

2016 Democratic Party Platform excerpts

July 2016

Raise Incomes and Restore Economic Security for the Middle Class

1 Democrats believe we must break down all the barriers holding Americans back and restore the basic bargain that built America's mighty middle class: If you work hard and play by the rules, you can get ahead and stay ahead. The system is not working when we have a rigged economy in which ordinary Americans work longer hours for lower wages, while most new income and wealth goes to the top one percent. Republican governors, legislatures, and their corporate allies have launched attack after attack on workers' fundamental rights to organize and bargain collectively. Too many Americans are living paycheck to paycheck, and hallmarks of a middle class life—owning a home, having access to affordable and quality childcare, retiring with dignity—feel out of reach. It is no wonder so many Americans feel like the deck is stacked against them. The Democratic Party believes that supporting workers through higher wages, workplace protections, policies to balance work and family, and other investments will help rebuild the middle class for the 21st century.

Raising Workers' Wages

2 Democrats believe that the current minimum wage is a starvation wage and must be increased to a living wage. No one who works full time should have to raise a family in poverty. We believe that Americans should earn at least \$15 an hour and have the right to form or join a union and will work in every way we can—in Congress and the federal government, in states and with the private sector—to reach this goal. We should raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour over time and index it, give all Americans the ability to join a union regardless of where they work, and create new ways for workers to have power in the economy so every worker can earn at least \$15 an hour. We applaud the approaches taken by states like New York and California. We also support creating one fair wage for all workers by ending the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers and people with disabilities.....

Protecting Workers' Fundamental Rights

3 The Democratic Party believes that when workers are strong, America is strong. Democrats will make it easier for workers, public and private, to exercise their right to organize and join unions. We will fight to pass laws that direct the National Labor Relations Board to certify a union if a simple majority of eligible workers sign valid authorization cards, as well as laws that bring companies to the negotiating table. We support binding arbitration to help workers who have voted to join a union reach a first contract.....

4 The Democratic Party believes consumers, workers, students, retirees, and investors who have been mistreated should never be denied their right to fight for fair treatment under the law. That is why we will support efforts to limit the use of forced arbitration clauses in employment and service contracts, which unfairly strip consumers, workers, students, retirees, and investors of their right to their day in court.

Supporting Working Families

5 We will fight to secure equal pay for women, which will benefit all women and their families, particularly women of color who are disproportionately impacted by discriminatory pay practices, and against other factors that contribute to the wage gap. And we will combat the discrimination they face on and off the job. While Donald Trump thinks it is "dangerous" for women to leave the home and paid family leave hurts our economy, Democrats will make sure that the United States finally enacts national paid family and medical leave by passing a family and medical leave act that would provide all workers at least 12 weeks of paid leave to care for a new child or address a personal or family member's serious health issue. We will fight to allow workers the right to earn at least seven days of paid sick leave. We will also encourage employers to provide paid vacation.....

Helping More Workers Share in Near-Record Corporate Profits

6 Corporate profits are at near-record highs, but workers have not shared through rising wages. Profit-sharing is linked to higher pay and productivity. That is why, working with business, labor, and other stakeholders, we will incentivize companies to share profits with their employees on top of wages and pay increases, while targeting the workers and businesses that need profit-sharing the most.

Expanding Access to Affordable Housing and Homeownership

7We will preserve and increase the supply of affordable rental housing by expanding incentives to ease local barriers to building new affordable rental housing developments in areas of economic opportunity. We will substantially increase funding for the National Housing Trust Fund to construct, preserve, and rehabilitate millions of affordable housing rental units. Not only will this help address the affordable housing crisis, it will also create millions of good-paying jobs in the process. Democrats believe that we should provide more federal resources to the people struggling most with unaffordable housing: low-income families, people with disabilities, veterans, and the elderly.....

Protecting and Expanding Social Security

8 Democrats are proud to be the party that created Social Security, one of the nation's most successful and effective programs. Without Social Security, nearly half of America's seniors would be living in poverty. Social Security is more than just a retirement program. It also provides important life insurance to young survivors of deceased workers and provides disability insurance protection. We will fight every effort to cut, privatize, or weaken Social Security, including attempts to raise the retirement age, diminish benefits by cutting cost-of-living adjustments, or reducing earned benefits. Democrats will expand Social Security so that every American can retire with dignity and respect, including women who are widowed or took time out of the workforce to care for their children, aging parents, or ailing family members. The Democratic Party recognizes that the way Social Security cost-of-living adjustments are calculated may not always reflect the spending patterns of seniors, particularly the disproportionate amount they spend on health care expenses. We are committed to exploring alternatives that could better and more equitably serve seniors.....

Ensuring a Secure and Dignified Retirement

9 Democrats believe it should be easier for Americans to save for retirement and prepare for unforeseen risks and expenses. We will defend the right of workers to collect their defined benefit pensions and make sure workers get priority and protection when pension plans are in distress. Democrats will also fight to enact legislation to make sure that the earned pension benefits of Americans will not be cut, and will pay for it by closing tax loopholes that benefit millionaires and billionaires. We will fight against any attempt by Republicans in Congress or on Wall Street to roll back the Conflict of Interest Rule, which requires that retirement advisors put the best interests of their clients above their own financial gain.....

Create Good-Paying Jobs

10 Democrats know that nothing is more important than creating good-paying jobs that can support a middle-class life—from nurses, firefighters, and teachers to construction workers, factory workers, and small business owners. That is why we are committed to doing everything we can to build a full-employment economy, where everyone has a job that pays enough to raise a family and live in dignity with a sense of purpose. Democrats will build strong, sustained, shared economic growth. We know that when Americans come together, we can do amazing things. In the last century, our leaders came together across the aisle to electrify the nation, build the Interstate Highway System, support groundbreaking research in medicine, science, and communications, and send a man to the moon. When we are bold and ambitious, we can do big things and make our economy stronger for decades to come.

Building 21st Century Infrastructure

11 If we are serious about reversing the decline of the middle class, we need major federal investments to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure and put millions of Americans back to work in decent paying jobs in both the public and private sectors. The climate emergency and the need to expand the middle class demand that we make the most ambitious investment in American infrastructure since President Eisenhower created the interstate highway system. We will put Americans to work updating and expanding our roads, bridges, public transit, airports, and passenger and freight rail lines. We will build 21st century energy and water systems, modernize our schools, and continue to support the expansion of high-speed broadband networks. We will protect communities from the impact of climate change and help them to mitigate its effects by investing in green and resilient infrastructure. We will address the backlog of deferred maintenance in our four key public land management agencies. And we will protect public health and safety by modernizing drinking and wastewater systems. These investments will create secure, good-paying middle-class jobs today and will substantially increase demand for American-made steel and other products manufactured in the United States. And by boosting economic growth in a fair and equitable way, and strengthening our long-term competitiveness, these investments will create many more jobs in the years to come.....

Creating Good-Paying Clean Energy Jobs

12 We must help American workers and businesses compete for jobs and investments in global clean energy, high-tech products, internet technology products, and advanced manufacturing and vehicles. We must make American manufacturing more internationally competitive by making it the greenest and most efficient in the world, including by investing in industrial energy efficiency.

Pursuing Our Innovation Agenda: Science, Research, Education, and Technology

13Democrats believe we must harness the promise of technological innovation to promote community participation and enhance opportunities to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency for people with disabilities. We will encourage technology transfer, entrepreneurship, and small business creation throughout the country and in all types of innovation sectors.....

14 Democrats support a free and open internet at home and abroad, and will oppose any effort by Republicans to roll back the historic net neutrality rules that the Federal Communications Commission enacted last year.

15 Democrats value American innovation and believe it is one of our country's great strengths. We will protect the intellectual property rights of artists, creators, and inventors at home and abroad. The entire nation prospers when we promote the unique and original artistic and cultural contributions of the women and men who create and preserve our nation's heritage.....

Supporting America's Small Businesses

16 The Democratic Party will make it easier to start and grow a small business in America, unlike Donald Trump, who has often stifled small businesses—nearly bankrupting some—with his deceptive and reckless corporate practices. By supporting small business and entrepreneurship, we can grow jobs faster in America. We will cut the red tape that holds back small businesses and entrepreneurs. We will open up access to credit because we know that small businesses are some of the best job creators in our country. We will provide tax relief and tax simplification. And we will expand access to new markets because every American small business should be able to tap new markets — whether across their city, across their state, or around the world. Democrats will provide targeted funding and support for entrepreneurship and small business growth in underserved communities. Democrats also realize the critical importance of small businesses as engines of opportunity for women, people of color, tribes, and people in rural America, and will work to nurture entrepreneurship.

Creating Jobs for America's Young People

17 Democrats will make investments to spur the creation of millions of jobs for our young people. Roughly one in ten Americans between the ages of 16 and 24 is unemployed, more than twice the national average. The unemployment rates for African American, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), and American Indian teenagers and youth with disabilities are far too high. That is why Democrats will provide direct federal funding for a range of local programs that will put young people to work and create new career opportunities.

Fight for Economic Fairness and Against Inequality

18 Democrats believe that today's extreme levels of income and wealth inequality are bad for our people, bad for our businesses, and bad for our economy. Our country depends on a thriving middle class to drive economic growth, but the middle class is shrinking. Meanwhile, the top one-tenth of one percent of Americans now own almost as much wealth as the bottom 90 percent combined. These trends create problems beyond insulting our sense of basic fairness. Social mobility is far lower than most believe it to be. Children who are born to families in the lowest fifth of earnings are more than 10 times more likely to remain there as adults than they are to earn as much as those in the top fifth. Unless we invest in building a level playing field, we all lose.

Reining in Wall Street and Fixing our Financial System

19We will also vigorously implement, enforce, and build on President Obama's landmark Dodd- Frank financial reform law, and we will stop dead in its tracks every Republican effort to weaken it. We will stop Republican efforts to hamstring our regulators through budget cuts, and we will ensure they have the resources and independence to fully enforce the law and hold both individuals and corporations accountable when they break the rules. We will also continue to protect consumers and defend the Commodity Futures Trading Commission from Republican attacks. We oppose any efforts to change the CFPB's structure from a single director to a partisan, gridlocked Commission and likewise oppose any efforts to remove the Bureau's independent funding and subject it to the appropriations process. Democrats will also continue to support the CFPB in enforcing foundational civil rights laws protecting against discrimination in consumer lending. Democrats condemn predatory payday lending, and will protect consumers by defending the CFPB and implementing strong new regulations.

20 Our goal must be to create a financial system and an economy that works for all Americans, not just a handful of billionaires. We support a financial transactions tax on Wall Street to curb excessive speculation and high-frequency trading, which has threatened financial markets. We acknowledge that there is room within our party for a diversity of views on a broader financial transactions tax.....

21 We will protect and defend the Federal Reserve's independence to carry out the dual mandate assigned to it by Congress—for both full employment and low inflation—against threats from new legislation. We will also reform the Federal Reserve to make it more representative of America as a whole, and we will fight to enhance its independence by ensuring that executives of financial institutions are not allowed to serve on the boards of regional Federal Reserve banks or to select members of those boards.....

Promoting Competition by Stopping Corporate Concentration

22 Large corporations have concentrated their control over markets to a greater degree than Americans have seen in decades—further evidence that the deck is stacked for those at the top. Democrats will take steps to stop corporate concentration in any industry where it is unfairly limiting competition. We will make competition policy and antitrust stronger and more responsive to our economy today, enhance the antitrust enforcement arms of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), and encourage other agencies to police anti-competitive practices in their areas of jurisdiction.....

Making the Wealthy Pay Their Fair Share of Taxes

23 At a time of massive income and wealth inequality, we believe the wealthiest Americans and largest corporations must pay their fair share of taxes. Democrats will claw back tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas, eliminate tax breaks for big oil and gas companies, and crack down on inversions and other methods companies use to dodge their tax responsibilities. We will make sure that our tax code rewards businesses that make investments and provide good-paying jobs here in the United States, not businesses that walk out on America. We will end deferrals so that American corporations pay United States taxes immediately on foreign profits and can no longer escape paying their fair share of U.S. taxes by stashing profits abroad. We will then use the revenue raised from fixing the corporate tax code to reinvest in rebuilding America and ensuring economic growth that will lead to millions of good-paying jobs.

24 We will ensure those at the top contribute to our country's future by establishing a multimillionaire surtax to ensure millionaires and billionaires pay their fair share. In addition, we will shut down the "private tax system" for those at the top, immediately close egregious loopholes like those enjoyed by hedge fund managers, restore fair taxation on multimillion dollar estates, and ensure millionaires can no longer pay a lower rate than their secretaries. At a time of near-record corporate profits, slow wage growth, and rising costs, we need to offer tax relief to middle-class families—not those at the top.

25 Democrats believe that no one should be able avoid paying their fair share by hiding money abroad, and that corrupt leaders and terrorists should not be able to use the system of international finance to their advantage. We will work to crack down on tax evasion and promote transparency to fight corruption and terrorism. And we will make sure that law-abiding Americans living abroad are not unfairly penalized by finding the right solutions for them to the requirements under the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) and Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts (FBAR).

26 We will offer tax relief to hard working, middle-class families for the cost squeeze they have faced for years from rising health care, childcare, education, and other expenses. Donald Trump and the Republican Party would do the opposite and provide trillions in tax cuts for millionaires, billionaires, and corporations at the expense of working families, seniors, and the health of our economy.

Promoting Trade That is Fair and Benefits American Workers

27 Democrats acknowledge that for millions of Americans, global trade has failed to live up to its promise—with too many countries breaking the rules and too many corporations outsourcing jobs at the expense of American workers and communities.

28 Over the past three decades, America has signed too many trade deals that have not lived up to the hype. Trade deals often boosted the profits of large corporations, while at the same time failing to protect workers' rights, labor standards, the environment, and public health. We need to end the race to the bottom and develop trade policies that support jobs in America. That is why Democrats believe we should review agreements negotiated years ago to update them to reflect these principles. Any future trade agreements must make sure our trading partners cannot undercut American workers by taking shortcuts on labor policy or the environment. They must not undermine democratic decision-making through special privileges and private courts for corporations, and trade negotiations must be transparent and inclusive.

29 Democrats' priority is to significantly strengthen enforcement of existing trade rules and the tools we have, including by holding countries accountable on currency manipulation and significantly expanding enforcement resources. China and other countries are using unfair trade practices to tilt the playing field against American workers and businesses. When they dump cheap products into our markets, subsidize state-owned enterprises, devalue currencies, and discriminate against American companies, our middle class pays the

price. That has to stop. Democrats will use all our trade enforcement tools to hold China and other trading partners accountable—because no country should be able to manipulate their currencies to gain a competitive advantage.

30 While we believe that openness to the world economy is an important source of American leadership and dynamism, we will oppose trade agreements that do not support good American jobs, raise wages, and improve our national security. We believe any new trade agreements must include strong and enforceable labor and environmental standards in their core text with streamlined and effective enforcement mechanisms. Trade agreements should crack down on the unfair and illegal subsidies other countries grant their businesses at the expense of ours. It should promote innovation of and access to lifesaving medicines. And it should protect a free and open internet. We should never enter into a trade agreement that prevents our government, or other governments, from putting in place rules that protect the environment, food safety, or the health of American citizens or others around the world.

31 These are the standards Democrats believe must be applied to all trade agreements, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

Bring Americans Together and Remove Barriers to Opportunities

Closing the Racial Wealth Gap

32 America's economic inequality problem is even more pronounced when it comes to racial and ethnic disparities in wealth and income. It is unacceptable that the median wealth for African Americans and Latino Americans is roughly one-tenth that of white Americans. These disparities are also stark for American Indians and certain Asian American subgroups, and may become even more significant when considering other characteristics such as age, disability status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

33 The racial wealth and income gaps are the result of policies that discriminate against people of color and constrain their ability to earn income and build assets to the same extent as other Americans. It has accumulated over time and is made worse by ongoing policies and practices. For example, African Americans and Latinos lost more than half of their net worth as a result of the housing crisis and the Great Recession, because they lost jobs at a much faster rate than white workers and because they were disproportionately targeted for subprime, predatory, and fraudulent mortgages during the run-up to the housing crisis.

34 Democrats believe it is long past time to close this racial wealth gap. Disparities in wealth cannot be solved by the free market alone, but instead, the federal government must play a role in eliminating systemic barriers to wealth accumulation for different racial groups and improving opportunities for people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds to build wealth. Federal policies must remove barriers to achieving sustainable homeownership, provide for greater diversity in federal and state contracting practices, incentivize and expand access to retirement investment programs, increase opportunities for quality jobs and education, and challenge the deeply rooted structures that perpetuate and exacerbate current disparities and ultimately stagnate the nation's economic growth and security.

Full 2016 Democratic Party Platform available at:

<https://www.demconvention.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Democratic-Party-Platform-7.21.16-no-lines.pdf>