



THE CLAREMONT MANIFESTO

**A NEW DEMOCRATIC MESSAGE
— PROSPECTUS FOR A BETTER WORLD —**

THE DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF CLAREMONT

THE CLAREMONT MANIFESTO

MAY 2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Credo

We Claremont Democrats see America as a COMMONWEALTH in which we and our fellow citizens work together for the COMMON GOOD and for our individual fulfillment. This core concept informs our VISION and our PROGRAM.

Vision

The Earth

Our common home, the earth, and all the peoples of the earth are in danger. It must be the first duty of the United States to protect our common home. We should make a livable world our top priority on behalf of all our descendents.

America in the World

We view our country as a cooperative and contributing member of the world-wide COMMONWEALTH embracing the family of peoples on this earth. We are willing to contribute our military power to the service of the world community to maintain peace and stability. In the common interest of the world's peoples, we shall take the lead in the preservation of the globe's finite resources and in the fight against global warming. In the interest of the survival of humankind, we pledge ourselves to work toward abolition of all nuclear armaments, with reduction of nuclear stocks and non-proliferation as intermediate steps.

America at Home

We shall strive to implement the concept of the COMMONWEALTH based on cooperation and mutual support rather than on dog-eat-dog competition. As a first step, we will restore to its full the vigor the Constitution which our Founding Fathers have bestowed on us. We will reinvigorate the principle of the Separation of Powers to allow the Congress to exercise vigorous oversight over the operations of the Executive. We will restore the Civil Rights guaranteed by the Constitution which have been set aside under the pretext of the so-called War on Terror. Furthermore, we shall institute a rational immigration policy which balances our need for labor from abroad against the protection of people already this in country.

In our COMMONWEALTH we will promote social equity and well-being. We will promote a more just distribution of wealth, diminishing the currently unacceptable gap between the Rich and the Poor. We will work to provide Universal Health Care on a national scale and we will protect Social Security against all attempts to destroy it through partial privatization.

This VISION is designed to set out ultimate goals for the Democratic Party to accomplish in the present century.

Selected Programs and Policies

1. Repudiation of the Bush policy of World Domination based on military might. Repudiation of Pre-emptive War and First Use of Nuclear Weapons.
2. Participation in the UNITED NATIONS as a peaceful partner.
3. Support of non-proliferation and reduction of nuclear armaments.
4. Impartial arbitration and settlement of Palestine conflict and negotiated regional settlements in the Middle East.
5. Increase in U.S. contribution to International Aid and Development.
6. Focus on roots of Islamic extremism. Search for political rather than military solutions. Our opponents are human beings too.
7. Movement toward cost-effective Universal Health Care.
8. Increased support of labor unions.
9. Focus on renewable energy to save the Environment and to decrease dependence on foreign oil.
10. The Justice system: Reduction of criminal penalties for non-violent offenses and renewed emphasis on rehabilitation.

THE CLAREMONT MANIFESTO

PROLOGUE

The Claremont Manifesto is a response to the Democratic defeat in 2004. In the wake of that defeat, the Democratic Party and the Democratic Club of Claremont realized that the Party needs a more inspiring and coherent presentation of its outlook and aims, one that enables the American electorate to understand what we advocate and why.

From the New Freedom of Woodrow Wilson to the New Deal of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society, the Democratic Party has acted to strengthen American society by employing the power of government to enhance the common good for all our people. We need now to reclaim that heritage.

This Manifesto is an effort by the Democratic Club of Claremont to rearticulate these classic values in the context of present and future needs. What follows is a message from local Democrats in Claremont, California, a message which seeks, as Adlai Stevenson used to say, to "talk sense", first to their Party, and then to the American people.

We begin by exploring the philosophical and moral basis of liberal political ideas. We then put forward a vision that derives from those roots. Finally, we describe policies and programs that could realize these ideas and that vision.

This country still has a rendezvous with destiny. The time to pursue that rendezvous is now.

In the process of framing our political agenda, we face a persistent paradox: should we present a minimalist program that will appeal to the swing voter in the center of the political spectrum, or should we make a bold appeal to the hearts and minds of our fellow citizens around us who at bottom hope for the Good Life and Security for themselves and their children despite the distractions and false slogans of our opponents.

With the adoption of this document, the Democratic Party of America will have decided to choose the latter path despite the risk that such a step entails. We have done so because we believe that our country and the world outside are in profound crisis and that therefore bold steps are needed.

CREDO

America as a Commonwealth

The program of the Democratic Party is based on a view of the nature of human beings, of the world in which they live and of the relationship between individual people and society.

We believe that the world is marked by both good and evil, that it can be made a better place, and that making it a better place necessitates the subordination of competition to cooperation.

Democrats assume that human beings have the potential for both good and evil. The role of the family is to raise children so as to develop their potential for goodness and to diminish their potential for evil as well as fostering their recognition of social and civic responsibilities.

We believe that individuals become persons not only through the agency of the family, but also through the institutions of the larger society into which they are born. Hence, it is the aim of the Democratic Party to create social institutions that further the improvement of the world, of our own society and of individuals by developing our cooperative powers and our potential for goodness.

Democrats emphatically reject the view that human beings are at bottom solitary individuals, seeking only their own pre-servation and self-advancement in competition with others. In contrast to this view, we see our society as a Commonwealth in which individual citizens cooperate and support each other in their endeavor to achieve the common good. This concept of America as a Commonwealth goes back to colonial times and informs all our domestic programs.

Individuals thrive when they are supported by strong social institutions. The child needs the nurturance of a family; the modern child needs also the stimulation of a school and the encouragement and protection of civil society. Adults today need the support of public services, a legal framework for economic achievement and for security against enemies foreign and domestic. To provide these services, individuals share part of their wealth with the community.

This same mutually supportive relationship between the individual and the community should also obtain at the international level. Peoples and nations should seek their own path within the context of the wider world community. Through such structures as the United Nations, this world community strives to create conditions that will benefit and enhance the security of all. Toward this end, Democrats advocate working toward the ultimate goal of making force a monopoly of the international community. We hold that military power should be employed by individual nations only for self-defense.

These are the fundamental values that animate the policies of the Democratic Party. These principles inform our VISION.

VISION

We need to dream before we can think. Before we can design a roadmap, we must know our direction. If we are to construct the Democratic Party we want, what would it look like and what would be its message to the country?

What follows is our effort to articulate a vision for our Party, a vision that flows from our understanding of the values and beliefs we have just discussed. We do this not as a conceit or an entertainment. We believe that our country and indeed the world are in a state of profound crisis, that we are teetering on the edge of catastrophe and disintegration.

If we are to pull back from the brink, we must deepen our understanding and summon extraordinary will. Our objective must be no less than to heal the world, to propose arrangements for a better future in which people will learn to live in harmony and goodwill, both at home and abroad. While we reject the notion that the state and its laws should be based on the teachings of any particular creed, we indeed believe that the spirit of all the great world religions is reflected in our program.

The Earth

The locus for all our lives and activities is the planet we inhabit. Hence we must act to protect and support our common home.

One source of the earth's current problems is human population. Its growth has placed that home and consequently ourselves in danger.

The chief immediate threat is global warming, a threat so pressing that, unless brought under control very soon, it will endanger all the peoples of the earth. It must be the first duty of the United States to see to it that this threat does not overtake mankind and that the quest for economic development is not allowed to despoil our home.

The Democratic Party should deliver a clarion call to our country and to the world—a call to make a livable world its top priority. To do less is to turn our backs on reality and to betray our descendents.

America in the World

The Democratic view of the role of the United States in the world derives from our fundamental values: the world is seen as a family of peoples, each pursuing its own path to fulfillment and a decent life, in cooperation with others, all of whom share the limited resources of the planet.

America, now the richest and most powerful country in the world, must do its utmost to keep the peace and work with others for the general welfare. However, we should not seek to dominate and exploit other peoples near or far. Nor should we dictate to others the form of government or the form of economy under which they are to live, even though we

ferently hope that all governments will seek to improve both the welfare and liberty of their own people, and although we encourage attempts to achieve a liberal democracy.

We believe that the primary task of keeping peace in the world should be assigned to the collective of the world's people, at this time the United Nations. As in well-ordered nation states, where the monopoly of force is reserved to the national government, so the military and police power of the world should be reserved to the agency that represents the world community, with the proviso that each member state may keep the capacity to repel attacks on its home territory.

The United Nations

The Democratic Party should promise to make the United States a full-fledged member of the United Nations and any successor organization.

We should give our full financial support, and dedicate our resources, to the world organization, commensurate with our wealth. We pledge our full support to attempts to develop the United Nations to be the primary peacekeeping authority in the world, reserving to ourselves only the right to defend our home territory. We will act with restraint and with respect for the needs and opinions of others, and above all, we will not seek to impose our will on the world.

Nuclear Weapons and Nuclear Energy

We pledge ourselves to the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weaponry. As long as nuclear weapons exist our species is in danger and our doom likely. The odds are that some accident or some madman will trigger the nuclear holocaust if the mechanisms to do so continue to exist indefinitely.

We also have strong reservations about expanding the use of nuclear energy until we discover means of safely storing nuclear waste.

Limits of Resources and Distribution of Wealth

We recognize that a growing world population and rising standards of living place a strain on the limited resources of the planet. We also acknowledge that the people of the United States consume a disproportionate share of these resources. A world divided between the very rich and the very poor is an unjust and unstable world.

We can, however, limit our appetites and our consumption. Our children and our grandchildren will not be able to appropriate as many material resources of the earth as their grandparents did, but we intend to preserve for every American a decent and dignified way of life, even as we assist other people to approach such a condition. In the process we may discover that the unlimited consumption of material goods is not the most assured road to human fulfillment.

America at Home

The Democratic view of our own society also derives from our fundamental values: we are in this life together, as different as we are. There are many paths to fulfillment and to a decent life. Our social institutions must be organized to enable individuals to realize their own values and potentials as far as possible.

Civil Rights

The Commonwealth treats all its members equally before the law regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship or sexual orientation.

Democrats advocate the uncompromising restoration of the full provisions of the Bill of Rights and the strict implementation of judicial decisions made in support of civil liberties.

We firmly repudiate the notion that the current so-called emergency justifies the present administration's attack on the Bill of Rights and civil liberties. We pledge ourselves to rescind all illegal emergency legislation instituted since September 2001. We intend to preserve the Republic in full compliance with the Bill of Rights and with the civil liberties that our Founding Fathers established for us.

The Distribution of Wealth

The principles that apply to the world also apply to our nation. If a world divided between rich and poor is doomed to injustice and instability, democracy at home so divided is just as doomed. Therefore the Democratic Party seeks a more just income distribution. In our Commonwealth, the rich and the poor, as well as corporations and other enterprises, must pay their fair share. A primary tool for a more just income distribution is a tax policy designed to assure that all contribute a fair and just share to the general welfare based upon their ability to pay. We reject the Republican contention that wealthy individuals and corporations should pay taxes in the same proportions as those in the middle and working classes who struggle to survive economically. Such 'proportionality' is not just.

In this context, we recognize our obligation to combat vigorously the Republican claim that taxes are the ultimate evil. Taxes supply, in fact, the revenue for a just and decent society. To pay our just taxes is our badge of citizenship.

Health Care

Democrats believe that access to health care must be universal, available to every man, woman and child in this land, at minimal administrative cost.

At the same time, we recognize the difficulties that lie in the path of achieving this goal. While the escalating cost of the present system will soon prove unbearable because of our rapidly aging population and increasing costs of medical technology, those that currently benefit—the insurance companies, HMO's, and health providers—have thus far been able to obstruct the path to reform. We pledge to renew our efforts to seek a universal system appropriate to the U.S., the varying models of universal care in other advanced countries providing helpful guidance. At present, we anticipate a single-payer system, but we remain open to alternatives as long as they provide both universal care and cost efficiency.

Social Security

The enactment of Social Security during the New Deal is one of the Democrats' proudest achievements. This nearly universal insurance program guarantees a reasonable amount of minimal economic security and dignity in old age. It remains a basically sound system, despite Republican forecasts of gloom and doom.

As adjustments need to be made in light of changing economics and demographics, the fundamentally universal character of the insurance concept must be preserved. In addition, the program needs to be expanded to include groups currently excluded (such as government employees) and groups not adequately covered (such as women and minorities).

We proudly proclaim that we owe it to ourselves as Americans to take care of our elders.

Gender Equity

Half of the human population are women. Throughout history women have been subordinated and unable to develop their talents and powers. While great strides were made in the twentieth century in the United States and elsewhere, much remains to be done to end the unequal status of women.

Democrats believe in gender equity: women's ability to reach their potential should be encouraged, not only for the enrichment of their own individual lives, but also for the common good. The needs and possibilities of human society are such as to require the participation of individuals of both sexes. Positions of authority must be open to all, and be awarded exclusively on the basis of talent and qualification.

Migration

Migrations of people have been a fact of history since our forebears first streamed out of Africa to eventually cover the globe. Migrations pose opportunities and hardships - both for migrants themselves and for the inhabitants of the countries to which they move.

At this point in history, migrations are caused primarily by demographic changes and differentials of poverty and wealth. On a worldwide scale, they are largely from the poor South to the more prosperous North.

We acknowledge that ours has been a nation of immigrants since colonial days and that it will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. We recognize and deplore the fact that present conditions create unacceptable hardships for people who come to this country in hope of a better life. At the same time, we recognize and deplore the hardships forced upon workers already in this country, citizens and resident aliens alike, whose livelihood is threatened by the influx of cheap labor. We shall seek to alleviate these hardships by coordinating labor supply and demand, in part by reasonable efforts to regulate the influx of workers from abroad. At the same time, we pledge to honor our commitment to the principle of family reunification.

Democrats proudly proclaim our vision of the Good Life, of a world in which people ultimately will be free to live where they wish, not restricted by arbitrary boundaries set by national states or by tribal groups or religious fanatics, and we promise to work toward that end.

PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

The specific recommendations that follow are meant to implement the vision just described. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

The Community of Nations

Democrats view the role of the United States in the world as that of one country in a family of nations, a country that is willing and determined to contribute to the welfare of the world community in ways commensurate with our ideals and strength. We intend to do our part in maintaining the peace and in responding to natural disasters. We are also determined to use our great wealth, in conjunction with other nations, to alleviate poverty, misery and disease around the world.

Repudiation of the Bush Doctrine of World Domination

The Democratic Party, upon accession to power, should repudiate the Bush regime's National Security Documents of September 2002 and March 2006. In particular, the United States should issue a NO FIRST NUCLEAR STRIKE pledge and we should repudiate the doctrine of PREVENTIVE WAR. Our position should replace the policy of trying to impose democracy on other countries by military force with one of encouraging by example the world's peoples to move toward democracy. Above all, the United States, under Democratic leadership, should reject Empire and proceed to dismantle American bases not strictly necessary for our security.

The U.S. and the U.N.

Under a Democratic administration, the United States will participate in the work of the United Nations without reservation. As a first step, we will immediately pay our outstanding dues. We will encourage restructuring the world organization to reflect the changed conditions since its founding in 1945, including modifications in the structure and functioning of the Security Council.

The Democratic Party also advocates a policy of increased support of the development and humanitarian efforts of the United Nations. America should increase its development support to at least the Millennium project level (i.e. 0.7% of GNP).

Under Democratic leadership, the United States will fully support the peace mission of the United Nations. Should the U.N. establish its own military force, we will permit recruitment for that force within the U.S. In any case, we expect to keep available for U.N. service under Security Council control, such forces as the Congress approves. The U.S. will also provide logistical support to U.N. operations around the world.

In short, the U.S. will be a fully cooperative and contributing member of the world organization, determined to use its power and influence in legitimate ways, respectful of the sentiments and needs of other peoples, and always mindful of the welfare of the planet as a whole.

The Nuclear Threat

Our ultimate goal is the total abolition of all nuclear armaments. We understand that the road to that goal will be long and complex.

As a first step, we propose re-affirmation of the non-proliferation program, rejecting any further exceptions. We will also urge the gradual reduction of the nuclear arsenals of the nuclear powers and the strengthening of agreements to prevent the spread of nuclear materials.

We propose the establishment of a standing commission on nuclear disarmament under the United Nations to prepare plans for a gradual world-wide movement toward total nuclear disarmament. An initial report or recommendation should be presented within a decade or sooner.

To indicate our good faith, a new Democratic administration should abandon current plans to develop new, more “usable” nuclear weapons and it should discontinue the present policy of proposing to put weapons in space.

America and the Middle East

The United States must take the lead in resolving the problems of the Middle East. At this present time, the Middle East is the source of much of the tension and conflict faced by the United States around the world. It is also the source of much death and suffering, and of huge expenditures of funds needed for social purposes at home and abroad.

It has become clear that the first inescapable step in the resolution of the conflict between East and West is the constructive resolution of the issue of Palestine. When that issue is resolved, the hatred and level of violence will decrease even though not all conflicts (such as Iraq and Afghanistan) will be resolved automatically. However, NO resolution of conflict will be possible without a peace in Palestine that is acceptable to Israel and the Muslim world.

Democrats recognize that the United States has a crucial part to play in the resolution of the Israeli-Arab conflict. A Democratic administration should immediately return to the role of a fully involved neutral arbitrator. We should require both parties to make the necessary concessions, and we should use all means at our disposal (short of military action) such as the threat of withholding financial assistance. The outline of a possible settlement has become apparent in earlier negotiations: a secure Israeli state essentially within its pre-1967 boundaries, with Jerusalem as the capital of both states, Israel and Palestine; and a contiguous and viable Palestinian state on the West Bank with a secure connection to Gaza. This state along with Israel will receive sufficient financial support and development aid to provide a decent life for its own people. In the long run, we should work toward an integrated free-trade area covering the entire land “between the rivers of Egypt and the Euphrates.”

We recognize that it will be difficult for any U.S. administration to act as an impartial arbitrator, given the domestic pressures in the United States. We will attempt to persuade all ethnic and political factions in this country to support a peaceful solution along the lines of the Geneva Accord of 2003, in the interest of world peace and of both captive peoples in the Middle East. Only peace can save them from the mutual destruction witnessed in the past decades.

Over time, Democrats will seek to lessen dependence upon the Middle East in the U.S. and Western economies by lowering the level of consumption of oil through the development of new technologies and of renewable energy sources. Such an approach may facilitate our disengagement from the disaster in Iraq. Never again will we rush into an unnecessary conflict in a part of the world we actually know so little about.

Our gradual disengagement from the Middle East will be an integral part of the demilitarization of U.S. power around the globe, to be accompanied by a vastly increased constructive engagement in the task of helping with the advancement of human well-being in the developing world.

The Rich and the Poor: Trade Policies and Development Aid

In the framing of U.S. Aid and Trade policies, Democrats seek arrangements that benefit all parties and contribute to international stability and comity. While we favor “free” trade (i.e. exchange of goods without export subsidies or import tariffs), we insist that it must also be fair. The rights of workers and environmental safeguards both at home and abroad must be protected.

If American workers are displaced by the importation of inexpensive goods from abroad, we must make certain that financial support, education and retraining are available to those workers. We also recommend that government support the development of new industries and new technologies that can provide employment for those displaced. Assistance should also be available for small, family-owned businesses that are adversely affected by the importation of foreign goods.

Development aid to foreign countries should be designed to encourage and support sustainable and environmentally responsible economic development based on humane working conditions, and on equitable distribution of income and wealth. It should foster the emergence of democratic political structures.

To achieve these goals, aid cannot be self-serving, i.e. designed to benefit U.S. economic interests or corporations. Tying aid to the purchase of U.S. goods or to the hiring of U.S. corporations is subversive of these aims. Rather, the development should be sustainable and employ local labor and resources.

Aid should focus on education and training of the entire work force without gender or ethnic discrimination. It should encourage small business and service industries in addition to large scale industries, and it should develop the economic infrastructure where needed.

Finally, U.S. assistance should go beyond technical job training to include education about health care, occupational and consumer safety and environmental protection—all of which contribute to the development of social and political infrastructures that stimulate the growth of democratic institutions.

The Problem of Terrorism

It has become obvious that the Bush regime’s proclamation of the “War on Terror” is an inaccurate propagandistic slogan. Terror is a tactic not an entity such as a state. It is quite clear from history that terrorism is a weapon used by the desperate against militarily superior enemies. Without approving or justifying the terrorist attacks on innocent victims, it is evident from our experience in Iraq that an exclusive military response is ineffective.

The only way to successfully combat terrorism is through a combination of patient, concerted, cooperative police work and the reduction of the causes of discontent that give rise to terrorist action. It is just these policies that Democrats promise to pursue. The first necessary steps to address the present discontents in the Muslim World are resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict along the lines of the Geneva Accord of 2003 and the initiation of a Marshall Plan for the Middle East.

In the meantime, Democrats will seek to maintain and improve measures designed to protect the security of our own people and others, especially in sensitive areas such as air transport, port facilities and at nuclear, electrical and chemical plants. Democrats will seek security through cooperative measures that respect human and national rights, not through

military threat and invasion or through torture and extraordinary rendition, as under the present regime. These have proven extremely damaging to our nation's moral standing in the world.

Domestic Programs

Our domestic programs aim to improve the welfare of the people in the Commonwealth and to undo the damage inflicted on our community during the years of the Republican regime.

Environment

It is ironic that the most critical issue we face has been the easiest to pass over. The earth is the only home we have. We depend on it for sustenance, for life itself. And the earth is in big trouble, as Al Gore makes abundantly clear in his much-discussed film "An Inconvenient Truth." Gore demonstrates that the population explosion in the last half century, and the heedless economic expansion that has come in its wake, pose a mortal danger to our natural habitat. Our addiction to oil and the vast increase in the emissions of greenhouse gases has induced global warming that threatens to upset the balance in nature on which our lives depend.

That Al Gore is a Democrat is not coincidence. While neither major party has given sufficient attention to the environment, the Democrats are the only ones even to begin to move in the right direction. Under Democratic leadership the United States must ratify the Kyoto Treaty, move immediately to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, make major investments in alternative fuel research to reduce—and eventually end—our dependence on fossil fuels, increase support for public transit and pursue other promising routes leading to a livable environment for ourselves and all the earth's creatures.

It must be remembered that global warming, while the most serious threat to the wellbeing of this country and the world, is not the only environmental issue facing us. Clean air and clean water are also aims which the Republican Party attempts to undermine. Moreover, preservation of our national aesthetic resources, such as our national park system is also a significant value which the Democratic Party promotes.

The Delivery of Health Care

We are resolutely committed to the principle of universal health care. The Commonwealth looks after all its people. Every person living in this land is entitled to adequate health care, regardless of race, religion, economic standing or citizenship.

At this time, we envision the eventual establishment of a single-payer system, but we suggest that universal systems elsewhere be examined for their strengths and weaknesses before a final determination is made. Such a system must include a radical reduction in the administrative cost of providing health care.

In order to minimize opposition and dislocation resulting from a conversion to a public/private system, careful planning is needed to provide retraining and reemployment to individuals whose current jobs will become redundant.

Provision also has to be made to train the additional personnel who will be needed to meet the increased demands of a larger clientele once every citizen of the Commonwealth is provided with adequate health care. We must build additional hospitals and medical schools in order to avoid the problem of bottlenecks which have plagued universal systems elsewhere.

This will obviously be a costly enterprise. Most of the funding can be reclaimed from diminished national expense of health care delivery resulting from a universal (presumably single-payer) system, but the Federal government must be prepared to allocate additional resources from the general budget.

Apart from these costs of the transition to a comprehensive program, the costs of the on-going program will be shared as widely and as equitably as possible. Patients, taxpayers, business, and the pharmaceutical industry in particular, will assume their just share. If necessary, the Federal budget will include a portion of the expenses of the system, but we will attempt to minimize the need for such assistance. However, we will preserve the principle that all members of the Commonwealth make a proportionate contribution.

Universal Health Care will have to deal with one more painful and difficult problem: some limitation of publicly assisted health care, especially of costly advanced procedures, for the rapidly growing elderly population. The Commonwealth will seek the counsel of ethicists, religious organizations and the wider public in the design of policies, in full awareness of the fact that medical care is also a limited resource which has to be shared rationally and compassionately among its citizens.

Saving Social Security

We believe, in contrast to the Republicans, that the present Social Security program is basically sound. We believe that its fundamental character as a near-universal insurance program must be preserved and extended to all citizens of the Commonwealth, including those not currently covered and those not served adequately.

The Democratic Party resolutely rejects any attempts to turn the existing insurance system into an investment venture through so-called “private accounts” or through any other changes that would in fact decrease the resources available to the general system. Moreover in its survivor and disability features, Social Security provides a combination of insurance coverages not available from any other source with just one affordable insurance premium.

At the same time, we recognize that changing demographics and changing financial and economic conditions may require minor adjustments in the future, as they have in the past. Such changes must enhance, rather than detract from, the basic character of Social Security as an insurance system covering the largest number of people possible. We propose that a review be conducted every ten years, following the decennial census, by a bi-partisan, multipartite commission appointed by the Congress.

However, any study of possible adjustments must recognize the basic commitment of the Democratic Party to the fundamental principles of the existing program. It is our enduring conviction that Social Security is a lasting assurance that our older fellow citizens will live out their lives in dignity and independence in this land of ours.

Separation of Powers

The American Republic was created in opposition to a government become intrusive and oppressive. In the years following the Revolution, the newly independent Americans struggled to formulate a political structure that would prove resistant if not immune to the arrogation of power that they associated with George III’s “tyranny.”

The “father” of the Constitution, James Madison, was convinced that the most dangerous threat to popular government throughout history was the emergence of passionate “factions” dedicated to the pursuit of particular goals contrary to the common good. His response to this threat lay in the doctrine of “checks and balances,” as exemplified in the separation of power among the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. These checks and balances, he argued, could constitute bulwarks against the prairie fires of passionate factions.

For over two hundred years, that system has worked reasonably well, but in the black-and-white world of George W. Bush, Madison's creation has crumbled.

It is high time to invoke the American remedy - to reinstate the principle of the Balance of Power: Congressional oversight of the Executive, respect for the role of the Judiciary, and an end to the subversion of civil rights and civil liberties. We may join with Republicans who share our concerns, for the present constitutional crisis is not so much the result of a struggle between Republicans and Democrats, but it is the work of a radical cabal that seeks to subvert the power balance envisioned by the Founders. It is time, once again, to right the Balance.

Hence we reject the theory of the Unitary Executive and the wholesale issuance of signing statements intended to avoid the will of Congress.

Civil Rights in Our Time

We promise to restore to the American people the full range of Civil Rights established for us by the Founding Fathers in the Bill of Rights. We reject the notion advanced by the current Republican administration and other advocates of the garrison state that in periods of so-called national emergency those rights can be taken away at will by the Executive branch.

We do believe that even temporary restrictions on our rights and liberties, if found by the appropriate judiciary authority to be absolutely necessary, should be subject to speedy revocation.

Democrats should scrutinize closely all emergency legislation and executive orders passed in the alleged interest of national security since September 11, 2001. We will call for open hearings on these statutes and regulations, hearings accessible to all parties of civil society and open to varying views on the issue under discussion. Determinations of whether to scrap, modify or retain such post-9/11 items will be made in consequence of those hearings. However, we advocate the outright repeal of the Military Tribunals Act of 2006, which suspends habeas corpus, allows coerced testimony, and authorizes the President to modify the Geneva Convention.

In all these deliberations, Democrats shall remain committed to dual objectives: to protect the Commonwealth against its internal and external enemies and to preserve our liberties and rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Democrats are guided by the statement attributed to Benjamin Franklin: 'Those who would trade liberty for security deserve neither.'

Privacy Rights

Democrats intend to restore fully to the American people the privacy rights guaranteed by the Founding Fathers which have been compromised by the Republican administration in recent years. The Fourth Amendment to the Constitution states unambiguously: "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be validated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause...." The U.S. Constitution does not authorize the President to abrogate the Fourth Amendment even when the United States is at war.

Money and Politics

We are committed to the task of limiting and, if possible, eventually eliminating the corrupting role of money in the political process. Political campaigns have become bidding wars where advertising budgets are more important than candidates and ideas. In recent elections, the candidate with the most money has won 95% of the time.

Even more than being unfair, however, “market politics” inevitably becomes corrupt. The claim that it is a sovereign “right” to contribute money and hire lobbyists is a smoke screen designed to protect the ability of the wealthy to dominate the political process.

Until and unless we remove, or at least vastly limit, the role of money in the political process, our claim to be a democratic society will ring hollow. Hence we support the eventual passage of campaign finance laws that allow for only public money to be used in the electoral process and for that money to be made available equally to all valid candidates. We support formulation of new regulations regarding the licensing of radio and television (including cable and satellite) to provide, as a public service, equal access to candidates for political office, and to prohibit the sale of air time designed to promote or detract from candidates for public office. And we should bar for five years any elected official from being employed by firms over which that official had any influence while in office.

The Rich and the Poor: Income Distribution and Tax Policy

In recent years there has been an alarming increase in the disparity between rich and poor in America. History suggests that democracy gives way to instability and dictatorship when that disparity becomes extreme. The Democratic Party is committed to narrowing that disparity by making the tax system more progressive, by lightening the tax burden on the poor in our society and by eliminating the tax loopholes for corporations and the wealthy. We also support the adjustment of minimum wage rates to inflation. The aim of any such adjustments is to protect the economically weaker segments of the population.

To further level the playing field, we pledge ourselves to the improvement of the quality of services delivered to the general population, such as affordable housing, health care, public education, and improved grant and loan programs for qualified students wishing to attend colleges and universities.

Immigration

Illegal immigration is a serious problem difficult to solve. At this point in time, every country has the right to control the number of people who immigrate.

In this situation, we face a huge problem indeed: more than twelve million undocumented aliens already live in this country. However, about forty percent of these have come here with legal visas but overstayed their approved visit.

Democrats support a policy that provides a way for illegal immigrants to acquire legal status and to become citizens.

Moreover, in order to lessen the urgency for people in developing countries, such as Mexico, to seek a better life elsewhere, Democrats intend to invest substantial resources in development aid to such countries. In particular, we must create conditions that will help Mexican farmers to remain on the land, by adjusting provisions in NAFTA that tend to displace such farmers. We also encourage economic reforms in Mexico and we propose a form of Marshall plan to create jobs in Mexico. We also encourage population control in developing countries to minimize the need for emigration.

In summary, we must deal with undocumented immigrants already in this country in a constructive and humane manner. We also propose the development of a rational guest worker program. If it can be convincingly demonstrated that American citizens will not work in certain occupations in adequate numbers—even when employers offer “living wages”—then a reasonable number of people who find those jobs attractive should be allowed to immigrate legally and to have an opportunity for citizenship.

Rationality and humanity should guide all of our immigration policies. In particular family reunification and the providing of a “safe haven”—not mere labor market balance—must inform our immigration policy.

Education

Democrats believe that a vibrant system of public education is essential to the functioning of democracy. In a multi-cultural society, students from different backgrounds must see themselves as equal members of a shared pluralistic culture and be equipped to work together to achieve the common good. While private schools and home schooling may have a role to play, the focus must remain on public education.

Schools in a democracy have a vital public function and they are also essential to help young people develop the skills and abilities that lead to personal fulfillment. In a democracy, every person should have the opportunity to develop his or her talents and interests to the maximum. Democrats hold that sound education must combine the development of critical thinking skills along with the acquisition of knowledge. Testing is a means of assessing progress but testing should not be allowed to dominate teaching content and methods, as it does in the current regime's mislabeled "No Child Left Behind" program.

Democrats also reject the Republican move to penalize "failing schools" which usually are under-funded institutions serving under-privileged children. Rather, we propose allocation of additional resources to such schools to allow for smaller classes, more personal attention, better teachers and improved physical facilities, perhaps under new professional leadership.

Finally, Democrats resist the Republican concept of subsidizing private schools as a means of solving the problems of under-performing public schools. Rather than bewail their failures, we shall make the public schools into places where students can be empowered to live rich and fulfilling personal lives and gain knowledge and understanding of their role in a democratic society.

Unions

Support and advocacy of the right of workers to form unions and bargain collectively has long been a hallmark of the Democratic Party. Passage of the Wagner Act legalizing collective bargaining was one of the major achievements of the New Deal.

In recent decades, the power of Big Business in American political life, as well changes in our economy, have led to a severe reversal in the progress made in unionization. Thus the expansion of American democracy, the empowerment of persons in their workplace, has receded significantly. This trend must be reversed. Government must strongly support the right of workers to unionize.

Democrats support the extension of the right to unionize to all sectors of the economy, public, non-profit and private. The category of those eligible to join unions needs to be expanded. Fair arbitration rules must be instituted. Lastly, the Taft-Hartley Act must at last be repealed.

In the more distant future, the Democratic Party should consider a further step toward economic democracy: the inclusion of workers and other stakeholders such as consumers and local government agencies in the Boards of Directors of business enterprises. European continental arrangements may serve as useful models for such arrangements.

Gender Equity

Women must enjoy full equality in opportunities and benefits. There remain barriers to women's entry and success in public and private work places. Democrats aim at eliminating such unfair roadblocks to a full and satisfying life.

Every encouragement should also be offered to substantially increasing the role of women in American political life. In this way the common good will be improved by the insights and ideas that women will bring to the table.

Women who choose marriage contribute to the earnings of their family and provide unpaid labor in the home. They need to have a legal right to an equitable share of earnings and pensions after divorce or death of a spouse or partner and to reasonable credit toward Social Security. Women who choose to combine motherhood and a career, need appropriate social services, especially easily available and affordable child care, to enable them to achieve the benefits of both children and career.

The commitment of the Democratic Party to do what it can to ensure a full and satisfying life to all members of the Commonwealth also extends to the protection of a woman's Right of Choice over her own body. While affirming the value of human life, Democrats refuse to use the power of the state to enforce any specific religious doctrine.

Equality before the Law

We have already held that all members of the community are to be treated as equal before the law. At present, some members of the Commonwealth are denied that equality because of their sexual orientation. Hence, Democrats must seek to guarantee to those living in committed relationships, regardless of their sexual orientation, the equal protection of the law and to resist further attempts to compromise those rights by any form of legislation. We Democrats refuse once again to use the power of the state to enforce specifically religious doctrines.

Crime and the Penal System

On this topic too, we reject the trends of the recent period and the policies of the current Administration.

We view individuals in the penal system as members of the Commonwealth who need to be reclaimed as far as possible. We believe that a program of prevention and rehabilitation will provide greater security to Americans than the current growing accumulation of penitentiaries—and will do so at a lower cost.

We should emphasize rehabilitation. The country should devote substantial resources to vocational education in the context of rehabilitation. The end is that of transforming returning inmates into contributing members of society once they are no longer a threat to others. Those who have served their sentences should have their full voting rights restored as part of the process of reintegration into society.

The Democratic Party should strive to substantially strengthen and extend existing probation systems. The rehabilitation and re-introduction into society of prisoners—especially of long-term inmates—will be complex, expensive and not devoid of failures. However, the ultimate benefit to society in money and in human worth and happiness will vastly outweigh the costs of such a program.

As a first step, changes should be made in existing legislation. The Democratic Party should implement the repeal of the harsher laws and penalties instituted in recent years. We should act to decrease the number of offenses subject to criminal prosecution. That will notably include the decriminalization of the use of drugs. Medical and counseling services in schools and the community shall be established in tandem with the removal of drug use and possession from the list of criminal offenses. Funds saved from policing of current drug legislation and from relieving the penal system of handling those convicted of drug use will be used for counseling and rehabilitation services.

Our general policy will be to attempt to empty the prisons while improving the security of ordinary citizens. Decriminalization of drugs will be followed by the selective release of inmates convicted of victimless drug offenses.

The Commonwealth looks after all its members, even those who have failed to observe existing laws.

RESTATEMENT OF CREDO

We conclude this Manifesto by referring to the statement of basic principles with which we began. We see human beings seeking the Good Life for themselves and their children and for their neighbors and their neighbors' children. It is our view that people wish to live in a Commonwealth that nurtures and protects us all. While fully conscious of the dangers and uncertainties in the world as it is, we sincerely urge our fellow citizens to seize the opportunities that lie before us to create a more just and peaceful future that will enable more human beings to lead secure and satisfying lives.

We indeed believe that the implementation of the Vision and Policies set forth in this MANIFESTO will lead us into a better and more peaceful world.

**THE DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF CLAREMONT
PRESENTS THIS DOCUMENT IN THE PROFOUND BELIEF
THAT IT IS GROUNDED IN THE BASIC PRINCIPLES
OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY**



WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS TO BE SELF-EVIDENT . . .

- DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, JULY 4, 1776 -



**WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES,
IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH A MORE PERFECT UNION . . .**

- THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES, SEPTEMBER 28, 1787 -



**THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO BE SECURE
IN THEIR PERSONS, HOMES ... AGAINST UNREASONABLE
SEARCHES AND SEIZURES, SHALL NOT BE VIOLATED.**

- THE BILL OF RIGHTS, FOURTH AMENDMENT, DECEMBER 16, 1791 -



WE HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR, BUT FEAR ITSELF.

- FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT, MARCH 4, 1933 -