

**2008 AND BEYOND**  
**A WNDC PLATFORM FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

**by the**  
**Public Policy Committee**  
**of the Woman's National Democratic Club**

**Woman's National Democratic Club**  
**1526 New Hampshire Ave., NW**  
**Washington, DC 20036**

**THE WOMAN'S NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB**

was founded in 1922, two years after women gained the right to vote. The mission of the

WNDC is to provide a forum where Democrats meet to study, discuss and act upon current issues, to further the participation of women in the political process, and to help build an effective and compassionate political party.

The mission of the WNDC Public Policy Committee is to develop public policy positions on timely national and international issues and advocate for these positions.

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***WOMAN'S NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CLUB***  
***WNDC PLATFORM FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY***  
***2008 AND BEYOND***

**INTRODUCTION**

The Woman's National Democratic Club is confident that the Democratic Party and its Presidential candidate will win the November elections. As a result the United States will again take its place as a member of the international community. The world will welcome American talents, imagination, resources and energy back to crucial campaigns to solve problems that face us all.

The members of the Woman's National Democratic Club are dedicated to taking responsibility for making changes in our personal and professional lives that will contribute to solving these problems. In addition, as active members of the Democratic Party we have laid out a "WNDC Platform for the Democratic Party for 2008 and Beyond."

We frame our positions on facts, values and actions. Pride in our country lifts us up when it is about how to improve the lives of our citizens. That is patriotism. That is why we emphasize the need for America to reorient its spending priorities to job creation, infrastructure renewal and development, and taking a leading position on long range environmental challenges.

We have also emphasized human rights. A commitment to human rights is both a common enterprise and a felt responsibility of Americans as individuals. We are all diminished when our government violates human rights. We believe in civic virtue, where corruption and exploitation are rejected as unworthy of us.

Before we can move on a new positive agenda for America we must correct mistakes.

To say that combating real threats requires giving up our rights and liberties is a mistake.

To say that left alone, market forces will create jobs is a mistake.

To say, as Republicans do, that government must be small is a mistake. We cannot build practical solutions to problems or plans to realize opportunities and dreams on that false idea.

## ECONOMY AND BUDGET

*SUMMARY.* The WNDC supports as top priorities for the economy:

- A dramatic increase in public investment in the American people and physical infrastructure
- Ending most of the Bush 2001 and 2003 tax cuts
- Achieving pay equity
- Establishing a bi-partisan commission on the financing of future liabilities

***INVESTING IN AMERICA.*** We need a dramatic increase in public investment, both in the American people and in our physical infrastructure. The potential returns are high and the resource needs especially substantial in the areas of education, health and transportation. Everyone benefits from such investment. Children are dropping out of or graduating from high school who are functionally illiterate, greatly reducing the quality of our workforce, national income and productivity, and creating social and political problems. We are failing to provide adequate preventive and curative health care not only to the 47 million persons without health insurance, but to millions of others without adequate coverage.

In 1950 – 1970 America spent 3 percent of its GDP on its physical infrastructure; since 1980 about one-half that. Over one-fourth of our bridges are deficient; airports won't be able to take the new jumbo jet airplanes; bad roads cost billions. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimated in 2005 that it would take \$1.6 trillion to overcome our investment deficit.

***FINANCING OUR FUTURE LIABILITIES.*** It is imperative that a distinguished bi-partisan commission be established to address the financing of U.S. government future liabilities. The largest of these are Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and civilian and military pensions. This cannot be done by one party alone. All of the issues and possible solutions must be on the table, and the major players-- such as the health industry--must be able to present their views.

***SPENDING PRIORITIES.*** Economic theory tells us that an additional dollar of spending on any government program should yield a return greater than its cost, and that the yield of the last dollar spent on each program should be the same. While not precisely measurable, this is the logic on which both the size of the budget--taxes and spending--and allocations between spending bills should be made. The trade-off between taxes and spending is illustrated by an analysis of what the nation could buy for the \$774 billion (over 10 years) that would be lost to tax cuts for the top 1 percent of American families should these tax cuts be made permanent. The lost revenue could pay for:

- Two million teachers' salaries for 10 years
- Pre school for the nation's four-year olds almost eight times over

- Two million police officer salaries for 10 years
- A fully comprehensive Medicare prescription drug benefit for senior citizens – with \$36 billion left over
- Doubling of Bush tax cuts for the bottom 80% of Americans
- Tripling of funding for the Earned Income Tax Credit for the working poor and the child tax credit put together
- Increasing international food aid 97-fold
- Tripling expenditures on natural resources, pollution control and superfund cleanup
- Doubling of federal spending on mass transit highways and aviation

***Sending a person to Mars vs. research on global warming.*** Because of the Bush Administration decision to focus NASA solely on the project of sending a person to Mars, NASA will no longer have a mandate to gather information about our earth, and, not coincidentally, contribute to research on global warming. A Democratic Administration must change course and mandate NASA to conduct research on global warming. The Mars project is in the interest of a major military corporation, Lockheed Martin, which early in the process was asked to submit a proposal to develop the concept for the project and has been selected by NASA as the prime contractor. There is a similar trade off between the dollars being spent on the war in Iraq and what could be achieved if those dollars were instead spent on domestic priorities.

***TAX CUTS.*** End most of the Bush 2001 and 2003 tax cuts. Otherwise our budget deficits will balloon out of control. This policy will also help pay for high priority spending needs.

***LIVING WAGE.*** Through higher minimum wages and other measures, America must work toward wage levels that will permit most workers to earn in a 40-hour work week enough to support a family in at least modest circumstances.

***PAY EQUITY.*** We strongly support all efforts to achieve pay equity. We urge the Congress to pass pending legislation regarding pay equity, particularly the Paycheck Fairness Act which strengthens the Equal Pay Act of 1963, and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Restoration Act of 2007.

***“SMALL” GOVERNMENT.*** In debates over economic priorities the Democratic Party should reject the rigid ideology of “small” government. In a democracy citizens tell their representatives what they want and need to achieve collectively. As the framers of the Constitution understood, an important part of the public debate on these tasks is the level of government--federal, state or local--that should implement them, as is public debate on the choice of the public sector, rather than the private sector or public/private partnerships. There is no fixed benchmark of “small government” that is relevant to these debates. Nor should one public sector be automatically privileged over other sectors.

The Democratic Party should be proud to express the moral value of Americans working together through their governments to improve the health, well-being and opportunities of all Americans. Accomplishing those tasks that should be performed by government through government also strengthens democratic accountability and citizen participation.

***INTERNATIONAL TRADE.*** Democrats need to come to agreement on trade issues. Trade agreements are not the enemy if properly designed. Trade agreements providing for free and fair trade with appropriate protection for the environment and workers should be supported along with a more robust safety net (extended unemployment insurance, increased funding for re-training of workers and health insurance) for workers displaced from jobs because of technology or globalization.

***AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES.*** Subsidized agriculture in developed countries, including the United States, has contributed to the agricultural crisis in the developing world. At a time when prices for certain mass-produced crops are at an all-time high, we should support efforts by countries in the developing world to persuade countries in the developed world to agree to reduce or eliminate their subsidies in the current round of international trade negotiations.

## FOREIGN POLICY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

**SUMMARY.** The WNDC calls on the U.S. government to:

- Take to Congress any agreement with the Iraqi government on long-range security cooperation for approval.
- Drop current U.S. policy calling for “regime change” in Iran; commit to direct negotiations with the Iranian government on nuclear proliferation issues.
- Eliminate the embargo against Cuba.
- Adopt a plan for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

While the U.S. should not contemplate acting alone, in extreme and unusual circumstances the international community, through the UN, does have a responsibility to protect citizens of states whose governments cannot or will not protect them. The U.S. should support this principle.

**IRAQ.** During a period of retrenchment of U.S. forces in Iraq and the negotiation underway on a security agreement with Iraq, the U.S. should ensure that the voices of the Iraqi people are heard on the future of U.S. presence in Iraq, either through Parliamentary vote or through other means, such as a national referendum. Otherwise, Iraqis will continue to express their preferences through demonstrations and violence. Should the Iraqis wish us to leave the President has said we will. If US forces are to remain in Iraq pursuant to the two security agreements under negotiation with the Iraqi government, the agreements must be submitted to Congress.

The WNDC supports “A Responsible Plan to End the War in Iraq” issued in March 2008 by 10 Democratic candidates for the U.S. House (Sam Bennett, Pennsylvania; Darcy Burner, Washington; Larry Burns, Florida; Donna Edwards, Maryland; George Fearing, Florida; Steve Harrison, New York; Eric Massa, New York; Tom Perriella, Virginia; Chellie Pingree, Maine; and Jared Polis, Colorado).

***Permanent Bases in Iraq.*** On January 29, 2008, the President signed into law the military budget bill. He, however, issued “signing statements” that four provisions of the bill impinged on his powers as commander-in-chief, and that therefore he would enforce those four provisions of law only if he so chose. One of these provisions states that no money appropriated under the bill can be used to establish permanent bases in Iraq. This action of the President arrogates to himself alone powers clearly intended by our founders to reside with, or be shared with, Congress, and raises alarm at the contents of the security agreements currently under negotiation between the U.S. and Iraq.

***Waste, Fraud and Abuse.*** In signing the military budget bill the President also issued “signing statements” on provisions regarding the military contracting system by, first, establishing a commission to investigate abuses and, second, providing protection for whistle blowers who bring those abuses to public

attention. The exposure of waste, fraud and mismanagement enhances American security by increasing the effectiveness of the institutions charged with spending taxpayer dollars on security. Congress must vigorously exercise its oversight responsibilities in this regard.

***Rights of Women in Iraq.*** The U.S. must make the rights of women in Iraq a priority. Over the last five years their status has become increasingly threatened. Investment in economic development and education focused on women is essential in achieving the goal of renewal for Iraqi civil society (from “A Responsible Plan to End the War in Iraq”).

***IRAN.*** The U.S. must commit to negotiations as the path towards resolving the standoff with Iran on its nuclear enrichment program, a strategy that brought normalization of U.S.-Libya relations and the deflection of North Korea’s nuclear ambitions. To that end the U.S. must drop its current policy of supporting “regime change” in Iran and its preconditions on direct talks with Iran, while not withholding the right to condemn human rights abuses in Iran and to counter aggressive behavior by Iran. There is no U.S. policy that would entail worse consequences for U.S. interests and for world peace than a military attack on Iran aimed at taking out its nuclear capabilities. The U.S. must recognize that Iran will be crucial for a peaceful solution in Iraq and should be included with other neighboring countries in talks on Iraq’s external and internal conflicts.

***AFGHANISTAN.*** The Democratic Party is the party of “stay and prevail” in Afghanistan. The Republican Administration has “cut and run” from Afghanistan. When Bush pulled troops out of Afghanistan to invade Iraq he left the door open for the Taliban to come back, and that is exactly what they are doing, providing a real safe haven for the real al-Qaeda. Another consequence of the Bush Administration’s “cutting and running” is that al-Qaeda is now also well installed on the border areas of Pakistan. Iraqis do not support al-Qaeda, whether US forces are present or not. Al-Qaeda is a Sunni Arab movement that even the Sunni Iraqis have turned against and the Shia Iraqis have never supported. Al-Qaeda does have support in Afghanistan. Afghanistan/Pakistan is the top anti-terrorist priority for the U.S.

***ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE SETTLEMENT.*** There are no magic formulas to set the Arab-Israeli conflict on a path to resolution with a two-state solution for the Israelis and Palestinians. However there are several fundamental changes the U.S. government can make that will be helpful.

First and foremost the U.S. can remove obstacles it itself has set in the way of progress. Israel wants direct negotiations with Syria, which the U.S. opposes. Without a deal with Syria no Palestinian guarantee of Israel’s security will be credible. Iran has said it will accept any deal Syria makes with Israel.

Anticipating requirements for a viable two-state solution, the U.S. should put on the table significant resources for resettling Israeli settlers from the West Bank to Israel and

assisting the new Palestinian state in resettling those Palestinians who will not be able to return to Israel.

**CUBA.** The embargo against Cuba has failed to achieve its purpose and should be eliminated. US policy should work for an increase in exchange of persons between the United States and Cuba. Non-intervention in Cuban internal affairs should be U.S. policy.

**BURMA.** China, Indonesia and Burma have been victims of devastating natural disasters. But there the similarity ends. Unlike Indonesia where massive international aid was in-country within days, and the recent openness of the Chinese to outside assistance, the Burmese junta, with a total of five helicopters at its disposal, resisted entry of international aid and aid workers, vastly worsening the humanitarian catastrophe. The same government had put down massive protests led by Burmese monks only months before. The Burmese government is a massive human rights violator and incubator of humanitarian crises.

***ELIMINATING OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS. NEEDED REDEFINITION OF NATIONAL SECURITY.*** The bipartisan plan for the elimination of nuclear weapons endorsed by, former Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, former Senator Sam Nunn, former Defense Secretary William Perry and former Secretary of State George Shultz should be adopted and implemented. The plan lays out the explicit goal of moving towards zero, which its authors state is essential to garner the international trust and cooperation that is necessary to stop growing nuclear proliferation.

The U.S. government must take the immediate specific steps called for by the plan, including the ratification of the **Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty** and extending key provisions of the **Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991**. All nuclear weapons must be taken off hair-trigger alert. We support the continued extension of the 1992 Nunn-Lugar bill providing for the elimination of stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

The Democratic Party must continue to oppose Administration efforts to fund development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission must focus on improving its oversight of nuclear plants, as described by the Union of Concerned Scientists (comments on proposed NRC rule on plant security, March 2007).

Adopting a plan for the total elimination of nuclear weapons supports a vitally needed redefinition of American national security.

## ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**SUMMARY.** High priorities for action on energy and the environment include:

- Immediate action at all levels of government to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases
- A federal cap and trade system
- Support for innovations in energy efficiency through extending tax breaks that steer money to research, development and deployment of new technologies.
- A Democratic Party campaign to inform the American public on the importance of environmental issues and their implications for national and global security.

**CLIMATE CHANGE.** Encourage the enactment of a strong and effective federal climate policy and integrate the efforts with those being made at a local, state and regional level.

Endorse the three principles to establish a comprehensive national climate policy adopted by the bipartisan **Governors' Declaration on Climate Change** (Yale University, April 18, 2008), recognizing that:

A federal-state partnership is the way to get the job done.

State-based climate action plans and programs have paved the way for cost-effective reductions of greenhouse gases and deserve continued support.

Rewarding and encouraging meaningful and mandatory federal and state climate action is the key to success.

Take immediate action--at all levels of government--to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. Recognize the critical role renewable energy electricity generation can play in reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

**Promote legislation to protect wildlife.** The Democratic Platform should strongly support legislation to protect the habitat of many species that are threatened by current practices of extraction of non-renewable sources of energy, as well as the agricultural and industrial use of land that results in enormous collateral damage to wild animals.

A well-known example is the plight of the polar bear. The Arctic ice on which polar bears depend is melting away. The Bush administration has finally designated polar bears as a "threatened" species under the Endangered Species Act. But they have made it clear that they are not giving it the status "endangered," and hence will not take responsibility to extend protections of the habitat that they would take if the designation were "endangered." We deplore the massive oil and gas lease sale in the Chukchi Sea--home to as much as 10 percent

of the world's polar bear population. It is incumbent upon the Democratic Party to take note of the increase in species going into extinction and strive to halt this loss of wildlife and the biodiversity essential to continuation of all life.

***INCENTIVES.*** Promote incentives to greater reliance on non-polluting renewable energy sources that can come from existing federal energy, transportation, and agricultural programs, as well as from auction revenue derived from a federal cap and trade system.

***ENERGY EFFICIENCY.*** Support innovations to conserve energy and promote energy efficiency. Of particular importance is the encouragement of renewable sources of energy (wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, hydropower). The Democratic Platform, therefore, should support legislation that extends expiring tax breaks and steers a large and significant amount of revenue to research and development and deployment of renewable, non-polluting technologies.

***DWINDLING SUPPLY OF RESOURCES ESSENTIAL TO LIFE.*** We support elimination of subsidies and mandates to grow corn for production of ethanol, which has contributed to global food shortages and increased prices of domestic food products.

The Democratic Party should, therefore,

- Foster local organic food production and distribution to local markets which conduces to the conservation of fuel and supports local small farms.
- Encourage the development of technology for the production of alternative fuels, including biofuels from crops other than foodstuffs, while preserving the ecosystem.

***FRESH WATER.*** Around the world fresh water is becoming scarce. The Democratic Party should oppose the trend toward privatization of control over sources of water supply, and advocate local control, management, and distribution of the supply of fresh water.

***THE ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT OF WAR.*** In all its stages, from the production of weapons through combat to cleanup and restoration, war entails actions that pollute land, air, and water, destroy biodiversity, and drain natural resources. Yet the environmental damage occasioned by war and preparation for war is routinely underestimated, under-reported, even ignored.

If we cannot eliminate war, we can at least require a fuller accounting of war's costs and consequences.

It is incumbent on the Democratic Party to make clear the environmental devastation caused by armed conflict and make every effort to support the use of diplomacy rather than force in the resolution of conflict.

**NUCLEAR WEAPONS.** If we do not pursue a policy of the global elimination of nuclear weapons, nuclear proliferation will continue with the all but certain prospect that nuclear weapons will be used. The consequence to the physical and human environment will be catastrophic (see the section on National Security).

***Health Consequences Associated with Use of Nuclear Weapons.*** Physicians for Social Responsibility estimates that within 48 hours in the immediate area, the fallout from two attacks using a burrowing nuclear weapon, such as the B6-11, against Iran's underground uranium enrichment plant at Natanz and the uranium conversion plant at Isfahan would cause an estimated 2.6 million people to die. In the wider region, over 10.5 million people would be exposed to significant radiation sickness, future excess cancer deaths, genetic abnormalities in future generations and other reproductive destabilization and malignancies (PSR, "Medical Consequences of a Nuclear Attack on Iran," Fact Sheet, May 2006).

## HUMAN RIGHTS

**SUMMARY.** The Democratic Party must commit to:

- Adhering to internationally accepted prohibitions against the use of torture.
- Closing the prison at Guantánamo
- Leading support for the UN “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine
- Strengthening actions against human trafficking
- Supporting abortion rights and sex education that includes education on all forms of contraception
- Restoring full funding for the Family Violence Prevention Service
- Ratifying the Treaty for the Rights of Women

**TORTURE.** It must be the policy of the U.S. government to respect internationally agreed human rights laws and norms, including prohibitions on torture, and to demonstrate respect for the dignity of all human beings. No practice not contained in the U.S. Army Field Manual shall be authorized for use by any entity of the U.S. government or any entity hired by the US government. This prohibition includes “waterboarding,” a form of torture the Bush Administration has recently admitted has taken place with its authorization. Congress should establish an independent investigation into the use of torture and the destruction of evidence relating to torture with powers to recommend criminal prosecutions.

Provisions in the Military Commissions Act of 2006 that provide retroactive immunity to government officials who authorized torture and abuse and permit convictions based on coerced evidence obtained through torture must be overturned.

**GUANTANAMO.** The detention camp at Guantánamo Bay must be closed, and those of the detainees against whom credible evidence of criminal acts exists turned over to federal or military courts for prosecution. Prolonged detention without trial violates international human rights law and norms. Resentment of these violations damages our international standing and our historic values.

Preventing terrorist acts is a top national priority. However, practices exist in the U.S. legal system and those of other advanced democracies, in addition to the lawful use of intelligence operations, which are appropriate tools for prevention. These include prosecution under the criminal conspiracy statutes or for the crime of giving material support to terrorist groups. There is existing law that allows for safeguarding classified material while ensuring due process for those prosecuted. There is no justification for adopting a legal regimen for preventive detention without trial as some have recommended.

**RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT.** The U.S. should play a leading role in international calls to invoke the new 2005 UN doctrine “Responsibility to Protect,” a

doctrine originally stimulated by the Rwanda genocide and the war in the former Yugoslavia. French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner urged using this evolving UN responsibility to get international assistance to Burmese cyclone victims if the Burmese government blocked such assistance. In April 2008, under this doctrine, Pope Benedict XVI supported a duty to intervene if a state failed to protect citizens from sustained human rights violations, referring especially to the poor in Africa, while continuing Chinese repression in Tibet warrants at least strong criticism from the international community. We support further a duty to protect women who are victims of massive human rights violations. These would include those violations that have been documented in Iraq and in Afghanistan. There should be, additionally, a campaign of protection of women against the crime of “honor” killing.

***HUMAN TRAFFICKING.*** Human trafficking is one of the worst forms of exploitation, disproportionately affecting Asian and Pacific Islander women and girls who represent the largest group of persons trafficked into the United States. The U.S. government has taken an international lead on combating the modern-day slavery of persons forced, defrauded or coerced into labor or sexual exploitation. Congress passed in 2000 and since has strengthened the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), which, among other actions created the Trafficking in Person Report, issued annually by the State Department. We support further action by the U.S. to pressure governments to increase rescues of trafficking victims and prosecutions of traffickers. People freed from slavery must be treated as victims of crime, not criminals.

***REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS.*** Provisions of the U.S. Constitution, especially involving the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens, must be upheld. Among these rights is the Right to Reproductive Choice, established by the Supreme Court in its January, 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. The right of a woman to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy or to bring a child to term is protected by law, just as is this right protected in most western developed countries.

A diversity of beliefs, attitudes, and practices has grown up around the question of life and what it means to be pro-life. Many religious and political groups have stated positions that recognize and support a woman’s right to choose. Many groups have taken the position that opposes the right to choose. A vital characteristic of a pluralistic, democratic society is recognition of and respect for the rights of both majorities and minorities, especially where the beliefs, attitudes and practices of the people and their leaders differ, as they do in the case of what it means to be pro-life.

The American people have been stable in their support for abortion rights over the past 25 years, as shown by all respected national polls, done by the Gallup Organization and the Pew Forum, among many others. For example, in the poll published by the Pew Forum in September, 2007, the results showed that 52 percent of U.S. adults said abortion should be legal in all or most cases (17 percent and 35 percent respectively), and 43 percent said it should be illegal in all or most cases (17 percent and 26 percent respectively). We believe it is our moral responsibility to support the right of U.S. citizens to have the right to choose what constitutes for them a pro-life position. In

continuing to urge this support, we stand with the great majority of people in almost all western countries who enjoy the legal right to choose.

We stand with all those citizens who seek to find ways to make abortion “legal, safe and rare.” One way to help reduce abortion rates is to support legislation that will help reduce unexpected and unwanted pregnancy. Again, research has consistently shown that the most successful programs to reduce undesired pregnancies are sex education programs that include important information about responsible sexual behavior that includes the use of all forms of contraception as well as abstinence.

We support funding and providing institutional support to all forms of family planning, including abortion – nationally and internationally.

***VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.*** Vital services to women and children are in serious jeopardy with the recommendations in the President's FY 2009 budget to cut \$120 million from the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and to cut funding by over \$50 million from the Family Violence Prevention Service (FVPS). Today, hundreds of thousands of women are served each year, yet insufficient resources prevent other thousands of women from getting the help they need to overcome violence and abuse.

Among other cuts, President Bush's proposed budget would eliminate grants that provide social services to protect children from abuse and neglect and also would eliminate hearing screenings for newborns. The President's budget would reduce funding for mental health and substance abuse programs for children and their parents, and food, housing, job training, energy assistance and related programs for low-income families.

Congress must reject any attempt to cut funding for the critical services to women and children provided in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and restore the full proposed budget for the Family Violence Prevention Service (FVPS) as well as other needed health and social services programs.

***TREATY FOR THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN.*** Scores of American cities, including the District of Columbia, have adopted the Treaty for the Rights of Women (officially, the Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) since its inception in 1980 in the United Nations; the treaty was signed by President Jimmy Carter. The treaty has been adopted by 173 members of the United Nations, but has never been presented to the U.S. Senate for approval. That situation must be rectified and congressional hearings held at the earliest possible opportunity, with the goal of Senate ratification.

## PRESERVING OUR CONSTITUTION

***GUARANTEE OF HABEAS CORPUS.*** One of the most critical checks on the government's coercive power is the right of the individual to appeal for relief from arbitrary detention to a court of law. No one can speak out freely against an executive who has an unchecked right to detain political prisoners without oversight. In the Military Commissions Act of 2006 the Bush Administration barred appeals to courts on the grounds of habeas corpus for anyone deemed to be an "enemy combatant." This provision must be repealed.

***WARRANTLESS WIRETAPPING.*** House Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers (D-MI) has made a compelling case against sweeping grants of immunity for telecommunications companies who agreed to warrantless wiretapping requests of the Administration. The New York Times has analyzed the case and found no evidence that the government has been hampered in its proper intelligence gathering by the expiration of the Protect America Act that permitted warrantless wiretapping; nor is there compelling evidence that telecommunications companies would not be able to defend themselves in legal actions brought against them because of the Secrecy Act.

***SIGNING STATEMENTS.*** In signing the military budget bill in January, President Bush issued a "signing statement" asserting his right not to comply with a provision requiring intelligence officials to respond to Congressional requests for information. We support such Congressional requests as justifiable challenges to an Administration record of cover up and stonewalling. We must oppose the abuse of power represented by the President's practice in issuing signing statements.

***DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.*** The Supreme Court's reversal of 70 years of Supreme Court precedents on Second Amendment rights in its June 27 decision invalidating the District of Columbia's handgun ban was deplorable. Americans must prepare to fight back the attacks on all types of gun regulation that are sure to follow this decision. The District has gun regulations that were not affected by the Supreme Court's decision. District residents alarmed at the Court's ignoring of legitimate public security concerns might start by looking at additional gun registration requirements such as ballistic tests or a reasonable waiting period.

## DEMOCRACY

The goal of the Democratic Party must be to restore the faith of our citizens in the election process by ensuring that every eligible voter can register to vote, that the votes of all registered voters are counted fairly and under uniform standards, and that the outcome accurately reflects the will of the American people, so expressed.

***ELECTORAL COLLEGE.*** We must ensure that there is no repetition of the 2000 election where the winner of the popular vote did not assume the presidency. The winner of the U.S. Presidential election must be the individual elected by the majority of the American people. We call for a commitment that Electoral College members be pledged to the winner of the national popular vote, or other procedure that would achieve that result.

***PUBLIC FINANCING OF FEDERAL ELECTIONS.*** We must fundamentally change the way the United States finances federal election campaigns with the ultimate goal of public financing of federal elections.

***VOTING MACHINES.*** We must build upon the major reforms mandated in the historic Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) by establishing uniform national standards for voting machines used in federal elections and require paper back-up and random audits.

***FEDERAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION.*** We must strengthen the Federal Elections Commission to ensure it carries out its mission under HAVA in a bi-partisan manner, and that it calls for full funding of HAVA's mandates.

***FREE AIR TIME.*** We must require the major TV networks and radio stations and their local affiliates to donate a specified amount of air time to federal candidates, and to charge no higher rates for campaign ads than they charge their commercial customers.

***PRIMARY ELECTION PROCEDURES.*** The WNDC urges the Democratic Party to establish a commission to study primary election procedures and recommend changes, drawing on lessons learned from the 2008 primary season.

***DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.*** Washington, DC is the world's only capital city in a democracy where residents of a federal district do not have full representation in the federal government. These citizens pay taxes, serve our country in time of war, vote in presidential elections and are subject to federal laws. We support full voting representation in both Houses of Congress for residents of the District of Columbia. Until this is achieved, we support full voting rights for the District of Columbia delegate to Congress.

Congress gives itself the power to review and approve every line of the District budget and freely and frequently restricts how locally raised revenues are spent. We support immediate budget autonomy for the District.

***INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY STANDARDS.*** In 1990, the U.S. signed a commitment on international democracy standards known as the “Copenhagen Document,” which set minimum standards for elections, including universal and equal suffrage and the honest counting and reporting of votes. The document also states that “the will of the people serves as the basis of the authority of government.” Standards also call for competitive multiparty elections. U.S. elections monitoring organizations use these standards to judge elections in other countries. The disenfranchisement of the District voters clearly violates these standards. The practice of partisan districting in the states reduces multiparty competitiveness. As noted above, the functioning of the Electoral College can, and has, led to the election of a president who did not win the popular vote.

***SUPPORTING DEMOCRACY.*** Democracy by definition encourages change--through free and fair elections. In what has been termed “the global awakening,” democracy is also the path to political stability. Democracy provides the legitimacy that people increasingly demand, as has been demonstrated globally, through setbacks and advances, from Pakistan to Zimbabwe.

Democratic accountability works against corruption. Research has demonstrated the use of extra-legal violence to settle disputes is less likely in democratic countries.

US government assistance programs must make democratic development a high priority, both in directly assisting democratic infrastructure development, such as voter registration programs, but also, except for humanitarian aid, in conditioning assistance on minimum democracy and governance standards. The U.S. should work through and to strengthen regional organizations in their democracy support functions, especially the Organization of American States.

Expelling Russia from the G-8, as has been proposed by Senator McCain, is not likely to be a productive response to Russia’s deplorable anti-democratic turn and should not be supported.

## EDUCATION

***SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION.*** Public education, pre-K through 12, should receive increased support with particular attention to schools that serve children living in poverty. No tax money should be used for vouchers for private school tuition.

***NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND.*** The No Child Left Behind legislation should be revised, maintaining its purpose of accountability, but with provisions for measurements other than high-stakes, multiple choice tests; for full funding for all mandates; and for effective remediation, not harsh sanctions, for schools that have not reached reasonable standards of success.

***SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS.*** Scholarships and grants should be increased to further enable college enrollment and completion.

***VIOLENCE AND DRUGS IN SCHOOLS.*** Efforts to eliminate violence and drugs from schools must be increased.

***CURRICULUM.*** Foreign languages, arts, music, and physical education must be essential components of the curriculum in public education.

***TITLE IX.*** Efforts must be increased to enforce and preserve Title IX of the Civil rights Act.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

***HEALTH CARE FOR ALL AMERICANS AND ALL LEGAL RESIDENTS.*** We support universal health care for all Americans and all legal residents. This can be achieved with the adoption of all the following principles:

- The plan must cover all Americans and all legal residents.
- It must include a decent guaranteed level of coverage at an affordable cost.
- The level of benefits, including preventive and chronic care, must be predictable and guaranteed.
- There must be guaranteed choice of providers and health plans.
- There must be an adequate financing scheme, including start-up costs.
- There must be realistic plans for controlling costs without compromising quality.
- There must be comparable information available to consumers on cost and quality.
- The plan must be simply and clearly explainable to the public.

***MENTAL HEALTH PARITY.*** We support passage of a mental health parity law and its prompt implementation. Mental illness and substance abuse are a source of anguish to families, lost productivity and absenteeism, and the second leading cause of disability and premature death in this country. Untreated, they are a major cause of physical problems for which care is sought from physicians and surgeons. Yet treatment of mental disorders is effective, as documented by repeated studies by the National Institute of Mental Health.

Since 2001, the Federal Health Benefits program has covered mental health and substance abuse services for federal employees to the same extent as general medical care. In 2005, a major study of that coverage, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, demonstrated that utilization of mental health services increased by 15 percent while the overall cost of the additional service was merely 0.94 percent. *Thus, mental health parity does not break the bank, but lowers access barriers to services for consumers.*

***SCHIP.*** The WNDC supports the expansion of this program to include all eligible children.

***SOCIAL SECURITY.*** We support raising the cap on the amount of income subject to Social Security tax and oppose the diversion of part of Social Security taxes into private retirement accounts.

## **IMMIGRATION**

***IMMIGRATION REFORM.*** Immigration reform, to be successful, must be comprehensive and contain the following elements:

- An increase in the U.S. minimum wage and enforcement for all workers.
- A guest worker program that protects both American and immigrant workers and meets estimated labor needs.
- Enforcement of laws against employers using unauthorized immigrants.
- Conditioned paths to legal residence (green cards) and citizenship for current qualified unauthorized immigrants.
- Developing tamper proof immigrant documents.
- Increased security on U.S. borders, including improved interception and punishment of persons engaged in illegal transportation of immigrants into the United States

## **Woman's National Democratic Club**

The Woman's National Democratic Club was founded in 1922, two years after American women gained the vote, as a meeting place for Democratic women nationwide. It is housed in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Whittemore House that is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. WNDC twice-weekly luncheon programs are a prestigious forum for local, national, and international speakers. The WNDC Educational Foundation supports community outreach. The WNDC Political Action Committee was established to support Democratic Party candidates.

The WNDC Public Policy Committee develops positions on the issues of the day. The WNDC issues statements and resolutions on these issues that are widely distributed. The Public Policy Committee publishes a monthly "Political Dispatch".

### **A Publication of the Woman's National Democratic Club Public Policy Committee**

**Elizabeth Spiro Clark, Chair and Platform Editor**

#### **Committee Members**

Gilbert Brown  
Lida Churchville  
William D'Antonio  
Alice Day  
Dorothy Dillon  
Jean Emery  
Jewell Fenzi  
Lucia Hatch

Fann Harding  
Sylvia Kassalow  
Ruth Nadel  
Ellen Overton  
Owen Roberts  
Martha Rosacker  
Barbara Stout  
Agnes Wolf

## Contributors to the WNDC Platform

**Elizabeth Spiro Clark** retired in 2000 from the Foreign Service following a 20-year career. She received multiple awards from the State Department and from the National Intelligence Community for her political reporting from South Africa in the mid eighties; she also served in Oslo, Norway and Reykjavik, Iceland, and directed a newly created State Department Democracy and Human Rights Fund. She pursued that interest as a Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy and in her writing, including numerous book chapters, journal articles, and op-ed pieces. Her opinion pieces on Iran, Iraq and other foreign policy topics have also appeared in on-line journals and in the press. She is a graduate of Radcliffe College.

**Gilbert T. Brown** received his PhD in economics at Yale in 1957. He then spent five years at the Federal Reserve Banks of Boston and New York, followed by 25 years advising developing country governments on their budget, economic and social policies; 10 years with USAID (Agency for International Development) and 15 years with the World Bank. He has also taught at Yale and Wesleyan Universities, and at the City College of New York. Since 1990 he has worked in various capacities to promote sound (and liberal) U.S. Federal budget policies.

**William D'Antonio** has an academic background that includes serving on the faculty of Michigan State University, Notre Dame University and the University of Connecticut where he served as Department Chair. He is currently a Fellow at the Life Cycle Institute at Catholic University and is the co-author of eight books including "*American Catholics Today: New Realities of Their Faith and Their Church*" (2007). He has a B.A. from Yale University and a PhD in anthropology and sociology from Michigan State University

**Alice T. Day** is a sociologist and filmmaker. She has long-time research and advocacy interests in environmental issues. She is the author of three books and some 30 published articles and book chapters on such topics as: population and environment, aging, and the status of women. Currently (with Lincoln Day) she is the Producer/Writer/Director of a full-length documentary film: "Scarred Lands and Wounded Lives: The Environmental Footprint of War." She has degrees from Smith College (BA, magna cum laude), Columbia University (MA), and Australian National University (PhD).

**Dorothy Dillon**, a historian by profession, taught at Sweet Briar College and Rutgers University before coming to Washington, DC. She had a 30-year career in several agencies here, including the U.S. Information Agency, where she eventually became Assistant Director in charge of the Latin American area. Her publications include books and articles on American and Latin American history. She graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa from Hunter College and has masters and doctors degrees in history from Columbia University.

**Jean Emery** holds a Masters Degree in Social Work, having been trained in Community Organization, Administration, and as a Clinical Social Worker licensed in DC, Maryland and Virginia to work with individuals, couples, families and groups in therapeutic settings. She created and directed the HIV/AIDS Program for the Child Welfare League of America, developing print and video training materials for their thousand or so member agencies and conducting the training. She was also Program Director of the Mid-Atlantic Region for CWLA's 300 member agencies in that region. She was heavily involved in community and family volunteer work in the years before and after her professional life.

**Jewell Fenzi** is an oral historian, former U. S. diplomatic spouse, and author of four books, including a cookbook published in Curaçao in 1971 that is still in print. She has organized oral history programs for Foreign Service Spouses and for the WNDC. With coalition partners she lobbies frequently on Capital Hill in support of DC voting rights for the residents of the District and on women's issues. She is a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley.

**Lucia S. Hatch** has worked in the public and private sector in health care for 40 years. Her experience includes executive positions in rural primary care, a big city health department, a Harvard teaching hospital, an HMO, and a trade association. She is currently an independent consultant assisting health plans to prepare for accreditation surveys in quality. She is a graduate of Radcliffe College (magna cum laude) and holds a Masters in Public Health from the University of Michigan.

**Sylvia Kassalow** has had a professional career as a health economist, serving in the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Social Security Administration, Department of Health & Human Services for the State of Wisconsin and the World Health Organization in Geneva Switzerland.

**Ruth Nadel** is a DC commissioner on aging, a board member and past president of the Clearinghouse on Women's Issues, a member of OWL (Older Women's League) and represents WNDC on the National Council of Women's Organizations. She holds the US Department of Labor Distinguished Service Award, and in 2005 received a Foremother award from the National Center for Research on Women and Families.

**Ellen Overton** grew up in Europe and attended seven schools in four languages. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa and magna cum laude from Mount Holyoke College and received an MA in Political Science from Yale Graduate School. She came to Washington to work for the Central Intelligence Agency, and also had a government career at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), US Department of Commerce. She attended all the UN Women's World Conferences in Mexico City; Houston; Nairobi; Beijing; Beijing Plus Five; and Beijing Plus Ten.

**Owen Roberts** is a veteran of World War II in Europe where he was wounded three times. He served 35 years in the U.S. Foreign Service, rising to the rank of Ambassador. His areas of expertise were Africa, the Middle East and peace-keeping. He has a PhD from Columbia University.

**Barbara Stout** is Professor Emerita, Montgomery College, Rockville, MD, where she instructed community college students in composition, rhetoric, critical thinking, and literature, and participated in professional organizations. Since retiring, she has been active in the Woman's National Democratic Club, DC Vote, and the League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia.

**Agnes Wolf** has had a life-long engagement in politics, as an elected official (Greenwich Democratic Town Council), as a worker in national campaigns (for Walter Mondale), and as a leader in a wide variety of Democratic Party organizations, including the WNDC. She is a graduate of Vassar College (magna cum laude), and has held many leadership positions in Vassar alumnae affairs.



**Woman's National Democratic Club  
1526 New Hampshire Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
202/232-7363; Fax (202)986-2791  
[www.democraticwoman.org](http://www.democraticwoman.org); [info@democraticwoman.org](mailto:info@democraticwoman.org)**