
Documentation

'A new covenant' for austerity and zero growth

Here are excerpts from the 1992 Democratic Platform, "A New Covenant with the American People."

Preamble

. . . [W]e call for a *revolution in government*—to take power away from entrenched bureaucracies and narrow interests in Washington and put it back in the hands of ordinary people. . . .

The Revolution of 1992 is about facing up to tough choices. . . .

To make this revolution, we seek a *New Covenant* to repair the damaged bond between the American people and their government, that will expand *opportunity*, insist upon greater individual *responsibility* in return, restore *community*, and ensure *national security* in a profoundly new era.

I. Opportunity

. . . We reject both the do-nothing government of the last twelve years and the big government theory that says we can hamstring business and tax and spend our way to prosperity. Instead we offer a third way. Just as we have always viewed working men and women as the bedrock of our economy, we honor business as a noble endeavor, and vow to create a far better climate for firms and independent contractors of all sizes that empower their workers, revolutionize their workplaces, respect the environment, and serve their communities well. . . .

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

The cities. . . . We will encourage the flow of investment to inner city development and housing through targeted enterprise zones and incentives for private and public pension funds to invest in urban and rural projects. . . .

II. Responsibility

. . . **Welfare reform.** Welfare should be a second chance, not a way of life. We want to break the cycle of welfare by adhering to two simple principles: No one who is able to work can stay on welfare forever, and no one who works should live in poverty. We will continue to help those who cannot help themselves. We will offer people on welfare a new social contract. We'll invest in education and job training, and provide the child care and health care they need to go to work and achieve long-term self-sufficiency. We will give them the help they need to make the transition from welfare to work, and require people who can work to go to work within two years in available jobs either in the private sector or in community service to meet unmet needs. This will restore the covenant that welfare was meant to be: a promise of temporary help for people who have fallen on hard times.

Choice. Democrats stand behind the right of every woman to choose, consistent with *Roe v. Wade*, regardless of ability to pay, and support a national law to protect that right. It is a fundamental constitutional liberty that individual Americans—not government—can best take responsibility for making the most difficult and intensely personal decisions regarding reproduction. . . .

Labor-management responsibilities. . . . Workers must also accept added responsibilities in the new economy. In return for an increased voice and a greater stake in the success of their enterprises, workers should be prepared to join in cooperative efforts to increase productivity, flexibility, and quality. . . .

Responsibility for the environment. For ourselves and future generations, we must protect our environment. We will protect our old growth forests, preserve critical habitats, provide a genuine "no net loss" policy on wetlands, reduce our dependence on toxic chemicals, conserve the critical resources of soil, water and air, oppose new offshore oil drilling and mineral exploration, and production in our nation's many environmentally critical areas, and address ocean pollution by reducing oil and toxic waste spills at sea. We believe America's youth can serve its country well through a civilian conservation corps. To protect the public health, we will clean up the environmental horrors at federal facilities, insist that private polluters clean up their toxic and hazardous wastes, and vigorously prosecute environmental criminals. We will oppose Republican efforts to gut the Clean Air Act in the guise of competitiveness. We will reduce the volume of solid waste and encourage the use of recycled materials while discouraging excess packaging. To avoid the mistakes of the past, we will actively support energy-efficiency, recycling, and pollution prevention strategies. . . .

III. Restoring community

The success of our democracy in America depends substantially on the strength of our community institutions: fami-

lies and neighborhoods, public schools, religious institutions, charitable organizations, civil groups and other voluntary associations. . . .

Our communities form a vital "third sector" that lies between government and the marketplace. The wisdom, energy, and resources required to solve our problems are not concentrated in Washington, but can be found throughout our communities, including America's non-profit sector, which has grown rapidly over the last decade. Government's best role is to enable people and communities to solve their own problems. . . .

National service. We will create new opportunities for citizens to serve each other, their communities, and their country. By mobilizing hundreds of thousands of volunteers, national service will enhance the role of ordinary citizens in solving unresolved community problems. . . .

IV. Preserving our national security

Military strength. America is the world's strongest military power and we must remain so. A post-Cold War restructuring of American forces will produce a substantial savings beyond those promised by the Bush administration, but that restructuring must be achieved without undermining our ability to meet future threats to our security. A military structure for the 1990s and beyond must be built on four pillars: *First*, a survivable nuclear force to deter any conceivable threat, as we reduce our nuclear arsenals through arms control negotiations and other reciprocal action. *Second*, conventional forces shifted toward projecting power wherever our vital national interests are threatened. This means reducing the size of our forces in Europe, while meeting obligations to NATO, and strengthening our rapid deployment capabilities to deal with new threats to our security posed by renegade dictators, terrorists, international drug traffickers, and the local armed conflicts that can threaten the peace of entire regions. *Third*, maintenance of the two qualities that make America's military the best in the world—the superiority of our military personnel and of our technology. These qualities are vital to shortening any conflict and saving American lives. *Fourth*, intelligence capabilities redirected to develop far more sophisticated, timely, and accurate analyses of the economic and political conditions that can fuel new conflicts.

Use of force. The United States must be prepared to use military force decisively when necessary to defend our vital interests. The burdens of collective security in a new era must be shared fairly, and we should encourage multilateral peacekeeping through the United Nations and other international efforts.

Preventing and containing conflict. American policy must be focused on averting military threats as well as meeting them. To halt the spread of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, we must lead a renewed international effort to get tough with companies that peddle nuclear and chemical warfare technologies, strengthen the International Atomic

Energy Agency, and enforce strong sanctions against governments that violate international restraints. . . .

Trade agreements. Multinational trade agreements can advance our economic interests by expanding the global economy. Whether negotiating the North American Free Trade Area [sic] (NAFTA) or completing the GATT negotiations, our government must assure that our legitimate concerns about environmental, health and safety, and labor standards are included. Those American workers whose jobs are affected must have the benefit of effective adjustment assistance. . . .

Democracy Corps. Promoting democratic institutions by creating a Democracy Corps to send American volunteers to countries that seek legal, financial, and political expertise to build democratic institutions, and support groups like the National Endowment for Democracy, the Asia Foundation, and others.

Middle East peace. . . . The end of the Cold War does not alter America's deep interest in our longstanding special relationship with Israel, based on shared values, a mutual commitment to democracy, and a strategic alliance that benefits both nations. The United States must act effectively as an honest broker in the peace process. It must not, as has been the case with this administration, encourage one side to believe that it will deliver unilateral concessions from the other. Jerusalem is the capital of the state of Israel and should remain an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths.

Preserving the global environment. As the threat of nuclear holocaust recedes, the future of the earth is challenged by gathering environmental crises. As governments around the world have sought the path to concerted action, the Bush administration—despite its alleged foreign policy expertise—has been more of an obstacle to progress than a leader for change, practicing isolationism on an issue that affects us all. Democrats know we must act now to save the health of the earth, and the health of our children, for generations to come.

Addressing global warming. The United States must become a leader, not an impediment, in the fight against global warming. We should join our European allies in agreeing to limit carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000.

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

Biodiversity. We must work actively to protect the planet's biodiversity and preserve its forests. At the Rio Earth Summit, the Bush administration's failure to negotiate a biodiversity treaty it could sign was an abdication of international leadership. . . .

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