative expression in our country. We applaud the increase in funding for the National Endowment for the Arts to the highest level since 1992.

SUPPORT freedom of expression in the arts, within the U.S. and through our foreign policy.

FAVOR increased funding for the National Science Foundation and additional grants and tax credits for universities and businesses for specialized training programs.

2. Economy and Tax Issues

As Democrats, we believe the Federal government must guide and manage the economy in ways that protect and provide for the public good. The Federal government should (A) manage the budget in a fiscally prudent manner, (B) preserve and improve our country’s material infrastructure upon which our lives and our economy depend, and (C) provide the means essential for every citizen to pursue opportunities for lifelong success and happiness. The Federal government must also (D) encourage corporations and financial institutions to adopt improved ethical standards and, (E) respect the longstanding commitments of our country to free and fair trade, and provide regulatory oversight to avoid financial crisis.

A. Managing the Nation’s Budget. In 1993, President William Jefferson Clinton devised the largest deficit-reduction plan in U.S. history. He left the Oval Office eight years later with many items in surplus and a strong dollar. Since 2001, the Republican administration of George W. Bush has turned inherited budget surpluses into a series of deficits estimated at many trillions of dollars. President Obama repeatedly offered sensible compromises and innovative programs to cynically obstructionist Republican members of Congress. We are eager to see our government go to work, and so, we:

FAVOR the immediate repeal of fiscally unsound tax cuts, including the capital gains and dividend tax cuts, which have unfairly transferred a greater share of the tax burden to lower-income workers.

APPLAUD President Obama’s reasonable and economically sound proposals to gradually reduce the Federal budget deficit, without eliminating key programs that benefit millions of Americans.

FAVOR reducing the military budget, excluding veteran retirement benefits, and investing the resulting dividends in education, job-retraining, and job-creation programs, thereby enabling American workers to compete more effectively in the new global labor market.

B. Maintaining the Nation’s Infrastructure. In August 2007, one section of a downtown Minneapolis, eight-lane steel-arch bridge, built in 1967 and used by 140,000 cars each day to cross the Mississippi, collapsed. This was a wake-up call, heeded by President Obama but ignored by too many others. The U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics and many independent organizations say that our nation’s infrastructure is dangerously under-maintained. Our transport networks, cities, and housing stock, are vital to our

economic well-being and urgently require renovation. We:

APPLAUD the dramatically increased spending of the Federal government on bridges and roads after years of neglect, including President Obama's insistence that Republicans in the 112th Congress agree to an adequately funded transportation bill.

APPLAUD President Obama's commitment of American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funds to development of a U.S. Smart Power Grid, new grants to encourage energy-efficient building codes, and the expansion of broadband Internet access to schools and rural areas.

FAVOR Federal assistance for the regular inspection, repair and modernization of integrated urban transport systems, as proposed to Congress in President Obama's annual budget requests

SUPPORT extensive Federal works and jobs creation programs, and, insofar as possible, incentives or requirements to employ recently unemployed, retrained industrial workers, preferably in full-time jobs with rights to unionization.

SUPPORT President Obama's proposals for a comprehensive expansion and modernization of the national rail network, as well as the integration of Amtrak passenger and freight services, with a view towards cost reduction of rail-based transport and enticement of more road and air travelers to trains.

SUPPORT President Obama's plans for expansion of light-rail transport and high-speed rail as means of reducing the use of cars and DEPLORE the ideological refusal by Republican governors of federal funds for that purpose and the short-sighted denial of funds for Republican legislators.

SUPPORT Federal support for research into alternative fuel use in integrated mass transit systems and incentives to adopt green transport technologies at the state and local levels, such as the 2012 initiatives from the Departments of Energy and Transportation.

C. Ensuring Opportunity for All. Some 36.5 million Americans lived in families with incomes below the official poverty line as of December 2006. The reduction of poverty, income inequality, unemployment and underemployment must be high priorities for the next presidential administration and Congress. Success in each area is essential to the process of restoring respect for our country in the world. We:

APPLAUD the passage of the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, which is an essential step in the right direction in the struggle against pay discrimination against women.

FAVOR the passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2012, which would help close the pay gap between women and men by giving new routes to justice for women, closing a variety of legal loopholes, and preventing employers from retaliating against employees who share pay information with colleagues.

FAVOR raising the basic Federal minimum wage to be in step with current and scheduled increases in a large number of states, and the indexing of the Federal minimum wage to inflation.

DEPLORE the fact that four states, Arkansas, Georgia, Minnesota, and Wyoming, have a basic minimum wage per hour that is lower than the Federal minimum wage, and that five states, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina and Tennessee, have no minimum wage at all.

APPLAUD the Recovery Act, which allowed President Obama's administration to issue more than 2,300 microloans and invest more than \$3 billion in 12,000 grants to women-owned small businesses.

FAVOR resources to ensure that no child live below the poverty line and improved child support for single-

parent families especially those living on incomes below the official poverty line.

FAVOR improved provision of childcare for low-income working families and expanded, improved training programs for childcare providers.

FAVOR providing tax incentives to businesses that provide on-site child care centers for working parents, compensated healthcare coverage, flexible work schedules, job sharing and on-the-job training with internship and apprenticeship programs.

SUPPORT the efforts of President Obama to promote flexible work policies that prevent parents from choosing between keeping their jobs and meeting their families' needs, and to provide flexibility to parents working in research fields so they can delay or suspend grants for up to a year to care for their newborns.

APPLAUD the expansion of health coverage to four million previously uninsured children through the Children's Health Insurance Plan Reauthorization Act of 2009.

OPPOSE all forms of sexual harassment in the workplace.

OPPOSE the hiring of permanent workers in place of lawful strikers and all attempts by employers to reduce or deny overtime pay or other benefits to workers in pay negotiations.

FAVOR the award of tax concessions or credits to small businesses, especially those owned by women and individuals from economically disadvantaged groups, including disabled persons.

FAVOR Federally supported job training and job-creation schemes for workers of all ages. This will help to protect and strengthen the national labor force as it attempts to meet the challenges presented by globalization and emerging new markets for goods, services and labor.

DEPLORE the schemes of ALEC, a group massively funded by major corporations that seeks to rewrite US states' laws to their own interests, to substitute a radical and corrupt agenda, driven by corporation's short-term interests, for the American, democratic system of legislation in each of the United States.

DEPLORE the actions in Wisconsin and Ohio to eliminate workers' rights through such anti-democratic means as undermining collective bargaining for unions.

SUPPORT the granting of carefully targeted, developmental incentives by state governments and the Federal government to manufacturing companies agreeing to redirect company investments (physical and material) to the continental United States while striving for significant advances in productivity.

SUPPORT increased Federal investment in research, engineering and technical innovation designed to facilitate the creation of more efficient, carbon-neutral industries and products, including cars.

SUPPORT S.2231, the Credit Union Small Business Jobs Bill, sponsored by New York Senators Charles Schumer and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, which would make available nearly \$13 billion in new small business loans nationwide within one year of adoption.

SUPPORT President Obama in his work towards a fairer, more progressive system of personal income taxation, including his support for a 'Buffett tax' which would set minimum tax thresholds for the wealthiest Americans and his continuing efforts to eliminate the Bush tax cuts for highest income earners

D. Strengthening Corporate Transparency and Accountability. Certain American businesses increasingly shirk their corporate responsibilities to employees, workers and shareholders. We:

FAVOR legislation that mandates improved accounting and auditing practices. This will enable stakeholders – investors, managers, and the public at large – to restore confidence and pride in America’s largest corporate enterprises.

FAVOR full funding of company pensions, and legal sanctions against firms that undermine retirement security through mismanagement or fraudulent use of pension funds.

FAVOR fully portable pensions.

FAVOR the reinstatement of the Glass-Steagall Act requiring a separation of commercial and investment banking.

FAVOR tax credits to assist families that budget for retirement by expanding access to tax-deferred IRAs or 401(k) retirement savings accounts.

FAVOR initiatives to make it easier for small businesses to provide private pensions.

E. Supporting Free and Fair Trade. The United States has long been committed to free and fair trade as a means of stimulating growth and improving consumption in our economy. Democrats Abroad recognizes the appeal that trade barriers and other restrictions on free trade might have, for example, in reducing the short-term loss of jobs at home, but protectionist measures also result in rising prices for consumers and restrict or preclude job gains. We:

FAVOR a Federally funded review of the impact of NAFTA on the U.S. manufacturing economy and employment. This review would identify competitive and uncompetitive industries as well as commercial trends, including patterns in capital investment, leveraging, outsourcing and re- exporting.

FAVOR sanctions against U.S. companies shifting production lines overseas in order to evade fair and reasonable standards of pay and conditions of work, or who employ child or indentured laborers.

SUPPORT efforts to develop new markets abroad for U.S.-made products and services, such as President Obama’s 2010 National Export Initiative, which has already dramatically increased U.S. exports and the number of jobs supported by those exports.

SUPPORT President Obama’s 2012 *Blueprint for an America Built to Last* which puts forward both common-sense and innovative policies to rebuild manufacturing in the U.S. and support American small businesses.

FAVOR Federally supported programs to protect our labor force and enhance our skills base, by providing retraining, especially in communities facing high unemployment and hardship due to factory closure. This will prepare us with new jobs in the green economy and globalized markets.

FAVOR ongoing attempts to ensure better protection of intellectual property rights in those parts of the world that do not respect these rights.

FAVOR respecting the rules and regulations of the World Trade Organization, among them the requirement that the United States and the European Union gradually reduce subsidies.

OPPOSE the imposition of new trade barriers or tariffs, and other price-distorting measures, while respecting foreign workers’ civil and labor rights.

3. Healthcare

Healthcare is a human right and a core element of the Democratic Party's compact with the American people. More than fifty years after Harry S. Truman inserted "Universal Health Insurance" into the platform of the Democratic Party, the United States is duty-bound to continue its progress towards what every other advanced, industrial nation has achieved. We:

FAVOR the provision of Universal Health Care for every American man, woman and child wherever they live.

CELEBRATE that 34 million Americans will gain health care coverage due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and that, when the Act is fully implemented, about 95 percent of Americans under age 65 will have health insurance.

APPLAUD the decreasing cost of prescription drugs for Medicare recipients and the progress towards eliminating the gap ("donut hole") in the plan's coverage.

REGRET that the United States spends a significantly higher percentage of its GDP on healthcare than any other affluent democracy, but still lags behind on such crucially important social development indicators as life expectancy and infant mortality.

FAVOR the repeal of the initial steps toward privatization included in the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003.

FAVOR nationwide regulation, already adopted in several states, of pharmaceutical company marketing campaigns, which restrict such unethical practices as the giving of gifts and promotional incentives to healthcare practitioners and the manipulation of scientific data and publication in medical journals.

FAVOR quality assurance and cost-control measures in the administration of universal healthcare, with a view to containing overall health costs and, if possible, gradually reducing costs per capita.

APPLAUD the implementation, by the Obama administration, of a Patient's Bill of Rights that eliminates many health insurers' abuses that plagued the American health care system.

FAVOR the extension of patients' right to include legal guarantees to protect the rights of patients to confidentiality in relation to medical treatment, health status and genetic predisposition.

SUPPORT the Affordable Care Act, which will keep health insurers from discriminating against people with current or previous health conditions.

FAVOR Federal healthcare coverage for contraception, sex education and pre- as well as post-natal care. DEPLORE recent attempts in Congress to reduce coverage for such care by holding hostage unrelated and sensible programs, such as college tuition assistance.

APPLAUD President Obama's leadership of the Democratic Party against Republicans' repeated attempts to defund Planned Parenthood, the largest provider of women's health care in the country

FAVOR development of a national program to combat Alzheimer's disease, which would increase funding for research into treatment, allow access to care for Alzheimer's patients under the age of 65 and provide financial assistance to families struggling to care for family members afflicted with Alzheimer's.

FAVOR Federal funding of stem-cell research.

4. *Electoral and Legal Systems*

A. Elections and Representation. Free, fair and verifiable elections are necessary for a vibrant and truly representative democracy. American citizens are concerned that the democratic basis of the U.S. government is threatened by the influence of partisan politics and massive amounts of money. After the [2012](#) Supreme Court decision *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* eliminated decades of campaign finance reform, the U.S. needs a coherent and transparent system of campaign finance. A constitutional amendment ratified by 38 states may be necessary to accomplish this absolute prerequisite for democratic elections that have the confidence of the American people.

Too many state officials engage in cynical and sometimes illegal "purges" that are clearly intended to disenfranchise legitimate voters. Some state legislatures and executives regularly flout the spirit of our democracy by passing laws and instituting practices that impose unreasonable burdens on Americans who want nothing more than to cast a ballot and be counted. Our country is approaching a crisis at the foundation of our democratic ideals.

Democrats Abroad vigorously defends the principle of "one person, one vote." We:

DEPLORE the 5-4 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and URGE the states to ratify an amendment to the United States Constitution to clarify that corporations are not entitled to the constitutional rights of natural people, and to reinstate limits on political campaign spending.

FAVOR passage of the OCCUPIED amendment "Outlawing Corporate Cash Undermining the Public Interest in our Elections and Democracy" and the companion item to the Senate known as the "Saving American Democracy Amendment".

SUPPORT the DISCLOSE (Democracy Is Strengthened by Casting Light on Spending in Elections) Act, promoted by Common Cause, which would require the top five donors to be listed on a screen of each of the advertisements they fund.

FAVOR the passage of comprehensive campaign reform by the U.S. Congress and, ultimately, full public financing of all presidential, senatorial and congressional elections.

FAVOR adoption of legislation regulating the length of campaigns for Federal office together with regulated, equitable access to free advertising and debate in the national media.

FAVOR an amendment to the Constitution that will establish the right of all U.S. citizens, irrespective of place of residence or permanent domicile, to vote in Federal elections and to have their votes verifiably counted.

FAVOR legislation and an amendment to the Constitution allowing residents of the District of Columbia to be represented by one voting member of the House of Representatives and two voting Senators (with no commensurate loss of representation to the existing states).

FAVOR an amendment to the Constitution to abolish the indirect election of the president by the Electoral College and to allow direct elections.

FAVOR the right of residents of the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico to vote for president without prejudice to their future independence or statehood.

FAVOR more delegate positions for Democrats Abroad at the Democratic National Convention and the

awarding of one full vote for each delegate.

FAVOR legislation mandating transparent, statistically significant, verifiable audits.

FAVOR national requirements for statewide, computerized databases of registered voters, including that databases be subjected to testing under Election Day conditions prior to Election Day, and paper backup of these electronic databases.

FAVOR suspending the use of all electronic “touch screen” voting machines until security and technical problems are resolved and a paper audit trail accompanies their use.

FAVOR legislation requiring U.S. citizens whose names have been deleted from voting rolls be notified in writing at least 45 days before the state’s registration deadline to ensure that such voters have an opportunity to re-register.

APPLAUD AND FAVOR the initiatives taken in some states to allow same-day registration, Party-run Internet voting, simplified postal voting and early/weekend voting in elections.

FAVOR legislation making Election Day a national holiday, at least in every Federal election year (even-numbered years).

B. Lobbyists. Roughly 13,000 registered lobbyists worked in Washington, D.C., in 2009, with nearly \$3.5 billion spent annually on lobbying. We:

SUPPORT prohibiting former Congressional staffers from lobbying Congress for two years after they leave the Congressional service.

SUPPORT extending the current one-year moratorium on former Congressional members lobbying other members of Congress to a full five years and applying the same rule to Federal appointees.

SUPPORT banning the acceptance of all gifts, services, money, or things of value to any elected or appointed official from any entity that the official is charged with regulating.

C. Criminal Justice. A criminal justice system with overcrowded prisons, that exists to punish criminals rather than to rehabilitate, holds little promise for crime and reduction of recidivism. Tragically, nearly one in every hundred Americans, excluding children and the elderly, live behind bars, where they are subject to the loss of dignity and rights, including the right to vote. The trend toward for-profit prisons invites abuse, and prolonged solitary confinement is now widely recognized as cruel yet widespread. American rates of incarceration are the highest in the world and several times higher than most industrialized democracies. The United States is the only major democracy that still applies capital punishment: it is a legal punishment in 33 states; 15 have banned it. Although the number of executions has declined to less than 50 per annum, in any given year more than 3,000 prison inmates live on death row. Because we are concerned that prisons are becoming America’s new ghettos, we:

APPLAUD the abolition of the death penalty in New Mexico in 2009 and in Connecticut in 2012.

FAVOR abolition of the death sentence everywhere in the United States. Life imprisonment without parole is not only more humane, it is less costly to taxpayers because of high cost of numerous appeals that customarily accompany a death sentence.

FAVOR Federal government ratification and real compliance with the Second Protocol to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as a means of informing the world community

of our commitment to the abolition of the death penalty.

FAVOR a nationwide moratorium on executions despite the Supreme Court judgment on lethal injection. Executions are particularly difficult to justify when legal processes are marred by error and discrimination on racial and / or socioeconomic grounds.

SUPPORT the National Criminal Justice Commission Act, introduced by Senator Jim Webb, which would be the first step to improving the operation of correctional facilities so they reflect the best, humane values of our criminal justice system, in accord with the recommendations of the 2006 report of the independent Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons.

OPPOSE privatization of any prison or any other correctional institution.

OPPOSE mandatory minimum sentences that curtail judicial discretion.

FAVOR the immediate repeal of "three strikes, you're out" laws, which result in excessively long sentences for nonviolent offenders.

FAVOR the creation of Federal and state programs for economic planning, and development in local neighborhoods with high incidences of delinquency and criminal activity, as well as research on recidivism, improved training for high-crime area police forces, community policing, and training programs for nonviolent offenders recently released from prison or on parole.

OPPOSE the incarceration of juveniles with adults and note with concern the understaffing and closing of juvenile correctional institutions in Texas and elsewhere.

APPLAUD the passage of the Fair Sentencing Act, which eliminated the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine.

DEPLORE systemic gun violence in America, and the failure to finally address these issues, especially the presence of guns in schools.

IV. CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

1. *Women's Issues*

About half of the world's population is female, with issues that transcend nationality, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Democrats Abroad affirms the rights of women to empowerment in every aspect of their lives, including physical safety, self-determination of reproductive rights, and equality of opportunity. We:

CALL FOR 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, and which the United States signed in 1980 but the Senate has failed to ratify. The U.S. is the only industrialized nation that has failed to ratify, and has joined the ranks of Iran and North Korea by its refusal.

APPLAUD the establishment of the White House Council on Women and Girls to ensure that women's rights receive the coordinated, serious attention they deserve, continuing the work of the White House Office for Women's Initiatives and Outreach, which was closed in the opening days of the Bush administration.

APPLAUD Present Obama's inclusion of women at all levels of his Administration, including the nomination of two women to the Supreme Court, and seven women to cabinet-rank positions.

CALL ON the United States government to support international efforts to define rape as a war crime and bring prosecution in appropriate cases, particularly through the signing and ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

SUPPORT President Obama's budget proposals to increase funding of the Violence Against Women Act, and his administration's initiatives to improve legal protections for victims, increase sexual assault arrests and successful prosecutions, and help victims regain housing and financial independence.

CALL ON the United States Congress to pass an honest and effect reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. DEPLORE the malicious procedural manipulations by Republicans in the US House of Representatives in 2012, to place women at risk by passing a deceptive bill under the same name.

APPLAUD the allocation of \$225 million to the Department of Justice to promote law enforcement strategies that address violence against women.

SUPPORT the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women around the world, including the right to education, healthcare, legal protection and legal standing before the law.

CALL FOR powerful enforcement of laws protecting women and girls, such as those prohibiting forced child marriages, those providing effective HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs, and those protecting women's and girls' safety.

ENDORSE the creation of a comprehensive Federal program to support women in the areas of family and medical leave, and access to family planning and contraception.

FAVOR welfare reform that does not penalize women with children, and women who become pregnant while receiving public assistance, including a commitment to include family planning, emergency contraception and abortion for women in all national healthcare plans and a commitment to provide high-quality sex education and confidential reproductive healthcare for adolescents.

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

ENDORSE unequivocally the right of women in the United States of America to bear children, practice birth control and obtain safe, legal abortions regardless of economic, religious or racial status. We believe that a decision 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 quality information from doctors and others regarding reproductive choices.

APPLAUD the appointment of first Latina to the Supreme Court, Sonia Sotomayor.

2. The Rule of Law at Home and Abroad

Democrats Abroad believes that the United States has restored its moral authority and credibility abroad, in part by upholding the U.S. Constitution and its honored principles. We must consistently apply our commitment to universal human rights abroad and at home. We:

URGE Congress to reject all forms of torture, including so-called waterboarding.

URGE Congress to demand accountability from, and where necessary to indict, all those whose policies condoned, allowed, or encouraged the practice of torture and violation of international conventions and who have been involved in systematic assaults on all human rights and civil liberties.

URGE Congress to reject the role of religion or “faith-based” institutions of any kind in the forming of national policy, in keeping with the First Amendment’s ban on the establishment of state religion.

APPLAUD President Obama’s Executive Order 13199, allowing federal funding to faith-based institutions only according to the values established in the First Amendment.

APPLAUD President Obama’s revocation of President Bush’s anti-democratic Executive Order that licensed the misuse of presidential power over presidential records.

3. Promoting Equal Rights

Democrats Abroad affirms the U.S. Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection under the law and abhors discrimination based on race, ethnic or national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, gender identity or sexual orientation. Racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination continue to be a serious problem in the United States, and where such discrimination exists in laws it must be addressed forcefully and decisively. We:

CALL FOR renewed vigor in the enforcement of Federal and State laws prohibiting discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, age, sexual orientation and disability.

APPLAUD the Department of Justice’s 2010 revision of rules under the Americans with Disabilities Act, to ensure newly designed, built, or renovated public facilities are accessible to all Americans.

CALL FOR a strong and renewed commitment to the development and implementation of policies and programs that facilitate and ensure full participation of people with physical disabilities into society, including all levels of education and the workplace.

APPLAUD President Obama’s signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2009, and URGE the U.S. Senate to ratify the treaty immediately.

CELEBRATE the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act in 2009, which expands Federal hate crimes laws to include violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender, and disability.

CALL FOR passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which would prohibit discrimination against employees on the basis of sexual orientation and URGE state and local governments to protect gender identity with anti–employment discrimination laws and ordinances.

CALL FOR revocation of the Constitutional amendments passed by 31 states that ban same- sex legal unions in violation of the U.S. Constitution’s guarantee of equal protection.

CALL FOR 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, healthcare, disability, immigration and military service.

SUPPORTS the Obama administration’s declaration that the Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional, and the administration’s efforts to provide hospital visitation and medical decision-making rights to same-sex couples.

APPLAUD the Presidential Memorandum of 2009 extending benefits to same-sex partners of Federal employees and his continued support for making the full range of benefits available. URGE the US Congress to pass the Domestic Partnership Benefits and Obligations Act of 2011.

FAVOR the legal recognition in all 50 states of civil unions that extend state-based marriage rights and responsibilities, such as inheritance and tax benefits, to any two consenting adults in a committed relationship, whether gay, lesbian or heterosexual.

CONDEMN efforts to amend the Constitution to deny any state the authority to grant legal rights to same-sex couples and, in particular, strongly oppose the Federal Marriage Amendment, which seeks to amend the Constitution to legally define marriage as a "union between a man and a woman."

OPPOSE the use of Constitutional amendments to remove civil rights rather than affirm them, as the framers of our Constitution intended in the Bill of Rights

APPLAUD the US Congress for reauthorizing the Ryan White Care Act in 2009, and President Obama for lifting the U.S. travel ban on HIV+ visitors and immigrants that same year. URGE the US Congress to make these changes permanent, leaving discrimination and stigma in the past.

4. Children and Family Rights

Democrats Abroad affirms all children's right to legal protection that guarantees their health, welfare, education and safety and believes that America has a moral obligation to support these rights internationally as well as at home. We:

CALL FOR the passage of laws to ensure that no child falls below the poverty line, and to make the American workplace truly family-friendly. No family should ever have to choose between work and family emergencies.

FAVOR the passage of the Parental Bereavement Act as well as the passage of Federal legislation guaranteeing paid maternity and paternity leave for all parents, and legislation similar to the Family and Medical Leave Act guaranteeing leave for parents, spouses, siblings, caregiver children, or committed partners in case of family emergencies.

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 take or accompany their children, or elderly relatives, to medical and dental appointments, as well as a Congressional response to the 5-4 decision by the US Supreme Court, *Coleman v. Court of Appeals of Maryland*, that invalidates important provisions of the original Family and Medical Leave Act.

FAVOR the immediate ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has not been ratified by only two other countries, Somalia and South Sudan. This treaty obliges its signatories 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, of the child's right to be protected from economic exploitation and from work likely to be hazardous or to interfere with a child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development, and of state assistance to families.

URGE the full implementation of International Labor Organization Conventions on Children's Rights to meet the 2016 goals of ILO Convention No. 182 related to eliminating the worst forms of child labor.

FAVOR the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention No. 138, which calls for the abolition of

egregious forms of child labor through domestic policies, and which has been ratified by 161 countries.

FAVOR, when a child must work from economic necessity anywhere in the world, the enactment and enforcement of effective measures to ensure safe working conditions, healthcare and compulsory quality education.

FAVOR the passage of the DREAM Act to provide green cards and then citizenship to immigrant children – brought to this country before age 16 and are under the age of 30 and have lived in the United States for five years – if they go to college or provide military service.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Democrats must lead our nation in preserving the Earth - our only home. Actions taken in one part of the planet affect each and every other part of our global ecosystem. Therefore, Democrats demand spirited international cooperation from our government to achieve mission-critical goals of environmental sustainable development. We do this for our children and our children's children. The economy and the environment can be made to work together in harmony, each strengthening the other. This environmental crisis is an opportunity for America's mythic and grand 'can do' spirit to take hold, to innovate, and to lead by inspiration. We have great moral responsibility, and the world is waiting for us to return to our place on the global stage. We:

SUPPORT a strong EPA that vigorously enforces the environmental laws of the United States of America.

SUPPORT President Obama's progressive "smart growth" policies that stimulate economic development, protect the environment and improve quality of life.

URGE the U.S. government to increase its commitment to apply the creative, scientific and capital resources to seek solutions to U.S. environmental sustainability, and to lead multilateral efforts to create positive actions in response to this looming crisis.

1. *Climate Change*

Democrats Abroad recognize the overwhelming scientific data that indicates human activity, particularly in the industrialized world, has contributed to dangerous levels of global warming. We:

DEPLORE the cynical misinformation dispersed by "climate-change skeptics".

FAVOR working multilaterally with other nations to meet and exceed the goals of the 2009 Copenhagen Accord and the 2011 Durban Accord

FAVOR that the U.S. Federal Trade Commission continue to update the "Green Guide" and file complaints against fraudulent "green" marketing claims, establish regulatory mechanisms for carbon offset marketing, credits, standardization, certifications and monitoring, and work multilaterally on the Clean Power Act mandating drastic reductions in carbon emissions from power plants.

2. *Energy Security & Reduced Dependence on Oil*

Our tremendous energy needs, and our dependence on oil and gas have resulted in difficult, and worsening economic, political, and environmental consequences. We:

FAVOR Congressional action to close the “sports utility vehicle loophole” by classifying light trucks as ordinary cars, in order to subject these vehicles to the fuel economy standards that would save millions of barrels of oil a day.

FAVOR supporting national energy policies that provide major funding and sound fiscal incentives for clean energy research and development, including new materials, solar power, wind power, hydrogen, fuel cells, batteries and other electricity storage devices, and carbon dioxide capture and sequestration. The development of clean energy technologies will also increase U.S. industrial and economic competitiveness and create new employment opportunities for Americans.

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

DEPLORE the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest for biofuel production.

FAVOR more compelling financial incentives to industry, as well as the general public, to invest and apply greater energy efficiency techniques and products. These would include green building products and designs for homes and commercial and public buildings and the retrofit of existing buildings with more energy-efficient equipment.

FAVOR implementing decoupling policies to use energy more wisely and modernizing and upgrading the electric power grid across America to reduce energy loss.

FAVOR offering Americans improved and diversified transportation choices by investing in infrastructure such as light rail systems, cleaner buses, national passenger rail (Amtrak), high-speed trains and other public transportation options.

FAVOR policies that coordinate the construction of walkable communities and public transportation hubs that offer incentives for those who build and buy homes located near public transit, such as the 2010 Department of Transportation Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership.

FAVOR Federal support for research on alternative fuel impact, especially biofuels, on the environment and on the food chain and food prices.

3. Public Lands

America’s National Parks, Forests, Grasslands, and Wildlife Refuges are national treasures that protect wildlife, are wondrous and integral parts of a healthy ecosystem, and pass our natural heritage to future generations. We:

FAVOR a moratorium on further releases of public lands. This includes 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.

4. Clean Air, Water and Land

To protect and improve the health of the American people and preserve future Americans’ quality of life,

we:

FAVOR the strengthening of the Clean Water Act in order to address today's diverse water quality problems, as called for by the Obama Administration's 2011 Clean Water Framework.

CELEBRATE the 25th anniversary of the undeniably successful Montreal Protocol worldwide timetable to phase out manufactured chemicals that destroy the ozone layer, and URGE the U.S. government to continue the enforcement that requires polluters to pay for restoring the environment they degrade.

URGE Congress to keep its commitments by revitalizing and fully funding of the Superfund Hazardous and Toxic Waste Cleanup Program, for example, through passage of Senator Lautenberg (D-NJ)'s Polluter Pays Restoration Act.

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 a review of all domestic policies to insure that there is no longer discrimination against those at lower socioeconomic levels who are most vulnerable to landfills, and other environmental hazards, being placed in their minority and low- income communities.

5. Agriculture

FAVOR significant restrictions on the use of growth and other hormones, antibiotics, and artificial food additives that introduce potentially harmful biochemical agents into the food supply.

FAVOR policies that will sustain long-term soil health, protect biodiversity of seed stocks, and curtail the use of toxic substances and genetically engineered biological products.

FAVOR policies that encourage and support organic farming practices.

URGE the Obama Administration to adopt a wise and coherent policy regarding the distribution and consumption of marijuana, one that respects medical evidence and states' initiatives, and furthermore is cost-effective.

FAVOR the passage of HR 2306 "Ending Federal Marijuana Prohibition Act of 2011", to limit the application of Federal laws to the distribution and consumption of marijuana and the adoption, in the all of the States, of regulations similar to those in the sixteen states where such laws already exist.

6. Immigration to, and Guests of, the United States of America

The United States of America has been shaped fundamentally and positively by immigration. Democrats Abroad, with "temporary visa holders," and "resident workers" (in other countries) prominent among our membership, favor clear, coherent, and fair policies with regard to those who are not citizens of our great country.

DEPLORE the abuse of the J1 visa program by recruiters who seek only low-wage and easily exploited workers, and URGE the Department of State to reform the system to prevent such abuse by employing proper oversight.

FAVOR the development by the Department of State of a fair means to reform the H-1B visa program for skilled professionals, especially following the recent exposure of fraud leading to exploitation of foreign professionals.

FAVOR meeting the needs of U.S. industries for foreign professionals through the expansion of the availability of visas to international students graduating with advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and policies of the Department of State that encourage international students who graduate from U.S. colleges and universities with Ph.Ds. and Master's Degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), to remain in the U.S. by providing them with access to green card permanent resident status.

FAVORS the passage of the StartUp Visa Act, introduced to the U.S. Congress in 2011, which would encourage the development of innovative new businesses by entrepreneurs who may not be American citizens but who want to contribute to the U.S. economy.

FAVORS the revision, by the United States Congress, of the existing H-2A Temporary Foreign Agriculture Worker Program, to meet the requirements of the Agriculture Job Opportunities, Benefits and Security Act (AgJOBS), which was introduced in 2009.

CALL FOR the modification of immigration regulations so that all currently undocumented foreign-born residents of the United States who wish to could take steps to become permanent residents with the possibility of eventually earning citizenship, in particular the DREAM Act. Those steps may require that those interested undocumented workers "get on the right side of the law" by registering and undergoing national security and criminal background checks and by paying any taxes or fines owed.

APPLAUD President Obama's 2012 Executive Order to stop the deportation of young immigrants who contribute to our nation's common good.

FAVOR the establishment of a path to U.S. permanent residency and citizenship, to make it fit for the 21st century, by maximizing transparency, efficiency and clarity, while minimizing the need for further legislation, reliance on concessions outside the rules, inconsistencies, duplications, and gaps in powers in order to address specific cases.

SUPPORT the existing ban on the importation of military-style assault weapons, in part because so many of them later are smuggled to Mexico.

FAVOR background checks for all gun sales by unlicensed dealers and at gun shows, requirements that gun dealers report to AFT the sale of multiple assault rifles to the same person within a five-day period, restrictions on the sale of military style semi-automatic weapons to individuals, and the provision of the ATF with more resources and authority to enforce existing firearm laws,

URGE the Department of Homeland Security, in cooperation with the Government of Mexico, to focus resources on dismantling the operations of 'coyotes' and human traffickers who prey on the vulnerable, and on disrupting drug smuggling from Mexico.

FAVOR policies that direct the Border Patrol to deal with undocumented border crossers humanely, taking all reasonable steps to avoid suffering, indignity and loss of life.

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