

Democrats For **Life** of America

DFLA – The pro-life voice within the Democratic Party

July 19, 2012

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Dear Platform Drafting Committee Members,

On behalf of the Democrats For Life of America and Democrats around the country who support the big tent of the Democratic Party, I write to submit language and supporting documentation to strengthen the Party and its historic mission of equality and opportunity for all Americans.

As a representative form of democracy, we cannot in good conscience exclude individuals simply because of their position on abortion. The current Platform language makes it clear the Party position is support for abortion without restrictions and support for taxpayer funding of abortion. This position is problematic for Democrats who oppose abortion or support abortion in limited circumstances.

An increasing number of individuals are identifying themselves as pro-life -- reaching over 50 percent in a recent Gallup Poll. Conversely, people identifying themselves as pro-choice has reached a record low of 41 percent according to the same May 23, 2012 poll.

As a Party we should strive to promote a big tent policy and include positions in the platform where we share agreement, not advocate for minority positions that divide our Party and affect our long-term goals.

There is no longer overwhelming support for abortion without restrictions and no longer overwhelming support for taxpayer funding of abortion. We, therefore, propose the following language as a way to bring Democrats on both sides of this issue together and focus on what unites us.

"We respect the conscience of each American and recognize that members of our Party have deeply held and sometimes differing positions on issues of personal conscience, like abortion and the death penalty. We recognize the diversity of views as a source of strength and we welcome into our ranks all Americans who may hold differing positions on these and other issues.

However, we can find common ground. We believe that we can reduce the number of abortions because we are united in our support for policies that assist families who find themselves in crisis or unplanned pregnancies. We believe that women deserve to have a breadth of options available as they face pregnancy: including, among others, support and resources needed to handle the challenges of pregnancy, adoption, and parenthood; access to education, healthcare, childcare; and appropriate child support. We envision a new day without financial or societal barriers to bringing a planned or unplanned pregnancy to term."

Sincerely,

Janet Robert
President
Democrats For Life of America

Kristen Day
Executive Director
Democrats for Life of America
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May 2, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

As pro-life Democrats we are encouraged by the signs of openness that you have displayed toward those of us within the party who oppose abortion. As a party we have found ways to come together in common purpose to stand against the root social causes of abortion by passing the Pregnant Women Support Act which 17 states are now implementing to assist pregnant women. We also came together to pass a health care reform bill that will save lives. Regardless of our differing position on abortion, we are united by our core values and can come together for the good of the nation.

However, our party must continue to show a real sign of openness. There are people in this Nation who have been told that Democrats do not share their values because of the current language in the Democratic Platform with respect to abortion. Several recent polls indicated that one-third of Democrats are pro-life. We should not turn a blind eye to the roughly 24 million of registered Democrats who oppose abortion, but instead try to find common ground language that represents us all.

As we move toward developing the 2012 Platform, we recommend that the language of the platform avoid the "single issue" trap sought to be imposed by the opposition. The Republicans would once again be only too pleased to argue that there is no room for someone who is pro-life in the Democratic Party. We know better, but the platform presently says, by its narrow, singular focus, the opposite and plays right into Republican hands.

The present platform praises and defends legal decisions that affirm a woman's right to terminate her pregnancy; but frankly, that is old news -- forty year old news. In any event, not all Democrats think the exercise of this right to be wise. Far from it.

Democrats are people of many faiths; some find abortion wholly immoral and others find it acceptable only under limited circumstances. The essence of our position is to support the whole life of a human person so that we value, protect and provide for not only the unborn child, but the pregnant mother, the father and, in fact, our entire human family. To not have the platform acknowledge the presence of our whole life position is as mistaken as failing to grasp that being pro-life means striving for a government that enhances all of life. Calls by Democrats to: strengthen child care, provide a living or family wage, encourage and defend the expansion of health care services to all, and advocate for responsible land use, transportation and environmental requirements are all pro-life policies.

It will be important for the chairs of the Platform Committee to understand the importance of promoting a big tent policy that includes Democrats who understand abortion in the larger whole life context. We respectfully request that when the time comes you consider appointing a pro-life Democrat, or one sensitive to pro-life issues, as Platform Committee Chair or Co-Chair. Many who signed this letter are well-qualified for that position. Additionally, we support a fair, balanced and open discussion with testimony from those on both sides of the issue. Again, many who signed this letter would be well-qualified to represent the 24 million registered Democrats who support the pro-life point of view.

It is essential to our party's success that the Democratic Party be inclusive. Many people are counting on us to win victories in the next year, and those who have lost their jobs, homes, and pensions because of irresponsible, life-threatening, corporate practices deserve a Democratic platform that is fully capable of meeting the needs of those who have to decide between putting food on the table or paying the rent. Those in corporate front offices who profited enormously at the expense of the average family may have been able to swing the Supreme Court toward allowing unlimited corporate campaign spending to help them hold onto their ill-gotten gains. There is no reason the Democratic platform should be written in a manner that leaves important Democratic voices omitted. To achieve victory and to make it resounding and convincing Democrats need to find common ground on this wedge issue that has plagued us for decades.

We thank you for what you have done already for our party and for the pro-life voice within that party. Together, we can secure our majority in the Senate and regain our majority in the House so we can continue to work for the American people. Finding common ground and including pro-life people and values in the party will help us to achieve these goals.

{Signatures: institutional affiliation for identification only}

President Jimmy Carter

U.S. Ambassador (ret.) Tony P. Hall

U.S. Ambassador (ret.) Douglas W. Kmiec
Chair & Professor
Constitutional Law, Pepperdine University

The Honorable Bart Stupak

The Honorable Kathy Dahlkemper

Dr. Tony Campolo
Evangelical Association for the Promotion of
Education

The Honorable Jim Oberstar

Bishop Charles E. Blake
Presiding Bishop of the Church of God in Christ

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Distinguished University Professor of Christian
Ethics
Director, Center for Theology and Public Life
Mercer University

Nick Cafardi
Dean Emeritus and Professor of Law
Duquesne University School of Law

Ronald J. Sider
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Palmer Seminary at Eastern University

Tim Jost
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Washington and Lee Law School

Vince Miller
Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture
Department of Religious Studies
University of Dayton

Dr. Jim Zogby
Founder and President
Arab American Institute

David J. O'Brien,
University Professor of Faith and Culture
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Steve Schneck
Director, Institute for Policy Research &
Catholic Studies
The Catholic University of America

Fred Rotondaro, Chair
Catholics in Alliance for
The Common Good

Joe Turnham
Chairman (Ret.), Alabama Democratic Party

Fr. Sinclair Oubre, J.C.L.
Spiritual Moderator
Catholic Labor Network

Rev. Samuel Rodriguez
President
National Hispanic Christian Leadership
Conference

Pat Casey, Attorney
The Casey Law Firm

Tom Berg
James L. Oberstar Professor of Law and Public
Policy
University of St. Thomas School of Law

Kristen Day
Executive Director
Democrats For Life of America

We are political Independents but fully endorse the concept of this letter.

Dr. Joel C. Hunter, Senior Pastor
Northland – A Church Distributed

The Reverend Luis Cortés, Jr.
President
Esperanza



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THE CASE FOR PRO-LIFE DEMOCRATS 2012



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For decades, the Democratic Party has been committed to the protection and equality of all Americans.

"It was once said that the moral test of Government is how that Government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped."

- Hubert Humphrey, Senator & 38th Vice-President



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That commitment has been compromised for an entire generation.

“I am a Democrat, I am pro-life. Today my Party is telling me that I cannot be both... [The children dying from abortion] are the single issue that our politicians have feared and scorned but our nation cannot avoid. For without the right to have one’s life protected, all other rights are meaningless.”

-Carol Wold, national committeewoman at the 1980 Democratic National Convention



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Does the current platform language represent the views of Democratic voters?

- Despite overwhelming public support for limits on abortion, the Party continues to be unduly influenced by those who favor abortion-on-demand regardless of circumstance.
- The 2008 platform states that Democrats “unequivocally” support “Roe v. Wade and a woman's right to choose a safe and legal abortion, regardless of ability to pay, and we oppose any and all efforts to weaken or undermine that right.”



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Consider the following:

- The number of pro-choice Americans is at a record low of 41 percent. (Gallup, May, 2012)
- Forty-four percent of all Democrats believe abortion should be *legal* in only a few circumstances (Gallup, 2011);
- 57% of Democrats believe that reducing the number of abortions is good (Pew, 2009)



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Further consider that Democrats support restrictions on abortion including:

- 61% of Democrats support parental consent for minors seeking abortion (Gallup, 2011);
- 60% of Democrats support a 24-hour waiting period for women seeking abortion (Gallup, 2011);
- 84% of Democrats support informed consent (Gallup, 2011);
- 49% of Democrats support an ultrasound requirement (Gallup, 2011);
- 59% of Democrats support a ban on partial-birth abortions (Gallup, 2011).

Pro-choice Democrats call the above “efforts to weaken or undermine” the right to abortion in language contained in the 2008 Democratic Platform.



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Women, a major constituency of the Democratic Party, make up the majority of voters overall.

- Women cast 53% of the votes in the 2008 presidential election (Gallup, 2008).

Large numbers of women identify as pro-life.

- 44% of all American women are pro-life (Gallup, 2011).
- 37% of Democratic women voters are pro-life, along with 40% of independent women voters (Gallup, 2008).



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95% of African-Americans voted for President Obama, but they are strongly pro-life.

- 58% consider abortion morally wrong (Pew, 2009); over 50% feel the same regarding capital punishment (Pew, 2008).
- 42% of African-American Protestants feel abortion should be illegal in most or all cases (Pew, 2009).



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Latino voters "helped clinch a number of swing states for Obama, redrawing the political map in the process."

However...

- A 2007 survey of DC area Hispanics showed 80% opposed abortion; 85% of respondents ages 21-29 opposed it; and even 44% of those indentifying as liberals strongly opposed it (CHLI-Ayuda, 2007).
- 88% of Latino Protestants say abortion is at least "somewhat important" in their voting decisions (Faith in Public Life, 2008).



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Two-thirds of young voters supported President Obama. However . . .

- 44% of Americans ages 18-29 believe abortion should be illegal in most or all cases (Pew, 2009).
- 42% of Americans ages 18 -34 call themselves pro-life and 53% consider abortion morally wrong (Gallup, 2012).



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***The platform language that supports
Roe v. Wade and taxpayer funding of
abortion does not represent the views of
all Democrats and discourages pro-life
Democrats from participating in the
Party.***



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Democrats introduced abortion into the Platform in 1976 and gradually added stronger abortion rights language.



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As the abortion language grew stronger -- including adding support for taxpayer funding of abortion in 1988 -- the Democratic Majority started to slip away.



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A few decades ago, Democrats held a 292-seat majority in the House. The Democratic Party Platform did not mention abortion, and pro-life Democrats were an important and welcomed constituency within the Party.



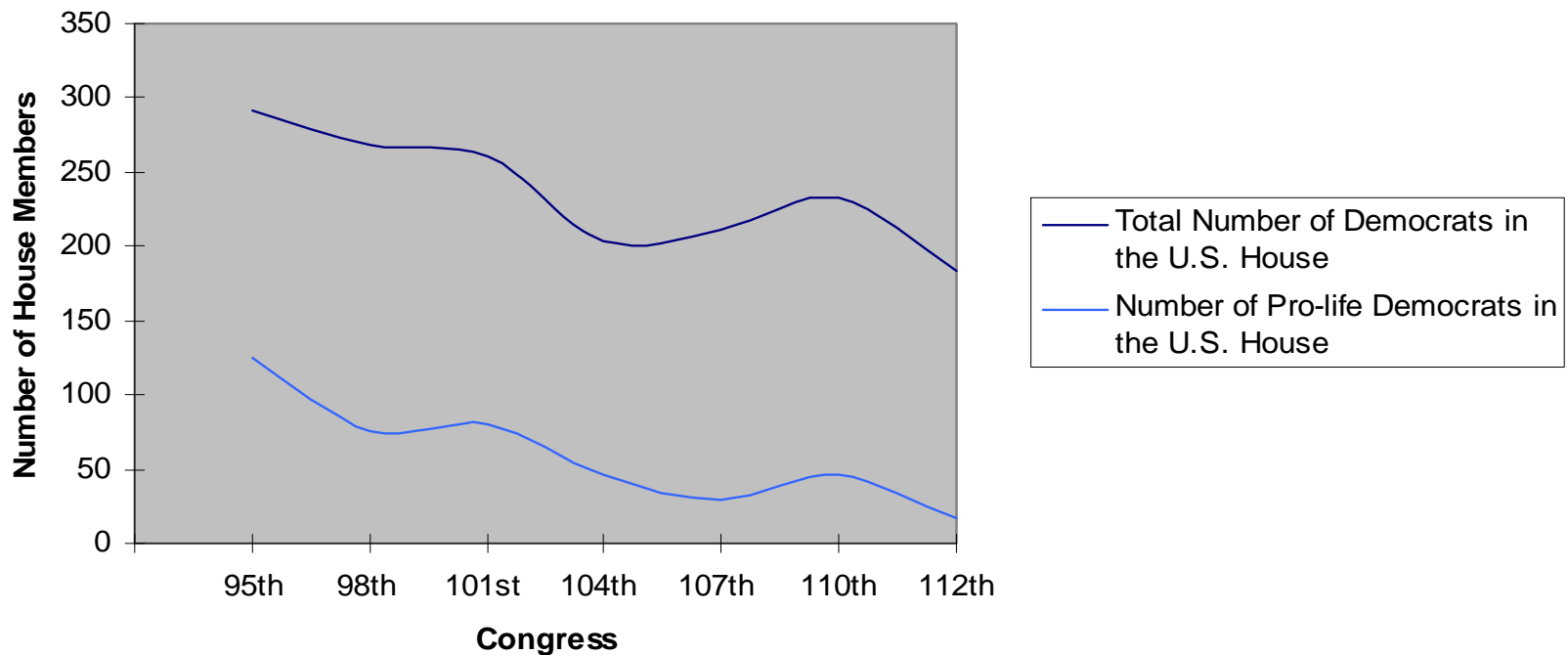
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When the Number of Pro-life Democrats Decreases, the Democratic Party is Weakened





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Without pro-life Democrats, we face policies that undermine the middle class and equality and opportunity for all Americans.



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***Pro-life Democrats are not like
Republicans. With a Democratic
Majority that depended on pro-life
Democrats, we passed:***

- ***The Family and Medical Leave Act***
- ***The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act***
- ***The Americans with Disabilities Act***
- ***The Affordable Care Act***
- ***The Dodd–Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act***



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The Republican Party has been able to successfully align itself with the Pro-Life Movement because of the strong pro-choice position of the Democratic Party.



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In turn, Pro-Life organizations work with Republican money to target pro-life districts that should be Democratic, and they win.

- From 2002 to 2010, pro-life groups spent an average of 99 percent of their funds to elect Republicans and less than 1 percent to support Democrats.
- The **National Right to Life Committee**, which claims to be a non-partisan organization, spent \$2.1 million for Republican candidates and spent \$4800 to support 2 Democratic candidates.
- In 2010, the **Indiana Right to Life Committee** installed a policy to not endorse any Democratic candidates regardless of their position on abortion.
- In 2010, the **Susan B. Anthony List**, which claims its mission is to elect pro-life women, spent more to defeat pro-life Democrats than to support pro-life candidates.



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***The Republicans have done
this not to end abortion but
to advance Republican
policies.***



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Who were some of the Republican targets in 2010?

- Congressman Jim Oberstar: 73% of his constituents oppose using tax dollars to pay for abortions (61% strongly oppose) – **DEFEATED**
- Congresswoman Kathy Dahlkemper: 79% of her constituents oppose using tax dollars to pay for abortions (64% strongly oppose) – **DEFEATED**
- Congressman Steve Driehaus: 79% of his constituents oppose using tax dollars to pay for abortions (59% strongly oppose) - **DEFEATED**
- Congressman Earl Pomeroy: 80% of his constituents oppose using tax dollars to pay for abortions (62% strongly oppose) – **DEFEATED**
- Congressman Charlie Wilson: 80% of his constituents oppose using tax dollars to pay for abortions (65% strongly oppose) – **DEFEATED**
- Congressman Joe Donnelly: 80% oppose using tax dollars to pay for abortions (66% strongly oppose) – **WON BY ONLY 1%**

All these Democratic targets supported the Affordable Care Act.

* Poll Numbers from a March 2010 poll conducted by the polling company, inc.



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The Democratic Party needs to include pro-life Democrats to regain our Democratic Majority so we can pass legislation that supports the middle class and creates equality and opportunity for all Americans.



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**A Democratic Platform that promotes
abortion and does not include pro-life
Democrats in the big tent of the
Democratic party hurts these goals.**



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***What happens if the Democratic Party
continues to alienate pro-life
Democrats?***



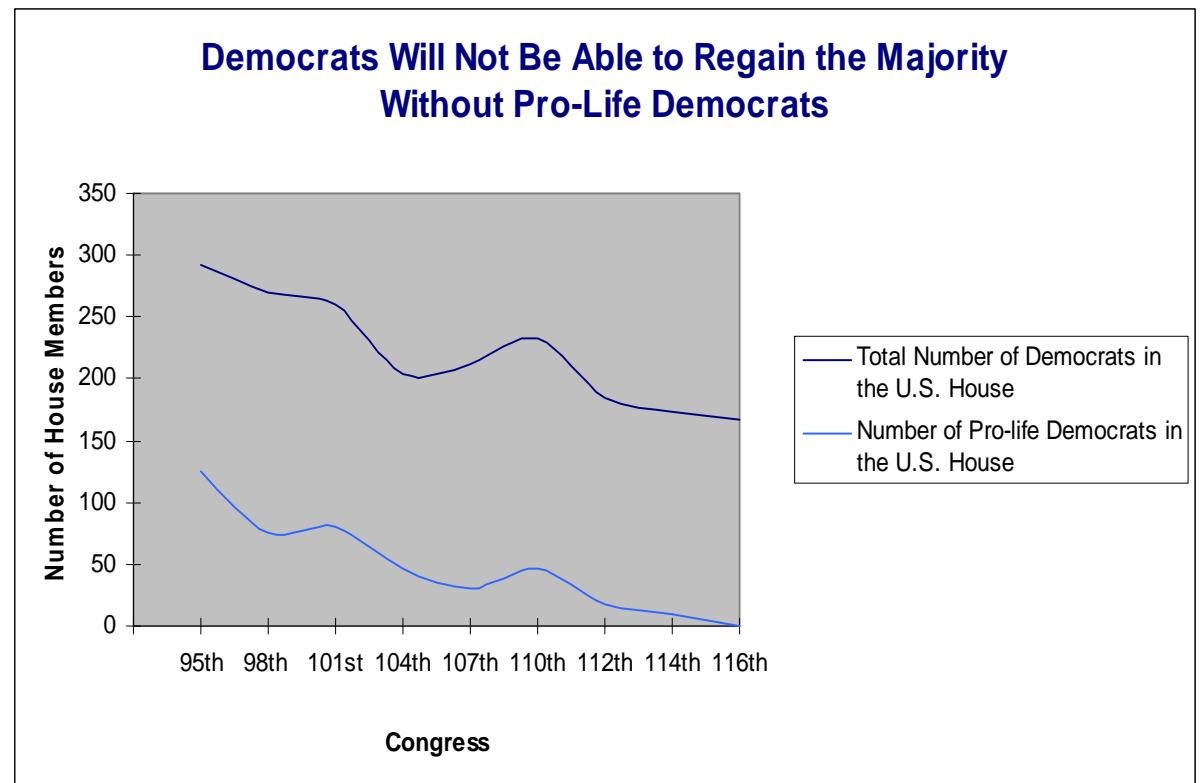
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The number of overall Democrats will continue to decrease.





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CONCLUSION:

- A Democratic Party that includes all Democrats and promotes a big tent position will be a stronger and more effective Party.
- Platform language that promotes the issues that we agree upon, rather than the issues we don't, will promote more Party unity and a stronger and more effective Party.



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Proposed Platform Language to Unite Democrats Around Historic Democratic Principles

"We respect the conscience of each American and recognize that members of our Party have deeply held and sometimes differing positions on issues of personal conscience, such as abortion and the death penalty. We recognize the diversity of views as a source of strength, and we welcome into our ranks all Americans who may hold differing positions on these and other issues.

However, we can find common ground. We believe that we can reduce the number of abortions because we are united in our support for policies that assist families who find themselves in crisis or unplanned pregnancies. We believe that women deserve to have a breadth of options available as they face pregnancy including, among others, support and resources needed to handle the challenges of pregnancy, adoption, and parenthood; access to education, healthcare, and childcare; and appropriate child support. We envision a new day without financial or societal barriers to bringing a planned or unplanned pregnancy to term."



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*“It is important that the United States remain a two-party system.
I'm a fellow who likes small parties and the Republican Party can't be too small to suit me.”
-Lyndon Johnson, 36th President*

Democrats for Life of America, Inc.

info@democratsforlife.org

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