

... On core union issues, a growing partisan divide

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up construction and maintenance costs, for the benefit of unions.”

The party platforms aren't binding on candidates, and individual candidates can and do adopt their own positions. But the platforms serve as a statement of consensus on what the parties should stand for.

Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders, a U.S. Senator from Vermont, contributed considerably to this year's Democratic platform. In some places, the platform document sounds like his speeches: "Our goal must be to create a financial system and an economy that works for all Americans, not just a handful of billionaires," reads a section on Wall Street reform.

Meanwhile, the Republican platform adds signature elements from the campaign of Donald Trump, including the first-ever call by the Republican Party for the construction of a wall covering "the entirety of the southern border and ... sufficient to stop both vehicular and pedestrian traffic." [Since the GOP wants to repeal Davis-Bacon, the wall would presumably be built nonunion.]

But deciphering the documents isn't always obvious. To an extent, they're written in code, recognizable only to targeted constituencies.

So for example, four years ago, the Republican platform called for a flat-rate income tax, in effect ending 100 years of the progressive income tax in which the rich pay higher rates. This

	2016 Democratic Party Platform	2016 Republican Party Platform
Minimum Wage	Raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour over time, and index it to inflation. End the sub-minimum wage for tipped workers and people with disabilities.	Eliminate the federal minimum wage. ("Minimum wage is an issue that should be handled at the state and local level.") Exempt US Territories (Guam, Northern Marianas, American Samoa, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico) from federal minimum wage law.
Workers' Rights	Pass a law that requires employers to recognize a union whenever a majority of workers sign valid authorization cards, and require binding arbitration in cases where the union and employer can't agree on a first contract. Limit the use of forced arbitration clauses in employment contracts.	Pass a national "Right to Work" law barring any requirement that workers pay dues to the union that represents them. Exempt tribal workplaces from the requirement to recognize unions. Rescind the right of Transportation Security Administration (TSA) employees to unionize. Repeal the Davis-Bacon law that requires payment of prevailing wage on federal construction projects.
Tax Fairness	Enact a financial transactions tax on Wall Street to curb excessive speculation and high-frequency trading. Establish a multimillionaire surtax. Eliminate tax breaks for big oil and gas companies and companies that ship jobs overseas. End deferrals so U.S. corporations pay taxes immediately on foreign profits. Close the "carried interest" loophole that benefits hedge fund managers.	Reduce the corporate tax rate. Pass a Constitutional amendment requiring a Congressional super-majority for any tax increase.
Health Care	Create a public insurance option to compete with private insurance companies. Repeal the "Cadillac" tax on high-cost health insurance. Allow those over 55 to opt in to Medicare. Allow Medicare to negotiate lower prices with drug manufacturers. Allow individuals, pharmacists, and wholesalers to import prescription drugs from licensed pharmacies in Canada and other countries with appropriate safety protections. Remove barriers to states that want to experiment with universal health care.	Repeal Obamacare. Replace traditional Medicare with a system of vouchers for private insurance coverage — and raise the age of eligibility.
Campaign Finance Reform	Support a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision. Eliminate Super PACs. Create a public campaign financing system that matches small donors. Require more disclosure and transparency for political contributions — by outside groups, federal contractors, and public corporations to their shareholders.	Repeal remaining campaign contribution limits. Repeal McCain-Feingold law that limits "soft-money" contributions to political parties. End the Fairness Doctrine (a no-longer-current FCC rule that required broadcasters to give equal time to opposing political candidates). Bar union dues-funded political contributions.

year, the party put it in code: "We oppose tax policies that deliberately divide Americans or promote class warfare." Does that mean a flat tax? Only the authors know for sure — like Oregon activist Russ Walker, who co-chaired the Republican Platform Committee's subcommittee on Government Reform. At least the GOP platform is more explicit in its pledge to repeal the Dodd-Frank Wall Street reforms

and abolish the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The Democratic platform, meanwhile, took union priorities to heart. "Democrats will ... fight to enact legislation to make sure that the earned pension benefits of Americans will not be cut, and will pay for it by closing tax loopholes that benefit millionaires and billionaires." That's a coded reference to a bill sponsored by Sanders that would overturn a


2014 law that lets distressed union-sponsored multi-employer pension plans cut retiree benefits to prevent insolvency.

Democrats are also committed to protecting the postal service: rejecting any privatization, eliminating a ruinous mandate to "pre-fund" retiree health costs, and restoring service to former levels, including overnight delivery of first-class mail and periodicals within the same metro-

politan area. The party even endorses proposals to let the Postal Service offer basic financial services such as paycheck cashing. Those are top priorities for postal unions.

READ THE PLATFORMS YOURSELF
Want more? See the 2016 Democratic platform at <http://bit.ly/29YL9Vu> and the 2016 Republican platform at <http://bit.ly/2abZWv>

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