



## Highlighted Areas

### 2008 Draft of the Democratic National Platform: *Renewing America's Promise*

August 13, 2008

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As the national organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) and pro-equality allied Democrats, Stonewall Democrats works to elect more pro-equality Democrats to public office and advocate within the Democratic Party on issues important to LGBT Americans. With more than 90 local chapters across the country, our members educate the Democratic Party on issues important to our community and partner with Democrats to advance the ideals of our party.

Stonewall Democrats worked with its members, and leading advocates of equality, to solicit input and recommendations into the proposed 2008 Democratic National Platform. Over the past several months, members of the Stonewall Democrats gathered in meetings across the country to discuss potential policy language that would be advocated by the organization. In Pittsburgh, Stonewall Democrats worked with committee members to propose and pass amendments that enhanced the draft platform language to more accurately reflect the position of the Democratic Party on issues of equality.

The draft of the 2008 Democratic Platform shows significant improvements over the 2004 platform in regards to the full inclusion of all people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. With input from our members, these changes more completely reflect the values the Democratic Party expresses—equal opportunity and access, fair play, and diversity—within the 2008 Democratic Platform.

### Observations

- One significant shift that the LGBT community should be proud of and applaud is the addition of gender identity into the platform's non-discrimination language. This is a significant step forward and signals that laws and policies attempting to end discrimination and create equal opportunity supported by Democrats should be fully inclusive of both sexual orientation and gender identity.
- By explicitly referencing **all** families, "including same-sex couples," we've expanded the types of families recognized by Democrats. Although the 2004 platform included "gay and lesbian families," this platform includes all same-sex couples. This would

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encompass families where one partner is transgender and doesn't identify as gay or lesbian, and also couples who are not heterosexual but don't identify as gay or lesbian (e.g. bisexual, two-spirit, queer, etc.). The proposed platform now unites pro-equality positions with policy on a host of issues mentioned in the platform not outlined here. These include, among others, health care, retirement, family care and medical decisions.

- Additionally, the draft platform should be commended for its strong stand against the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” policy that mandates discrimination in our armed forces and weakens America's security. The platform calls for a replacement of the policy with non-discrimination language.

## Adoption

**Language:** We must protect our most vulnerable children, by supporting and supplementing our struggling foster care system, enhancing adoption programs **for all caring parents**, and protecting children from violence and neglect.

**Note:** The clarification of the term “for all caring parents” was key for Stonewall Democrats and family advocates. After testimony, this term was clearly understood by the Platform Committee as a tool to combat the discrimination often faced by parents, and potential parents, simply based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

## Census

**Language:** We will make the Census more culturally sensitive, including outreach, language assistance, and increased confidentiality protections to ensure accurate counting of the growing Latino and Asian American Pacific Islander populations, and continue working on efforts to be more inclusive.

**Note:** This language was important to Stonewall Democrats, who noted how –under current Census rules- the cataloging of same-sex couples legally united is underreported by the United States Census.

## Family

**Language:** It is not enough to look back in wonder of how far we have come; those who came before us did not strike a blow against injustice only so that we would allow injustice to fester in our time. That means removing the barriers of prejudice and misunderstanding that still exist in America. We support the full inclusion of all families, **including same-sex couples**, in the life of our nation, and support equal responsibility, benefits, and protections. We will enact a comprehensive bipartisan employment non-discrimination act. We oppose the Defense of Marriage Act and all attempts to use this issue to divide us. But it is no good to be able to ride the bus when you can't afford the bus fare. We will work to provide real opportunities for all Americans suffering from disadvantage; we will pioneer new policies and remedies against poverty and violence that address real human needs and we will close the achievement gap in education and provide every child a world-class education. We support affirmative action, including in federal contracting and higher education, to make sure that those locked out of the doors of opportunity will be able to walk through those doors in the future. If we are to live up to our founding promise of equality for all, we must make sure that opportunity is open to all Americans.

**Note:** In the initial draft of the 2008 platform, the term “gay & lesbian families” (used in the 2004 platform) had been replaced with the phrase “all families.” This language was meant to be as inclusive as possible. However, Stonewall Democrats worked to add clarifying language to the phrase “all families” with the insertion of the term “same-sex couples.” This phrase is more inclusive than previous language and accurately reflects the diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. By providing this term under the section of the platform titled “Family” Democrats now reflect commitment to pro-equality positions in host of areas including health care, retirement, family care and medical decisions.

## Housing

**Language:** We will work to end housing discrimination and to ensure equal housing opportunity. We will combat homelessness and target homelessness among veterans in particular by expanding proven programs and launching innovative preventive services.

**Note:** By committing itself (under new platform language) to combating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the Democratic Party now commits to seeking solutions to the legal housing discrimination that threatens Americans in many states simply based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

## Military

**Language:** We will also put national security above divisive politics. More than **12,500** service men and women have been discharged on the basis of sexual orientation since the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy was implemented, at a cost of over \$360 million. Many of those forced out had special skills in high demand, such as translators, engineers and pilots. At a time when the military is having a tough time recruiting and retaining troops, it is wrong to deny our country the service of brave, qualified people. We support the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”: and the implementation of policies to allow qualified men and women to serve openly regardless of sexual orientation.

**Note:** Stonewall Democrats worked with policy experts at the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network to recommend a clarification to the above language. The number “12,500” replaces the previously drafted “10,000” to more accurately reflect the negative impact of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.

## Faith

**Language:** We will empower grassroots faith-based and community groups to help meet challenges like poverty, ex-offender reentry, and illiteracy. At the same time, we can ensure that these partnerships do not endanger First Amendment protections and that public funds are not used to proselytize or discriminate.

**Note:** The addition of the second sentence as created by the Platform Drafting Committee was key to Stonewall Democrats as it clarifies Democratic priorities on non-discrimination in both service and employment.

# Hate Crimes Legislation

**Language:** We will pass the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, because hate crimes desecrate sacred spaces and belittle all good people.

# Voting Rights

**Language:** We will vigorously enforce our voting rights laws instead of making them tools of partisan political agendas; We oppose laws that require identification in order to vote or register to vote, which create discriminatory barriers to the right to vote and disenfranchise many eligible voters; we oppose tactics which purge eligible voters from the voter rolls.

**Note:** The language here was supported by Stonewall Democrats as recent identification laws promoted by Republicans directly impact transgender voters who may face harassment or disenfranchisement at the voting booth over identity.