

OPINION

# Democrats and Republicans present platforms

## Democratic Platform

Excerpts from the Democratic National Platform:

**On the economy:** "Addressing the deficit requires fair and shared sacrifice of all Americans for the common good."

"In place of the Republican supply-side disaster, the Democratic investment, economic conversion and growth strategy will generate more revenues from a growing economy."

"We must also tackle spending, by putting everything on the table; eliminate non-productive programs; achieve defense savings; reform entitlement programs to control soaring health-care costs; cut federal administrative costs by 3 percent annually for four years; limit increases in the 'present budget' to the rate of growth in the average American's paycheck; apply a strict 'pay as you go' rule to new non-investment spending; and make the rich pay their fair share in taxes."

**On cities:** "It is in all Americans' interest that cities once again be places where hard-working families can put down roots and find good jobs, quality health care, affordable housing and decent schools."

"Democrats will create a new partnership to rebuild America's cities after 12 years of Republican neglect."

"We will create jobs by investing significant resources to put people back to work, beginning with a summer job initiative and training programs for inner-city youth. A national public works investment and infrastructure program will provide jobs and strengthen our cities, suburbs, rural communities and country."

**On health care:** "All Americans should have access to quality, affordable health care — not as a privilege, but as a right. That requires tough controls on health costs, which are rising at two to three times the rate of inflation, terrorizing American families and businesses and depriving millions of the health care they need."

"We will enact a uniquely American reform of the health-care system to control costs and make health care affordable; ensure quality and choice of health-care providers; cover all Americans regardless of pre-existing conditions; squeeze out waste, bureaucracy and abuse; improve primary and preventive care ... provide a safety net through support of public hospitals ... provide for the full range of reproductive choice ... expand medical research; and provide more long-term care."

**On the arts:** "We believe in public support for the arts, including a National Endowment for the Arts that is free from political manipulation and firmly rooted in the First Amendment's freedom of expression guarantee."

**On the environment:** "Democrats know we must act now to save the health of the earth, and the health of our children, for generations to come."

"The United States must become a leader, not an impediment, in the fight against global warming."

"We should join our European allies in agreeing to limit carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000."

"The United States must be a world leader in finding replacements for CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances."

"We must work actively to protect the planet's biodiversity and preserve its forests."

"We must fashion imaginative ways of engaging governments and business in the effort to encourage developing nations to preserve their environmental heritage."

"Explosive population growth must be controlled by working closely with other industrialized and developing nations and private organizations to fund greater family-planning efforts."

**On choice:** "Democrats stand behind the right of every woman to choose, consistent with Roe v. Wade, regardless of the ability to pay, and support a national law to protect that right."

"It is a fundamental constitutional right that individual Americans, not the government, can best take responsibility for making."

## Clinton, Bush target values, choice, economy

Welcome to that quadrennial milestone — the post-convention, pre-Labor Day limbo of the American presidential campaign process. Every four years, the American electorate survives the political conventions. The voters all come up for one last gasp for air, and then they dive headlong into the depths of the political rapids.

So what should we do during this pre-storm calm? I suggest we develop some insight into the national platforms of the two major political parties.

### Family Values

Though "change" is the catchword of the year, "family values" reigns as supreme catch phrase. What is it exactly? Some might say, like Supreme Court Justice Potter said of pornography, "I know it when I see it."

The Democratic platform asserts that it will restore "basic American values ... personal responsibility, individual liberty, tolerance, faith, family and hard work." Juxtapose that aim with the GOP's acerbic provision — "Elements within the media, the entertainment industry, academia and the Democratic party are waging guerrilla war against American values." The Democratic platform asserts that the Republicans do too little regarding the family when it comes to governmental programs and legislative bills. Republicans, on the other hand, seek limited governmental in-

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volvement in the family, emphasizing that "family values" should be affirmed by governmental leaders, not legislated. So which party is right? It's simple: No party — no person — has a monopolistic claim on family issues nor on God or patriotism. Believing otherwise is an affront to every citizen and a slap in the face of common sense.

### Abortion

This issue has ballooned into a powerful political tool. With the Reagan-Bush Supreme Court's treatment of Roe vs. Wade, emotions have escalated. In fact, so electric has the air become over abortion rights that both parties had delegates supporting the omission of any abortion plank. First Lady Barbara Bush, in a recent Newsweek interview, voiced that abortion is "a personal choice that should be left out of ... platforms at conventions."

Regardless of the GOP standard bearer's spouse, that party included strong anti-abortion language within its platform. Essentially Bush won the battle by the time-honored tactic of stroking the conservative right and, again, securing that wing of voters for the fall. That platform's proposed constitutional amendment would virtually ban all abor-

tion.

Meanwhile, the Democratic platform supported the Roe vs. Wade decision and the guarantee of choice. That provision roughly mirrors the nation: A Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll gives the Clinton/Democratic platform a 2-1 edge on that issue. Their platform also might entice GOP moderates, particularly women, whose inclusive language in the 1976 Republican platform disappeared in 1984 and 1988. However, Republican Newt Gingrich has urged pro-choice Republicans to subordinate their pro-choice support to their economic views in November's balloting. So, despite the strict language on the issue of abortion within the Republican platform, even the staunchest of conservatives wishes to stamp out part of the alleged Republican Big Tent.

### Economics

Both platforms pledge to balance the federal budget deficit. But both parties have been plagued for years by the same dilemma: To reduce the deficit, the nation must either cut services, raise taxes, impose an amalgam of those or cut the military budget plus engage in any of the previous options.

Unlike 1988, this year's GOP platform offered no targeted balanced budget date. The Republicans propose Reaganesque cuts in mandatory federal programs such as Medicare and Aid to Families With Dependent Children —

but not Social Security. Furthermore, the manifesto calls for across-the-board cuts in the income tax and capital gains tax, as well as new tax deductions. Others question this "have your cake and eat it too" mentality.

As for the Democrats, their platform interweaves the Clinton "New Covenant" with the call for radical change. It envisions entitlement reform as both a deficit-cutting tool and a means of undergirding individual rights and opportunity. The Democrat's plan for re-investing in human capital and infrastructure has received applause from moderates and liberals as well as charges of "tax and spend liberalism" by some conservatives.

This column by no means claims to highlight all the major issues of this year's party platforms. While party platforms no longer hold the role they once did, one thing is for sure: They allow partisans an opportunity to speak as one on issues of the day. This year, they also have become an electoral strategy. In this day and age of quick-draw political commentaries, a discussion of the platforms is refreshing. Campaigns are more than the glitz, glamour and personalities; they are also about ideas and visions for the world's future. Help protect an endangered species, the national party platform.

Wayne Goodwin is a UNC law school alumnus from Hamlet, N.C.

## Republican Platform

Excerpts from the Republican National platform:

**On the family:** "As the family goes, so goes the nation. Strong families and strong communities make a strong America. Our greatness starts at home."

"Imagine the America we could create if all parents taught their children the importance of honesty, work, responsibility and respect for others. We would have less violence in our homes and streets; less illegal drug use; fewer teen pregnancies forcing girls and boys to be adults before they have graduated from high school. Instead we would have an America of families, friends and communities that care about one another."

"Broken homes can have a devastating emotional and economic impact on children and are the breeding ground for gang members."

**On defense:** "A new era in defense requires new approaches to management, to get more out of every dollar in a shrinking budget."

"That calls for dramatically different ways of doing business. President Bush's reforms in defense management and acquisition already mean massive savings — \$70 billion through 1997 — without sacrificing combat capability."

"This is especially true of the high technology, demonstrated in Desert Storm, that made our enemies realize they had been left behind in the race for the future."

"We will attack the problem of waste in the military, especially at its root in the pork barrel politics of Capitol Hill."

"We will urge the Department of Defense to encourage a broader constituency for saving and to continue procurement reforms based on performance rather than unreasonable regulations imposed by the Democratic Congress."

**On the environment:** "Cleaning up America is a labor of love for family, neighborhood and the nation. In the Republican tradition of conserving the past to enrich the future, we have made the United States the world's leader in environmental progress."

"Liberal Democrats think people are the problem. We know people are the solution. Respecting the people's rights and views, we applied market-based solutions to environmental problems."

"Our reforestation drive will plant 1 billion trees a year across America. Our moratorium on offshore drilling in sensitive offshore areas has bought time for technology to master environmental challenges. Our farm policies have begun a new era in sound agricultural environmentalism."

"Adverse changes in climate must be the common concern of mankind. At the same time, we applaud our president for personally confronting the bureaucrats at the Rio Conference. Following his example, a Republican Senate will not ratify any treaty that moves decisions beyond our democratic process or transfers beyond our shores authority over U.S. property."

**On law and order:** "One of the first duties of government is to protect the public security — to maintain law and order so that citizens are free to pursue the fruits of life and liberty."

"Violent crime is the gravest domestic threat to our way of life. It has turned our communities into battlegrounds, our playgrounds into graveyards."

"This is the legacy of a liberalism that elevates criminals' rights above victims' rights, that justifies soft-on-crime judges' approving early-release prison programs and that leaves law enforcement officers powerless to deter crime with the threat of punishment."

"The Republican Party is committed to a drug-free America. We urge that states and communities emphasize anti-drug education by police officers and others in schools to educate young children to the dangers of the drug culture. Dope is no longer trendy. We oppose legalizing or decriminalizing drugs. That is a morally abhorrent idea, the last vestige of an ill-conceived philosophy that counseled the legitimacy of permissiveness."



## Candidates differ on options for the future

This election year, like many others before it, offers a choice between two different men who wish to hold the office of president of the United States. But more important, this time there is a clear difference in vision between the two candidates. George Bush is by far more qualified than Bill Clinton not only to hold the office of president, but also to lead this nation as it prepares for the 21st century. His programs, if enacted by Congress, offer hope and opportunity to all Americans by empowering people — not government — to make the important decisions in life.

**THE ECONOMY:** George Bush has offered an economic growth package to Congress that continually has been thwarted by the liberal Democrat leadership. This cruel political filibuster by congressional leaders was designed to hurt George Bush, but as a result, has abandoned millions of Americans in the quagmire of an economic downturn. The Bush proposals are as follows: to give first time home buyers a \$5000 tax credit; to keep inflation and interest rates low; to continue expanding American trade through new international agreements; to cut red tape so small businesses will grow, creating new jobs; and to cut wasteful spending without raising taxes. The president has proposed a 10-percent tax check off, contingent on congressional spending limits, that will allow the citizens to reduce the deficit without an increase in their tax burden. Furthermore, the Repu-

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blis candidates support an across-the-board tax cut, provided there is a corresponding cut in spending. This will spur private investment and job growth and give back to the people more of their hard-earned money without an increase in the deficit.

Bill Clinton and the Democrats have called for massive tax and spending increases that will stymie growth in all sectors of the economy. His new taxes and regulations will tax away two-thirds of all business profits, money that would otherwise be invested in new plants, more jobs and increased growth.

**HEALTH CARE:** George Bush has proposed a health-care package that has been held hostage by the liberal Democrat leadership of Congress. The president's plan opens up the health-care system to further competition and market forces to control costs, expand access and encourage innovation. Poorer families will receive tax credits. Small businesses can use new ways to cut costs. Paperwork is reduced. People can switch jobs and still get coverage. Consumers — not government — pick their doctors and make the decisions.

Bill Clinton has proposed what he calls a "pay or play" health-care system. Through this plan, health care would be provided at the workplace.

Clinton would cover the cost of this program through a 9-percent payroll tax, which many economists have argued would result in a corresponding increase in lay-offs and long-term unemployment, since businesses would attempt to compensate for this tax. Do you want our health-care system run and operated with the same efficiency as the House post office, Congressional bank and cafeteria? Bush's alternative will not lead to socialized medicine, will limit costs by discouraging frivolous and exorbitant lawsuits that drive up the cost of health care and will protect job growth by not taxing the small businesses of America which form the keystone of economic expansion.

**EDUCATION:** George Bush has proposed a "GI Bill for Children" that lets parents send their kids to the school of their choice. His "America 2000" strategy also gives schools greater flexibility, restores the emphasis on basics, strengthens math and science, encourages new kinds of schools and sets national goals.

On the other hand, Bill Clinton's record on education is, quite frankly, despicable. Arkansas is 50th in teacher pay, 47th in per capita education spending, 43rd in per capita spending for higher education and has the fifth-highest level of adult illiteracy. Granted, Arkansas has never been a leader in these categories. But under the Clinton administration, the state has slipped

further despite the fact federal aid has doubled in absolute dollar terms. Gov. Clinton has the audacity to claim that he is going to "Save the American education system, the way I saved education in Arkansas." With his record, we're better off keeping him in Little Rock.

**REFORM:** This election, like many others, is about change. We need to replace the entrenched leadership of the Democratic majority in the House and the Senate. The Democrats have controlled Congress for 40 years. With a Republican Congress, the president's agenda can be rescued and finally enacted. George Bush and the Republicans support congressional term limits, a balanced budget amendment, decreasing governmental bureaucracy and other reforms that will streamline government and empower the people. The Democrats offer the same, failed proposals of the 1960s and '70s. What the Democrats fail to realize is that the world has changed since then. Their ideas of big government, big spending and more regulation have not, cannot and will not work. If you want change in this election, change that will increase economic growth, create jobs, establish affordable health care, and keep America secure at home and abroad, re-elect George Bush and give him a Republican Congress that will work with him for the good of the country.

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## Survey says: Read between the lines with election year poll results

Political surveys are the scapegoat of new-age politics. Pundits gripe that the flood of numbers obscures policy issues. Blow-dried television anchormen appear on C-SPAN to slap themselves on the wrist for focusing too heavily on horse-racer coverage. Candidates say summer surveys are meaningless. Everybody important enough to garner sound-bite time argues that day-to-day changes in survey results reveal wild fluctuations in the electorate.

Amid all this posturing, it's important to remember one bit of advice: Polls don't mislead people; people mislead people. When poll results change from one day to the next, or when two polls reported on the same day differ dramatically, it's easy to blame the black magic of surveys. Most likely, however, the variations are due to different survey methodologies or actual changes in the political landscape.

Consider, for example, two national surveys released recently. The first survey, which appeared Aug. 21, indicated that Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton had tumbled into a virtual dead heat with George Bush. The poll, conducted by The New York Times and CBS, showed Clinton with 45 percent and Bush with 42 percent.

But on Aug. 26, the Times reported the results of another poll conducted in cooperation with CBS. This time, the front-page headline said: "Bush's Gains from Convention Nearly Evaporate in Latest Poll." In this poll, Clinton was ahead of Bush 51 percent to 36 percent.

So what happened between Aug. 21 and Aug. 26? Did

thousands of Clinton supporters desert him during the Republican convention in favor of Bush, only to return to the Clinton camp the day after the GOP fete ended? Or was the wide swing mostly an artifact of how the surveys were conducted?

It's a safe bet that the latter explanation is largely true. A closer look at the two surveys reveals important details. The first poll, which showed Clinton ahead by 45 percent to 42 percent, was an overnight telephone survey conducted on the last day of the Republican convention.

Overnight telephone surveys generally are not as reliable as surveys conducted over several days because they are based on smaller samples that are less representative of the electorate. This worked in Bush's favor, for many folks sitting home ready to be surveyed Aug. 20 were GOP convention viewers who supported Bush.

The second poll, which showed Clinton leading by 51 percent to 36 percent, was conducted over two days and was based on 903 registered voters. Also, the first day of the poll was a Sunday, a day telephone pollsters generally have a better chance of reaching people in their homes.

The Times said the fluctuating poll numbers "provided fresh evidence of the loose allegiances of voters this year" and said voters "shifted back and forth" in the last two weeks.

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There is little doubt that the GOP convention did give Bush some sort of bounce that did cut into Clinton's lead. There also is evidence to support the notion that voters do not have strong ties to either Bush or Clinton.

Just the same, however, there is little doubt that the timing and structure of the Times surveys also affected the results. But it sounds flashier to blame rocky poll numbers on a mysterious evaporation of support than on the survey methodology.

With this in mind, remember five things when you try to make sense of polls between now and election day.

■ Poll results are probabilities. So if 51 percent of a sample of 903 registered voters favor Clinton, all you can say is that you are 95 percent sure that between 48 percent and 54 percent of all registered voters favor Clinton. It's not absolute.

■ Read the fine print. Was it an overnight quickie or a three-day survey? And take note of real-life crises that occurred while the poll was being conducted. If it's a survey about the merits of Bush's foreign policy, and the United States bombs Iraq on the second day of the survey, the results will change.

■ Why don't the numbers add up to 100 percent? If Clinton has 51 percent and Bush has 36 percent, then 13 percent of the respondents gave no answer or some other answer. The way pollsters ask their questions affects the number of respondents who fall into this black hole.

■ The election will be decided not by the popular vote as reported in the polls, but by the Electoral College. Whoever gets 270 Electoral College votes wins. So it's best to examine state-by-state poll results that reveal who is ahead in the richest electoral states.

■ Finally, don't forget Ross Perot, whose name will appear on every state ballot. The results of summer polls that force respondents to choose between only Bush and Clinton will become obsolete when the feisty Perot is thrust into the mix on election day.

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### Column policy

The DTH welcomes guest column submissions from our readers. Interested writers should contact Ashley Fogle at 962-0245.

Please follow these guidelines when submitting columns:

- Limit column length to 800 words.
- All columns should be signed and typed double-spaced.
- Please include your class, major, hometown and phone number.