Democratic Platform:

Ensure the Health and Safety of All Americans

Democrats have been fighting to secure universal health care for the American people for generations, and we are proud to be the party that passed Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Being stronger together means finally achieving that goal. We are going to fight to make sure every American has access to quality, affordable health care. We will tackle the problems that remain in our health care system, including cracking down on runaway prescription drug prices and addressing mental health with the same seriousness that we treat physical health. We will fight Republican efforts to roll back the clock on women’s health and reproductive rights, and stand up for Planned Parenthood. And we will tackle the epidemics of substance abuse and gun violence, which claim tens of thousands of lives every year.

Securing Universal Health Care

Democrats believe that health care is a right, not a privilege, and our health care system should put people before profits. Thanks to the hard work of President Obama and Democrats in Congress, we took a critically important step toward the goal of universal health care by passing the Affordable Care Act. The ACA has covered 20 million more Americans and ensured millions more will never be denied coverage because of a pre-existing condition. Democrats will never filter in our generations-long fight to guarantee health care as a fundamental right for every American. As part of that guarantee, Americans should be able to access public coverage through a public option, and those over 55 should be able to opt in to Medicare. Democrats will empower the states, which are the true laboratories of democracy, to use innovation waivers under the ACA to develop unique locally tailored approaches to health coverage. This will include removing barriers to states which seek to experiment with plans to ensure universal health care to every person in their state. By contrast, Donald Trump wants to repeal the ACA, leaving tens of millions of Americans without coverage.

For too many of us, health care costs are still too high, even for those with insurance. And medical debt is a problem for far too many working families, with one-quarter of Americans reporting that they or someone in their household had problems or an inability to pay medical bills in the past year. Democrats will also work to end surprise billing and other practices that

Republican Platform:

that program, designed for 1965 medicine, a vehicle for good health in an entirely new era.

Medicare’s long-term debt is in the trillions, and it is funded by a workforce that is shrinking relative to the size of future beneficiaries. Obama warned this situation — and implored senators — by imposing hundreds of billions of dollars in cuts to Medicare providers to pay for its new spending. When a vital program is so clearly headed for a brain drain, it’s time to send it on a safe security track. That’s why we propose these reforms: impose no changes for persons 55 or older. Give others the option of traditional Medicare or transition to a premium-support model designed to strengthen patient choice, promote cost-saving competition among providers, and better guard against the fraud and abuse that now diverts billions of dollars every year away from patient care. Guarantee to every enrollee an income-adjusted contribution toward a plan of their choice, with catastrophic protection. Without disadvantaging present retirees or those nearing retirement, set a more realistic age for Medicare eligibility in light of today’s longer life span.

This is an agenda to improve health care, not just to manage its costs. We reject the Democrats’ approach of rationing inherited in Obamacare. We recognize the rising costs of health care caused by reduced access to doctors who increasingly opt out of participating in Medicare and Medicaid. We will not accept that or any approach which denies care — or lowers its quality — for America’s elderly.

Medicaid presents related, but somewhat different challenges. As the dominant force in the health market, with regard to long-term care, births, and persons with mental illness, it is the next frontier of reform. It is simply too big and too flawed to be administered from Washington. Most of the warranted expansion of health insurance coverage under Obamacare actually has been an unprecedented expansion of the Medicaid rolls in many states. We applaud the Republican governors and state legislatures who have undertaken the hard work of modernizing Medicaid. We will give them a free hand to do so by block-granting the program without strings. Their initiatives — whether premium supports for purchasing insurance, refundable tax credits, alternatives to hospitalization for chronic patients, disease prevention activities, and other innovations — are the best strategy for preserving Medicare for those who need it the most. Block granting Medicaid is particularly needed to address mental health care. Mental illness affects people from all walks of life, but there have been little success in developing effective system-wide medical models for addressing mental health. For a variety of reasons, governments is often the first frontier that people face when they encounter mental health problems — from first responders who deal with crises to publicly funded mental health facilities and programs where large numbers of inmates suffer from mental illness. Using block grants would allow states to experiment with different systems to address mental health and develop successful models to be replicated in states across the nation. The current federally dictated mental health care regime is wasteful and ineffective, and moving to a block grant approach would allow for state and local governments to create solutions for individuals and families in desperate need of help in addressing mental illness. We respect the states’ authority and flexibility to exclude abortion providers from federal programs such as Medicaid and other health care and family planning programs so long as they continue to perform or refer for elective abortions or sell the body parts of aborted children.

Saving Social Security

We reject the old axiom that Social Security is the “Third Rail” of American politics, deadly for anyone who would change it. The Democratic Party still has it right, even though everyone knows that its current course will lead to a financial and social disaster. Younger Americans have lost all faith in the program and expect little return for what they are paying into it. As the party of America’s Social Security, we accept the responsibility to preserve and modernize a system of retirement security forged in an old industrial era beyond the memory of most Americans. Common sense tells us that clear-cut merit-based retirement can be assured of their benefits. Of the many reforms being proposed, all options should be considered to preserve Social Security. As Republicans, we oppose tax increases and believe in the power of markets to create wealth and to