

Moving America Forward 2012 Democratic National 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.

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.

Putting Americans Back to Work

When President Obama took office, the economy was in the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression. His Recovery Act represented the largest education investment since President Johnson, the largest infrastructure investment since President Eisenhower, the single largest clean energy investment ever, and the broadest tax cut in American history. It helped keep teachers, police officers, nurses, and firefighters on the job. It ensured that as we re-built our country, we bought American-made iron, steel, and manufactured goods wherever feasible, consistent with our international obligations. It helped the President stop the bleeding and reverse the free fall.

But just as the recession was not created overnight, we knew it would take time to recover from the crisis – and more needs to be done. Last September, President Obama put forward the American Jobs Act to provide an immediate boost to the economy and strengthen the recovery. We have already enacted key parts of the American Jobs Act – payroll tax relief, tax credits for businesses that hire veterans, and an extension of unemployment insurance that also included reforms like work-sharing, a "Bridge to Work" to help the long-term unemployed reconnect with the labor force, and support for unemployed workers looking to become entrepreneurs. But Republicans in Congress blocked other provisions that independent analysis said could create one million jobs.

Even as President Obama remains committed to working with both parties, he and his cabinet pursued a series of executive actions to help spark economic growth and job creation, including expanding access to refinancing for families who have stayed current on their mortgages, challenging Community Health Centers to hire veterans, accelerating permitting for transportation projects, cutting waste and reducing improper payments, and enabling student loan borrowers to cap their payments at a percentage of income.

That's why President Obama and the Democratic Party have cut taxes on American workers and businesses and made sweeping reforms to the unemployment system to help get people back to work.

And we continue to fight for measures that would strengthen the recovery and create jobs now, including keeping teachers and first responders on the job, putting construction workers back to work by investing in our roads, bridges, schools, and water supply, helping families refinance their mortgages and save hundreds of dollars a month, cutting taxes for small businesses that invest and hire, and putting veterans back to work. That's why we continue to fight for relief for the long-term unemployed, including a ban on hiring discrimination against the unemployed and a reformed and expanded universal worker training proposal to provide more training and job search assistance to all displaced workers regardless of how they lost their job. The President's plan includes many measures that have long had bipartisan support.

The Middle Class Bargain

Middle Class Tax Cuts. President Obama and Democrats in Congress cut taxes for every working family, putting more money in the pockets of Americans who need it most. A typical family has saved \$3,600 during his first term. Now he's fighting to stop middle class families and those aspiring to join the middle class from seeing their taxes go up and to extend key tax relief for working families and those paying for college, while asking the wealthiest and corporations to pay their fair share. That is why we will always vigorously oppose the type of tax reform supported by Mitt Romney, which independent experts have found would require raising taxes on typical families with children by at least \$2,000 if it were paid for. At the same time, Mitt Romney's plan would cut taxes for those making over \$3 million by an average of \$250,000 and would create incentives that will lead to hundreds of thousands of jobs going overseas at the expense of American workers.

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.

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

"My life was saved by the Affordable Care Act. I have a family history of breast cancer, and when I heard on the news that the health care law was going to make sure I could get a mammogram without any copay, I breathed a sigh of relief. I knew I'd be able to keep on schedule and stay up to date on my breast cancer screenings. Then I had a mammogram and found out I had a small tumor. Luckily, we caught it very early and I'm doing fine." – Judith Smith

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.

Stabilizing the Housing Market and Hard-Hit Communities. For more than a decade, irresponsible lenders tricked buyers into signing subprime loans while too many homeowners got in over their heads by buying homes they couldn't afford. But when the housing bubble burst, it hurt everyone, including responsible homeowners who played by the rules, but saw their home values decline and their neighbors' houses sit vacant. The housing market's dramatic collapse did more than punish millions of innocent Americans; it also triggered the economy's downward spiral into recession.

President Obama took swift action to stabilize a housing market in crisis, helping five million families restructure their loans to help them stay in their homes, making it easier for families to refinance their mortgages and save hundreds of dollars a month, and giving tax credits to first-time home buyers. He also cracked down on fraudulent mortgage lenders and other abuses that contributed to the housing crisis. Democrats have held the largest financial institutions accountable by requiring them to provide relief for homeowners still struggling to pay their mortgages and to change practices that took advantage of homeowners. Democrats also understand the importance of helping communities fight back against the foreclosures that threaten entire neighborhoods, which is why the President proposed to expand the successful neighborhood stabilization efforts in his American Jobs Act.

Too many people still owe more on their homes than they are worth. That is why Democrats are fighting to give every responsible homeowner the chance to refinance their home, spurring investment in communities that have been hit hardest by foreclosure, and taking whatever steps we can to avoid more foreclosures. The President remains committed to creating an economy that's built to last, where home ownership is an achievable dream for all Americans.

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.

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.

An Economy that Out-Educates the World and Offers Greater Access to Higher Education and Technical Training. Democrats believe that getting an education is the surest path to the middle class, giving all students the opportunity to fulfill their dreams and contribute to our economy and democracy. Public education is one of our critical democratic institutions. We are committed to ensuring that every child in America has access to a world-class public education so we can out-educate the world and make sure America has the world's highest proportion of college graduates by 2020. This requires excellence at every level of our education system, from early learning through post-secondary education. It means we must close the achievement gap in America's schools and ensure that in every neighborhood in the country, children can benefit from high-quality educational opportunities.

This is why we have helped states and territories develop comprehensive plans to raise standards and improve instruction in their early learning programs and invested in expanding and reforming Head Start.

President Obama and the Democrats are committed to working with states and communities so they have the flexibility and resources they need to improve elementary and secondary education in a way that works best for students. To that end, the President challenged and encouraged states to raise their standards so students graduate ready for college or career and can succeed in a dynamic global economy. Forty-six states responded, leading groundbreaking reforms that will deliver better education to millions of American students. Too many students, particularly students of color and disadvantaged students, drop out of our schools, and Democrats know we must address the dropout crisis with the urgency it deserves. The Democratic Party understands the importance of turning around struggling public schools. We will continue to strengthen all our schools and work to expand public school options for low-income youth, including magnet schools, charter schools, teacher-led schools, and career academies.

Because there is no substitute for a great teacher at the head of a classroom, the President helped school districts save more than 400,000 educator jobs.

We Democrats honor our nation's teachers, who do a heroic job for their students every day. If we want high-quality education for all our kids, we must listen to the people who are on the front lines. The President has laid out a plan to prevent more teacher layoffs while attracting and rewarding great teachers. This includes raising standards for the programs that prepare our teachers, recognizing and rewarding good teaching, and retaining good teachers. We also believe in carefully crafted evaluation

systems that give struggling teachers a chance to succeed and protect due process if another teacher has to be put in the classroom. We also recognize there is no substitute for a parent's involvement in their child's education.

To help keep college within reach for every student, Democrats took on banks to reform our student loan program, saving more than \$60 billion by removing the banks acting as middlemen so we can better and more directly invest in students. To make college affordable for students of all backgrounds and confront the loan burden our students shoulder, we doubled our investment in Pell Grant scholarships and created the American Opportunity Tax Credit worth up to \$10,000 over four years of college, and we're creating avenues for students to manage their federal student loans so that their payments can be only 10 percent of what they make each month. President Obama has pledged to encourage colleges to keep their costs down by reducing federal aid for those that do not, investing in colleges that keep tuition affordable and provide good value, doubling the number of work-study jobs available to students, and continuing to ensure that students have access to federal loans with reasonable interest rates. We invested more than \$2.5 billion in savings from reforming our student loan system to strengthen our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Alaska, Hawaiian Native Institutions, Asian American and Pacific Islander Institutions, and other Minority Serving Institutions. These schools play an important role in creating a diverse workforce, educating new teachers, and producing the next generation of STEM workers.

"I work full-time during the day, and I attend Florida International University at night as a part-time student. I'm working towards a degree in Public Administration. If it wasn't for financial aid, I wouldn't be able to pursue my dream. Like so many people, I would have to put my education on hold. Because of President Obama, I don't have to make this sacrifice. By doubling Pell Grants and enacting college tax credits, he's standing up for students and helping to make college more affordable and accessible." – Maytee Lopez

We Democrats also recognize the economic opportunities created by our nation's community colleges. That is why the President has invested in community colleges and called for additional partnerships between businesses and community colleges to train two million workers with the skills they need for good jobs waiting to be filled, and to support business-labor apprenticeship programs that provide skills and opportunity to thousands of Americans. The President also proposed to double key investments in science to educate the next generation of scientists and engineers, encourage private sector innovation, and prepare at least 100,000 math and science teachers over the next decade. And to make this country a destination for global talent and ingenuity, we won't deport deserving young people who are

"As a math teacher, my job is to enter into my classroom each day and get my students excited about the world around them. I know that by sharing the fundamentals of math with my students, I am providing the critical tools they need to create their own success, and President Obama understands that a quality STEM education is critical to my students and to the economy of the future. That's why he is challenging our country to support the work I do, and train more teachers like me." – Hannah Pultz

Americans in every way but on paper, and we will work to make it possible for foreign students earning advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to stay and help create jobs here at home.

Mitt Romney has a radically different vision. He says we need fewer teachers, cops, and firefighters – good middle class jobs – even after losing hundreds of thousands of such jobs during the recession and at a time when state, local, and territorial governments are still shedding these jobs. He supports dramatic cuts to Head Start and the Pell Grant program.

Tuition at public colleges has soared over the last decade and students are graduating with more and more debt; but Mitt Romney thinks students should "shop around" for the "best education they can afford." And he supports the radical House Republican budget that would cut financial aid for more than one million students while giving tax cuts to the rich. We Democrats have focused on making sure that

taxpayer dollars support high-quality education programs, but Mitt Romney is a staunch supporter of expensive, for-profit schools – schools that often leave students buried in debt and without the skills for quality jobs and that prey on our servicemembers and veterans.

Cutting Waste, Reducing the Deficit, Asking All to Pay Their Fair Share

After the previous administration put two wars and tax cuts weighted towards the wealthy on the nation's credit card, and in the wake of the worst recession since the Great Depression, Democrats took decisive steps to restore fiscal responsibility to Washington. We reinstated the tough pay-as-you-go budget rules of the 1990s so that all permanent new spending and tax cuts must now be offset by savings or revenue increases. President Obama has already signed into law \$2 trillion in spending reductions as part of a balanced plan to reduce our deficits by over \$4 trillion over the next decade while taking immediate steps to strengthen the economy now. This approach includes tough spending cuts that will bring annual domestic spending to its lowest level as a share of the economy in 50 years, while still allowing us to make investments that benefit the middle class now and reduce our deficit over a decade.

We are committed to defeating efforts that would return us to the failed economic policies of the past, in which tax relief for the wealthy explodes the deficit and asks the middle class to shoulder that burden.

To help spur economic growth, President Obama and the Democratic Party cut taxes for every working family – providing \$3,600 in tax relief to the typical family over the President's first term in office – and we are committed to extending the middle class tax cuts for the 98 percent of American families who make less than \$250,000 a year, and we will not raise taxes on them.

In order to reduce the deficit while still making the investments we need in education, research, infrastructure, and clean energy, the President has asked for the wealthiest taxpayers to pay their fair share. We have to cut what we don't need in order to make room for the things we do need to grow our economy. We support allowing the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest to expire and closing loopholes and deductions for the largest corporations and the highest-earning taxpayers. We are committed to reforming our tax code so that it is fairer and simpler, creating a tax code that lives up to the Buffett Rule so no millionaire pays a smaller share of his or her income in taxes than middle class families do. We are also committed to reforming the corporate tax code to lower tax rates for companies in the United States, with additional relief for those locating manufacturing and research and development on our shores, while closing loopholes and reducing incentives for corporations to shift jobs overseas.

The Republican Party has a different vision—instead of asking everyone to do their fair share and making investments we need for an economy built to last, they would slash taxes for corporations and the wealthiest Americans, let Wall Street once again write its own rules, and balance the budget on the backs of the middle class. Romney and Congressional Republicans share the same, distorted view of the economy and support the same, lopsided budget. Romney would roll back the tax relief Democrats provided to working families and college students, and would require massive new taxes on the middle class to pay for his \$5 trillion tax plan that primarily benefits the wealthy.

The Democratic Party opposes efforts to give additional tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans at the expense of the middle class and investments in our future.

Economy Built to Last

All-of-the-Above Energy Policy. In the last four years, President Obama and the Democratic Party have taken concrete steps to make us more energy independent. We've supported nearly 225,000 clean energy jobs and Americans are importing less oil, breathing cleaner air, and saving money on energy costs. Historic investments in clean energy technologies have helped double the electricity we get from

wind and solar. New emissions and fuel efficiency standards for American cars are reducing our oil use, saving consumers at the pump, and putting Americans back to work. Our dependence on foreign oil is now at a 16-year low, and a new era of cheap, abundant natural gas is helping to bring jobs and industry back to the United States.

We can move towards a sustainable energy-independent future if we harness all of America's great natural resources. That means an all-of-the-above approach to developing America's many energy resources, including wind, solar, biofuels, geothermal, hydropower, nuclear, oil, clean coal, and natural gas. President Obama has encouraged innovation to reach his goal of generating 80 percent of our electricity from clean energy sources by 2035. Democrats support making America the world's leader in building a clean energy economy by extending clean energy incentives that support American businesses and American jobs in communities across the country. It's not enough to invent clean energy technologies here; we want to make them here and sell them around the world. We can further cut our reliance on oil with increased energy efficiency in buildings, industry, and homes, and through the promotion of advanced vehicles, fuel economy standards, and the greater use of natural gas in transportation. Harnessing our natural gas resources needs to be done in a safe and responsible manner, which is why the Obama administration has proposed a number of safeguards to protect against water contamination and air pollution. We will continue to advocate for the use of this clean fossil fuel, while ensuring that public and environmental health and workers' safety are protected. We support more infrastructure investment to speed the transition to cleaner fuels in the transportation sector. And we are expediting the approval process to build out critical oil and gas lines essential to transporting our energy for consumers. Building a clean energy future means that new exploration and production needs to be approached safely and responsibly. Democrats are committed to balancing environmental protection with development, and that means preserving sensitive public lands from exploration, like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Pacific West Coast, Gulf of Maine, and other irreplaceable national landscapes.

We are saving consumers money on their energy bills – both at home and at the pump – but Republican energy policy is full of empty rhetoric and bad ideas that would make their Big Oil donors even richer at the expense of the middle class. Republicans would keep giving billions of taxpayer dollars a year to profitable oil companies and increase costs on consumers. Democrats will fight to cut tax subsidies for Big Oil while promoting job growth in the clean energy sector, so we can cut the deficit and increase jobs and growth in America.

Out-Building and Out-Innovating the Rest of the World. The American people will make a clear choice. They can vote for Republicans who opposed saving the auto industry, who favor a tax code that would actually encourage outsourcing, and whose plans would gut investments in federally financed labs and universities that build new American industries. Or they can elect Democrats who bet on the American worker, will reward those who create private-sector jobs here in America, and make the investments that strengthen the middle class.

Betting on American Manufacturing and the American Automobile Industry. Thanks to President Obama's recovery program, American manufacturers are creating jobs for the first time since the 1990s, including more than 500,000 jobs since the beginning of 2010. Instead of cutting jobs or shipping them abroad, many American companies are now "insourcing," or bringing overseas jobs back home.

"In early 2009, the auto industry was collapsing. Our plant shut down and I was laid off. And, like so many of us, I was scared. But then President Obama bet on the American worker and rescued America's auto industry, and it's paying off for our economy and our country. The plant opened its doors again, so I got my job – and my pride – back. That's a great American comeback story." – Ina Sydney

President Obama and the Democrats boldly rescued America's auto industry, saving more than one million jobs, preventing the collapse of the industry's supply chain, and shoring up countless communities, while revitalizing the backbone of America's manufacturing sector.

Mitt Romney thought the government's action would destroy the auto industry; he and Republican leaders opposed the support President Obama extended to rescue an iconic industry.

All three of America's biggest auto manufacturers – Chrysler, GM, and Ford – are stronger today because of President Obama's decisive leadership. GM and Chrysler have repaid their outstanding loans years ahead of schedule, new American cars are inspiring pride, and the auto industry added more than 200,000 jobs in the last three years.

At the same time, President Obama forged an agreement with American carmakers to nearly double fuel efficiency standards in the coming years, changes that will save a typical car owner more than \$8,000 in fuel costs over the life of their vehicle and reduce American consumers' fuel costs by almost \$2 trillion.

Today American carmakers and auto workers are helping to drive a stronger recovery. The Democratic Party supports a broad-based strategy to further strengthen an American renaissance in manufacturing, with tax relief for clean energy manufacturing, incentives to create advanced vehicles in the United States, more research, and a network of manufacturing innovation hubs.

Insourcing. The Democratic Party believes in insourcing so that America can out-build the rest of the world again. We want to cut tax breaks for companies that are shipping jobs overseas and for special interests, and instead offer tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in the United States of America, betting on American workers who are making American products we sell to the world that are stamped with three proud words: Made in America.

Our strategy is paying off. After decades of watching American companies take jobs to other countries, we're beginning to see entrepreneurs and manufactures make the decision to keep factories and production facilities here in the United States — and even bring jobs back from overseas.

But the Republican Party has nominated a man whose firm invested in companies that were pioneers of outsourcing – and whose plans would actually encourage outsourcing by eliminating all taxes on the foreign profits of U.S. companies.

There is more to do. We Democrats support lowering the corporate tax rate while closing unnecessary loopholes, and lowering rates even further for manufacturers who create good jobs at home. We will give our businesses access to newer roads and airports, and faster railroads and Internet access. We will fight for immediate investments for highways, transit, rail, and aviation and for the creation of a national infrastructure bank to help modernize our infrastructure, put hundreds of thousands of construction workers back on the job, and help businesses grow.

Out-Building the Rest of the World. We support long-term investments in our infrastructure. Roads, bridges, rail and public transit systems, airports, ports, and sewers are all critical to economic growth, as they enable businesses to grow. That's why President Obama and Democrats in Congress have enacted infrastructure investments that will sustain our Highway Trust Fund and provide states, U.S. territories, and communities with two years of funding to build needed infrastructure. These investments are critical for putting Americans back to work and strengthening America's transportation system to grow our

"Back in August 2007, the entire span of the Minneapolis Bridge that crosses the Mississippi river collapsed. Tragically, 13 people were killed and dozens injured. The new Saint Anthony Falls I-35W Bridge was re-opened in September 2008. In my ten years in a steel mill, I've worked alongside my brother and sister steelworkers, and I'm proud to have produced the 63mm anchor bars that secured the newly rebuilt Minneapolis Bridge to bedrock. The bridge's collapse and repair shows the importance of our infrastructure and the strength of American steel. I am extremely grateful for President Obama's tireless commitment to repairing our infrastructure and creating good paying manufacturing jobs." – David Hallas, Listening to America hearing participant

economy. The President has proposed to go substantially further, including a significant up-front investment in our infrastructure followed by sustained increases in investment paid for with part of the savings from winding down our overseas wars, together with reforms that will better leverage government dollars and target significant projects. We will continue to partner with local communities to support their sustainable development.

Out-Innovating the Rest of the World. Democrats support a world-class commitment to science and research so that the next generation of innovators and high-technology manufacturing companies thrive in America. President Obama signed into law changes to help entrepreneurs raise capital and create jobs.

Democrats are committed to preparing math and science teachers and training workers with skills for the future, and doubling funding for key basic research agencies. We support expanding and making permanent the Research and Experimentation Tax Credit. President Obama has charted a new mission for NASA to lead us to a future that builds on America's legacy of innovation and exploration. Democrats reformed the patent system to speed approval of investors' patents and provide alternatives to wasteful litigation.

Democrats know that the United States must preserve our leadership in the Internet economy. We will ensure that America has a 21st century digital infrastructure – robust wired and wireless broadband capability, a smarter electrical grid, and upgraded information technology infrastructure in key sectors such as health care and education. President Obama has committed to ensuring that 98 percent of the country has access to high-speed wireless broadband Internet access. We are finding innovative ways to free up wireless spectrum and are building a state-of-the-art nationwide, interoperable, public safety network. President Obama is strongly committed to protecting an open Internet that fosters investment, innovation, creativity, consumer choice, and free speech, unfettered by censorship or undue violations of privacy.

The administration is vigorously protecting U.S. intellectual property – our technology and creativity – at home and abroad through better enforcement and innovative approaches such as voluntary efforts by all parties to minimize infringement while supporting the free flow of information. Customs seizures of counterfeit drugs are up 600 percent and seizures of fake consumer safety and critical technology have increased nearly 200 percent; the Department of Justice has aggressively prosecuted the illegal overseas transfer of trade secrets. As technology advances, we will continue to work with all stakeholders to protect the security of the nation and its knowledge assets, U.S. intellectual property, the functioning of fair and competitive markets, and the privacy, free expression, and due process rights of Americans.

Standing Up for Workers. When the President took office, the American middle class was under assault. From 2001 to 2007, we had the slowest private-sector job growth in an economic expansion since World War II. The typical family saw its income stall and inequality climb, even as the economy grew. And we had an administration that thought the answer was limiting unions.

Upon taking office, President Obama began the work of restoring an economy built to last that creates good jobs that pay well. Because the President and the Democratic Party believe in the right to organize and in supporting America's workers with strong labor laws, the President rolled back harmful labor policies designed to undermine collective bargaining rights. The President appointed members of the National Labor Relations Board and National Mediation Board who understand the importance of standing up for the rights of workers. He placed his bet on the American worker when he rescued the auto industry. His administration will continue its fight against the exploitative practice of employers fraudulently misclassifying workers as independent contractors or white-collar workers to evade taxes or deny them protections and overtime benefits. As new employment relationships evolve away from the traditional employee-employer model, we need to make sure our labor laws are modernized and keep pace with changes in our economy.

The Republican Party would return us to the failed policies of the last administration, vilifying the American worker, undermining unions, and arguing that everyone should fend for themselves. We oppose the attacks on collective bargaining that Republican governors and state legislatures are mounting in states around the country.

Democrats believe that the right to organize and collectively bargain is a fundamental American value; every American should have a voice on the job and a chance to negotiate for a fair day's pay after a hard day's work. We will continue to fight for the right of all workers to organize and join a union. Unions

"When the auto industry was falling on hard times, the President stepped in to keep it from a total collapse. He also helped some paper workers in St. Paul Minnesota. The Rock-Tenn mill in St. Paul is the largest paper recycler in the state. We have four paper machines the size of football fields, and we make the paper used for corrugated and boxboard boxes. Had the auto industry been allowed to fail, the mill probably would have closed, and 500 people would have lost their jobs. We make the paper for the boxes that Detroit uses to ship its auto parts. If there aren't any auto parts to ship, there isn't a need for boxes." – Bob Ryan, Listening to America hearing participant

helped build the greatest middle class the world has ever known. Their work resulted in the 40-hour workweek and weekends, paid leave and pensions, the minimum wage and health insurance, and Social Security and Medicare – the cornerstones of middle class security. We will fight for labor laws that provide a fair process for workers to choose union representation, that facilitate the collective bargaining process, and that strengthen remedies for

violations of the law. We will fight for collective bargaining rights for police officers, nurses, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, teachers, and other public sector workers – jobs that are a proven path to the middle class for millions of Americans. We will continue to vigorously oppose "Right to Work" and "paycheck protection" efforts, and so-called "Save our Secret Ballot" measures whenever they are proposed.

We will raise the minimum wage, and index it to inflation. We believe in an America where people looking for work can find good jobs, where hard work pays, and where responsibility is rewarded. Our Occupational Safety and Health Administration will continue to adopt and enforce comprehensive safety standards. The first bill the President signed was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, we are committed to passing the Paycheck Fairness Act, and we will continue to battle Republican opposition to efforts to stop wage discrimination.

Helping Small Business. Small businesses employ half of all working Americans, and, over the last two decades, have created two out of three net new jobs. Democrats believe that small businesses are the engine of job growth in America. President Obama signed 18 small-business tax cuts to encourage businesses to hire more workers and make job-creating investments in machinery and equipment and proposed significant additional small business tax relief. He encouraged investment and supported start-ups by allowing businesses to write off the full cost of new equipment and machinery they bought in 2011. Altogether, the President's Small Business Jobs Act accelerated \$55 billion in tax relief through 2011. Democrats made it easier for small businesses to access the loans they needed to grow and hire. The President signed into law changes to help entrepreneurs raise capital while maintaining key investor protections. Small businesses are now once again creating jobs. Democrats have helped small businesses provide health insurance to their workers

"When President Obama signed the Small Business Jobs Act two years ago, he made sure to guarantee some loans to small businesses. That made it easier for people like me to get the credit needed to make it through the recession. I got a loan from a local community bank and the Small Business Administration, which saved my business. I'm proud that I didn't lay off a single employee. This June, we'll celebrate 40 years in business. When we do, we'll be toasting President Obama. The President looked out for small businesses because he knew that we – the creators of most of the jobs in America – were struggling and in need of help." – Peter Aaron

with a tax credit to help pay for the cost of coverage. In 2014, the tax credit will grow and small businesses will be able to pool their purchasing power together to get affordable coverage.

We recognize the importance of small business to women, people of color, tribes, and rural America and will work to help nurture entrepreneurship.

President Obama and the Democratic Party are committed to continue cutting red tape for small businesses, helping them sell their goods around the world and access the capital they need to grow. This includes tax cuts for small businesses that make new investments, hire more workers, or increase wages.

Opened Markets All Over the World for American Products. President Obama and the Democratic Party know that America has the best workers and businesses in the world. If the playing field is level, Americans will be able to compete against every other country on Earth. Over the last four years, we have made historic progress toward the goal of doubling our exports by 2015. We have taken steps to open new markets to American products, while ensuring that other countries play by the same rules. President Obama signed into law new trade agreements with South Korea, Colombia, and Panama that will support tens of thousands of private-sector jobs, but not before he strengthened these agreements on behalf of American workers and businesses. We remain committed to finding more markets for American-made goods – including using the Trans-Pacific Partnership between the United States and eight countries in the Asia-Pacific, one of the most dynamic regions in the world – while ensuring that workers’ rights and environmental standards are upheld, and fighting against unfair trade practices. We expanded and reformed assistance for trade-affected workers, and we demanded renewal of that help alongside new trade agreements.

Both publicly and privately, the President has made clear to the Chinese government that it needs to take steps to appreciate its currency so that America is competing on a level playing field. This administration has doubled the rate of trade cases brought against China by the last administration, and created a new government-wide Interagency Trade Enforcement Center. The President is committed to continuing to fight unfair trade practices that disadvantage American producers and workers, including illegal subsidies, non-tariff barriers, and abuse of worker rights or environmental standards.

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.

Wall Street Reform

A strong middle class can only exist in an economy where everyone plays by the same rules, from Wall Street to Main Street. That's why President Obama and Democrats in Congress overcame fierce opposition from the financial industry to pass the most far-reaching Wall Street reform in generations.

The failed policies of the past decade and hands-off approach toward the excesses of the financial industry helped create the deepest economic catastrophe since the Great Depression. In the fall of 2008, when the financial system and economy were on the verge of catastrophic collapse, the last administration put in place the Troubled Asset Relief Program. The Obama administration has ensured that big banks repay these loans with interest, and its rigorous stewardship has brought transparency and accountability to the program. We enacted Wall Street reform to end all future taxpayer-funded bank bailouts.

Today Democrats are holding Wall Street accountable, bringing new transparency to financial markets, and ending taxpayer-funded bank bailouts and the era of "too big to fail." President Obama put in place new rules of the road that refocus the financial sector on getting capital to entrepreneurs and small and mid-sized businesses who create jobs and financing to millions of families who want to buy a home or send their kids to college.

We've created a single consumer watchdog agency whose sole job is looking out for working families by protecting them from deceptive and unfair lending practices of mortgage brokers, payday lenders, debt collectors, and other financial institutions. Democrats are not only fighting to protect consumers from practices that can hurt their pocketbooks and add to their debt, but also working to put an end to practices that helped cause the mortgage crisis.

Mitt Romney and his allies in Congress believe that the best way to grow the economy is from the top down – the same approach that benefited a few, but crashed the economy, hurt the middle class, and contributed to soaring income inequality. They would roll back financial reform and let Wall Street write its own rules again.

21st Century Government: Transparent and Accountable

President Obama and the Democrats are committed to rethinking, reforming, and remaking our government so that it can meet the challenges of our time. We reject the idea that we need to ask people to choose between their jobs and their safety. We reject the argument that says for the economy to grow, we have to roll back protections that ban hidden fees by credit card companies, or rules that

keep our kids from being exposed to mercury, or laws that prevent the health insurance industry from shortchanging patients. Rules should be simpler and more flexible, and regulations should be based on sound science and secure Americans' freedom of choice. In our platform hearing we heard about the importance of a safety net that works, public schools that educate, and government that invests in a strong economy. A 21st century regulatory system must promote economic growth, innovation, and job creation while also protecting public health and welfare.

President Obama proposed a simpler, smarter, and more cost-effective approach to regulation, rather than one riddled with special rules written by lobbyists. Efficient and effective regulations enforce common sense safeguards to protect the American people. That's what we've done in this country for more than a century. It's why our food is safe to eat, our water is safe to drink, and our air is safe to breathe. It's why we put in place consumer protections against hidden fees and penalties by credit card companies and new rules to prevent another financial crisis. That's why the administration launched the Internet Privacy Bill of Rights and encouraged innovative solutions such as a Do Not Track option for consumers. But there's no question that some regulations are outdated, unnecessary, or too costly. That's why President Obama asked all federal agencies to review and streamline outdated regulations, an effort that will save at least \$10 billion over five years, and will eliminate tens of millions of hours in annual paperwork burdens. That's why he has approved fewer regulations in the first three years of his presidency than his Republican predecessor did in his. At the same time, those regulations have more than 25 times the net benefits of the previous administration's regulations.

Looking to make our government leaner, smarter, and more consumer-friendly, President Obama has asked Congress to reinstate the authority that past presidents had to reorganize and consolidate government agencies. President Obama has also called for an ambitious, transparent, and unprecedented government-wide review of existing federal regulations to eliminate unnecessary rules. In response, more than two dozen agencies have released plans to streamline existing requirements. Just a small fraction of these initiatives will save billions of dollars in the near future without sacrificing consumer protections, the environment, workplace safety, or health. For too long, overlapping responsibilities among agencies have made it harder, rather than easier, for our small businesses to interact with their government. Where appropriate, we are also committed to working with states and U.S. territories to support innovation in exchange for accountability and results.

We are committed to the most open, efficient, and accountable government in history, and we believe that government is more accountable when it is transparent. This administration was the first to make public the list of visitors to the White House and create a centralized ethics and lobbying database available to the public online. Democrats led the fight to enact the STOCK Act to ban congressional insider trading.

President Obama launched the Open Government Initiative to empower the public – through greater openness and new technologies – to influence the decisions that affect their lives. We are committed to using government as a platform to spur innovation and collaboration. Forums such as Data.gov release more information to the public so that the private sector can pioneer innovative new services.

Lobbying Reform and Campaign Finance Reform

Our political system is under assault by those who believe that special interests should be able to buy whatever they want in our society, including our government. Our opponents have applauded the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United* and welcomed the new flow of special interest money with open arms. In stark contrast, we believe we must take immediate action to curb the influence of lobbyists and special interests on our political institutions.

President Obama signed an executive order to establish unprecedented ethics rules so that those who leave the executive branch may not lobby this administration and officials may not accept gifts from

lobbyists. We support campaign finance reform, by constitutional amendment if necessary. We support legislation to close loopholes and require greater disclosure of campaign spending. President Obama and the national Democratic Party do not accept contributions from federal lobbyists this cycle. We support requiring groups trying to influence elections to reveal their donors so the public will know who's funding the political ads it sees. President Obama and the Democrats are fighting to reduce the influence of money in politics, and holding Congress to higher conflict-of-interest standards.

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.

Strengthening the American Community

Immigration. Democrats are strongly committed to enacting comprehensive immigration reform that supports our economic goals and reflects our values as both a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. The story of the United States would not be possible without the generations of immigrants who have strengthened our country and contributed to our economy. Our prosperity depends on an immigration system that reflects our values and meets America's needs. But Americans know that today, our immigration system is badly broken – separating families, undermining honest employers and workers, burdening law enforcement, and leaving millions of people working and living in the shadows.

Democrats know there is broad consensus to repair that system and strengthen our economy, and that the country urgently needs comprehensive immigration reform that brings undocumented immigrants out of the shadows and requires them to get right with the law, learn English, and pay taxes in order to get on a path to earn citizenship. We need an immigration reform that creates a system for allocating visas that meets our economic needs, keeps families together, and enforces the law. But instead of promoting the national interest, Republicans have blocked immigration reform in Congress and used the issue as a political wedge.

Despite the obstacles, President Obama has made important progress in implementing immigration policies that reward hard work and demand personal responsibility. Today, the Southwest border is more secure than at any time in the past 20 years. Unlawful crossings are at a 40-year low, and the Border Patrol is better staffed than at any time in its history. We are continuing to work to hold employers accountable for whom they hire. The Department of Homeland Security is prioritizing the deportation of criminals who endanger our communities over the deportation of immigrants who do not pose a threat,

such as children who came here through no fault of their own and are pursuing an education. President Obama's administration has streamlined the process of legal immigration for immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, supporting family reunification as a priority, and has enhanced opportunities for English-language learning and immigrant integration. When states sought to interfere with federal immigration law by passing local measures targeting immigrants, this administration challenged them in court.

President Obama and the Democrats fought for the DREAM Act, legislation ensuring that young people who want to contribute fully to our society and serve our country are able to become legal residents and ultimately citizens. Although this bill has a long history of bipartisan support, Republicans decided to play politics with it rather than do the right thing. So the Obama administration provided temporary relief for youth who came to the United States as children, through no fault of their own, grew up as Americans and are poised to make a real contribution to our country.

These are not permanent fixes. Only Congress can provide a permanent, comprehensive solution. But these are steps in the right direction. President Obama and the Democratic Party stand for comprehensive immigration reform that intelligently prioritizes our country's security and economic needs, while Mitt Romney and the Republicans have opposed commonsense reforms and pandered to the far right.

Families. It's time we stop just talking about family values and start pursuing policies that truly value families. The President and Democrats have cut taxes for every working American family, and expanded the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit. We believe that all parents and caregivers – regardless of gender – need more flexibility and support in the workplace. We support passing the Healthy Families Act, broadening the Family and Medical Leave Act, and partnering with states to move toward paid leave. We have invested in expanding and reforming Head Start and grants to states to raise standards and improve instruction in their early learning programs, and we support expanding the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. We must protect our most vulnerable children by supporting our foster care system, adoption programs for all caring parents, grandparents, and caregivers, and protecting children from violence and neglect. We recognize that caring for family members and managing a household is real and valuable work.

President Obama's administration has offered men who want to be good fathers extra support. We have bolstered community and faith-based groups focused on fatherhood, partnered with businesses to offer opportunities for fathers to spend time with their kids at the bowling alley or ballpark, and worked to help deployed dads connect with their children. We all have a stake in forging stronger bonds between fathers and their children.

We support parents and their children as they work to lead healthier lives. With prevention and treatment initiatives on obesity and public health, Democrats are leading the way on supporting healthier, more physically active families and healthy children.

Supporting Troops, Military Families, and Veterans. President Obama and the Democratic Party are committed to keeping the sacred trust we have with our troops, military families, and veterans. These brave men and women and their families have borne the burden of war and have always made our

"We congratulate President Barack Obama for giving hope to millions of aspiring citizens when he announced the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Immigrant youth – who grow up attending our schools, churches, and places of recreation – come to this nation with the same desires and ideals the forefathers had; liberty, justice, and the pursuit of happiness. In order to create immigration policies that reflect our nation's values, lawmakers must work together to protect the rights of all and create a road map that allows immigrants to become full-fledged citizens. With our dreams, work, and talent we can help make America a more just and prosperous country." – Gaby Pacheco, Listening to America hearing participant

military the best in the world. We will not only continue to support them in the field, but we will also continue to prioritize support for wounded warriors, mental health, and the well being of our military families and veterans. We will keep working to give our veterans the health care, benefits, education, and job opportunities that they have earned. That's why the President and the Democratic Party supported the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill to provide opportunities for military personnel, veterans, and their families to get a better education. That's why the President is working to ensure returning veterans are able to get good jobs and put their skills to good use at home. That's why the President has launched partnerships with the private sector to help veterans transfer their experience into skilled manufacturing jobs, and why the President has proposed a new Veterans Jobs Corps to put veterans to work as first responders. That's why the President signed an executive order making it harder for for-profit colleges to prey on veterans. That's why we enacted the Returning Heroes Tax Credit and the Wounded Warrior Tax Credit to give companies incentives to hire vets. That's why we have committed to ending veterans' homelessness by 2015, and have launched new partnerships with the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development and with veterans' organizations to do just that. That's why, because the traumas of war don't always end when our loved ones return home, this administration is continuing to work to meet the mental health needs of our veterans. That's why we will continue to partner with the nation's Veterans Service Organizations and veterans advocacy groups to ensure that every veteran of every generation receives the care and benefits they've earned. That's why we have made it easier for veterans in rural communities to get the care they need. And it is why we have substantially increased funding for the VA, and directed it to eliminate its backlog of claims, hire additional claims processors, and deploy new systems to improve claims processing times.

"Under President Obama, veterans have started to realize the promise of a square deal. PTSD is no longer a dirty word. More veterans are getting their benefits. More veterans are in college. More veterans have more options in finding good jobs. I am one of these veterans. America has finally started to honor its promises to veterans after decades of breaking them." – Senior Airman Benjamin Krause, United States Air Force, Special Operations veteran, Listening to America hearing participant

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 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.

Faith. Faith has always been a central part of the American story, and it has been a driving force of progress and justice throughout our history. We know that our nation, our communities, and our lives are made vastly stronger and richer by faith and the countless acts of justice and mercy it inspires. Faith-based organizations will always be critical allies in meeting the challenges that face our nation and our world – from domestic and global poverty, to climate change and human trafficking. People of faith and religious organizations do amazing work in communities across this country and the world, and we believe in lifting up and valuing that good work, and finding ways to support it where possible. We believe in constitutionally sound, evidence-based partnerships with faith-based and other non-profit organizations to serve those in need and advance our shared interests. There is no conflict between supporting faith-based institutions and respecting our Constitution, and a full commitment to both principles is essential for the continued flourishing of both faith and country.

Rural Communities and Agriculture. We are committed to creating a rural economy built to last – one focused on reclaiming the security of the rural middle class by growing the food, fiber, and fuel that the rest of the world buys and restoring the basic values of hard work and fair play that made our country great. By investing in job creation, clean energy, agriculture, and education, Democrats have built a stronger rural economy where future generations can enjoy the rural way of life.

President Obama and Democrats in Congress have worked to extend credit to a record number of small business owners, boosting economic growth in rural America. We support a clean energy economy that is creating jobs and helping lower energy costs in rural America. U.S. biofuel production is at its highest level in history. We have made historic investments in renewable fuels and expanded markets for them.

We support strengthening rural water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure to make rural businesses more competitive. We have expanded broadband access to nearly seven million rural Americans, including rural businesses, creating new jobs. We have invested in water and wastewater community infrastructure projects, safeguarding the health of 18 million rural residents and creating even more jobs. Democrats will strengthen the American farm safety net by renewing crop disaster relief, maintaining strong crop insurance programs, and creating a permanent disaster relief program. We will improve access to education and health care, especially for rural veterans, and conserve millions of acres of public lands while supporting rural recreation and tourism.

Our vision for rural America stands in stark contrast to our opponents'. Republicans in Congress have introduced a budget that would gut rural economic programs that invest in education, clean energy, infrastructure, and health care, undermining job growth and economic development in rural America. They would severely weaken the farm safety net for family farmers in times of natural disaster and economic hardship.

Agriculture. An agricultural economy built to last is integral to the affordability of our food, the independence of our energy supply, and the security of America's middle class. Democrats support agriculture from the small farms that feed the community to the large farms that feed the world. Under President Obama, American farmers are seeing record farm income, record agricultural exports, and millions of acres enrolled in conservation programs. President Obama has expanded markets for American goods that help support more than a million agriculture jobs here at home. And in the past few years, agriculture has been one of the fastest-growing parts of our economy, creating one out of every 12 American jobs.

Democrats appreciate agriculture's role in securing America's food security and making our country an ambassador of food aid to countries across the world. That's why Democrats support a strong farm safety net, with increased availability of crop insurance and emergency disaster assistance to help farmers and ranchers keep their farms in business after natural disasters and crop loss. Democrats are also planning for a strong agricultural future, and President Obama has proposed increasing funding for research and development to improve agricultural productivity and continue to pursue global food security.

Tribal Sovereignty. American Indian and Alaska Native tribes are sovereign self-governing communities, with a unique government-to-government relationship with the United States. President Obama and Democrats in Congress, working with tribes, have taken unprecedented steps to resolve long-standing conflicts, finally coming to a resolution on litigation – some dating back nearly 100 years – related to management of Indian trust resources, administration of loan programs, and water rights.

The President worked with Democrats to pass the HEARTH Act to promote greater tribal self-determination and create jobs in Indian Country. The Affordable Care Act permanently reauthorized the Indian Health Care Improvement Act to improve care for Native Americans. Democrats enacted the Tribal Law and Order Act, support expansion of the Violence Against Women Act to include greater protection for women on tribal lands, and oppose versions of the Violence Against Women Act that do not include these critical provisions. We will continue to honor our treaty and trust obligations and respect cultural rights, including greater support for American Indian and Alaska Native languages. Democrats support maximizing tribal self-governance, including efforts for self-determination and sovereignty of Native Hawaiians.

Puerto Rico. As President Obama said when he became the first President to visit Puerto Rico and address its people in 50 years, *Boricuas* every day help write the American story. Puerto Ricans have been proud American citizens for almost 100 years. During that time, the people of Puerto Rico have developed strong political, economic, social, and cultural ties to the United States. The political status of Puerto Rico remains an issue of overwhelming importance, but lack of resolution about status has held the island back. It is time for Puerto Rico to take the next step in the history of its status and its relationship to the rest of the United States.

The White House Task Force Report on Puerto Rico has taken important and historic steps regarding status. We commit to moving resolution of the status issue forward with the goal of resolving it expeditiously. If local efforts in Puerto Rico to resolve the status issue do not provide a clear result in the short term, the President should support, and Congress should enact, self-executing legislation that specifies in advance for the people of Puerto Rico a set of clear status options, such as those recommended in the White House Task Force Report on Puerto Rico, which the United States is politically committed to fulfilling.

The economic success of Puerto Rico is intimately linked to a swift resolution of the status question, as well as consistent, focused efforts on improving the lives of the people of Puerto Rico. We have made great progress for Puerto Rico over the past four years, including a sharp, historic increase in Medicaid funding for the people of Puerto Rico and fair and equitable inclusion in the Recovery Act and the Affordable Care Act. Going forward, we will continue working toward fair and equitable participation for Puerto Rico in federal programs. We support increased efforts by the federal government to improve public safety in Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands, with a particular emphasis on efforts to combat drug trafficking and crime throughout our Caribbean border. In addition, consistent with the task force report, we will continue to work on improving Puerto Rico's economic status by promoting job creation, education, health care, clean energy, and economic development on the Island.

Guam, American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. We also recognize and honor the contributions and the sacrifices made in service of our country by the Americans living in the territories of Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. We support full self-government and self-determination for the people of the territories, and their right to decide their future status. We will work as partners to the people of Guam on military matters, and take seriously the unique health care challenges that Pacific Island communities face. For all those who live under our flag, we support strong economic development and will work towards fair and equitable treatment under federal programs.

Arts and Culture. Democrats are proud of our support for arts funding and education. We are

committed to continuing the policies and programs that have already done so much for our creative arts industry and economy. Investment in the arts strengthens our communities and contributes to our nation's rich cultural heritage. We will continue to support public funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, for the National Endowment for the Humanities, and for programs providing art and music education in primary and secondary schools. The entire nation prospers when we protect and promote the unique and original artistic and cultural contributions of the women and men who create and preserve our nation's heritage.

Protecting Rights and Freedoms

Civil Rights. We believe in an America where everybody gets a fair shot and everybody plays by the same set of rules. At the core of the Democratic Party is the principle that no one should face discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability status. Democrats support our civil rights statutes and we have stepped up enforcement of laws that prohibit discrimination in the workplace and other settings. We are committed to protecting all communities from violence. We are committed to ending racial, ethnic, and religious profiling and requiring federal, state, and local enforcement agencies to take steps to eliminate

"Because of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' each time I went off to war, no one was at the armory to say goodbye. No one was waiting at the airport when I returned. My partner, George Di Salvo, and I started a family five years ago by adopting two wonderful boys. But I kept their existence secret, because that's what the law required. Not anymore, however. Thanks to the unyielding efforts of President Obama, I can serve my country openly and proudly with my family by my side." – Dr. Vito Imbasciani, Colonel, California National Guard, Medical Service Corps

the practice, and we continue to support enforcement of Title VI. We are committed to equal opportunity for all Americans and to making sure that every American is treated equally under the law.

We are committed to ensuring full equality for women: we reaffirm our support for the Equal Rights Amendment, recommit to enforcing Title IX, support the Paycheck Fairness Act, and will urge ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

We know that putting America back to work is Job One, and we are committed to ensuring that Americans do not face employment discrimination. We support the Employment Non-Discrimination Act because people should not be fired based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

President Obama and the Democratic Party are committed to ensuring all Americans are treated fairly. This administration hosted the first-ever White House Conference on Bullying Prevention and we must continue our work to prevent vicious

bullying of young people and support LGBT youth. The President's record, from ending "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in full cooperation with our military leadership, to passing the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, to ensuring same-sex couples can visit each other in the hospital, reflects Democrats' belief that all Americans deserve the same chance to pursue happiness, earn a living, be safe in their communities, serve their country, and take care of the ones they love. The Administration has said that the word 'family' in immigration includes LGBT relationships in order to protect bi-national families threatened with deportation.

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

"I know firsthand the injustice of gender discrimination in pay: for years I was paid less than my male colleagues, and it took an anonymous note from a colleague to tip me off to the fact that I was being denied equal pay for equal work. I also know firsthand that President Obama takes these issues seriously: the first bill that he signed into law was focused on making sure that other women don't face the same injustice. While the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act won't change my story, I couldn't be prouder of the legislation that bears my name, and I know who is standing up for women and families." – Lilly Ledbetter

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 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.

Voting Rights. We believe the right to vote and to have your vote counted is an essential American freedom, and we oppose laws that place unnecessary restrictions on those seeking to exercise that freedom. Democrats have a proud history of standing up for the right to vote. During the Obama administration, the Justice Department has initiated careful, thorough, and independent reviews of proposed voting changes, and it has prevented states from implementing voter identification laws that would be harmful to minority voters. Democrats know that voter identification laws can disproportionately burden young voters, people of color, low-income families, people with disabilities, and the elderly, and we refuse to allow the use of political pretenses to disenfranchise American citizens.

District of Columbia. Every citizen of the United States is entitled to equal citizenship rights, including

the 638,000 residents of the nation's capital who pay federal taxes without representation. The American citizens who live in Washington, D.C., like the citizens of the 50 states, should have full and equal congressional rights and the right to have the laws and budget of their local government respected without congressional interference.

Freedom to Marry. We support the right of all families to have equal respect, responsibilities, and protections under the law. We support marriage equality and support the movement to secure equal treatment under law for same-sex couples. We also support the freedom of churches and religious entities to decide how to administer marriage as a religious sacrament without government interference.

We oppose discriminatory federal and state constitutional amendments and other attempts to deny equal protection of the laws to committed same-sex couples who seek the same respect and responsibilities as other married couples. We support the full repeal of the so-called Defense of Marriage Act and the passage of the Respect for Marriage Act.

Firearms. We recognize that the individual right to bear arms is an important part of the American tradition, and we will preserve Americans' Second Amendment right to own and use firearms. We believe that the right to own firearms is subject to reasonable regulation. We understand the terrible consequences of gun violence; it serves as a reminder that life is fragile, and our time here is limited and precious. We believe in an honest, open national conversation about firearms. We can focus on effective enforcement of existing laws, especially strengthening our background check system, and we can work together to enact commonsense improvements – like reinstating the assault weapons ban and closing the gun show loophole – so that guns do not fall into the hands of those irresponsible, law-breaking few.

Ensuring Safety and Quality of Life

Cities and Metro Areas. Cities and metro areas are a vital part of the American community and are incubators of innovation and job creation. Cities and metro areas represent over 80 percent of this country's gross domestic product and 80 percent of this country's population. We are committed to supporting and revitalizing these communities around the country.

When President Obama first took office, four in five cities had already cut services at a time when American people needed them most, while 48 states faced the prospect of budget deficits in the next fiscal year. We took swift and aggressive action in the first months of this administration to pull cities back from the brink, preventing our local communities from sinking into deeper holes and being forced to lay off tens of thousands of police officers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, and teachers. This administration is implementing the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative to combat poverty in American cities and the Sustainable Communities Initiative, supports the proposed Growth Zone Initiatives, and has invested in green jobs training programs, community development, public and affordable housing, and homelessness prevention to cut red tape and help revitalize American cities. The administration knows one size does not fit all, which is why it has listened to city leaders about what they need most and is fostering ground-up, instead of top-down, solutions by assigning federal workers to work side-by-side with local leaders in struggling cities.

"America's metro areas - cities and suburbs working in partnership - are home to 86 percent of the nation's jobs. In this economic environment, our nation's mayors call for a renewed investment in our metro economies. President Obama and the Democratic Party have already worked hard toward this promise, including the over \$100 billion of infrastructure investment as part of the Recovery Act, because investment in infrastructure, education, workforce training, and public safety will support job creation, foster innovation, and provide companies with a globally competitive workforce. The generations who came before us built our great nation by investing in the future. We must do the same." – Mayor Kevin Johnson, Listening to America hearing participant

President Obama and Democrats in Congress have enacted infrastructure investments that will sustain our Highway Trust Fund and provide states, U.S. territories, and communities with two years of funding to build needed roads, bridges, and transit systems. We will continue to partner with local communities to support their sustainable developments such as passenger rail, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and other projects to support livable cities.

Poverty. Too many Americans live without hope for a better future or access to good, family-supporting jobs. Fifteen percent of our fellow citizens live in poverty, and one in five families struggles with food insecurity. Many of these families work but are unable to pay the bills. The economic crisis has hit low-income American families particularly hard, but merely restoring our country to where it was before the economic crisis is not enough. We must make ending poverty a national priority.

When the President took office, we were losing hundreds of thousands of jobs a month. President Obama and Democrats took immediate action to get the economy moving again. By expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit, and supporting unemployment insurance benefits and food stamps, the Recovery Act kept seven million people out of poverty and reduced poverty for 32 million more in 2010. The Obama administration invested in Promise Neighborhoods in communities across the country – a comprehensive approach to fighting poverty from early learning to college and career. The administration provided grants to financial institutions in urban and rural communities for the purpose of increasing lending for low-income Americans.

But there is still more work to do. Democrats believe that we must raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation. We will continue to fight for equal pay for equal work, a strong labor movement, and access to a world-class education for every child. We will help lift people with disabilities out of poverty. We understand that poverty disproportionately affects communities of color and we are committed to working with those most affected by poverty. We will continue the improvements in refundable tax credits for low-income families to encourage work and education while lifting families out of poverty. To enhance access and equity in employment, education, and business opportunities, we encourage initiatives to remove barriers to equal opportunity that still exist in America. We will expand the Promise Neighborhoods Program to prepare more students for college.

We face an opposition that has proven its priorities are elsewhere. Mitt Romney would raise taxes on low- and middle-income Americans to fund his tax breaks weighted toward the wealthiest. We reject the Republican budget plan that would force us to destroy the safety net in order to help the wealthiest avoid doing their fair share.

Public Safety, Justice, and Crime Prevention. In the last four years, rates of serious crimes, like murder, rape, and robbery, have reached 50-year lows, but there is more work to do. President Obama and Democrats are fighting for new funding that will help keep cops on the street and support our police, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians. Republicans and Mitt Romney have opposed and even ridiculed these proposals, but we believe we should support our first responders. We support efforts to ensure our courageous police officers and first responders are equipped with the best technology, equipment, and innovative strategies to prevent and fight crimes.

We will end the dangerous cycle of violence, especially youth violence, by continuing to invest in proven community-based law enforcement programs such as the Community Oriented Policing Services program. We will reduce recidivism in our neighborhoods. We created the Federal Interagency Reentry Council in 2011, but there's more to be done. We support local prison-to-work programs and other initiatives to reduce recidivism, making citizens safer and saving the taxpayers money. We understand the disproportionate effects of crime, violence, and incarceration on communities of color and are committed to working with those communities to find solutions.

We will continue to fight inequalities in our criminal justice system. We believe that the death penalty must not be arbitrary. DNA testing should be used in all appropriate circumstances, defendants should

have effective assistance of counsel, and the administration of justice should be fair and impartial. That's why we enacted the Fair Sentencing Act, reducing racial disparities in sentencing for drug crimes. That's why President Obama appointed two distinguished jurists to the Supreme Court: Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor. Moving forward, we will continue to nominate and confirm judges who are men and women of unquestionable talent and character and will always demonstrate their faithfulness to our law and our Constitution and bring with them a sense of how American society works and how the American people live.

We must help state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement work together to combat and prevent drug crime and drug and alcohol abuse, which are blights on our communities. We have increased funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program over the last four years, and we will continue to expand the use of drug courts. We support the rights of victims to be respected, heard, and compensated.

We are committed to ending violence against women. We support reauthorizing the bipartisan Violence Against Women Act and oppose the proposals by Republicans in the House of Representatives that would undermine this law and deprive law enforcement of the tools it needs to combat violence against women.

Service, Volunteerism, and Social Innovation. President Obama has called on all Americans to participate in our nation's renewal by serving in our communities. The Democratic Party believes, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. did, that everybody can be great because everybody can serve. The challenges America faces are unprecedented and the new foundation for economic growth we need in America will not be built by Washington alone – it's going to take all of us, working together. To this end, Democrats enacted the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, increasing the size of AmeriCorps and creating more opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve their communities. President Obama and the Democrats in Congress have also sought to increase the budget for the Peace Corps, and today VISTA is larger, stronger, and more vital than it has ever been.

We believe solutions to America's challenges are being developed every day at the grassroots level, and government should be supporting those efforts. We've created a Social Innovation Fund that is leveraging millions in private sector dollars to invest in programs with a proven track record of success. Our nation is experiencing some of the greatest challenges in a generation, but it is also a time of great opportunity if we come together as a community.

Environment. Democrats are committed to protecting our natural resources while creating jobs, preserving habitats, and ensuring that future generations can enjoy our nation's outdoor heritage. From investing in clean energy to protecting our air, land, and water, Democrats have made protecting the environment a top priority. Today we are responsibly developing our natural resources to create clean energy jobs here at home while encouraging conservation, reducing energy waste, and protecting the environment.

President Obama has taken the most significant strides in decades to cut pollution and advance public health – protecting our children and communities from harmful pollution by restoring and advancing safeguards for clean air and water and by working to reduce carbon pollution. Pollutants like nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide, particulate matter, and mercury are a threat to human health, and Democrats will continue to stand up to polluters in the interest of environmental and public health.

We know that global climate change is one of the biggest threats of this generation – an economic, environmental, and national security catastrophe in the making. We affirm the science of climate change, commit to significantly reducing the pollution that causes climate change, and know we have to meet this challenge by driving smart policies that lead to greater growth in clean energy generation and result in a range of economic and social benefits.

President Obama has been a leader on this issue. We have developed historic fuel efficiency standards that will limit greenhouse gas emissions from our vehicles for the first time in history, made unprecedented investments in clean energy, and proposed the first-ever carbon pollution limits for new fossil-fuel-fired power plants. As we move towards lower carbon emissions, we will continue to support smart, energy efficient manufacturing. Democrats pledge to continue showing international leadership on climate change, working toward an agreement to set emission limits in unison with other emerging powers. Democrats will continue pursuing efforts to combat climate change at home as well, because reducing our emissions domestically – through regulation and market solutions – is necessary to continue being an international leader on this issue. We understand that global climate change may disproportionately affect the poor, and we are committed to environmental justice.

We are restoring treasured landscapes like the Great Lakes, the Florida Everglades, and local wilderness areas. We are working with Gulf Coast states to restore the Gulf and hold BP and other responsible parties accountable. Democrats will continue to work with local communities to conserve our publicly-owned lands and dramatically expand investments in conserving and restoring forests, grasslands, and wetlands across America for generations to come. We will ensure that our National Parks are protected while expanding opportunities for Americans to visit and experience these national treasures. Democrats will continue working to ensure the integrity of the waters Americans rely on every day for drinking, swimming, and fishing, by supporting initiatives that restore our rivers, oceans, coasts, and watersheds. We will preserve landscapes and ecosystems and open more lands and waters for hunting, fishing, and recreation. This will bolster local economies and is good for communities today and for generations to come.

Our opponents have moved so far to the right as to doubt the science of climate change, advocate the selling of our federal lands, and threaten to roll back environmental protections that safeguard public health. Their leaders deny the benefits of the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts – benefits like job creation, health, and the prevention of tens of thousands of premature deaths each year. They ignore the jobs that are created by promoting outdoor recreation, cleaning up our air, and promoting a healthy environment.

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.

Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq

Charting a responsible path out of the war in Iraq has been a crucial element of President Obama's foreign policy and has enabled important shifts in our broader strategy.

Then-Senator Obama pledged during the 2008 campaign to responsibly end the war in Iraq, saying it was imperative to "be as careful getting out as we were careless getting in" – and that is precisely what he has done. For over half a decade, our focus on Iraq meant we had taken our eye off of al-Qaeda, and it had cost us thousands of lives, a trillion dollars, and severely strained our key alliances. When President Obama took office, there were over 140,000 American troops in harm's way in Iraq. Today, all of those forces are out of Iraq, and there are no American bases there either. The Iraqi people, in continued partnership with the United States, now have the opportunity to build a better future.

After taking office, President Obama removed our combat brigades and ended our combat mission on a 19-month timetable. And after an interim period in which we continued to advise Iraqis and conduct counterterrorism operations, we completed the drawdown of all U.S. troops last December. This decision was reached after extensive discussions and with the full agreement of the Iraqi government, and it was determined to be in the best interest of both nations. Many Republicans, including Mitt Romney, would have preferred to leave tens of thousands of U.S. troops in Iraq in an open-ended commitment, against the will of the Iraqi government and people.

Moving forward, President Obama and the Democratic Party are committed to building a robust, long-term strategic partnership with a sovereign, united, and democratic Iraq in all fields – diplomatic, economic, and security – based on mutual interests and mutual respect.

Disrupting, Dismantling, and Defeating Al-Qaeda

President Obama and the Democratic Party understood that the war in Iraq distracted us from confronting many of the most fundamental national security challenges facing the United States, including the danger posed by international terrorist organizations that threaten the American homeland. As the Bush administration shifted its focus to Iraq, Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda established safe havens across the border from Afghanistan, in Pakistan. President Obama's decision to end the Iraq war freed up military and intelligence resources to refocus on this fight and enabled us to shift to a much more effective approach to counterterrorism.

"As Commander-in-Chief, President Obama has proven willing to use military force when necessary, though he also knows how important it is for force to be used as a last resort. He is a strong and responsible leader who has kept his promises to end our wars overseas while maintaining America's commitment to those of us who served. The President signed tax credits into law for businesses that hire veterans and wounded warriors. He supported the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which helps 800,000 veterans and their families pursue their education. I would like to thank the President for supporting our military and our veterans every day."
– Lieutenant Junior Grade Leo Cruz, United States Navy, Iraq War veteran

Importantly, President Obama also shifted away from the Bush administration's sweeping and internationally-divisive rhetoric of a "global war on terrorism" to a more focused effort against an identifiable network of people: al-Qaeda and its affiliates. That has allowed us to target force with greater precision against those who want to harm Americans and attack the United States and move away from the type of large-scale military deployments characteristic of the previous administration and favored by many Republicans today.

As a candidate, then-Senator Obama committed to bringing Osama bin Laden to justice, even if that meant crossing the border into Pakistan. As a consequence of the President's decisions and the brave work of our military and intelligence professionals, bin Laden can no longer threaten the United States and al-Qaeda's senior leadership has been devastated, rendering the group far less capable than it was four years ago. The al-Qaeda core in Afghanistan and Pakistan has never been weaker. We have also struck blows against al-Qaeda's leadership in Yemen and Somalia – with the full support and close cooperation of those governments. At the same time, the President and the Democratic Party understand that we must stay vigilant. The al-Qaeda core may be on the path to defeat, but the organization and its affiliates remain active in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and elsewhere. For that reason, we are committed to an unrelenting pursuit of those who would kill Americans or threaten our homeland, our allies, our partners, and our interests around the world.

Responsibly Ending the War in Afghanistan

The United States went into Afghanistan after 9/11 to bring justice to those who had attacked us and to take away al-Qaeda's safe haven. But by the time President Obama took office, we had lost sight of those goals. So the President refocused our efforts there in 2009, setting the clear goal of defeating al-Qaeda and denying it an ability to reestablish a safe haven in Afghanistan. Because of the deteriorating security situation, he sent additional resources to reverse the Taliban's momentum and to give the Afghans the time and space to build the capacity of their security forces. We have accomplished that, and now we have begun the process of bringing our troops home from Afghanistan, including removing 33,000 by September 2012. And, with the support of our allies, the President has outlined a plan to end the war in Afghanistan in 2014.

Already, the United States and our North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies have begun to transition responsibility to Afghan security forces. At the same time, we are keeping up the pressure on the Taliban, pursuing the possibility of a political resolution to parts of the conflict, and continuing our capacity-building efforts. Beyond 2014, we will continue to provide counterterrorism and training assistance and to build an enduring relationship with Afghanistan, as outlined by the U.S.-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement concluded in May. But we will not build permanent bases in Afghanistan. More broadly, we will also continue to support peace and stability in South Asia. Pakistan can be a partner in that process. The United States will make clear that we respect Pakistan's sovereignty and democratic institutions, and that our interest is in putting an end to al-Qaeda's safe havens and respecting Afghan sovereignty.

Mitt Romney has been both for and against our timeline to end the war in Afghanistan, but he has failed to outline any policy ideas for how he would bring our troops home and, at times, has suggested he would leave them there indefinitely.

Preventing the Spread and Use of Nuclear Weapons

In our continuing efforts to keep America safe, President Obama and the Democratic Party believe we must address the threat that nuclear weapons pose to our security and to peace in the world. Despite the two decades that have passed since the end of the Cold War, large stockpiles of nuclear weapons persist, and more nations are interested in acquiring them. Nuclear testing and black-market trade in sensitive nuclear materials continue. And terrorists remain determined to buy, build, or steal the ultimate weapon.

President Obama and the Democratic Party are committed to preventing the further spread of nuclear weapons and to eventually ridding the planet of these catastrophic weapons. This goal will not be achieved overnight. It will require patience, perseverance, and the steady accumulation of concrete actions. But real progress has already been made.

Reducing Nuclear Weapons Stockpiles. The Obama administration has moved away from Cold War thinking by reducing the prominence of nuclear weapons in America's national security strategy, and it has urged others to do the same. As long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal to deter any adversary and guarantee the defense of our allies. But President Obama has taken important steps to decrease America's nuclear arsenal and is committed to further responsible reductions.

To reduce our warheads and stockpile, lower the threat of a nuclear exchange, and lay the foundation for future progress, President Obama negotiated and signed the landmark New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, producing cuts in each side's deployed nuclear stockpiles and launchers and allowing us to monitor and verify Russia's arsenal. Yet despite bipartisan consensus among former National Security Advisors, Secretaries of Defense, and Secretaries of State that New START makes America safer, Mitt Romney strongly objected to the treaty. Moving forward, the President will work with Russia to achieve additional reductions in stockpiles and nuclear delivery vehicles, including tactical and non-deployed nuclear weapons. We will also work to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and seek a new Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty that prohibits the production of fissile materials intended for use in nuclear weapons.

Preventing Nuclear Proliferation. President Obama and the Democratic Party are also committed to strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as the bedrock of international efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to additional countries. As we work to uphold our obligations under the treaty by reducing stockpiles and recognizing the rights of all rule-abiding states to peaceful nuclear energy, we will insist that countries without nuclear weapons comply with their obligations not to develop them, and we will ensure that violators face real consequences.

Iran. President Obama, working closely with our international partners and Congress, has put in place unprecedented sanctions against Iran. Iran has yet to build a nuclear weapon, but has continually failed to meet its obligations under the NPT and several United Nations Security Council resolutions, and it cannot demonstrate with any credibility that its program is peaceful.

The President is committed to using all instruments of national power to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. When President Obama took office, Iran was ascendant in the region, and the international community was divided over how to address Iran's nuclear violations. The President's early offer of engagement with Iran – quickly rebuffed by the regime – allowed the United States to expose Iranian intransigence and rally the international community as never before. Working with our European allies and with Russia and China, the administration gained unprecedented agreement for the toughest ever UN sanctions against Iran, laying the foundation for additional national financial and energy sanctions imposed by the United States and other nations. As a result, Iran is now increasingly isolated and the regime faces crippling economic pressure – pressure that will only build over time.

President Obama believes that a diplomatic outcome remains the best and most enduring solution. At the same time, he has also made clear that the window for diplomacy will not remain open indefinitely and that all options – including military force – remain on the table. But we have an obligation to use the time and space that exists now to put increasing pressure on the Iranian regime to live up to its obligations and rejoin the community of nations, or face the consequences.

North Korea. President Obama will also continue to confront North Korea, another regime that ignores its international obligations by developing nuclear weapons and missile technology, with a stark choice: take verifiable steps toward denuclearization or face increasing isolation and costs from the United

States and the international community. That is why the administration worked with international partners to impose the harshest multilateral sanctions on North Korea in history. And it is why the President has made clear that the transfer of nuclear weapons or material by North Korea to states or non-state entities would be considered a grave threat to the United States and our allies, and we would hold North Korea accountable for the consequences of such action.

Securing Loose Nuclear Materials. The President has led a global effort to secure all loose nuclear materials around the world, hosting a nuclear security summit in Washington, and making concrete progress in locking these materials down. This is an important goal because the prospect that al-Qaeda or another terrorist organization might acquire a nuclear device represents an immediate and extreme threat to global security. At the same time, the United States will continue to work with international partners to break up black markets, detect and intercept nuclear materials in transit, and use financial tools to disrupt this dangerous trade.

Russia. Crucial to achieving all of these objectives has been, and will remain, expanded cooperation with Russia. The Cold War mentality represented by Mitt Romney's identification of Russia as "our number one geopolitical foe" ignores the very real common interest we share with Russia in reducing nuclear stockpiles, stopping additional proliferation by countries such as Iran and North Korea, and preventing nuclear materials from falling into the hands of terrorists. The President's "reset" policy toward Russia has produced significant cooperation in these areas, as well as in Russian support for the Northern Distribution Network that supplies our troops in Afghanistan. We support establishing permanent, normal trade relations with Russia because it would be good for the U.S. economy, for U.S. businesses, and for U.S. workers if we do. And securing Russia's accession to the World Trade Organization is an important step toward encouraging Russia to follow a rules-based system, and to protecting the rights of American workers, farmers, ranchers, and firms. At the same time, we are candid with the Russians when we disagree. The administration will not put aside our differences but will raise them directly with the Russian government. And we will continue to strongly criticize Russian actions that we oppose, such as their support for the Assad regime in Syria.

Countering Emerging Threats

As we have taken decisive steps to address today's dangers from terrorism and to prevent future nuclear proliferation, we have also sought to bolster homeland security and head off emerging challenges, ranging from cyber and biological threats to climate change and transnational crime.

Cybersecurity. Cybersecurity threats represent one of the most serious potential national security, public safety, and economic challenges we face. The very technologies that empower us to lead and create also empower individual criminal hackers, organized criminal groups, terrorist networks, and other advanced nations to disrupt the critical infrastructure that is vital to our economy, commerce, public safety, and military. Defending against cyber threats requires networks that are secure, trustworthy, and resilient. The President and the administration have taken unprecedented steps to defend America from cyber attacks, including creating the first military command dedicated to cybersecurity and conducting a full review of the federal government's efforts to protect our information and our infrastructure. We will continue to take steps to deter, prevent, detect, and defend against cyber intrusions by investing in cutting-edge research and development, promoting cybersecurity awareness and digital literacy, and strengthening private sector and international partnerships. President Obama has supported comprehensive cybersecurity legislation that would help business and government protect against risks of cyber attacks while also safeguarding the privacy rights of our citizens. And, going forward, the President will continue to take executive action to strengthen and update our cyber defenses.

Biological Weapons. Other dangers pose direct and deadly risks to our health and well-being. The use of a lethal biological agent within a population center would threaten the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. That's why President Obama outlined a National Strategy for Countering Biological Threats in

2009 to address the challenges from proliferation of biological weapons or their use by terrorists. We will continue to work at home with first responders and health officials to reduce the risks associated with unintentional or deliberate outbreaks of infectious disease. We will also continue our efforts with domestic and international partners to promote global health security and reinforce norms of safe and responsible conduct; obtain timely and accurate insight on current and emerging risks; take steps to reduce the potential for exploitation; expand our capability to prevent, attribute, and apprehend perpetrators of attacks; and communicate with all stakeholders. And we will build on existing public and private-sector efforts to prevent intentional contamination of the food supply.

Climate Change. The national security threat from climate change is real, urgent, and severe. The change wrought by a warming planet will lead to new conflicts over refugees and resources; new suffering from drought and famine; catastrophic natural disasters; and the degradation of vital ecosystems across the globe. That is why, in addition to undertaking measures to enhance energy independence and promote efficiency, clean energy, and renewable sources of power here at home, the President and the Democratic Party have steadily worked to build an international framework to combat climate change. We will seek to implement agreements and build on the progress made during climate talks in Copenhagen, Cancun, and Durban, working to ensure a response to climate change policy that draws upon decisive action by all nations. Our goal is an effective, international effort in which all major economies commit to reduce their emissions, nations meet their commitments in a transparent manner, and the necessary financing is mobilized so that developing countries can mitigate the effects of climate change and invest in clean energy technologies. That is why the Obama administration has taken a leadership role in ongoing climate negotiations, working to ensure that other major economies like China and India commit to taking meaningful action. It is also why we have worked regionally to build clean energy partnerships in Asia, the Americas, and Africa.

Transnational Crime. Transnational criminal networks also pose significant national security challenges. These networks continue to expand dramatically in size and scope, harming people worldwide, posing threats to stability, and subverting government institutions through corruption. Transnational criminal organizations have accumulated unprecedented wealth and power through the drug trade, arms smuggling, human trafficking, and other illicit activities, penetrating legitimate financial systems and destabilizing commercial markets. They extend their reach by forming alliances with terrorist organizations, government officials, and some state security services. That's why, in 2011, the Obama administration released a comprehensive Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime. We are committed to a multidimensional approach that safeguards citizens, breaks the financial strength of criminal and terrorist networks, disrupts illicit trafficking networks, fights government corruption, strengthens the rule of law, bolsters judicial systems, and improves transparency. We have responded to this threat through aggressive targeting of the illicit financial infrastructure supporting cross-border criminal activity. And we will continue to coordinate with other nations and build their capacity to combat these threats.

Strengthening Alliances, Expanding Partnerships, and Reinvigorating International Institutions

The greatest dangers we face – terrorism, nuclear proliferation, cyber and biological attacks, climate change, and transnational crime – cannot be solved by any one nation alone. Addressing these challenges requires broad and effective global cooperation. And President Obama and the Democratic Party understand that this depends on close collaboration with our traditional allies, cultivating partnerships with new centers of influence, and strong U.S. leadership within international institutions.

Europe. The cornerstone of our engagement with the world is our alliances, which had been badly damaged under the Bush administration. The President and the Democratic Party believe the foundation of global security remains our relationships with traditional allies in Europe and Asia, and our enduring commitments to their defense. That is why President Obama has worked to methodically strengthen our

alliances there, while pressing our allies to bear a greater share of the burden for tackling regional and global challenges.

The President and the Democratic Party recognize America's enduring interest in supporting peace and prosperity in Europe, as well as bolstering the strength and vitality of NATO, which is critical to the security of the continent and beyond. A decade of military operations in Afghanistan has strengthened NATO's fighting skills and enhanced its ability to cooperate at the political level. This proved critical to the alliance's timely, unified, and effective response in Libya. Going forward, we need to further improve the ability of NATO countries to operate collectively. Modernizing the alliance will be challenging given fiscal constraints on both sides of the Atlantic. But as large-scale military involvement in Afghanistan winds down, NATO has an opportunity to focus on further developing the capabilities required to address 21st century challenges. Therefore, we will continue to urge our NATO allies to pool, share, and specialize their capabilities, and to improve their capacity for effective coalition operations.

Meanwhile, even as the presence of U.S. forces in Europe necessarily evolves, the United States will maintain its Article 5 collective security commitments to NATO and will continue to leverage America's comparative advantage in high-end military capabilities to ensure the defense of our allies. For example, the President is moving forward with a "phased adaptive approach" to European ballistic-missile defense that will protect both Europe and the United States from missile threats emanating from Iran and elsewhere. We believe that the United States and Russia can cooperate on missile defense, but we have also made clear that we will move forward with our system, beginning with the steps we have taken to deploy it in Poland, Turkey, and Romania.

Asia-Pacific. As we have sought to rebalance our foreign policy, we have also turned greater attention to strengthening our alliances and expanding our partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region. In part, this is in recognition that the United States has been, and always will be, a Pacific power. And, in part, it is a recognition that America's future security and prosperity will be fundamentally interconnected with Asia given its status as the fastest growing economic region, with most of the world's nuclear powers and about half of the world's population. The President has therefore made a deliberate and strategic decision that the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future.

President Obama has made modernizing America's defense posture across the Asia-Pacific a top priority. We remain committed to defending and deepening our partnerships with our allies in the region: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. We will maintain a strong presence in Japan and on the Korean Peninsula to deter and defend against provocations by states like North Korea, while enhancing our presence in Southeast Asia and in Australia. We will also expand our networks of security cooperation with other emerging partners throughout the region to combat terrorism, counter proliferation, provide disaster relief, fight piracy, and ensure maritime security, including cooperation in the South China Sea. And we will continue to invest in a long-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region.

Meanwhile, the President is committed to continuing efforts to build a cooperative relationship with China, while being clear and candid when we have differences. The world has a profound interest in the rise of a peaceful and prosperous China, but China must also understand that it must abide by clear international standards and rules of the road. China can be a partner in reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, countering proliferation in Iran, confronting climate change, increasing trade, and resolving other global challenges. President Obama will continue to seek additional opportunities for cooperation with China, including greater communication between our militaries. We will do this even as we continue to be clear about the importance of the Chinese government upholding international economic rules regarding currency, export financing, intellectual property, indigenous innovation, and workers' rights. We will consistently speak out for the importance of respecting the universal human rights of the Chinese people, including the right of the Tibetan people to preserve their cultural and religious identity. And we remain committed to a one China policy, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the peaceful resolution of cross-

Strait issues that is consistent with the wishes and best interests of the people of Taiwan.

The Middle East. President Obama and the Democratic Party maintain an unshakable commitment to Israel's security. A strong and secure Israel is vital to the United States not simply because we share strategic interests, but also because we share common values. For this reason, despite budgetary constraints, the President has worked with Congress to increase security assistance to Israel every single year since taking office, providing nearly \$10 billion in the past three years. The administration has also worked to ensure Israel's qualitative military edge in the region. And we have deepened defense cooperation – including funding the Iron Dome system – to help Israel address its most pressing threats, including the growing danger posed by rockets and missiles emanating from the Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran. The President's consistent support for Israel's right to defend itself and his steadfast opposition to any attempt to delegitimize Israel on the world stage are further evidence of our enduring commitment to Israel's security.

It is precisely because of this commitment that President Obama and the Democratic Party seek peace between Israelis and Palestinians. A just and lasting Israeli-Palestinian accord, producing two states for two peoples, would contribute to regional stability and help sustain Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state. At the same time, the President has made clear that there will be no lasting peace unless Israel's security concerns are met. President Obama will continue to press Arab states to reach out to Israel. We will continue to support Israel's peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, which have been pillars of peace and stability in the region for many years. And even as the President and the Democratic Party continue to encourage all parties to be resolute in the pursuit of peace, we will insist that any Palestinian partner must recognize Israel's right to exist, reject violence, and adhere to existing agreements.

Elsewhere in the region, President Obama is committed to maintaining robust security cooperation with Gulf Cooperation Council states and our other partners aimed at deterring aggression, checking Iran's destabilizing activities, ensuring the free flow of commerce essential to the global economy, and building a regional security architecture to counter terrorism, proliferation, ballistic missiles, piracy, and other common threats.

The Americas. In the Americas, we have deepened our economic and security ties with countries throughout the hemisphere, from Canada and Mexico to Brazil and Chile and El Salvador. We have strengthened cooperation with Mexico, Colombia, and throughout Central America to combat narco-traffickers and criminal gangs that threaten their citizens and ours. We will also work to disrupt organized crime networks seeking to use the Caribbean to smuggle drugs into our country. As we collectively confront these challenges, we will continue to support the region's security forces, border security, and police with the equipment, training, and technologies they need to keep their communities safe. We will improve coordination and share more information so that those who traffic in drugs and in human beings have fewer places to hide. And we will continue to put unprecedented pressure on cartel finances, including in the United States.

Africa. We will continue to partner with African nations to combat al-Qaeda affiliates in places like Somalia and to bring to justice those who commit mass atrocities, like Joseph Kony. We have made great efforts to reduce the violence in Darfur and built international support for a successful referendum on South Sudan's future. And in his first visit as President to the United Nations, President Obama advanced initiatives to strengthen UN peacekeeping capabilities in Africa. This includes providing equipment, training, and logistical support for UN and African Union missions in Darfur and Somalia. The President has also worked to help African nations grow their economies, and we have opened trade and investment opportunities across the continent.

The United Nations. International institutions – most prominently the United Nations – have been a centerpiece of international order since the mid-20th century. And just as American leadership was essential to forging the architecture for international cooperation after World War II, the President and

the Democratic Party are committed to modernizing its infrastructure for the 21st century – working to reform international bodies and strengthen national and multilateral capabilities to advance peace, security, and opportunity.

We have restored America's leadership at the UN by cooperating with our partners there when we can and respectfully disagreeing with them when we must, reversing the previous administration's disdain for the UN. The President's leadership at the UN has enabled us to make real progress on a number of top national security priorities, including getting Russia and China on board to implement the toughest UN sanctions ever on Iran and North Korea.

Promoting Global Prosperity and Development

As the United States works with allies and partners to establish an international order that advances peace and prosperity, President Obama and the Democratic Party will continue to build three key pillars of American global leadership: a prosperous and inclusive economy, our unsurpassed military strength, and an enduring commitment to advancing universal values.

To allow each American to pursue the opportunity upon which our prosperity depends, we are investing in the sources of our long-term economic strength: access to a complete and competitive education for every American; affordable health care so our people, businesses, and government are not constrained by rising costs; training to allow our workers to adapt and win in a rapidly changing global economy; transformations in the way we produce and use energy to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and create new jobs and industry; infrastructure that fuels commerce; cutting edge developments in science and innovation that support our economy, defense, and technological leadership; and making the hard decisions to cut our deficit and put our fiscal house in order.

And, because a growing and open global economy serves as a source of opportunity for the American people and a source of strength for the United States, the President and the Democratic Party have coordinated our economic actions with other countries to address financial crises and head off renewed cycles of boom and bust. We have reformed international institutions to give emerging economies a greater role and more responsibility. We have promoted trade that is free and fair. And we have supported global economic development.

Abroad, just as we have at home, we have sought to build a new model for 21st century economic growth that is fair and in which every nation plays by the rules – a model where workers' rights are respected, businesses compete on a level playing field, and intellectual property and new technologies are protected. Currencies must be market-driven so no nation has an unfair advantage. Reforms must protect consumers from abuse and reflect a global commitment to end corruption. And we will continue to champion sustainable growth that includes the clean energy that creates green jobs and combats climate change.

Addressing the Global Financial Crisis. Alongside our global partners, we took decisive actions to address the global financial crisis and have worked together to make the global economy and financial system more stable and secure. While Europe remains a significant risk to the global economy and while the problems there will not be solved overnight, Europe's leaders have made clear they will do what is necessary to preserve financial stability in the Eurozone and have the collective ability to address their economic challenges. We have been and will continue to be in frequent contact with our European allies to discuss best practices and share valuable lessons from our own experience reversing our economic downturn, helping them chart the best way forward.

As we continue to work with traditional centers of influence, we have also reached out to emerging economies to give them a greater voice and a greater stake in the global economy. We have made the G-20 the premier forum for international economic coordination in recognition of the fact that 21st

century economic discussions must include countries like China, India, Indonesia, and Brazil. And, together, the nations of the G-20 brought the world economy back from the brink of another depression.

Free and Fair Trade. We have also sought to promote free and fair trade. Because of the economic dynamism of the Asia-Pacific region, which is already home to more than half the global economy, expanding trade with that region is critical to creating jobs and opportunities for the American people. Building on the free trade agreement with South Korea that President Obama signed, we are working with our partners in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum to create a seamless regional economy, promote green growth, and coordinate regulatory reform. Alongside Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, and Vietnam, we are on track to finalize the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a historic high-standard agreement that will address new and emerging trade issues, lower barriers to the free flow of trade and investment, increase exports, and create more American jobs. Exploring opportunities to shape the multilateral trading system to reflect the role and responsibility of major emerging markets in the global economy is a critical part of the President's trade agenda.

We will work to expand free and fair trade in the Americas as well. We already export more than three times as much to Latin America as we do to China, and we will pursue additional opportunities to expand commerce and promote shared prosperity. Last year the President signed free trade agreements with Panama and Colombia – agreements that will significantly boost U.S. exports and support thousands of jobs here at home – while protecting labor rights, the environment, and intellectual property. Because the Caribbean is an important region to our country, we will continue to support robust trade and economic relationships with our partners there. And, across the region, we are moving ahead with “open skies” agreements to expand opportunities for commercial aviation and to bring our people and businesses closer together.

We have also worked to ensure that American businesses and workers are competing on an even footing with our international competitors, and we have not hesitated to take action. That's why the Obama administration has brought trade cases against China at twice the rate of the previous administration and recently set up a new Interagency Trade Enforcement Center, which substantially expands our ability to investigate and take action against unfair trade practices around the world.

Advancing Global Development. President Obama recognizes that promoting global development is a strategic, economic, and moral imperative for the United States. Development expands markets for American products and creates American jobs. Strong and prosperous regional partners are critical to addressing global challenges, ending regional conflicts, and countering the spread of global criminal networks. And good governance and stability cannot take root, and basic human dignity cannot be protected, where poverty reigns and people lack access to the food, basic education, clean water, and medicine they need to survive.

For these reasons, the President this year announced a new strategy toward sub-Saharan Africa that commits to promoting economic growth, including through increased trade and investment. They are also why we are providing robust trade and investment support to Africa and building a trade and investment partnership with the countries of East Africa – because we believe that the private sector will be the engine of prosperity in the developing world. The administration continues to work to promote opportunity and development in sub-Saharan Africa by improving the region's trade competitiveness, encouraging economic diversification, and ensuring that the benefits from growth are broad-based.

Combating HIV/AIDS and Infectious Disease. Recognizing that health is a prerequisite for development, the President has made unprecedented progress in the global fight against HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. Building on the strong foundation created during the previous administration, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) has expanded its prevention, care, and treatment programming. As a result, PEPFAR now has made significant investments in more than 30

countries, and we set a goal to roughly double the number of lifesaving anti-retroviral treatments we provide by the end of 2013. With his latest budget, the President is fulfilling his historic commitment to request \$4 billion over three years for the Global Fund, and the President remains committed to robust funding for PEPFAR and the Global Fund in the future. And President Obama lifted the 25-year ban that prevented non-citizens living with HIV from entering the United States, allowing the world's largest group of HIV/AIDS researchers, policymakers, medical professionals, and advocates to convene in Washington to continue their efforts to improve prevention and treatment.

Our efforts to combat HIV/AIDS are part of a broader commitment to address the challenges posed by infectious disease. Over the past four years, the administration has leveraged billions of dollars in commitments from donors to meet the demand for new vaccines, making it possible to immunize millions of children and prevent premature deaths.

Ensuring Food Security. The President and the Democratic Party believe that true development requires much more than delivering aid – it requires building the capacity of governments and peoples so that assistance is no longer needed. That is why the administration through its Feed the Future initiative has, with the G-8 and other countries, mobilized more than \$22 billion for a global food security effort aimed at building the capacity of nations to feed themselves. This year, the President launched the next phase of this global effort – a major new food security partnership to reduce hunger and lift tens of millions of people from poverty across Africa. These efforts partner with African countries to improve nutrition for children, mitigate risks from volatile food prices, increase private capital investments, expand access to technologies and information required to boost food production, and provide greater assistance to countries that implement agricultural reforms.

Responding to Humanitarian Crises. Together with the American people and the international community, we will continue to respond to humanitarian crises around the globe. We will come to the aid of countries during their times of need, just as we did following the 2011 earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. And as we did in the aftermath of Haiti's catastrophic earthquake in January 2010, we will provide critical aid to countries facing devastating circumstances to meet their acute short-term needs and foster long-term recovery. The President led an unprecedented international effort in response to Haiti's natural disaster, committing over \$3.1 billion to relief, reconstruction, and recovery, and launching a multifaceted effort to improve health, promote food security, and strengthen economic security. While major challenges remain, President Obama has supported a sustained commitment to Haiti's reconstruction, and the administration has continued to assist in Haiti's development.

Maintaining the Strongest Military in the World

America's unrivaled military capabilities represent a second core pillar of our global leadership. After more than a decade of war, we have an opportunity to retool our armed forces and our defense strategy to ensure we both maintain the world's most capable military and adapt to the challenges of the 21st century.

The President and the Democratic Party understand that we have a special obligation to every soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, and Coast Guardsman who puts their life on the line for our nation. We must send them into harm's way only when it's absolutely necessary. When we do, we must ensure they have the equipment and the support that they need to get the job done. And we have to take care of our troops, their families, and our veterans when they come home.

Eleven years of continuous military operations and repeated deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan have stretched our forces and strained their families. Going forward, our troops will face fewer deployments, allowing them more time to train and ensuring that they are ready for the full range of missions they may have to face.

In our current fiscal environment, we must also make tough budgetary decisions across the board – and that includes within the defense budget. The Budget Control Act enacted by Congress last year, with the support of Republicans and Democrats alike, mandates reductions in federal spending, including defense spending. The administration has worked with Congress to make these decisions, which has been a strategy-driven process. As we look beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – and the conclusion of long-term nation-building with large military footprints – we will be able to ensure our security with a more agile and more flexible force. At the same time, we will continue to emphasize forward engagement in critical regions, while enhancing robust security partnerships to share the burden. And we will continue to get rid of outdated Cold War-era systems so that we can invest in cutting-edge technologies and maintain a versatile set of capabilities required to execute a wide range of military missions.

Advancing Universal Values

America's leadership extends beyond our economic prosperity and military might – it is also rooted in our enduring commitment to advancing a core set of universal values. These include an individual's freedom to speak their mind, assemble without fear, have access to information, worship as they please, and choose their own leaders. They also include dignity, tolerance, and equality among all people, and the fair and equitable administration of justice. The United States was founded upon a belief in these values, and people of every race, region, and religion around the globe have claimed these principles as their own. The President and the Democratic Party believe that nations that embrace these values for their citizens are ultimately more prosperous, peaceful, and friendly to the United States than those that do not.

Staying True to Our Values at Home. We must always seek to uphold these values at home, not just when it is easy, but, more importantly, when it is hard. Advancing our interests may involve new actions and policies to confront threats like terrorism, but the President and the Democratic Party believe these practices must always be in line with our Constitution, preserve our people's privacy and civil liberties, and withstand the checks and balances that have served us so well. That is why the President banned torture without exception in his first week in office. That is why we are reforming military commissions to bring them in line with the rule of law. That is why we are substantially reducing the population at Guantánamo Bay without adding to it. And we remain committed to working with all branches of government to close the prison altogether because it is inconsistent with our national security interests and our values.

Standing With Those Demanding Greater Freedom. As we continue to perfect our union here at home, setting an example for others to follow, we will also continue to champion universal rights abroad. We recognize that different cultures and traditions give life to these values in distinct ways, and each country will inevitably chart its own course. America will not impose any system of government on another country. But we also know that the sovereignty of nations cannot strangle the liberty of individuals. So as people around the world yearn for greater freedom, we will continue to support progress toward more accountable, democratic governance and the exercise of universal rights. We will do so through a variety of means: by speaking out for universal rights, bolstering fragile democracies and civil society, and supporting the dignity that comes with development.

Across the Middle East and North Africa, we have stood with the people demanding political change and seeking their rights during the Arab Spring. Since the beginning of the protests in Tunisia, the United States has consistently opposed violence against innocent civilians, supported a set of universal rights for the people of the region, and supported processes of political and economic reform. When the Egyptian people flooded Tahrir Square in Cairo demanding democracy, the administration actively engaged the Egyptian government, military, and people in support of a transition away from decades of dictatorship and towards democracy. In Libya, we built an international coalition and intervened alongside NATO and other partner nations to protect the Libyan people and support them as they

ended Muammar Qadhafi's brutal reign. In Iran, President Obama spoke out in support of the pro-democracy protestors and imposed human rights sanctions on the Iranian government. In Yemen, we worked with Gulf Cooperation Council states to facilitate a peaceful transition of power. And in Syria, we have led the international community to politically and economically isolate the regime, to increase pressure on President Assad to step down, and to provide assistance to unify the Syrian opposition in order to enable a stable transition. Moving forward, we will work to hasten the end of the Assad regime and support a political transition to a stable and democratic Syria. We will continue to support the consolidation of democratic transitions in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. And we will engage governments and civil society across the region on behalf of genuine efforts to promote political and economic reforms that are responsive to the people of the region.

The Arab Spring represents the world's most sweeping recent movement toward democracy, but it is not an isolated case. Across the globe, people are demanding more from their governments – and, when they do, they will continue to find support and partnership in the United States. For example, in Burma, we successfully employed a combination of sanctions and engagement to encourage the government to open up political space and release political prisoners. Our historic opening to Burma will continue to incentivize a democratic transition, a deeper engagement with the United States, and national reconciliation among Burma's many different ethnic groups. And because human rights violations persist, we will continue to speak clearly about the additional steps that must be taken for the government of Burma to have a better relationship with the United States.

In Africa, the administration engaged to ensure a legitimate transfer of power in Cote d'Ivoire, supported the independence of South Sudan, and remains actively involved in resolving the issues between Sudan and South Sudan.

In the Americas, we see vibrant democracies in countries from Mexico to Brazil and Costa Rica to Chile. We have also seen historic peaceful transfers of power in places like El Salvador and Uruguay. Yet despite the region's democratic progress, stark inequalities in political and economic power endure. We will continue to press for more transparent and accountable governance. And we will promote greater freedom in Cuba and Venezuela until all their citizens enjoy the universal rights they deserve.

Under President Obama, we have undertaken the most significant efforts in decades to engage the Cuban people. We have focused on the importance of the family ties between Cuban Americans and their relatives still living under oppression. Because of steps the President has taken, it is now possible for Cuban Americans to visit and support their families in Cuba, and to send remittances that reduce the Cuban people's dependence on the Cuban state. We have taken additional steps to bolster Cuban civil society, expanding purposeful exchanges that bolster independent religious groups on the island and enhancing the free flow of information to, from, and among the Cuban people. Going forward we will continue to support the Cuban people's desire to freely determine their own future.

Promoting Transparent, Accountable Governance and the Rule of Law. To promote transparent and accountable government worldwide, we joined with Brazil to launch and co-chair the international Open Government Partnership. Fifty-five countries now belong to the partnership – representing a quarter of the world's people – each of which has outlined concrete, credible steps to open the work of government so citizens are empowered, problems are solved, and democracy is strengthened.

The President and Democrats know that a commitment to the rule of law and effective judicial institutions are essential to sustainable economic development and must remain a core American value in the years to come. That is why the Obama administration has successfully pressed for international action against government corruption through the G-20 and promoted new initiatives to help countries develop stronger judicial institutions. Because the public's rights, freedoms, and access to economic opportunity depend on the rule of law, we will continue to work in partnership with our allies to promote this important value around the world.

Standing up for Women's Rights Around the Globe. As we work to advance universal values and human dignity, the President and the Democratic Party understand the critical importance of expanding protections and opportunities for women and girls around the world. Ensuring full equality and providing women and girls the opportunity to learn, earn a livable wage, and participate in public decision-making are essential to reduce violence, improve economies, and strengthen democracy. To continue to make progress at home and advance women's rights and opportunities abroad, we will urge ratification of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, and the State Department are committed to advancing the rights of women and girls as a central focus of U.S. diplomatic, development, and defense interests. We will continue to promote the full engagement of women in the political and economic spheres. We will work to address underlying socio-economic problems, including women's access to health, education, and food security. And we will ensure that women are equal participants in reconciliation and development in areas affected by conflict.

President Obama and the Democratic Party are committed to supporting family planning around the globe to help women care for their families, support their communities, and lead their countries to be healthier and more productive. That's why, in his first month in office, President Obama overturned the "global gag rule," a ban on federal funds to foreign family planning organizations that provided information about, counseling on, or offered abortions. And that is why the administration has supported lifesaving family planning health information and services.

Combating Human Trafficking. Some 27 million women, men, and children around the world are victims of human trafficking. The President and the Democratic Party believe that trafficking in persons is both an affront to our fundamental values and, as a source of funds for transnational criminals and terrorist organization, a threat to national and international security. The Obama administration has used bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, targeted foreign assistance, training programs, public outreach, and law enforcement to combat trafficking in persons across the globe. The administration has continued to provide annual assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of foreign governments' efforts to address the issue, encouraging all countries to do more and calling out countries that have failed to do enough. And the administration has provided technical assistance to improve law enforcement and grants to support grassroots prevention efforts around the world targeting sex and labor trafficking, child sex tourism, forced child labor, and other abuses. The administration is also committed to taking action at home to fight trafficking, including the sex trafficking of young girls.

Gay Rights as Human Rights. Recognizing that gay rights are human rights, the President and his administration have vowed to actively combat efforts by other nations that criminalize homosexual conduct or ignore abuse. Under the Obama administration, American diplomats must raise the issue wherever harassment or abuse arises, and they are required to record it in the State Department's annual report on human rights. And the State Department is funding a program that finances gay rights organizations to combat discrimination, violence, and other abuses.

Internet Freedom. The Obama administration has led the world to recognize and defend Internet freedom – the freedom of expression, assembly, and association online for people everywhere – through coalitions of countries and by empowering individuals with innovative technologies. The administration has built partnerships to support an Internet that is secure and reliable and that is respectful of U.S. intellectual property, free flow of information, and privacy. To preserve the Internet as a platform for commerce, debate, learning, and innovation in the 21st century, we successfully negotiated international Internet policymaking principles, support the current multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance, and oppose the extension of intergovernmental controls over the Internet.

Through all these actions, America is leading again. By responsibly ending the wars, rebalancing our foreign policy, taking concrete steps to address the greatest threats to our country, cooperating with allies and partners to tackle common challenges, reinvigorating international institutions, and sustaining

and building the core pillars of U.S. leadership, President Obama and the Democratic Party have worked to ensure that the 21st century remains an American one. That is why we are stronger abroad, and safer and more secure at home, than we were four years ago.



The United States continues to move forward towards a future of strong and sustained growth. Thanks to the leadership of President Obama and Democrats around the country, we're fighting back from the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression by making investments to create jobs, grow the middle class, and lay the foundations for an economy that out-educates, out-builds, and out-innovates the rest of the world. Today, America is both stronger and safer than it was four years ago. Now, we must continue the work we've started so that the United States of America never fails to meet the tests of our time.