

2008 STATE REPUBLICAN PARTY PLATFORM

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PREAMBLE

Throughout the world people dare to dream of freedom, of opportunity, of a beautiful country in which to grow, to raise their family, to worship God in their own way without fear. The embodiment of the Conservative Dream in America is Texas. Our Texas. It is we who strive to protect our culture from destruction, our children from predators, and our dear country from those who would waste it. It is we who preserve the embattled conservative traditions that have made our nation the greatest in history. It is we who have upheld human dignity and opposed buying or selling of human life in slavery or in test tubes. We know that free people and free markets can solve the challenges that plague or threaten all Americans. We are the party of ideas, of innovation, the party of the Information Age. We are the bottom-to-top party of the people, not the top-to-bottom party of the state. We are the Republican Party of Texas. We offer specific, concrete, creative yet prudent change. God bless Texas and God bless America.

We respectfully submit that the grass roots of this Party have properly written its platform, with ideas and planks drawn from neighborhood precincts across our State. This platform is indeed the heart and soul of our Party. We encourage all Republican candidates and officeholders to champion these critical issues clearly and forthrightly before the people of Texas and America.

We thank our officeholders for already putting into law the following former plans: Jessica's Law; Seat Belts for School Buses; the Defense of Marriage Act; the banning of most government funding of human embryo stem cell harvesting; and giving school districts the ability to pool insurance.

PRINCIPLES

1. We respect and cherish the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and our Founders' intent to restrict the power of the federal government over the states and the people. We believe self-government, based on personal integrity of a proper moral foundation, is the best government. This is best balanced with limited civil government, coupled with public trust, to provide collectively for the people those services not efficiently achieved individually.
2. We believe that human life is sacred, created in the image of God. Life begins at the moment of fertilization and ends at the point of natural death. All innocent human life must be protected.
3. We believe that good government is based on the individual, and each person's ability, dignity, freedom, and responsibility must be honored and recognized. We believe equal opportunity is a right and a privilege but equal outcome is not. We insist that no one's rights are negotiable and that individual freedom demands personal responsibility.
4. We believe that government spending is out of control and needs to be reduced. We support fundamental, immediate tax reform that is simple, fair, and fully disclosed.
5. We believe that traditional marriage is a legal and moral commitment between a natural man and a natural woman. We recognize that the family is the foundational unit of a healthy society and consists of those related by blood, marriage, or adoption. The family is responsible for its own welfare, education, moral training, conduct, and property,
6. We believe that a well-educated population is fundamental to the continued success of our Republic; and that parents have the right, as well as the duty, to direct their children's education. This right should include choices among public, private, home and religious schools. Competition improves education.
7. We believe that the future of our country depends upon a strong and vibrant private sector unencumbered by excessive government regulation.
8. We believe that a strong America ensures a free America. While we recognize that our nation is the primary leader in the global community, we must also vigorously protect the sovereignty of the United States.
9. We believe in peace through strength. We take a principled stand to preemptively defend the citizens of the United States against all foes, foreign or domestic, whose goal is to destroy our American way of life. Freedom is never free, and we honor all those who have served our nation to protect our liberty, especially our men and women in uniform, who unselfishly and courageously defend our country.
10. We believe all Americans have the right to be safe in their homes, on their streets, and in their communities. We support enforcement of the laws through the Courts imposing swift and sure justice with stiff penalties, truth in sentencing, and respecting the rights of law-abiding citizens, while opposing judicial activism.

United States Public Health Service and all states to declare HIV a “dangerous, yet preventable, infectious, communicable disease.” It should be legally reported in the same manner as any communicable disease. We oppose the needle exchange and bleach kit programs. We urge the return to the requirement of blood testing in order to obtain a marriage license with the previous reporting responsibilities to prevent the spread of dangerous, infectious, and communicable diseases.

Americans with Disabilities Act - We support amendment of the Americans with Disabilities Act to exclude from its definition those persons with infectious diseases, substance addiction, learning disabilities, behavior disorders, homosexual practices and mental stress, thereby reducing abuse of the Act.

Immunizations - All adult citizens should have the legal right to conscientiously choose which vaccines are administered to themselves or their minor children without penalty for refusing a vaccine. We oppose any effort by any authority to mandate such vaccines or any medical database that would contain personal records of citizens without their consent.

EDUCATING OUR CHILDREN

Parental Rights in Education – The right of parents to raise and educate their children is fundamental. Parents have the right to withdraw their child from any special or bilingual education program. We urge the Legislature to enact penalties for violation of parental rights.

Local Control – We support choice in public education and believe that quality education is best achieved by encouraging parental involvement, protecting parental rights, and maximizing local control. District superintendents and their employees should be made solely accountable to their locally elected boards. We support sensible consolidation of local school districts.

State Board of Education – We support an elected State Board of Education (SBOE) with authority over the Texas Education Agency, selection and termination of the Commissioner of Education, and textbook adoption. The SBOE must retain constitutional authority over the Permanent School Fund. The state should offer subject-area teacher certification without additional educational requirements for individuals who hold a baccalaureate in their field or professionals who have equivalent life experience in a field. We urge that the Legislature repeal Education Code 28.008 and 28.009; and that the legislature instead work within the established framework of the Texas Education code and the authority of the State Board of Education.

Textbooks and Curricula – The SBOE must have sole authority over textbook content and state adoption, and this process must include public hearings. We urge the Legislature to give the State Board of Education authority to establish textbook adoption standards. We oppose the replacement of textbooks by laptops. We support competitive pricing as part of the textbook selection process by independent school districts and oppose standard maximum pricing schemes.

Parental School Choice – We encourage the Governor and the Texas Legislature to enact child-centered school funding options – which fund the student, not schools or districts – to allow maximum freedom of choice in public, private or parochial education for all children. As a prerequisite, we urge passage of a constitutional amendment prohibiting imposition of state regulations on private and parochial schools.

Funding of Education - Educating Texans is a priority to Texas taxpayers. In order to prioritize education spending, it is necessary to maximize the percentage of school funds that are directed toward instructional purposes. We urge the Legislature to direct expenditures to academics first (books, desks, and teachers), then to non-academic activities; to provide funding for state mandates on local districts; and to not increase state taxes.

Transparency - We support legislation requiring all school districts to post their check registers online or made readily available to the public.

U.S. Department of Education – The Federal Government has no constitutional jurisdiction over education. We call for abolition of the U. S. Department of Education and prohibition of transfer of any of its functions to any other agency.

No Child Left Behind - The No Child Left Behind Act has been a massive failure and should be abolished.

Private Education – Parents have the fundamental right and responsibility for educating their children, and the state should not have power to force any parent or guardian to send their children to public school. Parents or guardians may choose to educate their children in private school without government interference of any kind. Home education is legally recognized as private education. We urge the Legislature to require cities and counties to exempt private school students from daytime curfew ordinances. We urge the Legislature to require University Interscholastic League (UIL) to open participation to private schools.

Juvenile Daytime Curfew - We oppose Juvenile Daytime Curfew which puts undue stress on students who have a legitimate reason to be out of school and their parents.

Government Regulation of Religious Institutions – The state should have no power over the licensing of clergy or religious institutions for training clergy. The curriculum, faculty, and boards of religious institutions should be determined only by the institution. We call on the State to withdraw all imposed regulations.

Sex Education – We recognize parental responsibility and authority regarding sex education. We support policies that mandate parental notification and consent before any sex education program is presented to their child. Parents must be given an opportunity to review the material prior to giving their consent. We oppose any sex education other than abstinence until heterosexual marriage.

Early Childhood Development – We believe that parents are best suited to train their children in their early development and oppose mandatory pre-school and Kindergarten. We urge Congress to repeal government-sponsored programs that deal with early childhood development.

Children with Special Needs – We advocate equal educational opportunity for all students and the requirement that children with special needs be educated commensurate with their abilities.

Classroom Discipline – We recommend that local school boards and classroom teachers be given more authority to deal with disciplinary problems. We urge the Legislature, Governor, Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education to remind administrators and school boards that corporal punishment is effective and legal in Texas.

Support for Classroom Teachers – We recognize the need to attract competent teachers; to get teachers involved in educational planning and program development; to minimize reports and paperwork; to support teacher incentives through monetary and recognition rewards; and to empower teachers to remove disruptive students.

Traditional Principles in Education – We support school subjects with emphasis on Judeo-Christian principles upon which America was founded and which form the basis of America's legal, political and economic systems.

Multiculturalism – We support teaching the principles articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that we be judged not by the color of our skin but by the content of our character and we celebrate positive contributions to our society by members of all cultural groups without emphasizing their differences. We favor strengthening our common American identity and loyalty instead of multiculturalism that emphasizes differences among racial and ethnic groups.

Basic Standards – We favor improvements on the quality of education and a return to the traditional basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic with sufficient discipline to ensure learning. We support standardized testing to ensure minimal standards are met. We advocate the elimination of the TAKS test.

Social Promotion – Students should master basic, minimum skills before advancing.

Knowledge-Based Education – The primary purpose of public schools is to teach critical thinking skills, reading, writing, arithmetic, phonics, history, science, and character as well as knowledge-based education, not job training. We support knowledge-based curriculum standards and tests. We support successful career and technology programs, but oppose mandatory career training. We oppose Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and similar programs. Further, because of an aging U.S. population and global competition, and because much of today's education teaches children to be employees or perhaps at best managers for employers, we encourage the teaching of entrepreneurial skills and investment skills.

School Surveys and Testing – Public schools should be required to obtain written parental consent for student participation in any test or questionnaire that surveys beliefs, feelings, or opinions in the areas of sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, religion, political persuasion, or other areas of morality.

Bilingual Education – We demand abolition of bilingual education. The best method is an "English Immersion Program." All students must pass recognized standard tests that verify each student's English ability for their grade level before advancing.

Educational Entitlement – We encourage legislation that prohibits enrollment in free public schools of non-citizens unlawfully present in the United States, whether or not such illegals pay or offer to pay tuition for such education.

Religious Freedom in Public Schools – We urge school administrators and officials to inform Texas school students specifically of their First Amendment rights to pray and engage in religious speech, individually or in groups, on school property without government interference. We support and strongly urge Congress to pass a Religious Freedom Amendment, which provides: "Neither the United States nor any State shall prohibit student-sponsored prayer in public schools, nor compose any official student prayer or compel joining therein." We urge the Legislature to end censorship of discussion of religion in our founding documents, and encourage discussing those documents.

Theories of Origin – We support objective teaching and equal treatment of strengths and weaknesses of scientific theories, including Intelligent Design. We believe theories of life origins and environmental theories should be taught as scientific theory, not scientific law. Teachers and students should be able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these theories openly and without fear of retribution or discrimination of any kind.

Pledge of Allegiance in Public Schools – Students should be taught flag etiquette and should be led daily in the Pledge of Allegiance, the Texas Pledge, the National Anthem, and other patriotic songs to ensure that the loyal and patriotic spirit of Texan and American heritage is preserved.

Higher Education – We reaffirm support of public and private institutions of higher learning. We advocate an equal standard for public college admission based on merit and ability. We urge the legislature to ensure equal access to grants and scholarships to all Texas high school graduates, including privately educated students. All Texas students should be given acceptance priority over out-of-state or foreign students. We oppose the 10% automatic admissions rule.

College Tuition – We recommend three levels of college tuition: In state requiring proof of Texas legal citizenship, Out of State requiring proof of US citizenship, and, nonresident legal alien. Non-US citizens should not be eligible for state or federal grants.

Public Higher Education Accountability - We support a system of accountability in Texas Public universities. We support binding audits by the State Comptroller of all public universities and a complete review of the tuition deregulation law for the purpose of validating whether it is accomplishing its stated goal.

Gambling and Education – We strongly oppose any gambling to fund public education.

School Health Care – We urge legislators to prohibit reproductive health care services, including counseling, referrals, and distribution of condoms and contraception through public schools. We support the parents' right to choose, without penalty, which medications are administered to their minor children. We oppose medical clinics on school property except higher education and health care for students without parental consent.

School District Lawsuits - We support legislation authorizing Independent School Districts threatened with lawsuits by organizations, such as the ACLU, or sued to certify the lawsuit to the Attorney General of Texas to represent the Independent School District in the suit where the issue is of significant statewide import, and the Attorney General of Texas agrees to take the case.

PROMOTING INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM AND PERSONAL SAFETY

INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

Right To Keep and Bear Arms – We urge the Legislature and Congress to repeal all laws that infringe on the right to bear arms, and to reject any monitoring of gun ownership, and all excessive taxation or regulation of guns and ammunition. We support a ten-year minimum mandatory sentence without parole for felonies committed with firearms. Stiff penalties should be enacted for frivolous lawsuits against legitimate firearms manufacturers. All gun owners are responsible for safely storing and operating firearms. We believe the Legislature should enact legislation: allowing: Concealed Handgun License holders to carry concealed weapons on publicly owned institutions of learning; and, preventing employers from prohibiting Concealed Handgun License holders from storing their concealed handgun in their vehicle while on a company parking area, and removing civil liability from property owners who do not prevent Concealed Handgun License holders from carrying on their premises. We believe that FFL holders should be free from harassment, and license revocations and denials against firearm dealers based on violations consisting of largely inconsequential recordkeeping errors and encourages the ATF to consider lesser gradation of sanctions for such errors.

Freedom of Access Act – We urge repeal of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Law. Those who assault peaceful protesters acting under the Constitution should be vigorously prosecuted. Picketing and literature distribution do not fall under the RICO Act.

Judeo-Christian Nation – As America is a nation under God founded on Judeo-Christian principles, we affirm the constitutional right of all individuals to worship in the religion of their choice.

Safeguarding Our Religious Liberties – We affirm that the public acknowledgment of God is undeniable in our history and is vital to our freedom, prosperity and strength. We pledge our influence toward a return to the original intent of the First Amendment and toward dispelling the myth of separation of church and state.

Religious Institutions – We urge Congress to sanction any foreign government that persecutes its citizens for their religion.

Faith-Based Opportunities – We urge the Legislature to increase ability of faith-based institutions and other organizations to assist the needy, and to reduce regulation of such organizations.

Electronic Privacy – We believe all law-abiding citizens should be free from government surveillance of their electronic communications except in cases directly involving national security. Except for non-citizens, we further oppose any national ID program, including the Real ID Act and the use of Radio Frequency Identification Chips (RFID) on humans.