

# AMERICA CAN DO BETTER

**Democrats are Focused on the American People's Priorities while Republicans Try to Distract from Their Failures.**

## **Democratic Priorities**

## **Republican Failures**

### **ENERGY INDEPENDENCE**



Democrats are committed to achieving energy independence from the Middle East in the next 10 years. The comprehensive Democratic proposal would double the percentage of renewable fuels sold in America in six years, increase the percentage of "flex-fuel" vehicles that run on ethanol or gasoline, invest in biofuel research, and provide federal incentives to build biofuels distribution infrastructure and develop more smaller ethanol and biofuel plants distributed around the country.

Under the Bush Administration, America's dependence on foreign oil has actually increased from 56 % to 65 %, and gas prices have more than doubled since 2001. Republicans' response has been tax breaks, subsidies, and handouts for big oil companies, rather than investing in renewable resources.

### **NATIONAL SECURITY AND HOMELAND SECURITY**



Democrats' "Real Security Agenda" ensures a state-of-the-art 21<sup>st</sup> century military, targets terrorists and thwarts the spread of weapons of mass destruction, immediately implements the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, screens 100% of incoming cargo, provides first responders with vital equipment, protects Americans from biological terrorism and pandemics, ensures that 2006 will be a year of significant transition in Iraq, and achieves energy independence for America.

President Bush and Congressional Republicans received 5 "F's", 12 "D's", and 2 "Incompletes" from the bipartisan 9/11 Commission for poor progress in terrorism prevention and readiness. Republicans rejected a Democratic proposal for 100% scanning of incoming cargo. Furthermore, Bush and Republicans have consistently underfunded the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, the nation's key program to collect dangerous nuclear materials.

### **MINIMUM WAGE**



Democrats continue to fight to raise the minimum wage to a fair, livable level that would allow millions of American workers to be more active participants in the economy. Democratic legislation would increase the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25. The minimum wage was last raised in 1997.

Republicans refuse to raise the minimum wage – even while touting an "ownership society" that minimum wage workers could never even hope to be a part of. The minimum wage is now at its lowest value in 50 years.

### **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**



Democrats continue to propose fiscally responsible budgets that incorporate the pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) policies that led to record surpluses in the 1990s. The FY07 Democratic budget would have balanced the budget by 2012. Democrats would prohibit the reconciliation process from being used to increase the deficit.

Since 2001, Republicans have raised the debt limit 4 times to nearly \$9 trillion – an increase of \$3 trillion. In addition, House Republicans also have voted to increase the debt limit by another \$653 billion. Republicans have turned the \$5.6 trillion surplus inherited from Clinton into a projected deficit of \$4 trillion.

### **TAX REFORM**



Democrats strongly support reforming America's complicated and confusing tax code. Real reform must follow several principles: 1) it must not increase taxes for middle class families and working Americans, 2) it must make the tax code simpler, 3) it must make the tax code fairer, so that ordinary Americans have faith in the system and give the middle class and small businesses a level playing field, and 4) it must not increase the deficit.

Republicans abandoned tax reform after their tax-reform panel's recommendations were poorly received. Since Bush took office, the tax code has increased by 20,000 pages. Republicans have tilted the tax code in favor of the wealthy over the middle class. Under the GOP's latest misguided tax bill, a family making \$40,000 to \$50,000 would receive a \$46 tax cut – compared to \$42,000 for people making more than \$1 million.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>VETERANS</b></p> 	<p>Democrats’ “GI Bill of Rights for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” makes health care accessible and affordable for our veterans, ends the disabled veterans’ tax, reduces waiting times on disability claims, ends the Military Families Tax and increases survivor benefits for families with children, improves pay for senior enlisted personnel and warrant officers, provides a bonus for those serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, strengthens the GI Bill Education and Job Training Programs, helps homeless and injured veterans, and improves benefits for our National Guard/Reservists.</p>	<p>Over five years, the Republicans’ budgets have shortchanged VA health care by at least \$6 billion. In addition, they have voted to nearly double TRICARE pharmacy co-payments, failed to quickly and fully end the tax on disabled veterans and the Military Families’ Tax, and voted against TRICARE for Reserves and to protect the pay of activated Reservists. In his budgets, President Bush has consistently doubled drug co-payments and imposed new enrollment fees.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>INNOVATION</b></p> 	<p>Democrats’ “Innovation Agenda” would foster a new generation of innovators, provide a sustained commitment to research and development, make affordable broadband accessible to all Americans within five years, achieve energy independence in 10 years, and promote a competitive small business environment for innovation.</p>	<p>Despite Republicans’ talk about their “Competitiveness Initiative,” President Bush only proposes \$380 million for new funding for math and science instruction. At the same time, Bush’s FY07 budget cuts education funding by \$1.5 billion, including elimination of key programs such as Education Technology and Gifted and Talented education.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>EDUCATION</b></p> 	<p>A major focus of Democrats’ “Innovation Agenda” is sustaining America’s edge in science, technology, engineering and math. Democrats’ “10,000 Teachers, 10 Million Minds” proposal seeks to aggressively recruit and increase the number of math and science teachers in schools. Democrats’ FY07 budget alternative rejects misguided Republican cuts and helps make college more affordable by cutting student loan interest rates.</p>	<p>President Bush’s FY07 budget proposal cuts education funding and underfunds No Child Left Behind by \$15.4 billion. In addition to terminating 42 education programs, Bush proposed freezing the maximum Pell Grant for the fifth year in a row and eliminating programs to help disadvantaged students go to college.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HEALTH CARE</b></p> 	<p>Democrats have been fighting for a stronger Medicare prescription drug benefit that would allow seniors more time to make crucial decisions and allow the government to negotiate lower drug costs. Democrats also have proposals to give small businesses, working families, and early retirees access to affordable, quality health care, such as the Small Business Health Insurance Promotion Act, which creates affordable insurance pools for small employers and self-employed workers.</p>	<p>A typical family pays \$3,000 a year more for health insurance and there are 6 million more uninsured since 2000. The Republican response to the health care crisis has been: 1) a prescription drug bill that is too confusing for many seniors to navigate and that slaps a lifetime tax penalty on many seniors, and 2) Health Savings Accounts that would undermine traditional health insurance, do little to lower costs and largely benefit the healthy and wealthy.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>HONEST LEADERSHIP</b></p> 	<p>Democrats’ “Honest Leadership, Open Government” proposal would close the revolving door between Congress and lobbying firms, toughen public disclosure of lobbyist activity, ban lobbyist gifts and travel, shut down pay-to-play schemes like the “K Street Project,” force lawmakers to disclose outside job negotiations, prohibit “dead of night” special interest provisions, restore accountability to the federal contracting process, and prohibit cronyism in key appointments.</p>	<p>House Republicans passed a sham lobbying reform bill that leading editorial boards called a “joke,” and an “outrageous substitute for needed reform” and that did nothing to end the GOP’s Culture of Corruption. House and Senate Republicans have failed to move forward on a conference report. Republicans’ real goal is to simply provide themselves cover for the November mid-term elections.</p>