

Major Health Care Planks in 2012 National Party Platforms

Democratic Platform

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Health Care

We believe accessible, affordable, high quality health care is part of the American promise, that Americans should have the security that comes with good health care, and that no one should go broke because they get sick. Over the determined opposition of Republicans, we enacted landmark reforms that are already helping millions of Americans, and more benefits will come soon.

As a result of our efforts, today, young Americans entering the workforce can stay on their parents' plans. Insurers can no longer refuse to cover kids with pre-existing medical conditions. Insurance companies will no longer be able to arbitrarily cap and cancel coverage, or charge women more simply because of their gender. People with private insurance are getting preventive services like cancer screenings, annual well-woman visits, and FDA-approved contraception with no out-of-pocket costs. We've established new Offices of Minority Health, and are helping state Medicaid programs fund home and community-based services. Small businesses are receiving tax credits to help them cover their workers, and businesses and families are receiving rebates from insurers who overcharged them.

Soon, working families will finally have the security of knowing they won't lose health care or be forced into bankruptcy if a family member gets sick or loses their job. And soon, insurance companies will no longer be able to deny coverage based on pre-existing conditions. Medicaid will cover more working families. Those who don't get insurance at work will be able to shop in new exchanges and will be eligible for new tax credits. As a result, all Americans will have access to health care. We heard powerful testimony before the platform drafting committee about the difference it will make in Americans' lives when, for the first time, 30 million of our fellow citizens finally gain health insurance.

Republican Platform

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The Sanctity and Dignity of Human Life

Faithful to the "self-evident" truths enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, we assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and endorse legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment's protections apply to unborn children. We oppose using public revenues to promote or perform abortion or fund organizations which perform or advocate it and will not fund or subsidize health care which includes abortion coverage. We support the appointment of judges who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life. We oppose the nonconsensual withholding or withdrawal of care or treatment, including food and water, from people with disabilities, including newborns, as well as the elderly and infirm, just as we oppose active and passive euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Republican leadership has led the effort to prohibit the barbaric practice of partial-birth abortion and permitted States to extend health care coverage to children before birth. We urge Congress to strengthen the Born Alive Infant Protection Act by enacting appropriate civil and criminal penalties on healthcare providers who fail to provide treatment and care to an infant who survives an abortion, including early induction delivery where the death of the infant is intended. We call for legislation to ban sex-selective abortions – gender discrimination in its most lethal form—and to protect from abortion unborn children who are capable of feeling pain; and we applaud U.S. House Republicans for leading the effort to protect the lives of pain-capable unborn children in the District of Columbia. We call for a ban on the use of body parts from aborted fetuses for research. We support and applaud adult stem cell research to develop lifesaving therapies, and we oppose the killing of embryos for their stem cells. We oppose federal funding of embryonic stem cell research.

We also salute the many States that have passed laws for informed

Mitt Romney and the Republican Party would repeal health reform. They are more concerned with playing politics than supporting families in this country. No law is perfect and Democrats stand willing to work with anyone to improve the law where necessary, but we are committed to moving forward. We will continue to stand up to Republicans working to take away the benefits and protections that are already helping millions of Americans every day. We refuse to go back to the days when health insurance companies had unchecked power to cancel your health policy, deny you coverage, or charge women more than men.

At the same time, the Affordable Care Act is not the end of efforts to improve health care for all Americans. Democrats will continue to fight for a strong health care workforce with an emphasis on primary care. We remain committed to eliminating disparities in health and will continue to make sure families have access to mental health and substance abuse services. We will strengthen Medicaid and oppose efforts to block grant the program, slash its funding, and leave millions more without health insurance. We will continue to invest in our public health infrastructure – ensuring that we are able to respond to emergencies and support community-based efforts to prevent disease. The Recovery Act and the health reform law made historic investments in Community Health Centers, and Democrats will continue to support these valuable institutions. We Democrats have increased overall funding to combat HIV/AIDS to record levels and will continue our nation's fight against HIV/AIDS. President Obama established the first-ever comprehensive National HIV/AIDS Strategy for responding to the domestic epidemic, which calls for reducing HIV incidence, increasing access to care, optimizing health outcomes, and reducing HIV-related health disparities. This is an evidence-based plan that is guided by science and seeks to direct resources to the communities at greatest risk, including gay men, black and Latino Americans, substance users, and others at high risk of infection. And we will continue to support America's groundbreaking biomedical researchers in their lifesaving work.

consent, mandatory waiting periods prior to an abortion, and health-protective clinic regulation. We seek to protect young girls from exploitation through a parental consent requirement; and we affirm our moral obligation to assist, rather than penalize, women challenged by an unplanned pregnancy. We salute those who provide them with counseling and adoption alternatives and empower them to choose life, and we take comfort in the tremendous increase in adoptions that has followed Republican legislative initiatives.

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Saving Medicare for Future Generations

The Republican Party is committed to saving Medicare and Medicaid. Unless the programs' fiscal ship is righted, the individuals hurt the first and the worst will be those who depend on them the most. We will save Medicare by modernizing it, by empowering its participants, and by putting it on a secure financial footing. This will be an enormous undertaking, and it should be a non-partisan one. We welcome to the effort all who sincerely want to ensure the future for our seniors and the poor. Republicans are determined to achieve that goal with a candid and honest presentation of the problem and its solutions to the American people.

Despite the enormous differences between Medicare and Medicaid, the two programs share the same fiscal outlook: their current courses cannot be sustained. Medicare has grown from more than 20 million enrolled in 1970 to more than 47 million enrolled today, with a projected total of 80 million in 2030. Medicaid counted almost 30 million enrollees in 1990, has about 54 million now, and under Obamacare would include an additional 11 million. Medicare spent more than \$520 billion in 2010 and has close to \$37 trillion in unfunded obligations, while total Medicaid spending will more than double by 2019. In many States, Medicaid's mandates and inflexible bureaucracy have become a budgetary black hole, growing faster than most other budget lines and devouring funding for many other essential governmental functions. The problem goes beyond finances. Poor quality healthcare is the most expensive type of care because it prolongs affliction and leads to ever more complications. Even expensive prevention is preferable to more costly treatment later on. When

Page 35**Social Security and Medicare**

We believe every American deserves a secure, healthy, and dignified retirement. America's seniors have earned their Medicare and Social Security through a lifetime of hard work and personal responsibility. President Obama is committed to preserving that promise for this and future generations.

During their working years, Americans contribute to Social Security in exchange for a promise that they will receive an income in retirement. Unlike those in the other party, we will find a solution to protect Social Security for future generations. We will block Republican efforts to subject Americans' guaranteed retirement income to the whims of the stock market through privatization. We reject approaches that insist that cutting benefits is the only answer. President Obama will also make it easier for Americans to save on their own for retirement and prepare for unforeseen expenses by participating in retirement accounts at work.

The Republican budget plan would end Medicare as we know it. Democrats adamantly oppose any efforts to privatize or voucherize Medicare; unlike our opponents we will not ask seniors to pay thousands of dollars more every year while they watch the value of their Medicare benefits evaporate. Democrats believe that Medicare is a sacred compact with our seniors. Nearly 50 million older Americans and Americans with disabilities rely on Medicare each year, and the new health care law makes Medicare stronger by adding new benefits, fighting fraud, and improving care for patients. And, over 10 years, the law will save the average Medicare beneficiary \$4,200. President Obama is already leading the most successful crackdown on health care fraud ever, having already recovered \$10 billion from health care scams. We will build on those reforms, not eliminate Medicare's guarantees. The health care law is closing the gap in prescription drug coverage known as the "doughnut hole." More than five million seniors have already saved money – an average of \$600 last year – and the doughnut hole will be closed for good by 2020.

approximately 80 percent of healthcare costs are related to lifestyle – smoking, obesity, substance abuse – far greater emphasis has to be put upon personal responsibility for health maintenance. Our goal for both Medicare and Medicaid must be to assure that every participant receives the amount of care they need at the time they need it, whether for an expectant mother and her baby or for someone in the last moments of life. Absent reforms, these two programs are headed for bankruptcy that will endanger care for seniors and the poor.

The first step is to move the two programs away from their current unsustainable defined-benefit entitlement model to a fiscally sound defined contribution model. This is the only way to limit costs and restore consumer choice for patients and introduce competition; for in healthcare, as in any other sector of the economy, genuine competition is the best guarantee of better care at lower cost. It is also the best guard against the fraud and abuse that have plagued Medicare in its isolation from free market forces, which in turn costs the taxpayers billions of dollars every year. We can do this without making any changes for those 55 and older. While retaining the option of traditional Medicare in competition with private plans, we call for a transition to a premium-support model for Medicare, with an income adjusted contribution toward a health plan of the enrollee's choice. This model will include private health insurance plans that provide catastrophic protection, to ensure the continuation of doctor-patient relationships. Without disadvantaging retirees or those nearing retirement, the age eligibility for Medicare must be made more realistic in terms of today's longer life span.

Page 22**Strengthening Medicaid in the States**

Medicaid, as the dominant payer in the health market in regards to long-term care, births, and individuals with mental illness, is the next frontier of welfare reform. It is simply too big and too flawed to be managed in its current condition from Washington. Republican Governors have taken the lead in proposing a host of regulatory changes that could make the program more flexible, innovative, and accountable. There should be alternatives to hospitalization for chronic health problems. Patients could

In short, Democrats believe that Social Security and Medicare must be kept strong for seniors, people with disabilities, and future generations. Our opponents have shown a shocking willingness to gut these programs to pay for tax cuts for the wealthiest, and we fundamentally reject that approach.

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Americans with Disabilities

No one should face discrimination based on disability status. President Obama and the Democratic Party will continue to lead efforts to facilitate the access of Americans with disabilities to the middle class, employment opportunities, and the ability to lead full, productive, and satisfying lives. The administration and the Democratic Party are committed to assisting the approximately 50 million people in this country living with disabilities, assuring their full integration into society.

This administration has committed to hiring 100,000 Americans with disabilities within the federal government by 2015, and has proposed new rules to create employment opportunities with federal contractors. We are committed to expanding access to employment for people with disabilities and removing barriers to work. The Affordable Care Act is opening access to health insurance to Americans with disabilities who were previously excluded because of pre-existing conditions, expanding access to Medicaid, and helping Medicaid to support home- and community-based services to keep people in their communities. Further, the President issued an executive order repealing the restrictions on embryonic stem cell research and signed into law the Christopher and Dana Reeves Paralysis Act, the first piece of comprehensive legislation aimed at improving the lives of Americans living with paralysis. Democrats are committed to ensuring that Americans with disabilities can exercise their right to vote and have access to the polls. We will continue to oppose all efforts to weaken the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act, and we will vigorously enforce laws that prevent discrimination. And the President and the

be rewarded for participating in disease prevention activities. Excessive mandates on coverage should be eliminated. Patients with long-term care needs might fare better in a separately designed program.

As those and other specific proposals show, Republican Governors and State legislatures are ready to do the hard work of modernizing Medicaid for the twenty-first century. We propose to let them do all that and more by block-granting the program to the States, providing the States with the flexibility to design programs that meet the needs of their low income citizens. Such reforms could be achieved through premium supports or a refundable tax credit, allowing non-disabled adults and children to be moved into private health insurance of their choice, where their needs can be met on the same basis as those of more affluent Americans. For the aged and disabled under Medicaid, for whom monthly costs can be extremely high, States would have flexibility to improve the quality of care and to avoid the inappropriate institutional placing of patients who prefer to be cared for at home.

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Advancing Americans with Disabilities

We renew our commitment to the inclusion of Americans with disabilities in all aspects of our national life. In keeping with that commitment, we oppose the non-consensual withholding of care or treatment from people with disabilities, including newborns, as well as the elderly and infirm, just as we oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide, which endanger especially those on the margins of society. Because government should set a positive standard in hiring and contracting for the services of persons with disabilities, we need to update the statutory authority for the Ability One program, a major avenue by which those productive members of our society can offer high quality services.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) has opened up unprecedented opportunities for many students, and we reaffirm our support for its goal of minimizing the separation of children with disabilities from their peers. We urge preventive efforts in early childhood, especially assistance in gaining pre-reading skills, to help many students

Democratic Party will fiercely oppose the harsh cuts in Medicaid that would inevitably lead to no or significantly less health care for millions of Americans with disabilities, workers with disabilities, and families raising children with autism, Down Syndrome, and other serious disabilities.

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Women

President Obama – the son of a single mother and the father of two daughters – understands that women aren’t a special interest group. They are more than half of this country, and issues that affect women also affect families. That is why the first bill he signed into law was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which helps women fight back when they are paid less than men, and why we continue to fight to overcome Republican opposition and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to help stop gender discrimination in pay before it starts. And that is why the Justice Department and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, led by President Obama’s appointees, have investigated and prosecuted numerous violations of the nation’s civil rights laws, and obtained more than \$140 million in relief for victims of gender discrimination. We Democrats will continue to support efforts to ensure that workers can combat gender discrimination in the workplace and to protect women against pregnancy discrimination. And that’s why we support passing the Healthy Families Act, broadening the Family and Medical Leave Act, and partnering with states to move toward paid leave.

We understand that economic issues are women’s issues, and the challenges of supporting and raising a family are often primarily a woman’s responsibility. That’s why putting Americans back to work is Job One. That’s why the Affordable Care Act especially helps women by guaranteeing they and their families won’t become uninsured when they lose their jobs. That’s why this administration strengthened Medicare and Medicaid for millions of women and families. And that’s why the Affordable Care Act is ending health insurance discrimination against women, and provides women with free access to preventive care, including prenatal screenings, mammograms, cervical cancer

move beyond the need for IDEA’s protections. We endorse the program of Employment First, developed by major disability rights groups, to replace dependency with jobs in the mainstream of the American workforce.

Repealing Obamacare

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act—Obamacare—was never really about healthcare, though its impact upon the nation’s health is disastrous. From its start, it was about power, the expansion of government control over one sixth of our economy, and resulted in an attack on our Constitution, by requiring that U.S. citizens purchase health insurance. We agree with the four dissenting justices of the Supreme Court: “In our view the entire Act before us is invalid in its entirety.” It was the high-water mark of an outdated liberalism, the latest attempt to impose upon Americans a euro-style bureaucracy to manage all aspects of their lives. Obamacare has been struck down in the court of public opinion and is falling by the weight of its own confusing, unworkable, budget-busting, and conflicting provisions. It would tremendously expand Medicaid without significant reform, leaving the States to assume unsustainable financial burdens. If fully implemented, it could not function; and Republican victories in the November elections will guarantee that it is never implemented. Congressional Republicans are committed to its repeal; and a Republican President, on the first day in office, will use his legitimate waiver authority under that law to halt its progress and then will sign its repeal. Then the American people, through the free market, can advance affordable and responsible healthcare reform that meets the needs and concerns of patients and providers. Through Obamacare, the current Administration has promoted the notion of abortion as healthcare. We, however, affirm the dignity of women by protecting the sanctity of human life. Numerous studies have shown that abortion endangers the health and wellbeing of women, and we stand firmly against it.

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Our Prescription for American Healthcare: Improve Quality and Lower Costs

We believe that taking care of one’s health is an individual responsibility. Chronic diseases, many of them related to lifestyle, drive healthcare costs,

screening, breast-feeding supports, and contraception.

We understand that women's rights are civil rights. That's why we reaffirm our support for the ERA, recommit to enforcing Title IX, and will urge ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. That's why we are committed to ending violence against women, why Vice President Joe Biden originally wrote and championed the Violence Against Women Act during his time in the Senate, and why we support reauthorizing and strengthening it now.

The President and the Democratic Party believe that women have a right to control their reproductive choices. Democrats support access to affordable family planning services, and President Obama and Democrats will continue to stand up to Republican efforts to defund Planned Parenthood health centers. The Affordable Care Act ensures that women have access to contraception in their health insurance plans, and the President has respected the principle of religious liberty. Democrats support evidence-based and age-appropriate sex education.

Protecting A Woman's Right to Choose

The Democratic Party strongly and unequivocally supports *Roe v. Wade* and a woman's right to make decisions regarding her pregnancy, including a safe and legal abortion, regardless of ability to pay. We oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine that right. Abortion is an intensely personal decision between a woman, her family, her doctor, and her clergy; there is no place for politicians or government to get in the way. We also recognize that health care and education help reduce the number of unintended pregnancies and thereby also reduce the need for abortions. We strongly and unequivocally support a woman's decision to have a child by providing affordable health care and ensuring the availability of and access to programs that help women during pregnancy and after the birth of a child, including caring adoption programs.

accounting for more than 75 percent of the nation's medical spending. To reduce demand, and thereby lower costs, we must foster personal responsibility while increasing preventive services to promote healthy lifestyles. We believe that all Americans should have improved access to affordable, coordinated, quality healthcare, including individuals struggling with mental illness.

Our goal is to encourage the development of a healthcare system that provides higher quality care at a lower cost to all Americans while protecting the patient-physician relationship based on mutual trust, informed consent, and privileged patient confidentiality. We seek to increase healthcare choice and options, contain costs and reduce mandates, simplify the system for patients and providers, restore cuts made to Medicare, and equalize the tax treatment of group and individual health insurance plans. For most Americans, those who are insured now or who seek insurance in the future, our practical, non-intrusive reforms will promote flexibility in State leadership in healthcare reform, promote a free-market based system, and empower consumer choice. All of which will return direction of the nation's healthcare to the people and away from the federal government.

To return the States to their proper role of regulating local insurance markets and caring for the needy, we propose to block grant Medicaid and other payments to the States; limit federal requirements on both private insurance and Medicaid; assist all patients, including those with pre-existing conditions, through reinsurance and risk adjustment; and promote non-litigation alternatives for dispute resolution. We call on State officials to carefully consider the increased costs of medical mandates, imposed under their laws, which may price many low-income families out of the insurance market. We call on the government to permanently ban all federal funding and subsidies for abortion and healthcare plans that include abortion coverage.

To achieve a free market in healthcare and ensure competition, we will promote price transparency so that consumers will know the actual cost of treatments before they undergo them. When patients are aware of costs,

they are less likely to over-utilize services. We support legislation to cap non-economic damages in medical malpractice lawsuits, thereby relieving conscientious providers of burdens that are not rightly theirs and addressing a serious cause of escalating medical bills. We will empower individuals and small businesses to form purchasing pools in order to expand coverage to the uninsured. Individuals with preexisting conditions who maintain continuous insurance coverage should be protected from discrimination. We support technology enhancements for medical health records and data systems while affirming patient privacy and ownership of health information.

Ensuring Consumer Choice in Healthcare

Consumer choice is the most powerful factor in healthcare reform. Today's highly mobile work force requires portability of insurance coverage that can go with them from job to job. The need to maintain coverage should not dictate where families have to live and work. Putting the patient at the center of policy decisions will increase choice and reduce costs while ensuring that services provide what Americans actually want. We must end tax discrimination against the individual purchase of insurance and allow consumers to purchase insurance across State lines. While promoting "co-insurance" products and alternatives to "fee for service," government must promote Health Savings Accounts and Health Reimbursement Accounts to be used for insurance premiums and should encourage the private sector to rate competing insurance plans. We will ensure that America's aging population has access to safe and affordable care. Because seniors overwhelmingly desire to age at home, we will make home care a priority in public policy. We will champion the right of individual choice in senior care. We will aggressively implement programs to protect against elder abuse, and we will work to ensure that quality care is provided across the care continuum from home to nursing home to hospice.

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Supporting Federal Healthcare Research and Development

We support federal investment in healthcare delivery systems and solutions creating innovative means to provide greater, more cost-effective access to high quality healthcare. We also support federal investment in

basic and applied biomedical research, especially the neuroscience research that may hold great potential for dealing with diseases and disorders such as Autism, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's. If we are to make significant headway against breast and prostate cancer, diabetes, and other killers, research must consider the special needs of formerly neglected groups. We call for expanded support for the stem-cell research that now offers the greatest hope for many afflictions—with adult stem cells, umbilical cord blood, and cells reprogrammed into pluripotent stem cells—without the destruction of embryonic human life. We urge a ban on human cloning and on the creation of or experimentation on human embryos. We support restoring the Drug Enforcement Administration ban on the use of controlled substances for physician-assisted suicide. We oppose the FDA approval of Mifeprex, formerly known as RU-486, and similar drugs that terminate innocent human life after conception.

Protecting Individual Conscience in Healthcare

No healthcare professional or organization should ever be required to perform, provide for, withhold, or refer for a medical service against their conscience. This is especially true of the religious organizations which deliver a major portion of America's healthcare, a service rooted in the charity of faith communities. We do not believe, however, that healthcare providers should be allowed to withhold services because the healthcare provider believes the patient's life is not worth living. We support the ability of all organizations to provide, purchase, or enroll in healthcare coverage consistent with their religious, moral, or ethical convictions without discrimination or penalty. We likewise support the right of parents to consent to medical treatment for their children, including mental health treatment, drug treatment, and treatment involving pregnancy, contraceptives, and abortion. We urge enactment of pending legislation that would require parental consent to transport girls across state lines for abortions.