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The Williamson County Statement

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The Williamson County Statement

“Humbly invoking the blessings of Almighty God, the people of the State of Texas, do ordain and establish this Constitution.”

Our State's great foundation, as evidenced by this preamble of our Constitution, is based on the Bible's influence. In 1876, the people of the State of Texas, grateful to Almighty God for our freedom and our liberty, chose the form of government which would provide for equal civil, political, economic, and religious liberty in order to secure and perpetuate its blessings of our liberties and freedoms and established a Constitutional Government. Texans' acknowledged, with gratitude, the good governance of God, and through Divine goodness, all peoples of Texas by nature have the right of worshiping and serving their Creator according to the dictates of their conscience. It is well known through song that the eyes of Texas are upon us, and Texas is a fusion of nationalities and religions. Hence the eyes of the world are upon Texas, and on our very own Williamson County; hence all nations claim kinship with us. The work in and of Texas . . . is different. She has

opened her vast territory to all. She has invited all to meet and mingle here and make one composite family, and illustrating the world's humanity, and Texas hospitality. On her own soil, she gathers children of all nations and of all faiths, and in her homes and churches and schools she trains them to be teachers of the world. This is an opportunity such as is given to no other on the face of the earth. Only in America, only in Texas!

We of Williamson County commit ourselves to the ideas of the American and Texas Founding. Through the United States Constitution and the Texas Constitution, our Founders created an enduring framework of limited government based on the rule of law. They sought to secure independence, provide for economic opportunity, establish true religious liberty and maintain a flourishing society of republican self-government.

These principles define us and inspire us as a people. They are responsible for a prosperous, just nation, state and county unlike any other in the world. They are our highest achievements, serving not only as powerful beacons to all who strive for freedom and seek self-

government, but as warnings to tyrants and despots everywhere.

Each one of these founding ideas is presently under sustained attack. In recent years, America's principles have been undermined and redefined in our culture, our universities and our politics. The self-evident truths of 1776 with the United States Constitution and in 1876 with the Texas Constitution have been supplanted by the notion that no such truths exist. Our federal government and to some degree our state government today ignores the limits of the Constitution, which is increasingly dismissed as obsolete and irrelevant.

Some insist that America must change, cast off the old and put on the new. But where would this lead — forward or backward, up or down? Isn't this idea of change an empty promise or even a dangerous deception?

The change we urgently need, a change consistent with the American ideal, is not movement away from but toward our founding principles. At this important time, we need a restatement of Constitutional conservatism grounded in the priceless principle of ordered liberty articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the

United States and Texas' Constitutions.

The conservatism of the Declaration asserts self-evident truths based on the laws of nature and nature's God. It defends life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It traces authority to the consent of the governed. It recognizes man's self-interest but also his capacity for virtue.

The conservatism of the Constitution limits government's powers but ensures that government performs its proper job effectively. It refines popular will through the filter of representation. It provides checks and balances through the several branches of government and a federal republic.

A Constitutional conservatism unites all conservatives through the natural fusion provided by American principles. It reminds economic conservatives that morality is essential to limited government, social conservatives that unlimited government is a threat to moral self-government, and national security conservatives that energetic but responsible government is the key to America's safety and leadership role in the world.

A Constitutional conservatism based on first principles provides the framework for a consistent and meaningful policy agenda.

- It applies the principle of limited government based on the rule of law to every proposal.
- It honors the central place of individual liberty in American politics and life.
- It encourages free enterprise, the individual entrepreneur, and economic reforms grounded in market solutions.
- It supports America's national interest in advancing freedom and opposing tyranny in the world and prudently considers what we can and should do to that end.
- It informs conservatism's firm defense of family, neighborhood, community, and faith.

In this time of moral and political crises, it is the responsibility of every American to affirm certain eternal truths.

We, as Williamson County conservatives, believe:

That foremost among the transcendent values is the individual's use of his God-given free will, whence derives his right to be free from the restrictions of arbitrary force;

That liberty is indivisible, and that political freedom cannot long exist without economic freedom;

That the purpose of government is to protect those freedoms through the preservation of internal order, the provision of national defense, and the administration of justice;

That when government ventures beyond these rightful functions, it accumulates power, which tends to diminish order and liberty;

That the Constitution of the United States is the best arrangement yet devised for empowering government to fulfill its proper role, while restraining it from the concentration and abuse of power;

That the genius of the Constitution - the division of powers - is summed up in the clause that reserves primacy to the several states, or to the people, in those spheres not specifically delegated to the Federal government;

That the market economy, allocating resources by the free play of supply and demand, is the single economic system compatible with the requirements of personal freedom and constitutional government, and that it is at the same time the most productive supplier of human needs;

That when government interferes with the work of the market economy, it tends to reduce the moral and physical strength of the

nation;

That when it takes from one man to bestow on another, it diminishes the incentive of the first, the integrity of the second, and the moral autonomy of both;

That we will be free only so long as the national sovereignty of the United States is secure;

That history shows periods of freedom are rare, and can exist only when free citizens concertedly defend their rights against all enemies;

That the forces of international terrorism and home grown terrorism are, at present, the greatest single threat to these liberties;

That the United States should stress victory over, rather than co-existence with, this menace; and

That American foreign policy must be judged by this criterion: does it serve the just interests of the United States?



Defending Our Nation, Supporting Our Heroes, Securing the Peace

Peace through strength – an enduring peace, based on freedom and the will to defend it.

That goal still requires the unity of Americans beyond differences of party and conflicts of personality. The rancor of past years must now give way to a common goal of security for our country and safety for our people. We are prayerfully grateful and salute all who have played a role in defending our homeland. We pledge to continue their vigilance and to assure they have the authority and resources they need to protect the nation.

Defending Our Nation

The Current Conflict Abroad

All Americans should affirm that our first obligation is the security of our country. To all those who defend it, we owe our full support and gratitude.

Homeland Security

We acknowledge and appreciate the significant contributions of all of America's First Responders. The security of our country is now everyone's responsibility, from the Department of Homeland Security to state and local first responders, private businesses, and individual families.

Terrorism and Nuclear Proliferation

America needs to lead by creating a comprehensive strategy for reducing the world's nuclear stockpiles and preventing proliferation. That effort begins by reducing the size of our nuclear arsenal to the lowest number consistent with our security requirements. We need to work with other nuclear powers to do the same.

Better Intelligence – the Key to Prevention

Intelligence is America's first line of defense. We must increase the ranks and resources of our human intelligence capabilities, integrate technical and human sources, and get that information more quickly to the soldier and the policy maker. The multi-jurisdictional arrangements that now prevail on Capitol Hill should be replaced by a single Joint Committee on Intelligence.

Intelligence is Key to Fighting Bioterrorism and Cyberterrorism

Bioterrorism and Cyberterrorism are immediate threats to our nation's health and safety. Our food and water distribution systems require special vigilance. A well-placed cyber-attack could cripple our economy, shut down our energy and transportation systems, wreck our health care delivery systems, and put millions of lives at risk. Although our country has thwarted new terrorist attacks since 2001, those threats do persist. That is why reform of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act is so vital.

Immigration, National Security, and the Rule of Law

Immigration policy is a national security issue, for which we have one test: Does it serve the national interest? By that standard, we know America can have a strong immigration system without sacrificing the rule of law.

Enforcing the Rule of Law at the Border and Throughout the Nation

Border security is essential to national security. Terrorism, drug cartels, and criminal gangs, millions of unidentified persons enter and remain in this country poses grave risks to the sovereignty of the United States and the security of its people. We simply must be able to track who is entering and leaving our country. Upholding the rule of law begins with more effective enforcement, giving our agents the tools and resources they need to protect our sovereignty, completing the border fence quickly and securing the borders, and employing complementary strategies to secure our ports of entry.

Embracing Immigrant Communities

Both government and the private sector must do more to foster legally present immigrants' integration into American life to advance respect for the rule of law and a common American identity. It is a national disgrace that the first experience most new Americans have is with a dysfunctional immigration bureaucracy

defined by delay and confusion; we will no longer tolerate those failures.

Welcoming Refugees

Our country continues to accept refugees from troubled lands all over the world. In some cases, these are people who stood with America in dangerous times, and they have first call on our hospitality. We oppose, however, the granting of refugee status on the basis of lifestyle or other non-political factors

Supporting Our Heroes

America has the best-manned, best-trained, best-equipped, and best-led military in the world. Our Armed Forces today are modern, agile, and adaptable to the unpredictable range of challenges in the years ahead. We pledge to keep them that way.

Providing for the Armed Forces

The men and women who wear our country's uniform – whether on active duty or in the Reserves or National Guard – are the most important assets in our military arsenal. They and their families must have the pay, health care, housing, education, and overall support they need. We must significantly increase the size of our Armed Forces; crucial to that goal will be retention of combat veterans. Injured military personnel deserve the best medical care our country has to offer.

National Guard and Reserves

We pledge to maintain the strength of the National Guard and Reserves and to ensure they receive pay, benefits, and resources befitting their service. We affirm service members' legal right to return to their civilian jobs, whether in government or in the private sector, when their active duty is completed, and we call for greater transition assistance from employers across the nation to smooth their return to the work force.

Personnel policies

The all-volunteer force has been a success. We oppose reinstituting the draft, whether directly or through compulsory national service. We support the advancement of women in the military and their exemption from ground combat units. Military priorities and mission must determine personnel policies.

Fulfilling our Commitment to our Veterans

To military personnel who have served honorably and then retire or leave active duty, we owe a smooth transition to civilian life. Funding for the programs that assist them should be sufficient, timely, and predictable and never be subject to political gamesmanship.

Economic Opportunity for Veterans

Returning veterans must have access to education benefits, job training, and a wide variety of employment options. We want to build on the expansion of the GI Bill by encouraging private colleges to bridge the gap between GI Bill education benefits and tuition costs. We will strongly enforce the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act.

Veterans' Health Care and Disability System

We will hold the VA accountable for tangible results and steady improvement of its services. The VA must become more responsive and more efficient by eliminating its disability backlog and reducing waiting times for treatment. To ensure that the VA provides veterans with world class medical care, both at its own facilities and through partnerships with community providers, we must recruit the next generation of highly qualified medical professionals.

Procurement Reform

The military's partners are the men and women who work in the defense industry and civilian sector, supplying the Armed Forces with weapons and equipment vital to the success of their mission. To ensure that our troops receive the best material at the best value, we must reform the defense budgeting and acquisition process to control costs and ensure vigorous and fair competition. We will not allow congressional pork to take the place of sound, sustained investment in the nation's security.

Securing the Peace

The vision of peace through strength requires a sustained international effort, which complements our military activities, to develop and maintain alliances and relationships that will lead to greater peace and stability.

Promoting Human Rights and American Values

The international promotion of human rights reflects our heritage, our values, and our national interest. Societies that enjoy political and economic freedom and the rule of law are not given to aggression or fanaticism. They become our natural allies. Our founding fathers made it clear that religious liberty is a central element of United States foreign policy.

State Department Reform

Advancing America's values should be the core mission of every part of the federal government, including the Department of State. America's diplomatic establishment must energetically represent our country's agenda to the world. There must be thorough reform to its structure to ensure that promotions and appointments are based on performance in supporting the nation's agenda. Our diplomats must be the best our country has to offer, and America's diplomatic abilities must be an integral part of America's national security system.

Public Diplomacy

Throughout the Cold War, our international broadcasting of free and impartial information promoted American values to combat tyranny. Getting America's message out to the world is a critical element in the struggle against extremism, and our government must wage a much more effective battle in the war of ideas.

Human Trafficking

We salute those across the political spectrum who have come together to end the commerce in our fellow human beings. We advocate the establishment of an Inter-Agency Task Force on Human Trafficking, reporting directly to the President, and call for increased diplomatic efforts with foreign governments that have been negligent toward this evil. The principle underlying our Megan's Law – publicizing the identities of known offenders – should be extended to international travel in order to protect innocent children everywhere.

Reforming Government to Serve the People

We will uphold and defend our core principles: Constrain the federal government to its legitimate constitutional functions. Let it empower people, while limiting its reach into their lives. Spend only what is necessary, and tax only to raise revenue for essential government functions. Unleash the power of enterprise, innovation,

civic energy, and the American spirit – and never pretend that government is a substitute for family or community.

Washington's Failure: the Scope of the Problem

The federal government collects \$2.7 trillion a year from American families and businesses. That's \$7.4 billion a day. Even worse, it spends over \$3 trillion a year: \$8.2 billion a day.

With so many redundant, inefficient, and ineffective federal programs, it is no wonder that the American people have so little confidence in Washington to act effectively when federal action is really needed.

The Budget Process – A Fraud that Guarantees Runaway Spending

For more than three decades – since enactment of the Budget Act of 1974 by Congress – the federal government has operated within a rigged system notable for its lack of transparency. The earlier approach – annual passage of the appropriation bills, amended and voted up or down, with the numbers there for all to see – had its flaws and generated much red ink. But its replacement, the current budget process, only worsened the money flow and came to rely on monstrous omnibus spending bills. The results are adverse to all seeking to limit government's growth

Empowering the States, Improving Public Services

We propose a National Sunset Commission to review all federal programs and recommend which of them should be terminated due to redundancy, waste, or intrusion into the American family. The Congress would then be required by law to schedule one year or nay vote on the entire sunset list with no amendments. Additionally, as important as returning power to the states is returning power to the people. We strongly affirm these rights and demands that government respect them.

Congress Must Improve Oversight of Government Programs

Congress has a fundamental duty to conduct meaningful oversight on the effectiveness of government programs, not use every hearing as an opportunity for political grandstanding.

Improving the Work of Government

We will provide Internet transparency in all federal contracting as a necessary step in combating cost overruns. We will draw on the expertise of today's successful managers and entrepreneurs in the private sector, like the "dollar-a-year" businesspeople who answered their country's call during the Second World War, to build real-world competence and accountability into government procurement and operations.

Domestic Disaster Response

State and local cooperation is crucial, as are private relief efforts, but Washington must take the lead in forging a partnership with America's best run businesses to ensure that FEMA's Emergency Operations Centers run as well as any Fortune 500 Company. We must make it easier for both businesses and non-profits to act as force-multipliers in relief situations. We believe it is critical to support those impacted by natural disasters and to complete the rebuilding of devastated areas, including the Gulf Coast.

Entitlement Reform

The job of modernizing Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid calls for bipartisanship, not political posturing. The public demands constructive action, and we will provide it.

Social Security

We are committed to putting Social Security on a sound fiscal basis. Our society faces a profound demographic shift over the next twenty-five years, from today's ratio of 3.3 workers for every retiree to only 2.1 workers by 2034. Under the current system, younger workers will not be able to depend on Social Security as part of their retirement plan. We believe the solution should give workers control over, and a fair return on, their contributions. No changes in the system should adversely affect any current or near-retiree. Comprehensive reform should include the opportunity to freely choose to create your own personal investment accounts which are distinct from and supplemental to the overall Social Security system.

Medicare and Medicaid

As discussed in the health care section of this document, we commit to revive Medicare by rewarding quality care, promoting competition, eliminating waste,

fraud, and abuse, and giving patients and providers control over treatment options. We envision a new Medicaid partnership with the states, improving public health through flexibility and innovation.

Appointing Constitutionalist Judges for the Nation's Courts

Nominees must have a record of fidelity to the United States Constitution and the rule of law.

We reject the view that judicial nominees should guarantee particular results even before the case is filed. Judges should not be politicians. Jurists nominated by the president will be thoughtful and open-minded, always prepared to view past error in light of stare decisis, including judicial fiats that disenfranchised the American people.

Protecting the Right to Vote in Fair Elections

The rights of citizenship do not stop at the ballot box. They include the free-speech right to devote one's resources to whatever cause or candidate one supports. We oppose any restrictions or conditions upon those activities that would discourage Americans from exercising their constitutional right to enter the political fray or limit their commitment to their ideals.

Guaranteeing a Constitutional Census in 2010

The integrity of the 2010 census, proportioning congressional representation among the states, must be preserved. The census should count every person legally abiding in the United States in an actual enumeration. We urge all who are legally eligible to participate in the census count to do so; at the same time, we urge Congress to specify – and to constitutionally justify – which census questions require a response.

Expanding Opportunity to Promote Prosperity

Economic freedom expands the prosperity pie; government can only divide it up. That is why we advocate lower taxes, reasonable regulation, and smaller, smarter government. That agenda translates to more opportunity for more people. It represents the economics of inclusion, the path by which hopes become achievements. It is the way we will reach our goal of enabling everyone to have a chance to own, invest, and build.

Tax Policy: Protecting Hardworking Americans

We believe you should keep more of what you earn. That's true, but our concern is the purpose of taxation. We believe government should tax only to raise money for its essential functions.

We will put a stop to both social engineering and corporate handouts by simplifying tax policy, eliminating special deals, and putting those saved dollars back into the taxpayers' pockets.

Using Tax Relief to Grow the Economy

Sound tax policy alone may not ensure economic success, but terrible tax policy does guarantee economic failure. Along with making the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts permanent so American families will not face a large tax hike, we will advance tax policies to support American families, promote savings and innovation, and put us on a path to fundamental tax reform.

Lower Taxes on Families and Individuals

- American families with children are the hardest hit during any economic downturn. We will lower their tax burden by doubling the exemption for dependents.
- New technology should not occasion more taxation. We will permanently ban internet access taxes and all new cell phone taxes.
- For the sake of family farms and small businesses, we will continue our fight against the federal death tax.
- The Alternative Minimum Tax, a stealth levy on the middle-class that unduly targets large families, must be repealed.
- We support tax credits for health care and medical expenses.

Keeping Good Jobs in America

America's producers can compete successfully in the international arena – as long as they have a level playing field. Today's tax code is tilted against them, with one of the highest corporate tax rates of all developed countries. That not only hurts American investors, managers, and the United States balance of trade; it also sends American jobs overseas. We support a major reduction in the corporate tax rate so that American companies stay competitive with their foreign counterparts and American jobs can remain in this country.

Promoting Savings through the Tax Code

We support a tax code that encourages personal savings. High tax rates discourage thrift by penalizing the return on savings and should be replaced with incentives to save. We support a plan to encourage employers to offer automatic enrollment in tax-deferred savings programs. The current limits on tax-free savings accounts should be removed.

Fundamental Tax Reform

Over the long run, the mammoth IRS tax code must be replaced with a system that is simple, transparent, and fair while maximizing economic growth and job creation. As a transition, we support giving all taxpayers the option of filing under current rules or under a two-rate flat tax with generous deductions for families. This gradual approach is the taxpayers' best hope of overcoming the lobbyist legions that have thwarted past simplification efforts.

In any fundamental restructuring of federal taxation, to guard against the possibility of hypertaxation of the American people, any value added tax or national sales tax must be tied to simultaneous repeal of the Sixteenth Amendment, which established the federal income tax.

Small Business: the Engine of Job Growth

Small businesses are where national prosperity begins. Small businesses such as Main Street retailers, entrepreneurs, independent contractors, and direct sellers create most of the country's new jobs and have been the primary means of economic advancement by women and minorities.

We will advance a multi-pronged plan to support small business and grow good-paying jobs:

- Through the energy agenda laid out elsewhere in this statement, we will attack the rise in energy costs that is making it so difficult for entrepreneurs to compete.
- Our tax reduction and tax simplification agenda will allow businesses to focus on producing and selling their products and services – not on paying taxes.
- Our plan to return control of health care to patients and providers will benefit small business employers and employees alike.

- Our determination to vigorously open foreign markets to American products is an opportunity for many small businesses to grow larger in the global economy.
- Our approach to regulation – basing it on sound science to achieve goals that are technically feasible – will protect against job-killing intrusions into small businesses.
- Our commitment to legal reform means protecting small businesses from the effects of frivolous lawsuits.

Using history as our guide, we look to innovative entrepreneurs for the ingenuity and daring that can give us the next generation of technological progress. The advances our country needs, in everything from health care to energy to environmental protection, are most likely to come from the men and women of small business.

Technology and Innovation

American innovation has twin engines: technology and small business, employing over half the private-sector work force. The synergy of our technology and small business drove a world-wide economic transformation of the last quarter-century. To maintain our global leadership, we need to encourage innovators by reforming and making permanent the Research and Development Tax Credit as part of the overall agenda outlined in this statement.

Innovation is our future – in our approach to energy, to education, to health care, and especially to government. As a symbol of that commitment, we share the vision of returning Americans to the moon as a step toward a mission to Mars. In advancing our country's space and aeronautics program, NASA will remain one of the world's most important pioneers in technology, and from its explorations can come tremendous benefits for mankind.

Developing a Flexible and Innovative Work Force

To master the global economy, our work force must be creative, independent, and able to adapt to rapid change. That challenge calls for better education and training and new approaches to employer-employee relations. It means investing in people, not institutions.

Investing in People

We believe that the employer-employee relationship of the future will be built

upon employee empowerment and workplace flexibility.

- The Industrial Revolution treated people like machines; today's economy must treat them as individuals. We recognize that work schedules should be more flexible when employers and employees are not negatively affected such as removing outdated distinctions between full time and part time, clock-punching and overtime. The federal government should set an example in that regard.
- The workplace must catch up with the way Americans live now. For increasing numbers of workers, especially those with children, the choice of working from home will be good for families, profitable for business, and energy efficient.
- All workers should have portability in their pension plans and their health insurance, giving them greater job mobility, financial independence, and security.
- Global competitiveness will increasingly require an entrepreneurial culture of cooperation and team work. Making the best talent part of our team is the rationale for the H-1B visa program, which needs updating to reflect our need for more leaders in science and technology while we take the necessary steps to create more of them in our own school systems. By complementing the United States work force with needed specialists from abroad, we can make sure American companies and their jobs remain here at home.

Businesses and employees, working together, are best suited to addressing the challenges ahead.

Individual-Based Unemployment Insurance and Training

Government can play an important role in addressing economic dislocations by modernizing its re-training and unemployment assistance programs. We must make these programs actually anticipate dislocations so that affected workers can get new skills quickly and return to the work force. We advocate a seamless approach to helping employees stay on the job and advance through education. Workers should be able to direct a portion of their unemployment insurance into a tax-free Lost Earnings Buffer Account that could be used for retraining or relocation. With financial incentives to return to work as soon as possible, this approach will also require strengthening community colleges and making them more accessible through Flexible Training Accounts.

Protecting Union Workers

We affirm both the right of individuals to voluntarily participate in labor organizations and bargain collectively and the right of states to enact Right-to-Work laws. But the nation's labor laws, to a large extent formed out of conflicts several generations ago, should be modernized to make it easier for employers and employees to plan, execute, and profit together. To protect workers from misuse of their funds, we will conscientiously enforce federal law requiring financial reporting and transparency by labor unions. We advocate paycheck protection laws to guard the integrity of the political process and the security of workers' earnings.

Stopping the Assault on the Secret Ballot

The recent attempt by congress to deny workers a secret ballot in union referenda is an assault, not only against a fundamental principle of labor law, but even more against the dignity and honor of the American work force. We oppose "card check" legislation, which deprives workers of their privacy and their right to vote, because it exposes workers to intimidation by union organizers.

Rebuilding Homeownership

Homeownership remains key to creating an opportunity society. We support timely and carefully targeted aid to those hurt by the housing crisis so that affected individuals can have a chance to trade a burdensome mortgage for a manageable loan that reflects their home's market value. At the same time, government action must not implicitly encourage anyone to borrow more than they can afford to repay. We support energetic federal investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution of criminal wrongdoing in the mortgage industry and investment sector. We do not support government bailouts of private institutions. Government interference in the markets exacerbates problems in the marketplace and causes the free market to take longer to correct itself. We believe in the free market as the best tool to sustained prosperity and opportunity for all. We encourage potential buyers to work in concert with the lending community to educate themselves about the responsibilities of purchasing a home, condo, or land.

Reforming the Civil Justice System to Improve Competitiveness

The rule of law demands that injured parties have access to the forums to vindicate their rights, but the rule of law does not mean the rule of lawyers – especially trial lawyers who manipulate the system to enrich themselves rather than protecting

consumers, workers, or taxpayers. While no one should be denied access to the courts, the rule of lawyers threatens our global competitiveness, denies Americans access to the quality of justice they deserve, and puts every small business one lawsuit away from bankruptcy.

Free and Fair Trade

Greater international trade, aggressively advanced on a truly level playing field, will mean more American jobs, higher wages, and a better standard of living. It is also a matter of national security and an instrument to promote democracy and civil society in developing nations.

We pledge stronger action to protect intellectual property rights against pirating and will aggressively oppose the direct and indirect subsidies by which some governments tilt the world playing field against American producers. To protect American consumers, we call for greater vigilance and more resources to guard against the importation of tainted food, poisonous products, and dangerous toys.

Additionally, we recognize the need to support our growth in trade through appropriate development and support of our ports in order to ensure safe, efficient and timely handling of all goods.

Supporting our Agricultural Communities

To meet surging global demand for food and biofuel, farmers must have the technology to grow higher yields using fewer inputs. The USDA must remain the international leader in agricultural research to ensure that America and the world will never have to choose between food and fuel. The United States government should end mandates for ethanol and let the free market work.

Energy Independence and Security

All Americans are acutely aware of the energy crisis our nation faces. Energy costs are spiraling upward, food prices continue to rise, and as a result, our entire economy suffers. This winter, families have spent for heat what they could have saved for college, and small businesses have spent for fuel what could have covered employee health insurance.

Together we can build a future around domestic energy sources that are diverse, reliable, and cleaner. We can strengthen our national security, create a pathway to growing prosperity, and preserve our environment. The American people will rise

to this challenge.

Growing Our Energy Supply

We must aggressively increase our nation's energy supply, in an environmentally responsible way, and do so through a comprehensive strategy that meets both short and long term needs. No amount of wishing or hoping can suspend the laws of supply and demand. Leading economists agree that any actions that will increase future energy supplies will lead to lower energy prices today.

In the long run, American production should move to zero-emission sources, and our nation's fossil fuel resources are the bridge to that emissions-free future.

Growing American Energy Production

To deliver energy to American consumers, we will expand our refining capacity. Because of environmental extremism and regulatory blockades in Washington, not a single new refinery has been built in this country in 30 years. We will encourage refinery construction and modernization and, with sensitivity to environmental concerns, an expedited permitting process.

Any legislation to increase domestic exploration, drilling and production must minimize any protracted legal challenges that could unreasonably delay or even preclude actual production. We oppose any efforts that would permanently block access to the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Nuclear Power: The Earth's Clean Future

Nuclear energy is the most reliable zero-carbon-emissions source of energy that we have. Unwarranted fear mongering with no relationship to current technologies and safeguards has prevented us from starting construction of a single nuclear power plant in 31 years. Meanwhile, the United States has for decades relied upon nuclear-powered vessels, and other nations have harnessed nuclear power to provide a major portion of their energy consumption. There is no reason why the United States cannot catch up and do the same. Confident in the promise offered by science and technology, we will pursue dramatic increases in the use of all forms of safe, affordable, reliable – and clean – nuclear power.

As new plants are constructed using the highest safety and operation standards, the nation's industrial and manufacturing base will be rejuvenated. The labor force will expand, with nearly 15,000 high quality jobs created for every new nuclear

plant built – and those workers will lead the nation away from its dependence on foreign oil.

Solar, Wind, Geothermal, Hydropower

Alternate power sources must enter the mainstream. The technology behind solar energy has improved significantly in recent years, and the commercial development of wind power promises major benefits both in costs and in environmental protection. We support these and other alternative energy sources, including geothermal and hydropower, and anticipate technological developments that will increase their economic viability. We therefore advocate a long-term energy tax credit equally applicable to all renewable power sources.

We support measures to modernize the nation's electricity grid to provide American consumers and businesses with more affordable, reliable power. We will work to unleash innovation so entrepreneurs can develop technologies for a more advanced and robust United States transmission system that meets our growing energy demands.

Clean Coal

Although alternate fuels will shape our energy future, coal – America's most affordable and abundant energy resource and the source of most of our electricity – remains a strategic national resource that must play a major role in energy independence. We look to innovative technology to transform America's coal supplies into clean fuels capable of powering motor vehicles and aircraft. We support coal-to-liquid and gasification initiatives, just as we support investment in the development and deployment of carbon capture and storage technologies, which can reduce emissions. We firmly oppose efforts by Congress to block the construction of new coal-fired power plants. No strategy for reducing energy costs will be viable without a commitment to continued coal production and utilization.

Natural Gas

Natural gas is plentiful in North America, but we can extract more and do a better job of distributing it nationwide to cook our food, heat our homes, and serve as a growing option as a transportation fuel. Both independently and in cooperation with alternative fuels, natural gas will be an essential part of any long-term energy solution. We must ensure it gets to consumers safely and quickly.

Energy Cooperation

We embrace the open energy cooperation and trading relationship with our neighbors Canada and Mexico, including proven oil reserves and vast, untapped Canadian hydroelectric generation.

Reducing Demand for Fossil Fuels

While we grow our supplies, we must also reduce our demand – not by changing our lifestyles but by putting the free market to work and taking advantage of technological breakthroughs.

Increase Conservation through Greater Efficiency

Conservation does not mean deprivation; it means efficiency and achieving more with less. Most Americans today endeavor to conserve fossil fuels, whether in their cars or in their home heating, but we can do better. We can construct better and smarter buildings, use smarter thermostats and transmission grids, increase recycling, and make energy-efficient consumer purchases. Wireless communications, for example, can increase telecommuting options and cut back on business travel. Our goal is to ensure that Americans have more conservation options that will enable them to make the best choices for their families.

New Technologies for Cars and Other Vehicles

We must continue to develop alternative fuels, such as biofuels, especially cellulosic ethanol, and hasten their technological advances to next-generation production. As America develops energy technology for the 21st century, policy makers must consider the burden that rising food prices and energy costs create for the poor and developing nations around the world. Because alternative fuels are useless if vehicles cannot use them, we must move quickly to flexible fuel vehicles; we cannot expect necessary investments in alternative fuels if this flexibility does not become standard. We must also produce more vehicles that operate on electricity and natural gas, both to reduce demand for oil and to cut CO2 emissions.

Environmental Protection

By increasing our American energy supply and decreasing the long term demand for oil, we will be well positioned to address the challenge of climate change and continue our longstanding responsibility for stewardship over the environment.

Addressing Climate Change Responsibly

The same human economic activity that has brought freedom and opportunity to billions has also increased the amount of carbon in the atmosphere. While the scope and long-term consequences of this is the subject of ongoing scientific research, common sense dictates that the United States should take measured and reasonable steps today to reduce any impact on the environment. Those steps, if consistent with our global competitiveness will also be good for our national security, our energy independence, and our economy. Any policies should be global in nature, based on sound science and technology, and should not harm the economy.

The Solution: Technology and the Market

To reduce emissions in the short run, we will rely upon the power of new technologies, as discussed above, especially zero-emission energy sources such as nuclear and other alternate power sources. But innovation must not be hamstrung by Washington bickering, regulatory briar patches, or obstructionist lawsuits. Empowering Washington will only lead to unintended consequences and unimagined economic and environmental pain; instead, we must unleash the power of scientific know-how and competitive markets.

International Cooperation

Because the issue of climate change is global, it must become a truly global concern as well. All developed and developing economies, particularly India and China, can make significant contributions in dealing with the matter. It would be unrealistic and counterproductive to expect the United States to carry burdens which are more appropriately shared by all.

Using Cash Rewards to Encourage Innovation

Because we believe that solutions to the risk of global climate change will be found in the ingenuity of the American people, we propose a Climate Prize for scientists who solve the challenges of climate change. Honoraria of many millions of dollars would be a small price for technological developments that eliminate our need for gas-powered cars or abate atmospheric carbon.

Doing No Harm

A robust economy will be essential to dealing with the risk of climate change, and

we will insist on reasonable policies that do not force Americans to sacrifice their way of life or trim their hopes and dreams for their children. This perspective serves not only the people of the United States but also the world's poorest peoples, who would suffer terribly if climate change is severe – just as they would if the world economy itself were to be crippled. We must not allow either outcome.

Continuing Our Stewardship over the Environment

Government at all levels should protect private property rights by cooperating with landowners' efforts and providing incentives to protect fragile environments, endangered species, and maintain the natural beauty of America. Our leadership has led to the rejuvenation and renewal of our National Park system. Future expansion of that system, as well as designation of National Wilderness areas or Historic Districts, should be undertaken only with the active participation and consent of relevant state and local governments and private property owners.

Health Care Reform: Putting Patients First

Americans have the best doctors, the best hospitals, the most innovative medical technology, and the best scientists in the world. Our challenge and opportunity is to build around them the best health care system. We believe the key to real reform is to give control of the health care system to patients and their health care providers, not bureaucrats in government or business.

It is not enough to offer only increased access to a system that costs too much and does not work for millions of Americans. Our goal is more ambitious: Better health care for lower cost.

First Principle: Do No Harm

We will continue to advocate for simplification of the system and the empowerment of patients. This is in stark contrast to the insistence on putting Washington in charge of patient care, which has blocked any progress on meeting these goals. We offer a detailed program that will improve the quality, cost, and coverage of health care throughout the nation, and we *will* turn that plan into reality.

Patient Control and Portability

We believe all Americans should be able to obtain an affordable health care plan,

including a health savings account, which meets their needs and the needs of their families.

Individuals with pre-existing conditions must be protected; we will help these individuals by building on the experiences of innovative states rather than by creating a new unmanageable federal entitlement. We strongly urge that managed care organizations use the practice patterns and medical treatment guidelines from the state in which the patient lives when making medical coverage decisions.

Because the family is our basic unit of society, we fully support parental rights to consent to medical treatment for their children including mental health treatment, drug treatment, alcohol treatment, and treatment involving pregnancy, contraceptives, and abortion.

Improving Quality of Care and Lowering Costs

While delivering control of health coverage to families and individuals, we will also advance a variety of targeted reforms to improve the quality of care, lower costs, and help Americans – men, women, and children – live longer and healthier lives.

Prevent Disease and End the “Sick Care” System

A culture of wellness needs to include the treatment of mental health conditions. We believe all Americans should have access to affordable, quality health care, including individuals struggling with mental illness. For this reason, we believe it is important that mental health care be treated equally with physical health care.

Empower Individuals to Make the Best Health Care Choices.

Clear information about health care empowers patients. It lets consumers make better decisions about where to spend their health care dollars, thereby fostering competition and lowering costs. Patients must have information to make sound decisions about their health care providers, hospitals, and insurance companies.

Use Health Information Technology to Save Lives

Advances in medical technology are revolutionizing medicine. Information technology is key to early detection and treatment of chronic disease as well as fetal care and health care in rural areas – especially where our growing wireless communications network is available. The simple step of modernizing

recordkeeping will mean faster, more accurate treatment, fewer medical errors, and lower costs. Closing the health care information gap can reduce both under-utilization (the diabetic who forgets to refill an insulin prescription) and over-utilization (the patient who endures repetitive tests because providers have not shared test results).

Protect Good Health Care Providers from Frivolous Lawsuits

Every patient must have access to legal remedies for malpractice, but meritless lawsuits drive up insurance rates to outrageous levels and ultimately drive up the number of uninsured. Frivolous lawsuits also drive up the cost of health care as health care providers are forced to practice defensive medicine, such as ordering unnecessary tests. Many leave their practices rather than deal with the current system. This emergency demands medical liability reform.

Reward Good Health Care Providers for Delivering Real Results

Patients deserve access to health care providers they trust who will personalize and coordinate their care to ensure they receive the right treatment with the right health care provider at the right time. Providers should be paid for keeping people well, not for the number of tests they run or procedures they perform. The current cookie-cutter system of reimbursement needs restructuring from the view of the patient, not the accountant or Washington bureaucrat.

Drive Costs Down With Interstate Competition

A state-regulated national market for health insurance means more competition, more choice, and lower costs. Families – as well as fraternal societies, churches and community groups, and small employers – should be able to purchase policies across state lines. The best practices and lowest prices should be available in every state. We call upon state legislators to carefully consider the cost of medical mandates, and we salute those governors who are leading the way in demonstrating ways to provide affordable health care options.

Modernize Long-Term Care Options for All

The financial burdens and emotional challenges of ensuring adequate care for elderly family members affect every American, especially with today's aging population. We must develop new ways to support individuals, not just institutions, so that older Americans can have a real choice whether to stay in their homes. This is true not only with regard to Medicaid, where we spend \$100 billion

annually on long-term care, but also for those who do not qualify for that assistance.

Encourage Primary Care as a Specialty

We believe in the importance of primary care specialties and supporting the physician's role in the evaluation and management of disease. We also encourage practice in rural and underserved areas of America.

Funding Medical Research

We believe medicines and treatments should be designed to prolong and enhance life, not destroy it. Therefore, federal funds should not be used for drugs that cause the destruction of human life. Furthermore, the Drug Enforcement Administration ban on use of controlled substances for physician-assisted suicide should be restored.

Protecting Rights of Conscience

The health care profession can be both a profession and a calling. No health care professional – doctor, nurse, or pharmacist – or organization should ever be required to perform, provide for, or refer for a health care service against their conscience for any reason. This is especially true of the religious organizations which deliver a major portion of America's health care, a service rooted in the charity of faith communities.

Medicare

We support the provision of quality and accessible health care options for our nation's seniors and disabled individuals and recognize that in order to meet this goal we must confront the special challenges posed by the growth of Medicare costs. Because it is isolated from the free market forces that encourage innovation, competition, affordability, and expansion of options, Medicare is especially susceptible to fraud and abuse. The program loses tens of billions of dollars annually in erroneous and fraudulent payments. We are determined to root out the fraud and eliminate this assault on the taxpayer.

Medicaid

Our Medicaid obligations will consume \$5 trillion over the next ten years. Medicaid now accounts for 20-25 percent of state budgets and threatens to

overwhelm state governments for the indefinite future. We can do better while spending less. A first step is to give Medicaid recipients more health care options. Several states have allowed beneficiaries to buy regular health insurance with their Medicaid dollars. This removes the Medicaid “stamp” from people’s foreheads, provides beneficiaries with better access to doctors, and saves taxpayers’ money. We must ensure that taxpayer money is focused on caring for United States citizens and other individuals in our country legally.

Building a Health Care System for Future Emergencies

To protect the American people from the threats we face in the century ahead, we must develop and stockpile medicines and vaccines so we can deliver them where urgently needed. Our health care infrastructure must have the surge capacity to handle large numbers of patients in times of crisis, whether it is a repeat of Hurricane Katrina, a flu pandemic, or a bioterror attack on multiple cities. We will ensure that this infrastructure, including the needed communications capacity, is closely integrated into our homeland security needs.

Education Means a More Competitive America

Education is essential to competitiveness, but it is more than just training for the work force of the future. It is through education that we ensure the transmission of a culture, a set of values we hold in common. It has prepared generations for responsible citizenship in a free society, and it must continue to do so. We are committed to restoring the civic mission of schools envisioned by the founders of the American public school system. Civic education, both in the classroom and through service learning, should be a cornerstone of American public education and should be central to future school reform efforts.

Principles for Elementary and Secondary Education

To ensure that all students will have access to the mainstream of American life, we support the English First approach and oppose divisive programs that limit students’ future potential. All students must be literate in English, our common language, to participate in the promise of America.

Early Childhood Education

The family is the most powerful influence on a child’s ability to succeed. As such, parents are our children’s first and foremost teachers. We support family literacy, which improves the literacy, language, and life skills of both parents and children

along with the continued improvement of early childhood programs, such as Head Start, from low-income families. We reaffirm our support for the child care tax credit that helps parents choose the care best for their family.

Giving Students the Best Teachers

We encourage state efforts to ensure that personnel who interact with children pass thorough background checks and are held to the highest standards of conduct.

Partnerships between schools and businesses can be especially important in STEM subjects: science, technology, engineering and math. The need to improve secondary education in those fields can be measured by the number of remedial courses now offered at the college level. Our country's reliance upon foreign talent in those areas begins with insufficient emphasis upon them in the high school years. We applaud those who are changing that situation by giving young people real-world experience in the private sector and by providing students with rigorous technical and academic courses that give students the skills and knowledge necessary to be productive members in a competitive American work force.

Asserting Family Rights in Schooling

Parents should be able to decide the learning environment that is best for their child. We support choice in education for all families, especially those with children trapped in dangerous and failing schools, whether through charter schools, vouchers or tax credits for attending faith-based or other non-public schools, or the option of home schooling. We call for the vigilant enforcement of laws designed to protect family rights and privacy in education. We will energetically assert the right of students to engage in voluntary prayer in schools and to have equal access to school facilities for religious purposes. We renew our call for replacing "family planning" programs for teens with increased funding for abstinence education, which teaches abstinence until marriage as the responsible and expected standard of behavior. Abstinence from sexual activity is the only protection that is 100 percent effective against out-of-wedlock pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS when transmitted sexually. We oppose school-based clinics that provide referrals, counseling, and related services for abortion and contraception. Schools should not ask children to answer offensive or intrusive personal non-academic questionnaires without parental consent. It is not the role of the teacher or school administration to recommend or require the use of psychotropic medications that must be prescribed by a physician.

Reviewing the Federal Role in Primary and Secondary Education

To get our schools back to the basics of learning, we support initiatives to block-grant more Department of Education funding to the states, with requirements for state-level standards, assessments, and public reporting to ensure transparency. Local educators must be free to end ineffective programs and reallocate resources where they are most needed.

Maintaining our Commitment to IDEA

Because a federal mandate on the states must include the promised federal funding, we will fulfill the promise of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act to cover 40 percent of the costs incurred because of that legislation. We urge preventive efforts in early childhood, especially assistance in gaining pre-reading skills, to help many youngsters move beyond the need for IDEA's protections.

Higher Education

Our country's system of higher education – public and private, secular and religious, large and small institutions – is unique for its excellence, its diversity, and its accessibility. Learning is a safeguard of liberty. Post-secondary education not only increases the earnings of individuals but advances economic development. Our colleges and universities drive much of the research that keeps America competitive. We must ensure that our higher education system meet the needs of the 21st century student and economy and remain innovative and accessible.

Meeting College Costs

Our vision for expanding access to higher education has led to two major advances, Education Savings Accounts and Section 529 accounts, by which millions of families now save for college. While federal student loans and grants have opened doors to learning for untold numbers of low- and middle-income students, the overall financial aid system, with its daunting forms and confused rationales, is nothing less than Byzantine. It must be simplified. We call for a presidential commission to undertake that task and to review the role of government regulations and policies in the tuition spiral. We affirm our support for the public-private partnership that now offers students and their families a vibrant marketplace in selecting their student loan provider.

Innovation Will Lead to Lifelong Learning

The challenge to American higher education is to make sure students can access education in whatever forms they want. As mobility increases in all aspects of American life, student mobility, from school to school and from campus to campus, will require new approaches to admissions, evaluations, and credentialing. Distance learning propelled by an expanding telecommunications sector and especially broadband, is certain to grow in importance – whether through public or private institutions – and federal law should not discriminate against the latter. Lifelong learning will continue to transform the demographics of higher education, bringing older students and real-world experience to campus.

Community Colleges Continue to Play a Crucial Role

Community colleges are central to the future of higher education, especially as they build bridges between the world of work and the classroom. Many of our returning veterans find community colleges to be welcoming environments where they can develop specific skills for use in the civilian work force. As the first responders to economic development and retraining of workers, these schools fulfill our national commitment of an affordable and readily accessible education for all.

Special Challenges in Higher Education

Free speech on college campuses is to be celebrated, but there should be no place in academia for bigotry or racism of any kind. We oppose the hiring, firing, tenure, and promotion practices at universities that discriminate on the basis of political or ideological belief. When federal taxes are used to support such practices, it is inexcusable. We affirm the right of students and faculty to express their views in the face of the leftist dogmatism that dominates many institutions. To preserve the integrity and independence of the nation's colleges, we will continue to ensure alternatives to ideological accrediting systems.

Because some of the nation's leading universities create or tolerate a hostile atmosphere toward the ROTC, we will rigorously enforce the provision of law, unanimously upheld by the Supreme Court, which denies those institutions federal research grants unless their military students have the full rights and privileges of other students. That must include the right to engage in ROTC activities on their own campus, rather than being segregated elsewhere.

Protecting Our Families

We will take vigorous action against crime and empower the law-abiding by protecting their right to keep and bear arms for self-protection. Our national experience over the past twenty years has shown that vigilance, tough yet fair prosecutors, meaningful sentences, protection of victims' rights, and limits on judicial discretion protect the innocent by keeping criminals off the streets.

Stopping Online Child Predators and Ending Child Pornography

Child pornography is a hideous form of child abuse. Those who produce it – and those who traffic in it – must be punished to the maximum extent of the law. Because it is an international problem, the Executive branch must carry the fight overseas to where the molesters perpetrate their evil. Congress should expand the range of companies required to report the existence of child pornography, and we congratulate the social networking sites that agree to bar known sex offenders from participation.

Internet Gambling

Millions of Americans suffer from problem or pathological gambling that can destroy families. We support the law prohibiting gambling over the Internet.

Ridding the Nation of Criminal Street Gangs

Gang violence is a growing problem, not only in urban areas but in many suburbs and rural communities. It has escalated with the rise of gangs composed largely of illegal aliens, most of whose victims are law-abiding members of immigrant communities. We call for stronger enforcement and determined prosecution of gang conspiracies. Illegal alien gang members must be removed from the United States immediately upon arrest or after the completion of any sentence imposed. Aliens convicted of crimes that render them removable from the United States must be removed as soon as possible after the completion of their sentences through the immediate transfer of their custody to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Locking Up Criminals

Criminals behind bars cannot harm the general public. We support mandatory sentencing provisions for gang conspiracy crimes, violent or sexual offenses against children, rape, and assaults resulting in serious bodily injury. Gang rape,

child rape, and rape committed in the course of another felony deserve, at the least, mandatory life imprisonment. We oppose the granting of parole to dangerous or repeat felons. Courts must have the option of imposing the death penalty in capital murder cases and other instances of heinous crime, while federal review of those sentences should be streamlined to focus on claims of innocence and to prevent delaying tactics by defense attorneys. We encourage the use of advanced technology to monitor nonviolent criminals.

Reforming Prisons and Serving Families

Breaking the cycle of crime begins with the children of those who are incarcerated. Deprived of a parent through no fault of their own, these youngsters should be a special concern of our schools, social services, and religious institutions. Government at all levels should work with faith-based institutions that have proven track records in diverting young and first offenders from criminal careers through Second Chance and similar programs. Individuals, including juveniles, who are repeat offenders or who commit serious crimes need to be prosecuted and punished.

Protecting Law Enforcement Officers

In solidarity with those who protect us, we call for mandatory prison time for all assaults involving bodily injury to law enforcement officers. Reviews of death sentences imposed for murdering a police officer should be expedited, and a retrial of the penalty phase of the killer's trial should be allowed in the absence of a unanimous verdict. We support the right of off-duty and retired officers to carry firearms. Criminals should be barred from seeking monetary damages for injuries they incur while committing a crime.

Improving Law Enforcement

In recent years, many federal resources for law enforcement have been shifted to the fight against terror. To compensate for that loss of manpower – and with the significant increase in cybercrime, identity theft, and human trafficking – several thousand new FBI agents, United States marshals, immigration officers, and Border Patrol agents are needed.

Continuing the Fight against Illegal Drugs

The human toll of drug addiction and abuse hits all segments of American society. It is an international problem as well, with most of the narcotics in this country

coming from beyond our borders. We will continue the fight against producers, traffickers, and distributors of illegal substances through the collaboration of state, federal, and local law enforcement. We support the work of those who help individuals struggling with addiction, and we support strengthening drug education and prevention programs to avoid addiction. We endorse state and local initiatives, such as Drug Courts, that are trying new approaches to curbing drug abuse and diverting first-time offenders to rehabilitation.

Protecting the Victims of Crime

The Task Force on Victims of Crime, calling the neglect of crime a “national disgrace,” proposed a constitutional amendment to secure their formal rights. Today, that disgrace persists in courtrooms across the nation. Innocent victims – battered women, abused children, the loved ones of the murdered – still may not be told when their case is being heard. They can be excluded from the courtroom even when the defendant and his friends may be present. They have no right to a speedy trial, and a judge or parole board has no obligation to consider their personal safety in making release decisions. In short, the innocent have far fewer rights than the accused. We call on Congress to correct this imbalance by sending to the states for ratification a constitutional amendment to protect the rights of crime victims. In addition, crime victims should be assured of access to legal and social services, and the Crime Victims Fund should be used solely for that purpose.

Securing Our Civil Liberties

Because our Constitution is based on the principles of individual liberty and limited government, we must always ensure that law enforcement respects the civil and constitutional rights of the people. While we wage war on terrorism in foreign lands, it is sometimes necessary for intelligence agencies and law enforcement officials to pursue terrorist threats at home. However, no expansion of governmental powers should occur at the expense of our constitutional liberties.

Renewing Neighborhoods, Building Communities

Decentralized decision-making in the place of official controls empowers individuals and groups to tackle social problems in partnership with government. Bureaucracy is no longer a credible approach to helping those in need. This is especially true in light of alternatives such as faith-based organizations, which tend to have a greater degree of success than others in dealing with problems such as substance abuse and domestic violence. To accomplish their missions, those groups must be able to rely upon people who share their faith; their hiring must not

be subjected to government regulation and mandates.

Preserving Our Values

From its founding, America has been an idea as much as a political or geographic entity. It has meant, for untold millions around the world, a set of ideals that speak to the highest aspirations of humanity. From its own beginning, we have boldly asserted those ideals, as we now do again, to affirm the rights of the people under the rule of law.

Upholding the Constitutional Right to Keep and Bear Arms

We uphold the right of individual Americans to own firearms, a right which antedated the Constitution and was solemnly confirmed by the Second Amendment. We call for education in constitutional rights in schools, and we support the option of firearms training in federal programs serving senior citizens and women. We urge immediate action to review the automatic denial of gun ownership to returning members of the Armed Forces who have suffered trauma during service to their country. We condemn frivolous lawsuits against firearms manufacturers, which are transparent attempts to deprive citizens of their rights. We oppose federal licensing of law-abiding gun owners and national gun registration as violations of the Second Amendment. We recognize that gun control only affects and penalizes law-abiding citizens, and that such proposals are ineffective at reducing violent crime.

Ensuring Equal Treatment for All

Individual rights – and the responsibilities that go with them – are the foundation of a free society. From the time of Lincoln, equality of individuals has been a cornerstone of our ideals. Our commitment to equal opportunity extends from landmark school-choice legislation for the students of Washington D.C. to historic appointments at the highest levels of government. We consider discrimination based on sex, race, age, religion, creed, disability, or national origin to be immoral, and we will strongly enforce anti-discrimination statutes. We ask all to join us in rejecting the forces of hatred and bigotry and in denouncing all who practice or promote racism, bigotry, ethnic prejudice, or religious intolerance. As a matter of principle, we oppose any attempts to create race-based governments within the United States, as well as any domestic governments not bound by the Constitution or the Bill of Rights.

Precisely because we oppose discrimination, we reject preferences, quotas, and set-

asides, whether in education or in corporate boardrooms. The government should not make contracts on this basis, and neither should corporations. We support efforts to help low-income individuals get a fair shot based on their potential and merit, and we affirm the common-sense approach of the Chief Justice of the United States: that the way to stop discriminating on the basis of race is to stop discriminating.

Protecting Our National Symbols

The symbol of our unity, to which we all pledge allegiance, is the flag. By whatever legislative method is most feasible, Old Glory should be given legal protection against desecration. We condemn decisions by activist judges to deny children the opportunity to say the Pledge of Allegiance in public school.

Freedom of Speech and of the Press

We support freedom of speech and freedom of the press and oppose attempts to violate or weaken those rights, such as reinstatement of the so-called Fairness Doctrine.

Maintaining the Sanctity and Dignity of Human Life

Respect for life requires efforts to include persons with disabilities in education, employment, the justice system, and civic participation. In keeping with that commitment, we oppose the non-consensual withholding of care or treatment from people with disabilities, as well as the elderly and infirm, just as we oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide, which endanger especially those on the margins of society. Because government should set a positive standard in hiring and contracting for the services of persons with disabilities, we need to update the statutory authority for the AbilityOne program, the main avenue by which those productive members of our society can offer high quality services at the best possible value.

Preserving Traditional Marriage

Because our children's future is best preserved within the traditional understanding of marriage, we call for a constitutional amendment that fully protects marriage as a union of a man and a woman, so that judges cannot make other arrangements equivalent to it. In the absence of a national amendment, we support the right of the people of the various states to affirm traditional marriage through state initiatives.

We recognize the importance of having in the home a father and a mother who are married. The two-parent family still provides the best environment of stability, discipline, responsibility, and character. Children in homes without fathers are more likely to commit a crime, drop out of school, become violent, become teen parents, use illegal drugs, become mired in poverty, or have emotional or behavioral problems. We support the courageous efforts of single-parent families to provide a stable home for their children. Children are our nation's most precious resource. We also salute and support the efforts of foster and adoptive families.

We have been at the forefront of protecting traditional marriage laws, both in the states and in Congress. We have enacted the Defense of Marriage Act, affirming the right of states not to recognize same-sex "marriages" licensed in other states. Unbelievably, there are those who wish to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act, which would subject every state to the redefinition of marriage by a judge without ever allowing the people to vote on the matter. We also urge Congress to use its Article III, Section 2 power to prevent activist federal judges from imposing upon the rest of the nation the judicial activism in Massachusetts and California. We also encourage states to review their marriage and divorce laws in order to strengthen marriage.

As the family is our basic unit of society, we oppose initiatives to erode parental rights.

Safeguarding Religious Liberties

Our Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion and forbids any religious test for public office, and it likewise prohibits the establishment of a state-sponsored creed. The balance between those two ideals has been distorted by judicial rulings which attempt to drive faith out of the public arena. The public display of the Ten Commandments does not violate the United States Constitution and accurately reflects the Judeo-Christian heritage of our country. We support the right of students to engage in student-initiated, student-led prayer in public schools, athletic events, and graduation ceremonies, when done in conformity with constitutional standards.

We affirm every citizen's right to apply religious values to public policy and the right of faith-based organizations to participate fully in public programs without renouncing their beliefs, removing religious objects or symbols, or becoming subject to government-imposed hiring practices. Forcing religious groups to abandon their beliefs as applied to their hiring practices is religious discrimination. We support the First Amendment right of freedom of association of the Boy Scouts

of America and other service organizations whose values are under assault, and we call upon the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to reverse its policy of blacklisting religious groups which decline to arrange adoptions by same-sex couples. Respectful of our nation's diversity in faith, we urge reasonable accommodation of religious beliefs in the private workplace. We deplore the increasing incidence of attacks against religious symbols, as well as incidents of bigotry on college campuses.

Preserving Americans' Property Rights

At the center of a free economy is the right of citizens to be secure in their property. Every person has the right to acquire, own, use, possess, enjoy, and dispose of private property. That right was undermined by the Supreme Court's Kelo decision, allowing local governments to seize a person's home or land, not for vital public use, but for transfer to private developers. That 5-to-4 decision highlights what is at stake in the election of the next president, who may make new appointments to the Court. We call on state legislatures to moot the Kelo decision by appropriate legislation, and we pledge on the federal level to pass legislation to protect against unjust federal takings. We will enforce the Takings Clause of the Fifth Amendment to ensure just compensation whenever private property is needed to achieve a compelling public use. We urge caution in the designation of National Historic Areas, which can set the stage for widespread governmental control of citizens' lands.

Surface Transportation

In 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed into law a new federal transportation bill with an ambitious vision to link America's cities and states with a network of long-distance superhighways that would allow people, commerce, and the military to move rapidly from one part of the country to another. This bill, commonly known as the National Interstate Highways and Defense Act was one of the most important national infrastructure laws of the 20th century.

Fifty Four years later, the Interstate Highway System as originally envisioned has been built, and America stands in desperate need of a new vision for our national transportation system. Just as the Interstate Highway Bill answered some of the most pressing mobility needs of the nation in the mid-20th century, a new federal transportation bill must answer the vastly different needs of America in the 21st century. The next transportation program must set about the urgent task of repairing and maintaining our existing transportation assets, building out the rest of

the transportation network, and making our current system work more efficiently. Modern and affordable public transportation, safe places to walk and bicycle, smarter highways that use technology and tolling to better manage congestion, land use policies that reduce travel demand by locating more affordable housing near jobs and services, and long-distance rail networks all have the potential to help us reduce our oil dependency, slow climate change, improve social equity and public health, and fashion a vibrant new economy. Getting there from here will require some significant reforms in the next federal transportation bill.

We support a level of investment in the nation's transportation system that will promote a healthy economy, sustain jobs, and keep America globally competitive. We need to improve the system's performance and capacity to deal with congestion, move a massive amount of freight, reduce traffic fatalities, and ensure mobility across both rural and urban areas. We urgently need to preserve the highway, transit, and air facilities built over the last century so they can serve generations to come. At the same time, we are committed to minimizing transportation's impact on climate change, our local environments, and the nation's energy use. Careful reforms of environmental reviews and the permitting process should speed projects to completion. Safeguarding our transportation infrastructure is critical to our homeland security.

Establish Accountability for Responsible Investment

Under the current system, most federal transportation dollars go to state departments of transportation, with few questions asked. DOTs remain largely geared toward building highways between metropolitan areas rather than providing multiple options for mobility within metropolitan areas. This is despite the fact that the United States population is highly urbanized, with 80 percent of us living in metropolitan areas and 85 percent of our nation's economic activity occurring within them. The current law assigns metropolitan areas responsibility for transportation planning, but it does not give them real authority to implement those plans.

Transportation agencies must be held accountable for investments that promise to deliver safe, efficient and economical transportation for all Americans. The next federal transportation bill should:

- Establish National Transportation Objectives to guide how transportation investments address issues such as energy security, mobility options, safety, national security, equal access for poor and minority communities, economic

competitiveness, climate change, and affordability.

- Link funding levels to achievement of these goals. Progress in achieving federal goals should be linked to an increased federal match or access to increased funding.
- Restructure the program categories, funding allocations, and project eligibility criteria to put all modes on an equal footing in determining eligibility for federal funds.
- Empower metropolitan areas to shape their future by shifting more transportation money and decision-making to them, while also holding them accountable for results through a new Metropolitan Mobility Program.

The Next Federal Transportation Bill Should:

- Require a fix-it-first approach to restore our crumbling highways, bridges and transit systems and set “State of Good Repair” criteria, with financial incentives for compliance.
- Hold state and local transportation agencies accountable for meeting the transportation needs of an increasingly diverse America, in particular its seniors, people in poverty and disabled citizens. This means planning our transportation systems – and our development patterns – to ensure that there are convenient and affordable travel options available to everyone for every stage of life.
- Adopt a “complete streets” approach that provides for the safety and comfort of everyone traveling along a corridor, whether by car, bicycle, foot, or public transit.

Invest to Compete in the 21st Century

Poorly planned transportation investments, combined with spread-out development patterns, has forced families to spend 20 percent or more of their household budgets for transportation. Many spend hours driving in congestion every day, reducing their productivity. Our heavy reliance on oil leaves the nation’s economy vulnerable to inevitable price shocks. The absence of high-speed rail lines and sophisticated, long-distance freight systems common in other nations puts us at a competitive disadvantage. Our aging infrastructure is placing a strain on state and local budgets, often leaving metropolitan areas with few resources to remake transportation networks that can revitalize cities and towns. Without smart, strategic investments in modern transportation systems, America will be supplanted as the world’s most productive economy.

We must catch and pass competitors in China and Europe by modernizing and expanding our rail, freight, and transit networks. Some initiatives to address these issues include:

- Create a new Metropolitan Mobility Program that would support regional investments in smarter highway system management, transit expansion, demand management, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
- Create a national program to bring modern, convenient public transportation networks to the nation's 50 largest metropolitan areas by 2030, and provide incentives for building neighborhoods and business districts around transit connections, with housing for a wide range of incomes.
- Create a National Freight and Passenger Rail Program aimed at completing an intercity passenger rail network by 2030 with direct high-speed rail service linking our nation's largest cities.
- Establish a National Infrastructure Commission to identify investments of national priority, focusing on multimodal intercity corridors, a national intercity rail network, and key freight corridors.
- Create a mechanism to monitor changes in user fees such as transit fares, toll roads, and congestion pricing to reduce the cost burdens on low and moderate-income families.

Invest for Multiple Payoffs in Solving our Energy, Air Quality, and Climate Challenges

Our federal transportation investments can work simultaneously to end our overwhelming reliance on oil, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, clean up polluting ports and trucks, and help Americans save money through these actions:

- Establish National Transportation Objectives that include two important targets for the year 2050: reducing reliance on petroleum for transportation to no more than 20 percent (from more than 95% today), and reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector to 80 percent below 1990 levels. Link funding to achievement of these goals.
- Expand the current Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program into a broader program of energy conservation, air pollution, and greenhouse gas reduction.
- Provide significant funding so that our ports and freight system – trucks and trains – are as clean as possible. Ports, highways, and railroad corridors with heavy freight usage have significant public health risks that typically fall

disproportionately on low-income and minority communities that are often located closest to these facilities.

- Create a new Smart Innovations program to assist communities in their efforts to build neighborhoods that include affordable housing in accessible locations; retrofit dangerous roads to become complete streets; implement car- and bicycle-sharing programs; deploy information technology to make highways and transit systems smarter; and implement other energy-saving, community-enhancing ideas being developed around the country.

Reward and Support Smart Local Land Use Planning

The most efficient trip is the shortest – or the one you don't have to take at all. More than 60 percent of the growth in driving is due not to population or economic growth, but to spread-out development. Our nation can no longer afford the endless cycle of building roads, allowing them to become overwhelmed by poorly planned development, and widening or building again. The federal transportation program can encourage coordinated planning between transportation facilities and land use, ending the de facto subsidization of unsustainable development through these initiatives:

- Set national transportation objectives for transportation and location efficiency that reward investments that help locate destinations closer to each other and to transit centers.
- Create a tax-credit incentive to support development around transit stations, while lifting existing barriers to using transportation funds on land use and infrastructure projects that will help reduce driving.
- Provide technical assistance for sophisticated travel forecasting that takes land use into account and for planning that coordinates land use policies and transportation investments.
- Require scenario planning – similar to Envision Central Texas – to ensure efficient transportation investments that meet the desires of citizens, and then provide the funding flexibility for metropolitan areas and localities to implement these plans.

Invest for Public Health and Safety

Our transportation system can do much more to foster human health and safety. While other countries have made strides on safety, traffic deaths in the United States hover around 43,000 people per year, with disproportionate deaths among older Americans, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Millions of Americans, and

particularly those in low-income communities, face asthma and other health problems caused by pollution from cars and trucks. Wide streets with fast traffic and no sidewalks or bike lanes discourage this physical activity, contributing to associated health effects.

Local innovations in roadway design and operations have effectively reduced the rate of death and injury on our streets, and should be encouraged across the country. The federal transportation program could also help get Americans moving with programs to make active transportation the cornerstones of a higher quality of life.

- Set health and safety targets in the National Transportation Objectives, and require best practices in “active transportation” and context-sensitive roadway design (or Context-Sensitive Solutions) for program and project eligibility.
- Set aside a substantial share of funds for non-motorized safety initiatives in the Safety Program.
- Integrate existing disparate programs into an expanded and integrated new program to provide transportation options for older and disabled Americans, including para-transit service.
- Include health impact assessments as a regular part of environmental review for projects, and fund the mitigation of negative health impacts of highways, diesel rail, and freight facilities on nearby residential areas.

Find New ways to Pay for What We Need

Federal transportation funding has long relied almost exclusively on taxing each gallon of gas, but the limitations of this source have become clear. Congress has already propped up the Highway Trust Fund with general funds. The situation could get worse if the drop in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) that began in 2007 continues, draining expected revenues. Opposition to raising the tax is strong, as Americans already cope with high transportation costs. A revenue distribution scheme that rewards the states whose population drives the most runs counter to other national goals. We need to develop new long-term revenue sources that are complementary to the nation’s need for energy efficiency and continue to protect our investment in our public assets. Transportation for America stands ready to support an increase in federal transportation investments if – and only if – they are directed towards the sorts of priorities and objectives outlined in this document.

In rewriting the nation's federal transportation law, We should:

- Begin serious exploration of a new set of sustainable and equitable federal funding sources for transportation, including the potential for a federal transportation tax based on miles driven rather than gasoline consumed.
- Direct a significant share of revenue from future cap-and-trade or carbon tax programs from transportation sources to transforming our transportation system toward greater efficiency and reduced carbon emissions.
- Establish a National Infrastructure and Transportation Bank funded by capturing some of the economic value created by the placement of infrastructure investments.
- Evaluate and mitigate the burden of transportation costs on low- and moderate-income families.
- Protect public assets by creating clear guidelines for public-private partnerships such as toll facilities and congestion pricing systems.

National Water Policy

The United States faces severe water resource challenges today and in the decades ahead. The Nation must deal with significant drought, floods, growing threats to its water quality, continuing loss of wetlands and the impact of these losses on the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains and estuaries, and a water resources infrastructure that is aging, in need of revitalization and whose collapse would threaten our economic vitality. The potential impacts of climate change that could increase the intensity of floods, severity of droughts and change or weaken the health and stability of many ecosystems only adds to the challenge. There is an immediate need for an assessment of the Nation's water resources to include the current status of the resource, the future needs for water and identification of gaps that exist in fulfilling these needs.

Our federal government, in cooperation with state and local agencies, needs to develop a national vision and overarching principles to guide water resources development activities supported by the federal government.

There is increasing need for mechanisms that will better coordinate the water related activities of federal agencies and among congressional committees. The absence of effective coordination is apparent in the conflicts and overlaps that exist in legislation, programs, and agency activities.

The relationship among the federal government, states and the local community is changing and must be addressed. The federal government's role in water resources, long seen to be a driving force, must be reevaluated in light of growing state attention and direction of water resource activities.

Guiding principles for domestic water management should be developed. These principles include:

- Understand the Status and Trends in Water Resources
- Expand Partnerships and Coordination Across Federal, State, and Local Government Organizations
- Continue Federal Investment in Water Infrastructure
- Connect Water Quantity, Water Quality and Environmental Land Use Planning
- Seek Sustainable Development – Bridge the Gap Between Public Good and Private Rights
- Seek to Expand Supplies
- Provide a Strong Scientific Base for Water Management Decisions
- Value Water Resources Appropriately
- Value Ecosystems and Their Human Benefits

The following tasks are common to each regional water plan:

- Determine Water Demands through Dynamic Modeling
- Determine Water Supplies available for use during Drought of Record
- Determine where and when there is a surplus of supply or need for additional supplies
- Determine social and economic impact not meeting needs
- Develop plans that contain:
 - Specific strategies to meet future near-term needs (less than 30 years)
 - Options to meet long-term future needs
 - Identified needs with no feasible solution
- Identify ecological unique streams and rivers
- Identify unique sites for reservoir construction
- Coordinate with neighboring regions concerning mutual interests and shared resources

- Propose regulatory, administrative or legislative recommendations to improve water resource management in the state

The Domestic Situation

- To sustain the United States' current population of 300 million people, we withdraw around 345 billion gallons of water a day. This equals 30% of all the runoff in the United States. Of these withdrawals, approximately 30% is consumed. So approximately 10% of all surface runoff (our renewable supply) is consumed currently.
- We use the remainder of the water to provide dilution of municipal, industrial and agricultural discharges; environmental water needs; river based transportation; energy production and support other needs. It is difficult to measure the fraction of the non-diversion capacity currently used.
- Over-consumption, climate change, and significant population growth have caused the United States to begin to experience the effects of water shortage. Water stress is affecting almost every region within the United States.
- To fully define and implement integrated policies, we also need a new national coordination function. Such a function could be patterned after the now defunct National Water Council or some similar structure in the Executive Branch / White House

Conclusions

When it comes to water resources and all that depends on them, the planet is clearly at a crossroads. Population growth, increased demands and changes in our hydrological systems caused by climate change make addressing the water crisis an imperative. We must solve our own drinking water and sanitation issues. Additionally, our leadership is a critical element in solving the world's water problems which in turn helps improve the United States security situation.

Acknowledgements

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Association of Community Organizers for Reform Now
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The Texas Constitution
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