

2012 Democratic Party Platform

Moving America Forward

Four years ago, Democrats, independents, and many Republicans came together as Americans to move our country forward. We were in the midst of the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, the previous administration had put two wars on our nation's credit card, and the American Dream had slipped out of reach for too many.

Today, our economy is growing again, al-Qaeda is weaker than at any point since 9/11, and our manufacturing sector is growing for the first time in more than a decade. But there is more we need to do, and so we come together again to continue what we started. We gather to reclaim the basic bargain that built the largest middle class and the most prosperous nation on Earth—the simple principle that in America, hard work should pay off, responsibility should be rewarded, and each one of us should be able to go as far as our talent and drive take us.

This election is not simply a choice between two candidates or two political parties, but between two fundamentally different paths for our country and our families. We Democrats offer America the opportunity to move our country forward by creating an economy built to last and built from the middle out. Mitt Romney and the Republican Party have a drastically different vision. They still believe the best way to grow the economy is from the top down—the same approach that benefited the wealthy few but crashed the economy and crushed the middle class.

Democrats see a young country continually made stronger by the greatest diversity of talent and ingenuity in the world, and a nation of people drawn to our shores from every corner of the globe. We believe America can succeed because the American people have never failed and there is nothing that together we cannot accomplish.

Reclaiming the economic security of the middle class is the challenge we must overcome today. That begins by restoring the basic values that made our country great, and restoring for everyone who works hard and plays by the rules the opportunity to find a job that pays the bills, turn an idea into a profitable business, care for your family, afford a home you call your own and health care you can count on, retire with dignity and respect, and, most of all, give your children the kind of education that allows them to dream even bigger and go even further than you ever imagined.

This has to be our North Star—an economy that's built not from the top down, but from a growing middle class, and that provides ladders of opportunity for those working hard to join the middle class.

This is not another trivial political argument. It's the defining issue of our time and at the core of the American Dream. And now we stand at a make-or-break moment, and are faced with a choice between moving forward and falling back.

The Republican Party has turned its back on the middle class Americans who built this country. Our opponents believe we should go back to the top-down economic policies of the last decade. They think that if we simply eliminate protections for families and consumers, let Wall Street write its own rules again, and cut taxes for the wealthiest, the market will solve all our problems on its own. They argue that if we help corporations and wealthy investors maximize their profits by whatever means necessary, whether through layoffs or outsourcing, it will automatically translate into jobs and prosperity that benefits us all. They would repeal health reform, turn Medicare into a voucher program, and follow the same path of fiscal irresponsibility of the past administration—giving trillions of dollars in tax cuts weighted towards millionaires and

billionaires while sticking the middle class with the bill. But we've tried their policies—and we've all suffered when they failed.

It is not enough to go back to where the country was before the crisis. We must rebuild a strong foundation that ensures it never happens again.

Democrats know that America prospers when we're all in it together. We see an America where everyone has a fair shot, does their fair share, and plays by the same rules. We see an America that out-educates, out-builds, and out-innovates the rest of the world.

We see an America with greater economic security and opportunity, driven by education, energy, innovation and infrastructure, and a tax code that helps to create American jobs and bring down the debt in a balanced way. We believe in deficit reduction not by placing the burden on the middle class and the poor, but by cutting out programs we can't afford and asking the wealthiest to again contribute their fair share. These values are why we enacted historic health care reform that provides economic security for families and enacted sweeping financial reform legislation that will prevent the recklessness that cost so many their jobs, homes, and savings. They're why we rescued the auto industry and revived our manufacturing supply chain. They're why we helped American families who are working multiple jobs and struggling to pay the bills save a little extra money through tax cuts, lower health care costs, and affordable student loans.

They're why we fought to reclaim the value of treating all Americans with dignity and respect. And they're why President Barack Obama has ended one war and is responsibly drawing down another. They're why we're restoring our alliances and image around the world and pursuing a foreign policy that's making us safer.

But there is more to be done. We knew that renewing the American Dream wouldn't be easy—we knew it would take more than one year, or one term, or even one president.

The problems we're facing right now have been more than a decade in the making. We are the party of inclusion and respect differences of perspective and belief. And so, even when we disagree, we work together to move this country forward. But what is holding our nation back is a stalemate in Washington between two fundamentally different views of which direction America should take.

We must keep moving forward and doing the hard work of rebuilding a strong economy by betting on the American worker and investing in a growing middle class. We need a government that stands up for the hopes, values, and interests of working people, and gives everyone willing to work hard the chance to make the most of their God-given potential.

Rebuilding Middle Class Security

We've come a long way since 2008. The President took office in the middle of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression; that month 800,000 Americans lost their jobs—more than in any single month in the previous 60 years. On Day One, he took immediate action to stop the free fall and put Americans back to work. In the midst of the crisis, President Obama knew what Democrats have always known: that American workers are tougher than tough times. Since early 2010, the private sector has created 4.5 million jobs, and American manufacturing is growing for the first time since the 1990s.

The President knew from the start that to rebuild true middle class security, we can't just cut our way to prosperity. We must out-educate, out-innovate, and out-build the world. We need an economy that creates the jobs of the future and makes things the rest of the world buys—not one built on outsourcing, loopholes, or risky financial deals that jeopardize everyone, especially the middle class.

We've already made historic progress. States have more flexibility to raise standards and reform schools, more students are receiving grants and scholarships, and young adults can stay on their parents' health insurance plans as they finish their education and enter the workforce. More working families than ever before have received tax cuts, and fuel-efficiency standards are doubling. The President cracked down on Wall Street recklessness and abuses by health insurance, credit card, and mortgage companies.

Our work is far from done. A crisis this deep didn't happen overnight and it won't be solved overnight. Too many parents sit around their kitchen tables at night after they've put their kids to bed, worrying about how they will make a mortgage payment or pay the rent, or how they will put their children through college. We now stand at a make-or-break moment for families, and America faces a clear choice in this election: move forward toward a nation built from the middle class out where everyone has the chance to get ahead, or go back to the same failed ideas that created the crisis in the first place.

The Republicans in Congress and Mitt Romney have a very different idea about where they want to take this country. To pay for their trillions in additional tax cuts weighted towards millionaires and billionaires, they'll raise taxes on the middle class and gut our investments in education, research and technology, and new roads, bridges, and airports. They'll end Medicare as we know it. They want to let Wall Street write its own rules again and allow insurance companies to once again deny health care to working families. Their troubling and familiar economic scheme doubles down on the same bad ideas of the last decade while arguing that, somehow, this time, they'll lead to a different result. We can't afford to go back or abandon the change we've fought so hard for. We have to move forward.

1. [Putting Americans Back to Work](#)
2. [The Middle Class Bargain](#)
3. [Cutting Waste, Reducing the Deficit, Asking All to Pay Their Fair Share](#)
4. [Economy Built to Last](#)

America Works When Everyone Plays by the Same Rules

For too long, we've had a financial system that stacked the deck against ordinary Americans. Banks on Wall Street played by different rules than businesses on Main Street and community banks. Without strong enough regulations, families were enticed, and sometimes tricked, into buying homes they couldn't afford. Banks and investors were allowed to package and sell risky mortgages. Huge reckless bets were made with other people's money on the line.

That behavior not only nearly destroyed the financial system, it cost our economy millions of jobs, hurt middle class and poor families, and left taxpayers holding the bill. For the past three and a half years, President Obama and Democrats around the country have been fighting to bring the country back from this historic economic crisis. We put in place Wall Street reform with smarter, tougher, commonsense rules that will prevent a crisis like that from ever happening again. We know that the free market only works when there are rules of the road to ensure that competition is fair, open, and honest.

Mitt Romney and the Republicans would roll back financial reform and let Wall Street write its own rules again. The President put in place government reform that has led to the most open, efficient, and accountable government in history. We know that transparent and effective government makes economic sense.

Republicans would continue to allow lobbyists too much sway over lawmakers, leading to gridlock in Washington, an outdated regulatory system, and a tax code riddled with loopholes. The President put in place unprecedented ethics reforms and we're fighting for campaign finance reform. We know that millions of Americans are struggling to get by, and their voices shouldn't be drowned out by millions of dollars in secret special-interest lobbying and advertising.

Mitt Romney's opposition to commonsense campaign finance is nothing less than support for corporate and special-interest takeovers in our elections.

We believe America prospers when everyone, from Main Street to Wall Street, does their fair share and plays by the same rules. We will not back down from making sure an oil company can't take the same reckless actions that led to the kind of oil spill we saw in the Gulf of Mexico two years ago. We will not back down from protecting our kids from toxic mercury pollution, or making sure that our food is safe and our water is clean. We will not back down from ensuring that everyone has a seat at the American table and the opportunity to grab the first rung on the ladder to the middle class.

1. [Wall Street Reform](#)
2. [21st Century Government: Transparent and Accountable](#)
3. [Lobbying Reform and Campaign Finance Reform](#)

Greater Together

As Americans, we are bound together by more than nationality or geography. We are bound by a shared set of ideals and values rooted in the notion that we are greater together; that our collective efforts produce something better than the sum of our individual actions; and that together, rather than divided, we can overcome the greatest challenges that come our way.

The path to restoring middle class security is through the basic values that made our country great. We are a nation that says anyone can make it if you try—no matter who you are, where you come from, or what you look like. We know that America is strongest when everybody has a seat at the table and when the same rules apply to everyone, from Main Street to Wall Street.

Republicans like Mitt Romney want to turn back the clock on the progress we've made, telling people whom they can marry, restricting women's access to birth control coverage, and going back to the same economic policies that benefited the wealthy but crashed our economy. Their narrow vision is of an America where everyone is left to fend for themselves and the powerful can write their own rules. Ours is a vision of a big, compassionate America where everyone who works hard has the chance to get ahead—not just those already at the very top. It's a vision that says everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does their fair share, and everyone engages in fair play. It's a vision that says we prosper when we realize that we are all in it together and stand united as a nation without dividing or excluding people.

1. [Strengthening the American Community](#)
2. [Protecting Rights and Freedoms](#)
3. [Ensuring Safety and Quality of Life](#)

Stronger in the World, Safer and More Secure at Home

When President Obama took office in January 2009, our armed forces were engaged in two wars. Al-Qaeda, which had attacked us on 9/11, remained entrenched in its safe havens. Many of our alliances were strained, and our standing in the world had diminished. Around the world and here at home, there were those who questioned whether the United States was headed toward inevitable decline.

Under the leadership of President Obama and the Democratic Party, the tide of war is now receding, and America is looking ahead to a new future. We have responsibly ended the war in Iraq. We have struck major blows against al-Qaeda, bringing Osama bin Laden and other senior al-Qaeda leaders to justice, and putting the terrorist organization on the path to defeat. And we have reversed the momentum of the Taliban and established the conditions to draw down our forces in Afghanistan.

These actions have enabled a broader strategic rebalancing of American foreign policy. After more than a decade at war, we can focus on nation-building here at home and concentrate our resources and attention abroad on the areas that are the greatest priority moving forward. This means directing more energy toward crucial problems, including longstanding threats like nuclear proliferation and emerging dangers such as cyber-attacks, biological weapons, climate change, and transnational crime. And it means a long-overdue focus on the world's most dynamic regions and rising centers of influence.

As we rebalance our foreign policy, we have rebuilt our relationships around the world. From Europe and Asia to the Middle East, Africa, and the Americas, we have strengthened the alliances and partnerships that are so central to global security, and we have taken steps to reinvigorate international institutions. All the while, we have built the foundation for sustained American leadership by growing our economy, preserving our unrivaled military strength, and advancing our values.

President Obama and the Democratic Party know that there is no greater responsibility than protecting the American people. We also understand the indispensable role that the United States must continue to play in promoting international peace and prosperity. And because of the steps we have taken, the United States is leading once again, and America is safer, stronger, and more secure than it was four years ago.

1. [Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq](#)
2. [Disrupting, Dismantling, and Defeating Al-Qaeda](#)
3. [Responsibly Ending the War in Afghanistan](#)
4. [Preventing the Spread and Use of Nuclear Weapons](#)
5. [Countering Emerging Threats](#)
6. [Strengthening Alliances, Expanding Partnerships, and Reinvigorating International Institutions](#)
7. [Promoting Global Prosperity and Development](#)
8. [Maintaining the Strongest Military in the World](#)
9. [Advancing Universal Values](#)