

DEMOCRATS ABROAD PLATFORM 2016
FINAL DRAFT FOR VOTE

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PREAMBLE

Democrats Abroad is made up of members from the eight million U.S. citizens who live around the world. We cast absentee ballots wherever Americans vote. Some of us reside abroad permanently, while others plan to return after completing their work, study, overseas adventure or U.S. Government assignments. We mirror the great diversity of American society. We pay taxes where we live and we also file annual income tax returns in the U.S.

We care about fairness in all facets of public policy from tax reporting to the visa application process, to Social Security, to elections, to keeping families together.

We care about the future of our planet, the future of our children, and the quality of life of the elderly. We share the anger, frustration and suffering of our fellow citizens when they don't see politicians and policy makers moving decisively to address economic inequality.

How America resolves its problems affects all who reside abroad. Good solutions to ecological and climate problems are renewable and sustainable. Good solutions are equitable and promote opportunities for all. Good solutions promote peace and security. Good solutions fight corruption.

Our strength as a nation depends on upholding our civic values of fairness, equality and democracy so that we can solve our problems and contribute to a world that offers the benefits of peace and cooperation.

As Democrats Abroad, we stand united to protect the good solutions achieved in the past eight years and to promote good solutions to unsolved problems described below.

I - ISSUES AFFECTING AMERICANS ABROAD

Americans living outside the U.S. face distinctive challenges that should be resolved by the administration and Congress. Democrats Abroad seek constructive solutions to the following:

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

The Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act of 2009 (MOVE) successfully addressed many issues raised over the years by Democrats Abroad. One key element of the MOVE Act requires election officials to report the number of votes received from overseas, but that provision has not been implemented by numerous states.

We:

CALL ON all election officials of the fifty states to implement the provision of the MOVE Act requiring election officials to report the vote of all absentee voters abroad, in order to document an accurate count of overseas votes received and counted in their jurisdictions.

SUPPORT an amendment to the MOVE Act to require election officials at the beginning of each federal election year to send to citizens who reside abroad and who have voted in the previous election, those documents that enable them to register to vote and request a ballot, with the further provision of a single, nationwide online system to re-confirm that they are still living abroad and seek a ballot for the current election cycle.

CALL ON all states and territories to pass the Uniform Law Commission's model statute known as the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act, to simplify absentee ballot requests for U.S. military and overseas civilians and to enfranchise U.S. citizens born overseas who have reached voting age without having resided in the U.S.

CALL FOR the Uniform Law Commission to develop a model statute to align states' voter registration requirements, voter registration deadlines, and ballot request and ballot return deadlines, and to allow the right of all military and overseas voters to vote for all offices and initiatives on the ballot, even if the voter is living abroad indefinitely.

Public Policy-making and Americans Abroad

Americans vote from abroad via their respective state's absentee ballots, and are thus represented within Congress and as individuals. However there is little recognition of overseas Americans as a constituency group with unique and pressing concerns in areas such as taxation, voting, citizenship transmission, family visas and more. In 2007, Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney established the Americans Abroad Caucus, which numbers 25 out of a possible 435 House members. She further sponsors HR3078, a Bill to establish a commission to undertake an in-depth study of these critical issues and report findings to Congress.

We:

URGE members of Congress to recognize and prioritize overseas Americans as an important constituency by joining the Americans Abroad Caucus and becoming co-sponsors of HR 3078 and active advocates of legislation crucial to us.

URGE the Senate to establish a Special Committee on Overseas Americans that would represent our constituency within their chamber, and further move for a Senate Bill parallel to HR3078.

Citizenship Transmission

The right for Americans abroad to transmit their citizenship to their children born abroad is severely restricted and unfair in its application to specific instances. 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 at the time the child obtains U.S. residency.

FAVOR making the above change retroactive to include children 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 the “retention requirements” in the section of the Immigration and Naturalization Act that was repealed in 1978 mandating that U.S. citizens born abroad with only one U.S. citizen parent be present physically and, at some points continuously physically present, in the U.S for a stated length of time (first 5 years then 2 years) between certain ages (first ages 13 and 21 then ages 14 and 28) in order to retain citizenship.

URGE the recognition of the 14th Amendment’s provision of birthright citizenship and designation as “natural born citizens” for all persons born in U.S. territories, including American Samoa, or born overseas to a U.S. citizen parent.

SUPPORT the call for a declaratory judgment by the courts defining “natural born citizen.”

Medicare and Healthcare

Americans abroad can be subjected to higher taxes than their U.S.-based compatriots for services such as Medicare that they are not allowed to access outside of the U.S. This denial of benefits is not only unfair but can cause real hardship for individuals and unnecessarily high costs for the Medicare system and ultimately for the U.S. federal government. In addition, the denial of Medicare coverage may result in the U.S. being put in a competitive disadvantage if it results in highly qualified retirees not taking foreign work or volunteer positions because of a lack of Medicare coverage.

We:

FAVOR extending provisions of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) to allow voluntary access to affordable health care to Americans living and traveling abroad.

FAVOR an amendment to the Medicare law that extends Medicare benefits to all eligible U.S. citizens residing overseas to ensure provision of health care in selected hospitals that meet U.S. medical standards in their country of residence.

FAVOR establishing provisions to allow for compassionate waiver of the Medicare waiting period for vulnerable overseas resident Americans who wish to return to the U.S. but whose need for assisted living or other high levels of care precludes their return.

FAVOR initiating demonstration projects in Mexico to determine the feasibility and cost-savings of providing Medicare benefits to eligible U.S. citizens resident abroad.

FAVOR providing easy to access, affordable, quality medical care for our veterans living overseas who do not have access to regular Veterans Health Administration hospitals and CALL on the Department of Veterans Affairs, Congress, and Obama Administration to

- Improve significantly the provision of health care services for U.S. veterans living abroad and their dependents,
- Permit highly qualified hospitals and medical facilities located abroad to supplement the services provided by VHA health care facilities at low cost, and
- Require each U.S. embassy to assist U.S. veterans and their dependents living abroad by posting a list of qualified consultants available in the embassy host country that can assist veterans in preparing their claims for health care benefits.

FAVOR the amendment of Section 202 (t) of the Social Security Act to permit foreign citizens who are surviving spouses of American citizens and residing in any country, to receive derivative social security benefits in the same manner as any other Surviving Spouse without the requirement of being an American citizen or living in the U.S.

Social Security

Several important laws and regulations relating to U.S. Social Security either unintentionally discriminate against Americans abroad or are simply inequitable.

We:

CALL FOR the repeal of Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the passage of the Social Security Fairness Act, notably as applied to Americans who live abroad. The WEP operates unfairly to confiscate a large part of the hard-earned social security retirement benefits of working Americans who live abroad and threatens to thrust many of them into near poverty.

FAVOR elimination of the provision that now cuts off Supplemental Social Security Income for persons who live outside the U.S. for more than 30 consecutive days.

FAVOR negotiation and implementation of totalization agreements with all countries that have social security programs and where no such agreement is in place.

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. Under the Foreign Work Test the monthly Social Security benefit is withheld for each calendar month that the beneficiary works a) outside the U.S.; b) in work for pay not covered by Social Security; and c) for more than 45 hours.

Taxation

RESIDENCE BASED TAXATION

A long-standing system of Citizenship Based Taxation (CBT) requires U.S. citizens to file annual U.S. tax returns in addition to meeting tax requirements in their countries of residence. With very few and extremely limited exceptions, all other nations apply the

alternative system of Residence Based Taxation (RBT) in which individuals are taxed only on income and for goods and services provided in their countries of residence.

CBT creates unnecessary and unfair costs, stress, and hardship on the estimated 6+ million tax-liable Americans living abroad, some of whom have never resided in the U.S. The complex tax codes of two separate jurisdictions are only partially, and inadequately, addressed by IRS Section 911 Earned Income Exemption and various foreign tax treaties. Duplicated filing requirements impact all income types, and standards are often more stringent for overseas filers than for their domestic counterparts. Competing tax treatments result in double taxation for certain income types.

The adoption of Residence-Based Taxation would recognize the legitimate participation of U.S. citizens in other economies, while not impacting the taxation of their U.S.-sourced income and would provide positive outcomes for the U.S. economy.

We:

URGE the Senate Finance Committee, the House Ways and Means Committee, and relevant U.S. tax bodies to include an in-depth focus on overseas Americans in the ongoing bi-partisan discussion of U.S. tax code reform.

URGE the adoption of Residence-Based Taxation on the foreign-sourced income and assets of U.S. citizens who are bona fide residents of a foreign country.

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

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

- Allow pensions earned from work abroad to qualify as foreign earned income (as was the case prior to 1963);
- Simplify the calculation of the foreign tax credit by allowing individual taxpayers to group all foreign income together;
- Require Americans abroad to pay U.S. income tax only on income derived from U.S. sources;
- Exempt U.S. citizens living abroad who meet physical presence or residency requirements under section 911 from reporting on and paying the Net Investment Income Tax; and
- Provide greater flexibility for non-resident taxpayers for meeting the terms of the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion.

FILING FROM ABROAD

We:

FAVOR maintaining the Foreign Earned Income Exclusion (FEIE), merging it with the Foreign Housing Exclusion, and eliminating the ceiling, as Americans residing abroad are required to pay, and benefit from paying, taxes in their country of residence.

FAVOR elimination of U.S. capital gains tax on the sale of the principal place of residence of non-resident U.S. citizens who are bona fide residents of the country in which the residence is located.

FAVOR elimination of artificial capital gains and losses for tax reporting purposes when no currency has been exchanged by allowing the currency of the country of residence to be the functional currency.

FAVOR an amendment to the Internal Revenue Code to allow foreign income tax credits for Americans residing abroad when calculating Net Investment Income Tax (NIIT).

FAVOR optional provisions for submission of a one-sentence, handwritten or printed declaration – accessible from the IRS website and every U.S. embassy and consulate – accompanied by a tax return or tax assessment from the country of residence for Americans abroad who owe no U.S. federal or state income tax.

FAVOR provision of translated versions of IRS publications and tax forms commonly used by non-resident non-English speaking U.S. citizens to enable them to complete their tax returns.

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

FAVOR taxation of foreign government invalidity, unemployment and social welfare payments to disabled and disadvantaged Americans overseas only by the country of residence making those payments.

TAXATION OF INVESTMENT AND RETIREMENT SAVINGS

We:

FAVOR provision for tax-free transfer of assets from foreign retirement plans deemed as qualified plans by international tax treaty provisions to qualified retirement plans in the U.S. when citizens residing abroad relocate to the U.S. or another foreign country.

FAVOR simplified reporting provisions for foreign long-term savings plans that do not require declaration of income until money is withdrawn from the plan.

FAVOR revision of Passive Foreign Investment Company rules and reporting requirements as they apply to non-U.S. pension plans, foreign mutual funds and other investment savings vehicles for citizens residing abroad to enable them to save for retirement and to promote U.S. international competitiveness in the global economy.

FAVOR implementation of a simplified reporting structure for non-U.S. non-qualified pension plans that would alleviate the need for Form 3520 filings for non-employer-funded pension schemes.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNT REPORTING FOR TAX PURPOSES

We:

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

CALL for the reform of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) through the introduction by the U.S. Treasury and the IRS of a change to the FATCA implementation rules that would exempt from FATCA reporting, by both the U.S. citizen abroad and their financial account provider, the financial accounts of law-abiding overseas resident U.S. citizens in their bona fide country of residence.

CALL for the following reforms to the Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts Report (FBAR):

- Redress the enormous, out of proportion penalties – civil and criminal – imposed by the IRS for non-willfully neglecting to file forms;
- Adjust for inflation the \$10,000 aggregate threshold amount that triggers a FBAR filing requirement, which has not been adjusted since the Bank Secrecy Act was enacted in 1970;
- Eliminate the duplication of information disclosed on the FBAR and FATCA reports;
- Exempt U.S. citizens from reporting foreign financial accounts that are not reportable by financial institutions in their country of residence;
- Address the vulnerability of FBAR data security inherent in electronic filing; and
- Remove the burden imposed on filers who are computer illiterate or with no access to computers by eliminating recently introduced mandatory electronic FBAR reporting.

OTHER TAX MATTERS

We:

FAVOR harmonization of provisions in international tax treaties to align them with the U.S. Model Income Tax Convention of November 15, 2006 as they apply to private pensions, social security benefits, annuities, alimony, child support and pension plans.

APPLAUD the introduction of the Streamline Filing Compliance (Offshore) Procedures, a tax amnesty program introduced in June 2014 for Americans who non-willfully are not compliant with their tax filing and reporting obligations, enabling them to file three years of back tax returns, six years of back Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts Reports, meet any outstanding liabilities to the IRS, and face no civil or criminal fines or charges.

SUPPORT recent efforts by the IRS to remedy its poor level of communications with Americans living abroad but CALL for the re-opening of its overseas offices and the restoration of offshore services lost due to cuts in its funding.

Freedom of Movement

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

We:

FAVOR simplifying and expediting procedures for obtaining U.S. permanent residence and citizenship for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. “Immediate relatives” is defined as the spouse, widow(er), unmarried children under 21, and parents of a U.S. citizen who is 21 or older.

DEPLORE changes to the I-130 procedure for obtaining immigrant visas for immediate relatives, which have severely restricted the filing of I-130 petitions at U.S. embassies and consulates. The restrictions adversely impact a U.S. citizen’s ability to easily and quickly return to the U.S. with his/her immediate relatives, 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, naturalization, and Legal Permanent Residence status retention opportunities for their immediate relatives, without regard for the nature of their employer.

FAVOR providing the immediate relatives 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 ceasing the judicial doctrine of Consular Non-Reviewability/Absolutism in visa matters that allows for the virtually limitless exercise of consular discretion.

APPLAUD President Obama’s November 21, 2014 Presidential Memorandum, “Modernizing and Streamlining the U.S. Immigrant Visa System for the 21st Century,” the dialogue created with stakeholders, the clear-eyed review of the issues, and other actions to fix our broken immigration system.

SUPPORT continuing efforts to create fundamental fairness in the visa system, specifically, reviewing and implementing changes in visa procedures for visa adjudications at U.S. consulates and embassies and at all ports of entry into the U.S. The recommended changes include:

- permitting in-person assistance by U.S. licensed attorneys and Accredited Representatives at U.S. embassies and consulates and U.S. ports of entry;
- increased explanation of the factual and legal basis for visa denials and refusals of entry;
- the standardization and transparency of legal authority, procedure, and guidance in all immigration matters between all agencies involved in the immigration process; and
- the creation of an administrative appeal and review process in visa and U.S. border matters.

FAVOR expanding Section 212(h) of the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow the possibility of a waiver for immigrating immediate relatives of U.S. citizens or Permanent Residents that have convictions for controlled substances. The possibility of a waiver would end the extreme consequences of a permanent bar to immigration for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens who have made a mistake or have a medical issue, and would equalize the treatment of all criminal convictions.

CALL for an amnesty program for foreign nationals who are citizens of the U.S. in name only, with no nexus to the U.S. other than their birth on U.S. soil or birth abroad to a U.S. citizen parent, to allow them to shed their unwanted U.S. citizenship on a no fees, no penalty, and no tax filing or reporting basis.

CALL FOR these safeguards in the implementation of the Fixing America's Surface Transport Act, the highway re-authorization act of 2015, in relation to the provisions that empower the IRS to request that the State Department revoke, or deny the renewal of, the passport of U.S. citizens with a tax debt in excess of \$50,000. The taxpayer will receive

- verified notification of the tax debt;
- an opportunity to appeal the tax decision prior to any denial or revocation of the passport;
- information on his or her rights and the opportunity to remedy the situation prior to the denial or revocation of the passport; and
- the discretion of the State Department to allow retention of the passport in view of the State Department's in-depth knowledge of potentially dangerous in-country events or circumstances that might arise for the individual U.S. citizen from the revocation or denial of a U.S. passport.

SUPPORT regulation requiring banks to reactivate the prior credit rating of Americans returning permanently or temporarily to the U.S. and/or establish a process for repatriating Americans to enable them to build a new credit rating. American citizens living abroad who do not use American credit cards may return to the U.S. to find that their credit rating is zero, which prevents them from leasing a car, purchasing a home, or otherwise re-starting their lives in the U.S.

State Department and 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 or to change hours or services at consular sections.

CALL FOR notice and public consultation for all Department of State changes of local policy, procedure, rules, and reciprocity schedules affecting American citizens and their immediate relatives overseas.

CALL FOR adequate funding of U.S. Citizen Services Sections (USCSS) in American embassies and consulates so that Americans can obtain routine services such as notarizations and passport renewals without advance appointments.

CALL FOR the establishment by the Department of State of an independent USCSS citizen advisory group to confer with USCSS on matters that come under their auspices and CALL FOR online resources that help the USCSS to better fulfill their mission.

CALL FOR recognizing and affirming U.S. Citizens' and U.S. Legal Permanent Residents' right to in-person representation by U.S. licensed attorneys at all U.S. government facilities abroad and U.S. border points of entry just as such representation would be allowed if the person was in the U.S.

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

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 through the U.S. military postal service by military retirees abroad.

II - AMERICAN FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY

We applaud our President for reopening America to the world and the world to America and celebrate the sharp improvement of the world's opinion of the U.S. under the leadership of President Barack Obama and Secretaries of State Hillary Clinton and John Kerry.

A Global Good Neighbor Policy

We:

STRONGLY SUPPORT a U.S. foreign policy that places at its core concerns about respect for human rights, labor rights, and democratic governance through free and fair elections, as a reflection and affirmation of American values.

SUPPORT increased action and engagement in human rights in U.S. bilateral relations with rights abusing governments.

FAVOR considering a country's respect for human rights to any consideration of Military Aid.

FAVOR the Economic Support Fund (ESF) that would support democratic institutions that administer justice, ensure due process, protect human rights, and support economic growth and assistance to improve income opportunities.

APPLAUD President Obama's frequent and meaningful visits to countries and world leaders.

SUPPORT further efforts by the U.S. to publicly support democracies, new and mature alike, through regular high-level engagement and a willingness to stand with them against aggression and intimidation.

SUPPORT the U.S. having a robust voice for the protection of journalists, human rights activists, and lawyers, as well as for the release and protection of prisoners of conscience.

FAVOR expanded U.S. leadership in the realm of developing a clean energy economy and combating pollution. (See also the “Climate Change” section of Section V.)

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 that impedes negotiation with legally elected leaders of countries with which the U.S. has differences.

DEPLORE nativist and jingoistic rhetoric and FAVOR civility in discussion of foreign affairs to model respect for the shared humanity of all the people of the world.

FAVOR U.S. approval of and participation in the International Criminal Court in The Hague. (See also the “International Agreements, Treaties and Obligations” section of Section II.)

FAVOR U.S. participation in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions and SUPPORT military and political intervention, conditional on securing a formal UN mandate.

SUPPORT U.S. leadership in the development of a general international standard on the use of Unmanned Military Vehicles (drones) and other new military technologies.

CALL on the Obama Administration to reverse its shift of arms export control from the Department of State to the Department of Commerce and demand a return of arms export control back to the State Department, which has inherently stronger controls based on studied policy and is less exposed to influence by defense lobbyists.

SUPPORT reconsideration of visa caps and reduction of the immigration backlog. (See also “Refugees, Migrants and Guest Workers” section of Section IV.)

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.

We:

SUPPORT full funding of the State Department, including embassies and consulates (including security measures) and American Citizen Services. (See also the “State Department and Other Government Services and Benefits” section of Section I for planks relating specifically to U.S. Citizen Services.)

URGE the U.S. State Department to protect LGBT residents living abroad from harm through diplomatic and economic pressure.

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 UN, including payment of all dues and assessments.

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 established by the Rome Statute.

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.

SUPPORT the International Criminal Court and URGE the President to sign and the Senate to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

SUPPORT the U.S. joining

- the Forced Labor Convention (CO29), and negotiating its expansion to prohibit forced labor as a civil or criminal penalty;
- the Freedom of Association and Right to Organise Convention (CO87); and
- the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (CO98).

SUPPORT THE U.S. ratifying the UN Conventions on

- the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) (See also the "Asia Pacific" section of Section II.);
- the Rights of the Child (See also the "Child and Family Rights" section of Section IV.);
- the UN Convention on Biological Diversity; and
- The Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (See also the "Women's Issues" section of Section IV.)

Debt

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.

Sanctions

Conditionality as an instrument is club-fisted and prone to hurt the people that the policy is meant to assist.

We:

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. (See also the “Support Free and Fair Trade” section of Section III.)

SUPPORT the use of sanctions and conditionalities in conjunction with international partners in a collaborative, well-planned and considered way that avoids harming the innocent and with specific goals and aims that target wrong-doers, such as human rights abusers and those guilty of genocide.

Foreign Aid

America’s long-term security depends on a world where poverty is eradicated and the innate dignity of individuals is protected. U.S. foreign aid also plays a critical role in securing good will for the U.S. in the global community. 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 democratic values thrive, the global community is more secure and the international economy more robust.

We:

SUPPORT full funding and increased funding of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), non-governmental organizations, and international agencies, including the UN, for programs to eliminate hunger, disease and civil war, to create judicial remedy and reparations to women who have been victims of sexual violence during war, to support infrastructure development, electoral reform, judicial capacity building, education, and more generally to advance the civil and human rights of all citizens.

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, and **OPPOSE** efforts to reinstate barriers to family planning and maternal health care.

RECOGNIZE our moral obligation to continue to help the 10% of the global population living in extreme poverty 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 Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015 and to reach the allocation target of 0.7% of GNP devoted to global poverty reduction.

FAVOR assisting nations that seek funding for civilian uses, social and economic infrastructure development, income generation, democratic reform, institutional strengthening, and human rights improvements, particularly those that apply to women, tackle corruption and target health, climate change, water development, 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.

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

SUPPORT easing remittances to and reducing remittance fees for nations with large numbers of citizens working abroad and remitting funds to support family members back at home. Obstacles to international funds transfers meant to impede terrorist financing are blocking critical financial support to families who are then put under pressure to survive, including selling children to militias or into other types of slavery.

SUPPORT foreign aid that sources food and other aid inputs locally wherever possible.

SUPPORT food aid consistent with local diets and OPPOSE that which causes harm to the local economy or agriculture.

OPPOSE the "Buy American" approach to sourcing foreign aid when it costs more than materials sourced locally or causes harm to the economy of recipient nations.

Control of WMDs and Similar Weaponry

Weapons of mass destruction (WMD) continue to endanger the world, as do cluster bombs, land mines, various types of missiles, and chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear (CBRN) weapons materials. The danger lies not only the possibility that terrorist groups and rogue states obtain such weapons or weapons materials, but also in 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 in 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 and his 2016 speech in Hiroshima.

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

URGE a review of the nuclear missile sites and the nuclear sharing program in which the U.S. is a key player. NATO's nuclear sharing violates Articles I and II of the NPT (Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty), which prohibit the transfer and acceptance, respectively, of direct or indirect control over nuclear weapons.

FAVOR establishment of the International Nuclear Fuel Bank under the International Atomic Energy Agency (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, agreed to by over 100 countries, 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, which began in 2009, of the Mine Ban Treaty.

Supporting Our Military

Democrats Abroad fully supports the men and women of our armed forces whose extraordinary service receives our deepest respect and gratitude. Future initiatives and policy should be closely analyzed and critiqued on its ability to provide security to the U.S. and its interests.

MILITARY POLICY

We:

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 as well as his recommendations to Congress to increase pay and benefits for military.

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

FAVOR a strict restriction on the policy of outsourcing critical security and military functions to private contractors as a default mechanism for conflict and increased funding for outreach, recruitment, training, and retaining of young Americans for our armed forces.

URGE the enforcement of ITAR (International Traffic in Arms Regulations) on U.S. private military contractors, who must first seek the approval of the (DDTC) Directorate of Defense Trade Controls within the State Department before providing military services.

SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS

We:

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 a policy that awards 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.

PROMOTE initiatives of gender equality such as those that have led to opening the Army Infantry, Armor, and Spec Ops Units to women in 2016.

APPLAUD setting an example for wellness and dynamism by allowing active duty members to participate in the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

SUPPORT non-discriminatory appearance codes that suit all troops regardless of race, religion, gender expression, or other innate characteristics.

PRAISE Obama's Administration decision to raise funding for the prevention of sexual assault and harassment within the military and SUPPORT the Military Justice Improvement Act to reform the handling of sexual assault in the military.

SUPPORT a military and civilian interface through efforts towards proactive civilian integration.

Honoring Our Veterans

VETERANS AND TROOPS

We:

FAVOR full healthcare for veterans, their domestic partners, and children and VIEW as a sign of progress in this area Congressional efforts to expand CHAMPVA Children's Care Protection Act of 2015 coverage in bills in both the House and the Senate.

FAVOR facilitating and expediting citizenship for immigrants who have honorably completed their U.S. military service.

APPLAUD the continued success of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill to extend educational benefits to more veterans and active-service members of the military, including the military spouse and family education accessibility, transferability, and support services for military spouse career advancement.

URGE the U.S. Government to discontinue the recognition of undergraduate and graduate degrees granted by some for-profit colleges and universities, in support of President Obama's 2012 Executive Order to stop predatory abuses of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill program.

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

GOVERNMENT POLICY IMPACTING VETERANS

We:

FAVOR permanent statutory funding of the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and OPPOSE all efforts to privatize the Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

FAVOR linking the VHA's future medical requirements to U.S. Military Combatant Commands Contingency Plans.

APPLAUD extensions to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act by the Tax Increase Prevention Act of 2014, allowing the continuation of extra funding to the VHA to strengthen and expand its network of medical centers, state-supported nursing homes, and national cemeteries.

SUPPORT increased funding to the VHA, particularly for mental health care for returning soldiers and SUPPORT continued efforts to address veteran homelessness, unemployment, and mental illness.

APPLAUD the initiative of the Obama White House in collaboration with the DVA and the Department of Labor in continuing the Veterans Employment Center, Job Bank, and National Resource Directory.

DEPLORE the suppression of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act and also the VRAP (Veterans Retraining Assistance Program).

URGE the U.S. Congress to refrain from sequestering funds from the budget of the DVA, which led to the shutdown of military cemeteries throughout the world in 2013.

DEPLORE the neglect of thousands of veterans who helped clean up nuclear test sites in the Marshall Islands between 1977 and 1980, 35% of whom now suffer cancer from their exposure to radiation, URGE Congress to support the efforts of Congressmen Al Franken, Mark Takai, Ted Lieu, Brad Ashford, Mark Takano, and Mark Pocan to have them recognized as "Atomic Veterans" and CALL FOR the DVA to provide them and all veterans exposed to

radiation during their military service with the quality health care and the compensation they deserve.

The U.S. and the Middle East Regional Conflict

The Middle East and North Africa are in turmoil today, much of which results from the disastrous prosecution of the war in Iraq. The development of Daesh (ISIS/ISIL) is a direct result of Bush-Cheney actions. Despite continued obstruction from the GOP in Congress, President Obama has made substantial progress with the Nuclear Agreement with Iran. The next president will face many complex problems in ending the war in Syria, finally bringing peace between Israel and Palestine, improving economic conditions throughout the region, and bringing governance to Libya, South Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan.

We:

APPLAUD President Obama's persistence, in conjunction with our allies, in achieving the Nuclear Agreement with Iran.

APPLAUD President Obama's foresight and strength to keep American troops out of the war in Syria and to end the war in Iraq.

FAVOR the continued U.S. leadership in bringing peace to Syria, South Sudan, Libya, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia.

DEPLORE the efforts by Republican members of Congress, including former Speaker John Boehner, to undermine President Obama's efforts to reach an accommodation with Iran by inviting the leader of Israel to speak to a joint session of Congress without coordination with the White House.

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 U.S. remaining engaged as an honest, independent 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 pressing both parties to adhere to international law.

Latin America

We:

OPPOSE the proposal to erect a wall along the border between the U.S. and Mexico.

FAVOR strongly encouraging the U.S. government to implement a policy of not intervening in the politics of any Latin America country unless said country has committed hostile acts against the U.S.

FAVOR the re-examination of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) treaties and the renegotiation or amendments thereto. (See also the "Supporting Free and Fair Trade" section of Section III.)

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.

APPLAUD President Obama for his commitment, announced during his visit to Argentina on the 40th anniversary of the military coup, to declassify additional American military and intelligence records related to the suppression of human rights and for recognizing the "incredible heroism and courage of those who stood up against these human rights violations" and expressing his hope that this gesture will help to rebuild trust between the U.S. and Argentina.

Applaud President Obama's Alliance for Prosperity Plan in the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) directed at correcting structural issues such as poverty and violence that have led to the mass flight of unaccompanied children to the United States, especially to the extent that the effort centers on demanding transparency and strengthening institutions in the region and seeks commitment and accountability from Northern Triangle governments to see that the situation actually improves.

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. (See also the "Voter Suppression" section of Section III.)

FAVOR creating procedures that make border crossings by U.S. citizens coming from Canada or Mexico less complicated and time consuming.

FAVOR strong enforcement of existing laws pertaining to the exportation of firearms to all Latin America countries.

DEPLORE U.S. immigration initiatives forcing the deportation of thousands of young men steeped in U.S. street gang culture to their Central American nations of origin and resulting in the exportation of violent, antisocial, U.S. street gang culture. CALL FOR the U.S. to adequately fund a robust, multi-faceted program to provide these nations with support to overcome gang dominance in communities.

FAVOR the legalization of soft drugs throughout the United States, in order to facilitate the end of a costly war on drugs that has cost thousands of lives, not only in the United States but also in many other countries.

CUBA

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

APPLAUD President Obama's normalizing relations with Cuba, and CALL FOR the 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 making changes to the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) and Department of Commerce regulations governing exports to Cuba and imports from Cuba.

FAVOR directing the Attorney General to end preferential treatment for Cuban migrants arriving at U.S. borders, ordering the same field interview for asylum eligibility determinations that Central Americans and other migrants receive.

SUPPORT the U.S. extending its current Cuban immigration policy to cover other Caribbean and Central American nations.

Africa

We:

APPLAUD President Obama's efforts at reaching out to the people of the African continent.

FAVOR U.S. policies in Africa which strengthen democratic institutions; support African economic growth and development; advance peace and security; and promote opportunity and development.

FAVOR continued support of democratic and transparent elections, judicial capacity building, civil society, health infrastructure, education, women's rights, and more generally human rights of all citizens of African countries.

SUPPORT restoration of democracy in Uganda and Burundi and FAVOR the U. S. taking a stronger stance with the use of sanctions, cessation of military aid and other non-military supports against regimes that do not support democracy, human rights and the rule of law
APPLAUD eradication of the guinea worm and SUPPORT increased investment in eradication of tropical diseases, like malaria.

FAVOR aid to Africa, as determined by the local communities, that builds infrastructure, such as health and education, will reduce poverty and will strengthen democratic institutions in civil society, particularly an independent press, a free internet and an independent judiciary.

SUPPORT all initiatives that favor local agricultural and small industry development including regulation to prevent multinational enterprises from dominating African economies.

APPLAUD the Paris COP 21, recognizing the current tragedy of climate change in Africa among other locations abroad.

Asia Pacific

The Asia Pacific (AP) region has significant trade, human rights, and security challenges and plays a huge role in the U.S. economy as both a market for U.S. products and services and as home to key partners in manufacturing, assembly, and research efforts.

We:

APPLAUD and SUPPORT President Obama's "Pivot to Asia" policy advancing U.S. engagement with the AP region premised on a desire for a peaceful, stable and economically prosperous region — a vision shared with U.S. AP partners. It has started to restore some diplomatic and security balance to a region neglected by the George W. Bush administration.

SUPPORT the U.S.'s lasting commitment to cultivate an open, fair, stable and predictable political, economic, and security operating environment across the vast expanse of the AP region.

SUPPORT active commitment and further cooperation between U.S. and AP countries in building and sustaining this effort on all fronts, so that all AP countries play their part in finding and implementing solutions to shared regional and global challenges, from the proliferation of dangerous weapons to the impacts of climate change.

SUPPORT that the U.S., as a Pacific nation and resident power, has a national interest in the maintenance of peace and stability, respect for international law, freedom of navigation, and unimpeded lawful commerce in the South China Sea.

FAVOR the peaceful and non-coercive resolution of disputes over sovereignty and borders in the East China Sea and South China Sea through internationally recognized dispute resolution mechanisms.

AFFIRM that international law (including the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea) should be followed in adjudging disputes between various countries in the region, and, in all cases, that the U.S. should uphold an international law approach to continued disputes between parties with interests in the AP region.

SUPPORT that the nations of the region should work collaboratively and diplomatically to resolve disputes without coercion, without intimidation, without threats, and without the use of force, ensuring that the rule of law – not coercion and force – dictates the maritime future of the AP and protects the stable economic order of the region.

SUPPORT further U.S. efforts to use bilateral and multilateral efforts within the AP region to

- reduce hostilities in the region, on land, in the sea, and in the air while providing a strong deterrent force against aggression to back the security needs of our many allies in the region;
- cooperatively address terrorism issues;
- stop, reduce, and prevent human rights abuses;
- promote and strengthen democratic reforms, greater transparency, and the rule of law;
- strengthen efforts to roll back greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the effects of sea level rise; and
- take affirmative steps to reduce ocean pollution.

APPLAUD and SUPPORT the U.S.-China Joint Presidential Statement on Climate Change, including bilateral actions being taken respectively and cooperatively in the U.S. and China, the two largest carbon emitting countries in the world, such as:

- by the U.S. implementing the Clean Power Plan to reduce CO₂ from the power sector by 32% below 2005 levels by 2030;

- to finalize next-stage fuel efficiency standards for heavy vehicles; to cut methane emissions from oil and gas by 40 to 45% from 2012 levels by 2025; and to cooperate on mobilizing climate finance mechanisms to support low-carbon, climate-resilient development in developing countries; and
- to otherwise deepen bilateral cooperation on climate change.

APPLAUD and SUPPORT the U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Cooperation, which will further the achievement of ambitious climate and clean energy goals in the U.S. and India, such as by:

- enhancing bilateral climate change cooperation;
- cooperating on hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) reduction;
- accelerating clean energy finance; and
- expanding the Partnership to Advance Clean Energy Research (PACE-R).

FAVOR U.S. policies which encourage greater transparency in China's foreign aid assistance to Africa, and encourage China's cooperation with other major bilateral and multilateral actors to ensure that aid agreements support the efforts of responsible African governments to be responsive to the needs of the African people.

Terrorism

Terrorism is a worldwide scourge, and attacks upon the U.S. must have a vigorous and unrelenting response. While recognizing this threat, the U.S. should not use terrorism as a cover for aggression and curtailment of civil liberties.

We:

FAVOR the continued efforts by the U.S. and its allies to combat the radical extremists that continue to disrupt legitimate governments in Syria (Daesh), Somalia (Shebab), Nigeria (Boko Haram), and Afghanistan (Taliban).

FAVOR U.S. actions against terrorism that use “soft power” where possible to gain the support of citizens and nations around the world for efforts to address conditions that lead to Islamist radicalisation.

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

APPLAUD President Obama's efforts to close the military detention facility at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

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

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

DEPLORE irresponsible rhetoric that seems to exclusively link the words “Middle East” and “Islam” with “terrorism.” Unrelated U.S. domestic terrorism is also a major concern; terrorism originates in many non-Arab and non-Muslim contexts, and this linkage obscures the role of many progressive actors in the Middle East and Muslim world more generally.

DEPLORE the anti-Muslim rhetoric from GOP presidential candidates — and attempts to equate American citizens who are Muslims with terrorists — as un-American and serving as a propaganda tool for Islamists around the world.

URGE the U.S. Government to publicly release the entire 9/11 commission report that discloses the financial supporters of Islamist terrorism against the U.S.

FAVOR active U.S. support for resettlement, inclusion, and integration of immigrants and refugees, especially from war-torn countries, to increase global stability, security, and welfare while reducing the breeding ground for Islamist radicalization.

III - AMERICAN DOMESTIC ISSUES

We applaud the Obama administration’s accomplishments and encourage greater efforts to ensure equality of opportunity through support for public education.

Education

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:

SUPPORT strengthening quality public education for all young people in the U.S. based on enduring American values and internationally recognized best practices.

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.

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 have quality construction and are 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 into play.

FAVOR Internet access and training in new computer-based technologies in all public schools, to allow students from all backgrounds 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 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 inclusion and strengthening of civics education so that students are well prepared to exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

FAVOR the expansion of high school counseling services to provide students with information about filling out applications for college, university, and vocational programs and applying for and securing financial aid for which they are qualified.

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.

OPPOSE ineffective "choice" measures such as school vouchers, tax-credit programs, and semipublic 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.

HIGHER EDUCATION

APPLAUD President Obama's efforts to provide more federal funding for higher education and his support of community colleges and FAVOR further action be taken to improve equal access to all forms of tertiary education and to reduce the cost of higher education and the burden of high interest student debt.

FAVOR making public colleges and universities tuition free.

SUPPORT the exploration of opportunities for students in higher education to volunteer in their communities or work in government agencies for a period of time in return for free or greatly reduced tuition.

OPPOSE the increasing use of adjuncts as college faculty.

Arts and Sciences

FAVOR increased funding for music education in primary and secondary schools. Exposure to music has been shown to increase brain activity, stimulating parts of the brain not otherwise stimulated by other activities.

FAVOR increased support and publicity to the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Exposure to the arts and humanities has been shown to have a strong positive effect on all students, but especially those in lower income and disadvantaged communities.

FAVOR increased funding for U.S. State Department programs in American art and culture around the world, including tours of orchestras to promote classic, non-commercial American music, introducing people of other cultures to the best of what we have to offer.

FAVOR increased funding for the National Endowment for the Arts to support artistic endeavor as an essential element of American culture.

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

SUPPORT maintaining (adjusted for inflation) or increasing the current amount of funding for America's space program and the cultural, scientific, educational, economic, and national security benefits it provides, with the goal of crewed missions to Mars being the primary objective.

FAVOR increased funding for the National Science Foundation and additional grants and tax credits for universities and businesses for specialized training programs. These programs, in particular the National Science Foundation funding programs, have a substantial impact on the formation of scientific thinking and research of students at all educational levels and have contributed immeasurably to advances in all fields of science, engineering, and mathematics.

The Economy

As Democrats we believe the federal government has a duty to manage the economy towards full employment while protecting and enhancing the public good, including the maintenance of reasonable price stability. The federal government should

- manage the budget in a fiscally prudent manner;
- preserve and improve our country's material infrastructure upon which our lives and our economy depend; and
- provide the means essential for every citizen to pursue opportunities for lifelong success and happiness.

The federal government must also

- require corporations to operate ethically and pay their fair share of taxes; and
- respect the longstanding commitments of our country to free and fair trade and provide regulatory oversight to avoid financial crisis.

MANAGING THE NATION'S BUDGET

President Obama repeatedly offered sensible compromises and innovative programs to cynically obstructionist Republican members of Congress.

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.

SUPPORT efforts to develop a fairer, more progressive system of personal income taxation, including support for a "Buffett tax" that would set minimum tax rates for the wealthiest Americans and eliminate the Bush tax cuts for the highest income earners.

APPLAUD President Obama's proposal to increase the capital gains tax rate to 28%, which was about the rate during the Reagan administration.

URGE Congress to consider eliminating special capital gains tax treatment altogether. We urge U.S. tax policy makers to adopt the principle that a buck is a buck whether it is earned by an honest day's labor or by the clipping of bond or stock coupons. This is especially important given the prevalence of the shareholder value movement and high frequency trading, which all too often harm rather than help increase employment opportunities and the economy generally.

URGE the adoption of a cap on deductions for the extremely wealthy so that they are prevented from paying little or no income tax on very high gross incomes.

APPLAUD President Obama's reasonable and economically sound proposals that will 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.

APPLAUD President Obama's support for a new Customer Due Diligence rule that will require banks to collect the names of customers opening accounts in the names of anonymous shell companies for the purpose of thwarting tax evasion.

APPLAUD the IRS's newly published Inversions and Related Transactions rules and legislation that imposes an "exit tax" on expatriating companies, to contain 1) transactions structured to avoid taxation by moving a company's tax home into a foreign country through a domestic parent or larger company being absorbed by a foreign subsidiary or merger partner and 2) certain post-inversion U.S. tax avoidance mechanisms.

FAVOR reforms closing the loopholes in laws meant to limit CEO pay so that no forms of performance-based pay are tax deductible.

FAVOR reforms closing corporate tax loopholes which drain the nation's budget and provide no business incentives for protecting people or the environment.

FAVOR the introduction of a Financial Transactions Tax, also known as Robin Hood Tax, a small tax on all sales of securities to raise much needed federal revenue and to curb speculative short term and high frequency trading that can endanger share market stability.

MAINTAINING THE NATION'S INFRASTRUCTURE

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, water supplies, and housing stock, are vital to our economic well-being and urgently require renovation.

We:

APPLAUD the passage in 2015 of the FAST Act ("Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act"), the first law enacted in over ten years that provides long-term funding certainty for surface transportation, meaning States and local governments can move forward with critical transportation projects. (See also the "Freedom of Movement" section of Section I.)

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 attracting road and air travelers to travel by train.

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 intended for these purposes.

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, to improve energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

FAVOR creating a nationwide infrastructure development and rehabilitation program to repair the nation's public roads, rails, bridges, sewers, schools, health, recreational, and other infrastructure, to restore public assets and create jobs.

FAVOR requiring that all infrastructure programs prioritize public and mass transportation in areas that are economically disadvantaged, employ workers displaced from fossil fuel industries and industries adversely impacted by trade agreements, and meet long-term environmental sustainability goals.

ENSURING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

At the height of Recession of 2007-2010, nearly 50 million Americans were living in poverty. Despite progress since, about one quarter of African American and Hispanic Americans lived in poverty in 2014 and one in five children live in poverty. The reduction of poverty,

economic inequality, unemployment, and underemployment must be high priorities for the next presidential administration and Congress.

We:

FAVOR the passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2015, to help close the gap between women and men.

FAVOR raising the basic federal minimum to \$15/hour by 2020 and indexing the federal minimum wage to inflation.

FAVOR the passage of a Basic Income Act, which would provide a minimum guaranteed income level to unemployed and underemployed men and women who are forced out of the labor force, due to job availability and/or life circumstances, and guarantee a basic level of economic dignity.

FAVOR resources to ensure that no child lives below the poverty line and to ensure adequate child support for single-parent families, including childcare from properly trained 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.

OPPOSE all forms of sexual and gender harassment in the workplace.

OPPOSE the hiring of workers in place of lawful strikers and all attempts by employers to reduce or deny overtime pay or other benefits to workers who are in negotiations concerning their terms and conditions of employment.

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.

SUPPORT federally funded job training and job-creation schemes for workers of all ages to protect them from the rise of the automated work place in a globalised economy and to strengthen the national labor force with employment re-training as it attempts to meet the challenges of globalization and emerging new markets for goods, services, and labor. Measures should include

- investing in job re-training and educational opportunities to ensure that well-paying jobs are filled by skilled American workers;
- targeting communities facing chronically high unemployment and hardship due to closures of factories and other business enterprises; and
- Federal Trade Adjustment Assistance, a program that provides opportunities for employees whose jobs are lost when facilities move from the U.S to foreign locations.

APPLAUD the recent judicial decision in Wisconsin that ruled legislation to eliminate workers' rights through such anti-democratic means as undermining collective bargaining for unions is unconstitutional.

SUPPORT continuing the effort to overturn and prevent legislation that deters the rights of workers through anti-democratic means.

SUPPORT efforts to ensure future generations will be afforded the opportunity to invest in their retirements and that Social Security and pensions will continue to safeguard the retirements of employees well into the future.

SUPPORT granting carefully targeted, developmental incentives by state governments and the federal government to manufacturing companies that agree to redirect company investments (physical and material) to the U.S. 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. (See also the “Climate Change” section of Section V.)

FAVOR the passage of legislation to support community institutions like quality child care, libraries, parks, athletic leagues, and youth organizations, creating full and part-time employment for youth and adults in communities where social capital and community bonds have withered away due to economic decline.

SUPPORT efforts to end residential racial and socioeconomic segregation, which isolates low-income households and perpetuates a cycle of poverty, and promote residential racial and socioeconomic integration, particularly the Moving to Opportunity Model, which strongly influences upward mobility in a given community.

SUPPORT closing the carried-interest loophole in the U.S. tax code that currently allows for significant rate differentials between capital gains and ordinary income, thus enabling private equity firm managers to benefit from a favorable tax rate denied to the vast majority of ordinary American workers who pay a higher rate on their earned income.

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

STRENGTHENING CORPORATE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Some American businesses increasingly limit and/or deny their corporate responsibilities to employees, workers, shareholders, the nation’s taxpayers, local communities, and communities abroad.

We:

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 the separation of commercial and investment banking in U.S. financial institutions.

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

SUPPORT the Stop Corporate Inversions Act, which would make it more difficult for large U.S. companies to merge with foreign companies for the purpose of shifting their corporate headquarters overseas and avoiding U.S. corporate taxes. (See also the “Managing the Nation’s Budget” section of Section III.)

SUPPORT changes to Treasury rules in order to block companies from shifting profits earned in the U.S. to their overseas partners by taking out huge loans from their foreign parent company and then claiming a tax deduction for interest on the loans.

DEPLORE accounting gimmickry, including but not limited to “trade mispricing,” that enables U.S. companies to shift profits into offshore companies registered in low-tax or no-tax jurisdictions (tax havens).

SUPPORT legislative and regulatory initiatives, such as Country-by-Country Reporting (CBCR), that require international corporations to assume and honor their tax obligations in the countries from which they derive their profits and in which they benefit from taxpayer expenditures on all aspects of the nation’s life. CBCR is a mandatory corporate disclosure regime that exposes the corporation’s revenues, profits, taxes and employees in each jurisdiction where it operates, providing an understanding of a company’s operations in a specific country and facilitating further investigation where irregularities are spotted.

APPLAUD the U.S. Treasury’s introduction of regulations for how multinational enterprises will report income generated and taxes paid in each jurisdiction of operation to ensure that corporate profits are reported (and, ultimately, taxes are paid) where economic activities are carried out and value is created.

DEPLORE influence peddling, nepotism, conflicts of interest, and other forms of non-transparent business practice and the damaging influence of corporate lobbyists in blocking reforms to stop corporate inversion mergers, curb the use of tax havens, and tax overseas corporate earnings.

APPLAUD the Obama Administration’s implementation of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, a program in which oil, mining, and gas companies disclose what they have paid local, state, and federal governments in tax and other payments for the extraction of natural resources, while governments disclose what they have received, for the purpose of promoting open and accountable exploitation of natural resources and avoiding corruption and conflict.

SUPPORT focus by the Justice Department on prosecuting the individuals who commit and enable corporate crimes rather than the corporations employing them so that those individuals who are responsible pay the price, rather than the workers of the company.

SUPPORT the Stop Tax Haven Abuse Act to tighten offshore tax rules and enforcement and therefore significantly curb rampant tax avoidance by many multinational corporations and generate an estimated \$278 billion over the next decade in much-needed revenue.

SUPPORT the expansion of funding and authority to the IRS to pursue companies and wealthy individuals evading tax by hiding assessable earnings in offshore accounts.

SUPPORT the Incorporation Transparency and Law Enforcement Assistance Act, which requires U.S. Department of Treasury and states to collect, maintain, and update beneficial ownership information on legal entities to fight shell company anonymity that facilitates domestic and foreign corruption and other criminal activity by allowing individuals to hide their identities and their illicit assets behind the façade of a U.S. corporation and FURTHER SUPPORT listing the information in publicly available central registers to eliminate the secrecy that facilitates fraud, money laundering, and tax evasion.

SUPPORT the break-up of large, “too big to fail” financial institutions that put the nation's economy at risk.

SUPPORT corporate whistleblower protections as, without leaks and whistleblowers, even governments only see a small window into the inner workings of companies, which makes proving fraud, tax evasion and other forms of illegality nearly impossible.

SUPPORT sanctions for companies that fail to remove child and forced labor from the global supply chain and FAVOR holding U.S. companies profiting from child or forced labor legally culpable and requiring treble compensation of back wages to victims.

SUPPORT sanctions against U.S. companies

- that shift production lines and other types of investments overseas to evade fair, reasonable and safe standards of employment; and
- whose overseas operations violate U.S. standards for human rights, civil liberties, indigenous rights to self-determination, gender rights, labor rights, environmental protection or ensuring public health and well-being.

SUPPORTING FREE AND FAIR TRADE

The U.S. has long been committed to the ideals of free and fair trade as a means to stimulate worldwide economic growth and improve production and consumption of goods domestically and in foreign lands. Democrats Abroad is sensitive to the appeal that trade barriers and other restrictions on free trade might stem the short-term loss of jobs at home but also recognizes that protectionist measures often cause consumer prices for goods and services to rise substantially and also dampen and preclude job gains.

We:

APPLAUD the fact that Democratic Presidents of the U.S. from the 1800s to Barack Obama have negotiated trade agreements with other nations, including the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which substantially reduced tariffs after World War II and led to the foundation of the World Trade Organization (WTO);

FAVOR trade agreements that promote the well-being and interests of American workers and take into account our shared environment and our commitment to a livable world for future generations and CALL FOR any measures to increase taking these criteria into account given the support for them voiced by the Democratic Party, President Obama, and many members of Congress.

FAVOR transparent negotiations of all future international trade agreements.

FAVOR trade agreements that encourage adoption of labor, human rights and environmental protection best practices.

FAVOR sanctions against U.S. companies shifting production lines, and other types of investments overseas to evade fair, reasonable and safe standards of employment and which do not respect the human, civil, and gender rights of employees and neighboring communities. (See also the “Strengthen Corporate Transparency and Accountability” section of Section III.)

FAVOR a federally-funded review of CAFTA and NAFTA’s impacts on manufacturing in the U.S. and overall employment and support efforts to dismantle or renegotiate areas of the agreement that harm workers in the signatory countries. This review would identify competitive and uncompetitive industries along with commercial trends, including patterns in capital investment, debt, outsourcing of work to other countries, and re-exporting of goods.

SUPPORT legal and economic incentives to increase export opportunities for small- and medium-sized U.S. businesses in order to stimulate (i) their economic growth, (ii) the employment of more workers in well-paying jobs, and (iii) their social responsibility in matters of labor rights and fair trade.

FAVOR ongoing attempts by the federal government in the area of foreign trade to insure stronger and more effective protection of intellectual property rights, labor rights, broad ecommerce access, net neutrality, and responsible foreign investment, especially in nations that do not respect these rights.

FAVOR multilateral trade agreements, such as TTIP, CETA and TPP, if they

- support and endorse democratic processes;
- enable the signatory nations to enforce existing and pass new laws to protect human rights, civil liberties, the environment, indigenous rights, gender rights, labor rights, and public health; and
- do not primarily benefit large international corporations to the detriment of small start-ups and local businesses.

FAVOR the inclusion of investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms in free trade agreements entered into with other nations if they

- afford robust due process protections to the citizens of the contracting states that make those investments;
- provide for prompt and equitable resolution of the disputes between foreign investors and contracting states;
- impose sanctions, including monetary sanctions, against litigants who assert frivolous claims or defenses in these proceedings;

- prohibit cases that seek to overturn regulations protecting community health and safety, the environment, labor rights, civil liberties, human rights, gender rights, and indigenous rights; and
- require full and complete public access to documents, hearings, and all proceedings between foreign investors and contracting states.

FAVOR respecting the rules and regulations of the WTO, including those that prohibit trade discrimination in all of its forms.

OPPOSE the imposition of new trade barriers, increased tariffs on goods and services, and other price- and trade-distorting measures, while at the same time recognizing and respecting the human rights, civil rights, labor rights, indigenous rights, gender rights, and the rights of foreign laborers.

URGE the expansion of redistributive programs such as Trade Adjustment Assistance so that all Americans can receive their fair share of the gains from trade.

CALL ON the next President to staff the U.S. Trade Representative with economists, not corporate lobbyists.

FAVOR requiring trade agreements to strengthen ILO enforcement mechanisms and be negotiated in consultation with local labor organizations.

FAVOR requiring all regulatory harmonization in trade agreements to be done in consultation with public health experts, consumer advocates, and disinterested advocates for public welfare.

FAVOR requiring all trade agreements to empower and respect the rights of indigenous people and include reparations for past harms to indigenous people caused by previous trade agreements.

DEPLORE trade agreements that advance rent-seeking.

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 U.S. is duty-bound to continue its progress towards what every other advanced industrial nation has achieved.

We:

FAVOR the provision of universal health care coverage for every American man, woman, and child, wherever they live, and consideration of a single payer "public option" for health care coverage to reduce costs and broaden the choices of health insurance coverage for every American.

CELEBRATE that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has permitted nearly 20 million Americans to enjoy health care coverage and URGE the states to fully implement the ACA, including the

expansion of Medicaid to permit citizens everywhere in the U.S. to benefit from adequate health care at little cost to the states.

APPLAUD President Obama's January 2016 veto of legislation passed by Congressional Republicans that would have repealed the ACA and denied federal funding to Planned Parenthood. (See also the "Women's Issues" section of Section IV.)

OPPOSE the attempts of state governors, corporate-funded lobbyists, and doctrinaire legislators to halt or radically change the structure and implementation of the ACA by drastic measures not in the interest of ordinary Americans.

FAVOR Federal healthcare coverage for contraception, sex education, and pre- as well as post-natal care and DEPLORE recent attempts in Congress to reduce coverage for such care by holding hostage unrelated and sensible programs, such as college tuition assistance. (See also the "Women's Issues" section of Section IV.)

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

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

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, by restricting 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 guaranteeing robust legal protection of patients' rights to confidentiality in relation to medical treatment, health status, and genetic predisposition.

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 the expansion of research and services to persons affected by autism.

FAVOR Federal funding of stem-cell research.

Electoral and Legal Systems

ELECTIONS AND REPRESENTATION

Campaign Finance

Free, fair and verifiable elections are necessary for a vibrant and truly representative democracy. Since the Supreme Court's erroneous 5-4 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* in 2012 – based on the flawed notion of Corporate Personhood – eliminated decades of campaign finance regulation, American citizens have become concerned that the democratic basis of the U.S. government is threatened by the influence on campaigns of massive amounts of money, much of it from special interests and much of it undisclosed. 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.

We:

DEPLORE the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and FAVOR overturning it by any legal means, including supporting a new challenge to the Supreme Court and ratifying an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to

- clarify that corporations are not entitled to the constitutional rights of natural people;
- reinstate limits on corporate campaign spending; and
- require disclosure of campaign donors.

FAVOR comprehensive campaign reform, including limits on the length of campaigns, public financing, and free access to public airways.

Voter Suppression

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:

FAVOR an amendment to the Constitution to guarantee the right of a U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older, to vote and the enactment of legislation that educates Americans about the need for this amendment and the importance of voting.

URGE the passing of legislation to restore overturned provisions of and strengthen the Voter Rights Act.

URGE Congress to pass legislation to make voter registration automatic for all when they reach the age of 18 and strengthen voting rights, and in the meantime SUPPORT motor voter laws and electronic/online voter registration and URGE legislation that

- reinstates voting rights to felons who have completed their sentences;
- provides all voters with cost-free identification documents valid in all states and for all elections;

- requires 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; and
- makes Election Day a national holiday, at least in every Federal election year (even-numbered years).

CALL for the Uniform Law Commission to create a model statute that brings states' voter registration requirements and timetables into alignment for the purpose of fighting state-based voter suppression initiatives.

APPLAUD the appointment in January 2015 of a third Commissioner to the Electoral Assistance Commission (EAC), enabling the Commission to have the quorum it needs to fulfill its mission of implementing the Help America Vote Act.

SUPPORT the work of the EAC and the Federal Voter Assistance Program in collaboration with the U.S. Postal Service to resolve problems related to postal ballot delivery, return, and postmarking that have particularly disenfranchised military and overseas voters.

FAVOR national requirements for state-wide, computerized databases of registered voters compliant with the uniform data security standards applied by federal regulatory agencies, which can be subjected to testing and independent audit under Election Day conditions prior to Election Day, and that include paper backup of these electronic databases.

FAVOR expansion of days and times for voting.

FAVOR efforts to certify that polling places are accessible for Americans with disabilities and supportive of the enfranchisement of Native Americans, migrants, and other groups that have traditionally been marginalized.

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

SUPPORT the enfranchisement of the more than four million Americans living in the U.S. territories – Puerto Rico, American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and Northern Marianas Islands – in the General Election of the President of the U.S.

SUPPORT the ongoing work to make voting for Congressional representation available as a democratically chosen possibility for Americans living in U.S. territories. (See also the “Good Governance” section of Section III.)

Election Integrity

FAVOR the National Popular Vote Compact to abolish the Electoral College and to allow the direct election of the president and vice president.

URGE the DNC and the State Democratic Parties to review and debate abolishing superdelegates in the Democratic Party.

CALL FOR the Democratic National Committee to review and debate guidelines, to be adhered to by all state Democratic parties, that would require an open caucus or open primary in every state, with adequate polling locations for the population of that state.

CALL FOR the Democratic National Committee to review and debate the elimination of all caucuses in favor of presidential primaries. Caucuses may appeal to a severely limited number of voters, be essentially undemocratic, and be subject to manipulation by interest groups and small segments of the voting age population.

FAVOR legislation mandating transparent, statistically based, verifiable federal election audits.

DEPLORE political gerrymandering and APPEAL to states to put a stop to this practice, SUPPORT the principle that the responsibility for defining constituency boundaries should be established by non-partisan methods, and SUPPORT a constitutional amendment to protect the rights of citizens from political gerrymanders that result in a minority of voters electing a majority of representatives to the House of Representatives.

FAVOR more delegate positions for Democrats Abroad at the Democratic National Convention and the awarding of one full vote for each delegate, taking into consideration our 2016 Global Presidential Primary results.

CALL FOR the implementation of an electronic voting system that meets the requirements for data security and integrity as set out in uniform data security standards that have been tested, independently audited, validated, and are in common use by federal regulatory agencies and that are subject to independent security audits before and after election day(s).

CALL FOR a secure online voting system that is available to all registered voters, or until then SUPPORT research into the adoption of universal vote by mail/postal ballot.

DEPLORE all regulations and practices that suppress voter participation and SUPPORT the enforcement of laws aimed at ending campaign finance violations, voting machine and polling place irregularities.

Democracy and Good Government

URGE the U.S. Senate to reform the Senate Standing Rules, including the rule for unanimous consent, to prevent obstruction of consideration of important legislation, thus limiting or inhibiting the functioning of government agencies, sections of the government, businesses and individual citizens.

SUPPORT Supreme Court Justices being subject to the same rules as all lower court justices, concerning ethics and conflicts of interest.

SUPPORT federal, state and local government employee whistleblower protections for those reporting illegality and misconduct.

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

DEPLORE the Insular Cases that ruled that full constitutional rights do not automatically extend to places under American control and STAND in solidarity with our fellow Americans

residing in U.S. territories to promote fair representation, voting rights and equal treatment under U.S. law for citizens in every U.S. state and territory and all over the world.

SUPPORT reasonable term limits for members of both houses of Congress for the purpose of bringing representatives closer to the concerns of American citizens. Congress has become an aristocracy that votes for its own salaries, guarantees its own healthcare cover and can be lead by campaign fundraising needs to act against the public interest.

DEPLORE the refusal of Senate Republicans to consider the President's nominee to fill the vacancy on the Supreme Court created by the death of Justice Antonin Scalia obstructing the Court's ability to issue decisions and make progress on important issues such as these currently before the court: immigration reform; regulation of health centers performing abortions; when political favors are public corruption; and gun ownership rights for domestic violence convicts.

SUPPORT strengthening tribal sovereignty, which was abrogated in the Dollar General case, which removed all jurisdiction over non-Indians on Indian lands, giving perpetrators and corporate bad actors an exemption for crimes they commit on Indian lands.

LOBBYISTS

As of 2009 roughly 13,000 registered lobbyists worked in Washington, D.C. and spent nearly \$3.5 billion annually on lobbying.

We:

DEPLORE anti-democratic influence of enormous and obscene and secret amounts of money thrown at office-seekers in order to gain influence.

SUPPORT expansion of opportunities for ordinary citizens to provide testimony at Congressional hearings in order to counterbalance the influence of professional lobbyists.

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 former members of both Houses of Congress and high ranking Federal officers being prohibited for life from becoming lobbyists, unless they agree to renounce all public pensions and benefits, and make a public statement to that affect.

SUPPORT criminalizing 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, and for a minimum of two years after the official has left office.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Living outside the United States makes us no less concerned that the laws of our country are respected to protect the safety and well-being of our fellow citizens. We are likewise committed to the principle that the prevention, enforcement, and penalties for breaking

those laws conform with the highest ideals and principles of justice and fairness. As Democrats living abroad, we are conscious of the need to reform many aspects of our criminal justice system.

Policing and Crime Prevention

The fact that many law-abiding Americans experience police authority as a threat to their lives and livelihoods is not new. As Americans living abroad, we and our families have never been insulated from this crisis in our home society – and it is the responsibility of every American to secure justice for our fellow citizens, no matter where we live.

The past two years have established, furthermore, that ignorance and denial of this crisis are irresponsible and directly contrary to American principles. It is beyond dispute that radical reforms of American law enforcement are urgently needed. State and Federal governments should enact laws and take all appropriate measures to secure the cessation of arbitrary police power.

We:

FAVOR community-controlled and community-based policing practices.

SUPPORT regulation of local police forces by strong, community-controlled, independent, and well-funded civilian police accountability review boards.

FAVOR the creation of Federal and state programs for economic planning and development in local neighborhoods with high incidence 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.

SUPPORT local police forces to consider equipping all law enforcement agents with complete video surveillance equipment and rules making agents accountable for their full-time use.

FAVOR the passage of legislation at the federal and state levels to address the practice of racial profiling by law enforcement, such as the federal End Racial Profiling Act of 2015 and URGE the U.S. Department of Justice to update and strengthen national guidelines and uniform standards for the use of force by law enforcement agents.

URGE the appointment of independent prosecutors for all cases involving unarmed civilians killed by law enforcement, by executive order or preferably by legislation.

FAVOR the establishment and maintenance of a national database of American deaths in police custody and police shootings, with mandatory reporting requirements and reasonable public access.

OPPOSE the transfer of military equipment to local law enforcement except under extraordinary circumstances, with strict limits, training, and monitoring.

OPPOSE the incarceration of juveniles with adults and NOTE with concern the understaffing and closing of juvenile correctional institutions.

Prosecution and Incarceration

A criminal justice system that exists to punish criminals rather than to rehabilitate holds little promise for crime prevention and reduction of recidivism. An obvious disparity in prosecution and sentencing based on race or class undermines both the American standard of justice and the sense that we are equal citizens under the law. The United States is the only major democracy other than Japan that still applies capital punishment.

We:

FAVOR an overhaul the criminal justice system to eliminate racial bias and the disproportionate level of incarceration of African Americans.

SUPPORT the development of a national federal standard for prosecutors that requires mandatory disclosure of exculpatory evidence to a criminal defendant, with the failure to provide such evidence subjecting a prosecutor to criminal sanctions for a knowing failure to disclose.

OPPOSE mandatory minimum sentences that curtail judicial discretion.

FAVOR legalizing and decriminalizing marijuana for both medical and recreational use on a federal level.

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

FAVOR relaxed penalties for minor infractions.

APPLAUD the abolition of the death penalty in 32 states.

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 a penal system that treats prisoners with dignity, prioritizes rehabilitation, protects vulnerable prisoners, provides opportunities for education, training, community re-entry, and programs aimed at ending recidivism and does not substitute incarceration for mental health care.

FAVOR job training during incarceration and job placement and comprehensive re-entry programs for incarcerated people upon release.

SUPPORT compassionate release of ageing prisoners.

Prison Reform

We favor the exploration of alternatives to incarceration, and, when incarceration is necessary, we insist on a humane system that includes continuity of family and community contact, and special protections for juveniles, transgendered individuals, and others at risk. The trend toward for-profit prisons invites abuse, and prolonged solitary confinement is now widely recognized as cruel yet widespread.

We:

OPPOSE privatization of any prison or any other correctional institution, OPPOSE the appropriate of funds for new contract beds or private prison facilities and URGE Congress to ban prisons operated by private corporations, as they have been shown to lead to increased levels of incarceration with a large bias toward incarceration based on race and immigration status.

CALL FOR public funding of Residential Re-Entry Centers and Home Confinement Options, which could help divert low-security prisoners out of existing facilities, thus reducing overcrowding and eliminating the need for additional beds.

Noncitizens and Criminal Justice

Noncitizens face enormous bias at the levels of police-interaction, law enforcement, prosecution, judicial sentencing, and prison assignment. It is therefore urgent and essential that the problems encountered by noncitizens facing criminal charges be addressed as much as an issue of criminal justice as one of immigration. Legal noncitizens that face criminal charges by which a conviction would entail deportation are considered high flight risks and so are deemed ineligible for minimum-security facilities. Some states place these persons in high-security prisons when their charges would not warrant such placement if they were either American citizens or undocumented immigrants.

We:

URGE Congress and the Department of Justice to ensure that noncitizens, including immigrants, have equal access to justice in the criminal system by eliminating arbitrary law enforcement policies that target communities based on race or perceived immigration status, investing in a meaningful and effective system of public defense, including notice on the immigration consequences of criminal cases, and curbing the power of prosecutors and judges to impose more punitive measures on immigrants, including harsher plea deals and sentences.

URGE Congress and the Department of Justice to restore a fair day in court and end fast-track deportations by ensuring that everyone, regardless of immigration status and criminal record, has the opportunity to go before an immigration judge and to present a full defense with an effective lawyer.

OPPOSE mandatory detention of noncitizens charged with a crime.

URGE Congress, the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Prisons to provide legal noncitizens – both those detained and those awaiting trial – housing separate from that in which prisoners who have been found guilty of violent crimes are placed, and for the U.S. courts to assign legal noncitizens to those public facilities.

URGE Congress and the Department of Justice to narrow the list of aggravated felonies and, additionally, remove any misdemeanor from the aggravated felony category. Under current law in some states, a misdemeanor can lead to incarceration of a noncitizen in a high-security prison if that misdemeanor is labeled an aggravated felony.

CALL FOR recognition and correction of the problem of legal bias against noncitizens, which independent and academic studies have linked to legal inequality and harsher penalties at sentencing.

CALL FOR the discontinuation of the Bureau of Prison's inclusion of "Deportable Alien" as a "Public Safety Factor" which determines the prison security level to which an incarcerated individual is assigned.

OPPOSE the Criminal Alien Requirement (CAR) prison. CAR prisons have been linked by independent analyses to prison overcrowding and the overuse of solitary confinement.

OPPOSE the public funding of additional private low-security beds for the incarceration of noncitizens.

GUN VIOLENCE

Gun violence is a serious AMERICAN problem. Every year 30,000 people are killed by guns. The reputation of the U.S. around the world is damaged by the killing by guns in our homes, on our streets, in our businesses, but especially in our schools.

We:

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

CALL FOR Congress to pass legislation that helps ensure dangerous people are prohibited from having guns, including:

Background Check System -

- Requiring every gun buyer to go through a criminal background check;
- Ensuring that the background check system has complete information on people prohibited from having guns;
- Addressing unnecessary legal barriers that prevent states from reporting information about those prohibited from having guns;
- Improve incentives for states to share information with the background check system;
- Holding federal agencies accountable for sharing reliable information with the background check system;

Assault Weapon Control -

- Reinstating and strengthening the ban on assault weapons;
- Limiting ammunition magazines to 10 rounds;
- Removing armor-piercing bullets from the marketplace;
- Eliminating restrictions that force the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to authorize the importation of dangerous weapons deemed of collectible

interest that are abused and to permit the importation of fully functional and powerful military weapons;

CALL FOR Congress to pass legislation to, with the support of governments at all levels, put a stop to senseless gun violence in the U.S., including:

Supporting Law Enforcement –

- Closing loopholes on new gun trafficking laws and to create serious punishments for gun trafficking;
- Enacting the Obama administration's \$4 billion proposal to fund 15,000 police officers in cities and towns across the U.S.;
- Funding the provision of effective training for active shooter situations for 14,000 law enforcement officers, first responders, and school officials;

Mental Health –

- Funding for "Mental Health First Aid" training for teachers; treatment referrals for students with signs of mental illness; support for 16-25 year olds at high risk of mental illness; training for 5,000 mental health professionals serving students and young adults;
- Requiring private health insurance plans to cover mental health services through the ACA;
- Requiring quality mental health coverage for the millions of Americans covered by Medicaid;

Also –

- Ending the freeze on gun violence research and providing \$10 million for the Center for Disease Control to investigate the causes and prevention of gun violence, including the relationship between video games, media images and violence;
- Empowering health care providers with avenues for providing warnings to law enforcement authorities about threats of violence;
- Launching a national responsible gun owner program;
- Funding a review of safety standards for gun locks and gun safes and the development of innovative gun safety technology;
- Providing incentives schools to hire school resource officers, such as the COPS Hiring Grants.

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.

URGE the Senate to confirm an Obama administration appointment of Director of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which has not had a confirmed director for six years.

FAVOR the abolition of all “Stand Your Ground” laws.

FAVOR the abolition of “Open Carry” laws.

IV - CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Women's Issues

About half of the world’s population is female, with issues that transcend nationality, race, ethnicity, economic status and sexual orientation. Democrats Abroad affirms 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, physical and psychological safety, reproductive self-determination and equality of opportunity and of remuneration.

We:

CALL FOR the ratification by the U.S. 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 U.S. signed in 1980 but the Senate has failed to ratify.

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. The Council should continue its work to date, inspiring young girls and women to recognize their potential for leadership.

APPLAUD Present Obama’s inclusion of women at all levels of his Administration, including the nomination of two women, Sonia Sotomayor, the first Latina, and Elena Kagan, to the Supreme Court, to join Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and the appointment of eight women to cabinet-rank positions, including Attorney General Loretta Lynch, the first woman to hold that position.

CALL ON the U.S. government to support international efforts to define rape as a war crime and bring prosecution in appropriate cases, particularly but not solely through the signing and ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. (See also “International Agreements, Treaties and Obligations” section of Section II.)

APPLAUD the U.S. Congress’s 2013 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act.

CALL for efficient and effective 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 and reproductive rights.

ENDORSE the enactment of Federal legislation criminalizing the practice of genital mutilation.

ENDORSE the principle of Equal Pay for Equal Work and FAVOR the adoption of Federal legislation establishing and implementing this principle.

SUPPORT the revival of the campaign to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

FAMILY PLANNING

DEPLORE the serious erosion in the U.S. of a woman's right to reproductive privacy 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 U.S. 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.

SUPPORT reducing the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions through contraceptive insurance coverage under the ACA and more generally through the universal availability of both high-quality sex education and of confidential reproductive healthcare (including a full range of birth control methods) for all women, including adolescents.

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, denying it hundreds of millions of dollars in federal support and disproportionately impacting low-income families.

FAVOR including emergency contraception and abortion methods, as well as family planning more broadly, in all national healthcare plans.

OPPOSE welfare reform that would penalize women with children and women who become pregnant while receiving public assistance.

SUPPORT the creation of a comprehensive program to support women and men needing family and medical leave. (See also the "Children and Family Rights" section of Section IV.)

The Rule of Law at Home and Abroad

Democrats Abroad believes that the U.S. during the presidency of Barack Obama has restored its moral authority and credibility abroad, in part by upholding the U.S. Constitution and its time-honored principles as well as the internationally accepted principle of the Rule of Law. We must consistently act on our commitment to universal human rights abroad and at home.

We:

URGE the U.S. Congress to pass legislation which would authorize the indictment in the U.S. of persons who may have committed acts constituting torture anywhere in the world and would grant, through legislation, jurisdiction to the U.S. Federal Courts over those who may have violated U.S. law or the applicable international conventions concerning torture, and

who have been involved in violations of human rights and civil liberties as defined under international treaties, the U.S. Constitution and under U.S. Federal Law.

URGE Congress and the various States to respect the protections of the First Amendment with respect to religious freedom of the people and prohibiting the establishment of a religion by the U.S. and the various States.

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

APPLAUD the efforts of the White House Legal Aid Interagency Roundtable established by President Obama to expand access to justice for low- and middle-income Americans and URGE state governments to adequately fund civil legal services so that all Americans have an equal opportunity to vindicate their rights in the justice system, regardless of their income level.

URGE the U.S. to deepen its commitment to human rights and justice at home and abroad by signing and ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. (See also "International Agreements, Treaties and Obligations" section of Section II.)

APPLAUD the decision by the U.S. Government to support and implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, especially the provision of "Free, Prior and Informed Consent" requiring states to consult and cooperate in good faith with indigenous peoples before adopting and implementing legislation or other measures that may affect them.

URGE the U.S. Government to develop a National Action Plan to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

ENDORSE the UN Charter on Human Rights and in particular, Article 18, which sets out the principle of freedom of religion or belief for all.

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 forces that undermine equal opportunity, safety, health, and well being of U.S. individuals, families and communities. Where such discrimination exists in laws, it must be addressed forcefully and decisively.

We:

SUPPORT the passage of the Equality Act, which would amend and extend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex in employment, housing, public accommodations, public education, federal funding, credit, and the jury system.

CELEBRATE the 2013 Windsor and 2015 Obergefell Supreme Court rulings, which affirm the dignity of LGBT people and their families, fully eliminating DOMA, the discriminatory federal law that barred recognition of LGBT married couples and denied them federal benefits;

these rulings establish fundamental human rights for LGBT people to form a family and protect their families through marriage.

APPLAUD the Obama Administration's efforts to quickly and effectively implement the 2013 Windsor and 2015 Obergefell rulings.

CONDAMN so-called Religious Freedom laws, which enshrine discrimination in local and state laws and target lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people for unfair treatment

CONDAMN state and local laws that allow any business or person to choose to deny services, including critical services such as health care, on the basis of race, gender or sexual orientation, including in particular to LGBT people, same-sex couples, and their children.

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 heterosexual or otherwise.

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.

CONDAMN 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."

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

SUPPORT the Disability Integration Act sponsored by Senator Schumer, which would require states and other public bodies that provide institutional care for the disabled (and insurance companies that provide policies covering such services) to include the provision that such funds would be available for homecare (rather than institutional) services, if available, and if that is the choice of the disabled person concerned.

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.

Children and Family Rights

Democrats Abroad affirms the right of all children to legal protection that guarantees their health, welfare, education and safety and believes that the U.S. has a moral obligation to support these rights internationally as well as at home.

We:

SUPPORT legislation giving paid maternity and paternity leave to parents during the first months of their childrens' lives or in the first months following an adoption.

URGE the Congress to pass the Parental Bereavement Act which would amend the Family and Medical Leave Act to guarantee leave for parents, spouses, siblings, caregiver children, or committed partners in case of the death of a son or daughter.

URGE the Congress to amend 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.

URGE the Senate to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which 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, and FAVOR the adoption of all changes to Federal and state law necessary in order to meet the Convention's requirements.

SUPPORT the enactment and enforcement of effective measures pertaining to both U.S. labor and U.S. trade to ensure that, when a child anywhere in the world must work from economic necessity, it is with safe working conditions, healthcare, compulsory quality education, and protection from circumstances that are mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful.

Human Trafficking

We:

SUPPORT enactment of new Federal legislation and the implementation and enforcement of existing State legislation to stop slavery and human trafficking cross national borders and within the U.S., especially with regard to human soldiers, migrant and foreign born workers, in the sex trade, aboard fishing vessels and cargo ships, and in prisons.

SUPPORT humanitarian refugee visas for all victims of human trafficking.

DEPLORE efforts to punish the victims of trafficking, including women forced into prostitution and undocumented workers who have their documents confiscated by traffickers, and SUPPORT laws that punish the perpetrators.

SUPPORT legislation facilitating the private sector and nongovernmental organizations to stop human trafficking and slavery practices by monitoring the supply chain from sources of goods and services to their delivery to consumers.

SUPPORT the U.S. having a robust voice against the trafficking and use of slave and child labor in the production of goods or in the sex industry.

Refugees, Migrants and Guest Workers

The U.S. has been shaped fundamentally and positively by immigration. New migrants and refugees will continue to strengthen our country. 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. We also wish to act in solidarity with people in need and with our allies overwhelmed by those seeking asylum.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-APPLICANTS

We:

DEPLORE the use of language that dehumanizes refugees, asylum applicants, and immigrants to the U.S. and the use of them as a political tool to incite fear of terrorism or economic displacement.

APPLAUD President Obama’s initiative to increase the number of refugees admitted to the U.S. in 2016.

DEPLORE the decision by 31 U.S. governors to oppose the Obama' Administration's Syrian refugee resettlement program by announcing their intention to block or deter the resettlement of Syrian refugees within their states’ borders.

URGE increased funding and resources to determine the status of refugees/migrants and for refugee/migrant protection, legal defense and services.

CALL FOR expedited processing of refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan who have close ties to the U.S. (e.g., NGO workers, interpreters).

APPLAUD United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) status determination efforts in Central America prior to arrival of refugees in the U.S.

URGE the President to increase resettlement quotas for Iraqi, Libyan, and Syrian refugees.

MIGRANTS AND IMMIGRATION REFORM

We:

SUPPORT the passage of the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act to provide green cards and then citizenship to immigrants under the age of 30 who were brought to the U.S. before the age of 16 and have lived in the U.S. for at least five years – if they go to college or provide military service.

APPLAUD President Obama for his 2014 executive order protecting millions of undocumented persons from deportation and giving them the right to work legally in the U.S. and DEPLORE the Supreme Court's 4-4 deadlock that leaves in place the decision of a lower court stating the President exceeded his powers in issuing the directive, freezes the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents program and leaves up to 5 million people in limbo. (See also the "Democracy and Good Governance" section of Section III.)

CALL FOR of the modification of immigration regulations so that all currently undocumented foreign-born residents of the U.S. who qualify can become permanent residents with the possibility of eventually earning U.S. citizenship.

SUPPORT the reunification of children with their parents in the U.S. (through such methods as expanding the law on Temporary Protected Status).

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

GUEST WORKERS

Besides family reunification, prospective immigrants are granted status based on employment sponsorship. Various visa programs are intended to promote cultural exchange and understanding or fill critical U.S. employment gaps.

We:

DEPLORE the abuse of the J-1 visa program by recruiters who seek only low-wage and easily exploited workers.

URGE the Department of State and Department of Labor to deter J-1 visa abuses by enhancing and enforcing regulations, including requirements that

- employers certify that no American workers were available before filling posts with J-1 visa holders;
- J-1 visa holders be paid a minimum wage for their work;
- J-1 visa holders be excluded from jobs without cultural exchange benefits; and
- J-1 visa holders be provided with training if needed and be given sufficient hours of work to support themselves without having to take a second job.

CALL ON the Department of State and Department of Labor to reform the H1-B visa program to ensure that:

- employers certify that no American worker is available to fill a position before hiring an H1-B visa holder;
- foreign skilled professionals are paid the same wages as Americans doing similar work; and
- regulations are strictly enforced to ensure that American workers are not displaced by foreign nationals.

FAVOR the revision, by the U.S. 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.

FAVOR meeting the needs of U.S. industries to hire 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 supporting

Department of State policies that encourage international students who graduate from U.S. universities with Ph.Ds. and Master's Degrees in STEM to remain in the U.S. by providing them with access to green card permanent resident status.

V – ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Democrats demand spirited international cooperation and bold action from our government to achieve mission-critical goals of environmental protection and sustainable development. The economy and the environment should work together in harmony, each strengthening the other. The crisis posed by climate change is an opportunity for America's 'can do' spirit to take hold, and to innovate.

We:

SUPPORT a strong EPA that vigorously enforces the environmental laws of the U.S.

SUPPORT progressive policies that simultaneously protect the environment and improve quality of life, while stimulating economic development.

Climate Change

This issue is a top priority. There is simply no more time to delay. We urge immediate action to address known impacts of climate change by drastically reducing our greenhouse gas output and taking leadership in helping other nations do the same. These impacts include food and water scarcity, public health challenges, natural disasters and social unrest. Society must avoid climate change mitigation initiatives that would create even higher levels of carbon emissions and address global tipping point issues before it is too late.

We:

URGE efforts to drastically cut carbon emissions **immediately** by putting a tax on carbon pollution, repealing fossil fuel subsidies and making massive investments in energy efficiency and clean, sustainable energy such as geothermal, wind and solar power.

APPLAUD the signing of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

URGE working with other nations to not only meet but exceed the goals of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

SUPPORT efforts to aid other nations in reaching their climate goals and adapting to climate change.

APPLAUD the Pentagon for prioritizing climate change as a national security issue.

DEPLORE State and Federal legislators who refuse to acknowledge climate change and obstruct progress on this crucial issue.

APPLAUD the OSTP Initiative on Combating Climate Change and support efforts to expand this program further both nationally and internationally.

URGE more public discussion on climate related issues and how they impact our economy and livelihoods, including efforts to involve all sectors of the economy in providing climate solutions and the promotion of educational initiatives at the K-12 level addressing climate science.

URGE aggressive exploration of climate change related disaster mitigation technologies and policies, including those focusing on water conservation, drought, sea level rise, and extreme weather events, as well as technology to actively remove ambient CO₂ from the atmosphere and safely store it.

SUPPORT the Clean Power Act mandating drastic reductions in carbon emissions from power plants.

Energy Security & Reduced Dependence on Oil

We:

SUPPORT efforts to increase energy efficiency in all sectors, including industrial, commercial and residential applications.

OPPOSE fracking. Period. **Fracking is an immediate public health concern and should not be seen as a temporary solution to 'lower' carbon emissions.**

SUPPORT the cessation of fracking or prospecting to undertake fracking when

- the community or state is against it;
- the release of methane or contamination of water is present; or
- the operators cannot or will not certify what chemicals are being or will be used.

CALL FOR a moratorium on new fracking permits and stricter regulations on existing fracking wells, with strict, but reasonable, time limits on how long they continue to operate, and with the aim of a complete ban within 10 years and FAVOR a transition away from fracking and towards sustainable, alternative energy.

SUPPORT any effort to regulate and reduce methane and natural gas leaks.

FAVOR a ban on Arctic drilling and offshore drilling.

OPPOSE fossil fuel drilling and pipelines in National Parks & Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, and on native lands.

OPPOSE mountain top removal mining practices.

FAVOR a ban on exports of liquefied natural gas and crude oil.

SUPPORT further national energy policies that provide major funding and sound fiscal incentives for clean energy research and development, including new materials, energy grid improvements, solar power, wind power, hydrogen, fuel cells, batteries, and other electricity storage devices.

FAVOR an increase of Renewable Energy Investment Tax Credits and Renewable Energy Production Tax Credits.

FAVOR a Federal Renewable Portfolio Standard that takes into account the variations in different states' abilities to produce renewable energy.

FAVOR strict auto and airline emission requirements and the imposition of severe penalties and sanctions for manufacturers or others that falsify emissions tests.

FAVOR decoupling energy utility profits from energy sales volume, so that utilities have an incentive to use energy more wisely.

SUPPORT the transition of utilities from sole energy providers to managers of energy supply and demand.

SUPPORT urban sustainability measures including improved and diversified transportation choices through investment in public transportation, including light rail, bus, bike lanes, pedestrian walkways, and other transportation infrastructure and urban design that reduces energy use.

SUPPORT the development and improvement of high-speed rail systems in dense travel corridors to replace commuter air travel, a major source of carbon emissions.

SUPPORT the Clean Energy Workers Just Transition Act.

SUPPORT and APPLAUD President Obama's rejection of the Keystone XL Pipeline, which he deemed does not serve the national interests of the U.S., and URGE government support for energy projects that have minimal impacts on the environment and make no contribution to climate change.

PUBLIC LANDS AND MARINE RESERVES

America's National Parks, Forests, Grasslands, Wetlands, Wildlife Refuges, and Marine Areas are important to our natural ecosystems, protecting wildlife and the environment while preserving our cultural legacy. We have a responsibility to manage and protect these areas with all available resources.

We:

SUPPORT the retention of the Endangered Species Act.

OPPOSE deforestation, SUPPORT the sound management of forests and CALL FOR the provision of federal funds needed to care for forests.

OPPOSE desecration of national parks, reserves and forests and FAVOR banning the construction of logging roads for use by mineral prospectors.

OPPOSE exploitation of natural resources from public lands for commercial interests.

FAVOR a ban on destructive fishing practices, including those that harm coral reef systems such as bottom trawling and use of bottom-contact fishing gear.

FAVOR a ban on coral harvesting.

FAVOR policies which reduce and limit the use of disposable plastics, such as plastic bags, which are non-biodegradable and dangerous to marine life.

APPLAUD the passing of the Microbead-Free Waters Act.

Clean Air, Water and Land

We support the existence and the power of the EPA to implement and enforce environmental laws protecting human health and the environment.

We:

SUPPORT the strengthening and enforcement of the Clean Water Act, in all sectors, including agriculture, and efforts like the Clean Water Rule, finalized in May 2015, which protects a variety of streams, ponds, and wetlands, including those streams that one in three Americans relies on for drinking water.

OPPOSE the U.S. Navy's use of sonar and explosives during routine training and testing, which continues to needlessly kill whales and dolphins and APPLAUD the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's Ocean Noise Strategy aimed at addressing ocean noise impacts and SUPPORT its full implementation.

FAVOR stronger standards that will reduce water used in power plants and limit the amount of toxic pollutants discharged, to better protect aquatic habitat and curb water pollution.

SUPPORT all U.S. Government efforts to require polluters to pay for restoring any environment they degrade; these efforts should include passing laws which prevent corporations from avoiding such payment through bankruptcy.

SUPPORT the enforcement of the Safe Drinking Water Act and any measures which help assess and treat public water systems for lead and other contaminants.

OPPOSE the privatization of water resources.

SUPPORT efforts to remove existing environmental toxins from the environment, including chemicals, plastics and waste.

SUPPORT all efforts towards lead remediation to remove lead from homes, buildings and infrastructure, such as that found in lead based paints or pipes.

AGRICULTURE

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. These policies include support for organic farming practices and those which increase carbon sequestration in our soil.

FAVOR the banning of glyphosate (active ingredient in Round-Up), which has been linked to a variety of health issues and banned in multiple countries, including France (effective 2022).

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

URGE an end to subsidies for animal agriculture in order to limit its negative impacts on the environment, including a significant fraction of green house gas emissions, excess air and water pollution and heavy consummation of freshwater resources.

FAVOR policies that encourage reductions in meat consumption, as animal agriculture is one of the major sources of the greenhouse gas emissions which threaten our climate and environment.

Consumer Goods

We:

FAVOR a nation-wide ban on the disposal of electronic waste in solid waste landfills and efforts towards increasing electronic waste recycling.

FAVOR the adoption of electronic waste recycling initiatives similar to those already in place in Europe (WEEE, or Waste of Electronic and Electrical Equipment Directive). FAVOR adoption and enforcement of legislation similar to the European REACH Act (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization and Restriction of Chemicals).

FAVOR research and development of nontoxic chemicals and chemical processes to replace toxic chemicals and processes used in the creation of every day products.

★★★

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