

Compare the Platforms

This article is from the “Edifying the Body” section of the Church of God Big Sandy’s website, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of Oct. 29, 2016. Because the Church of God Big Sandy does not officially endorse candidates, it encourages Christians who vote to be informed voters. Ms. Ross’s article did not provide information about the Libertarian Party and Green Party. A full version of her article is posted at janross.org.

By Jan Ross

WILLARD, Ohio—Possibly like you, over the past few months I’ve wrangled with the choice of candidates. Neither would be my choice out of a pool of qualified men and women.

But, alas, America has spoken and we’ve been presented with two flawed candidates.

In my own search for an answer that is compatible with my conscience, it occurs to me that voting for the platform that most closely represents my position and adequately addresses concerns that are important to me makes the choice much easier.

So, in order to choose the less-objectionable party platform, I did a comparison that I’d like to share with you based on just a few of the major issues most important to me as a Christian. The language is taken directly from the 2016 party-platform documents and is in no way manipulated or misquoted.

[On her website, Ms. Ross offers access to a PDF of the Democratic Party Platform that is 55 pages long and of the Republican Party Platform that is 66 pages long.]

■ Republican platform—“Sanctity of Life” (p. 13-14)

The Constitution’s guarantee that no one can “be deprived of life, liberty or property” deliberately echoes the Declaration of Independence’s proclamation that “all” are “endowed by their Creator” with the inalienable right to life.

Accordingly, we assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental right to life that cannot be infringed. We support a human-life amendment to the Constitution and legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment’s protections apply to children before birth.

We oppose the use of public funds to perform or promote abortion or to fund organizations, like Planned Parenthood, so long as they provide or refer for elective abortions or sell fetal body parts rather than provide health care.

We oppose the nonconsensual withholding or withdrawal of care or treatment, including food and water, from individuals with disabilities, newborns, the elderly or the infirm, just as we oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide.

We affirm our moral obligation to assist, rather than penalize, women who face an unplanned pregnancy.

We support state and federal efforts against the cruelest forms of abortion, especially dismemberment abortion procedures, in which unborn babies are literally torn apart limb from limb.

■ Democratic platform—"Sanctity of Life" (p. 37)

Democrats are committed to protecting and advancing reproductive health, rights and justice.

We believe unequivocally, like the majority of Americans, that every woman should have access to quality reproductive health-care services, including safe and legal abortion—regardless of where she lives, how much money she makes or how she is insured.

We believe that reproductive health is core to women's, men's and young people's health and well-being. We will continue to stand up to Republican efforts to defund Planned Parenthood health centers, which provide critical health services to millions of people.

We will continue to oppose—and seek to overturn—federal and state laws and policies that impede a woman's access to abortion, including by repealing the Hyde Amendment.

We condemn and will combat any acts of violence, harassment and intimidation of reproductive-health providers, patients and staff. We will defend the ACA, which extends affordable preventive health care to women, including no-cost contraception, and prohibits discrimination in health care based on gender. (p. 37)

■ Republican platform—"Marriage and Family" (p. 31-34)

Foremost among those institutions is the American family. It is the foundation of civil society, and the cornerstone of the family is natural marriage, the union of one man and one woman. Its daily lessons—cooperation, patience, mutual respect, responsibility, self-reliance—are fundamental to the order and progress of our Republic. Strong families, depending upon God and one another, advance the cause of liberty by lessening the need for government in their daily lives.

We do not accept the Supreme Court's redefinition of marriage and we urge its reversal, whether through judicial reconsideration or a constitutional amendment returning control over marriage to the states.

We oppose government discrimination against businesses or entities that decline to sell items or services to individuals for activities that go against their religious views about such activities.

We support measures such as the First Amendment Defense Act to ensure these entities do not face government discrimination because of their views on marriage and family.

■ Democratic platform—"Marriage and Family" (p. 19)

Democrats applaud last year's decision by the Supreme Court that recognized that LGBT people—like other Americans—have the right to marry the person they love.

We will also fight for comprehensive federal nondiscrimination protections for all LGBT Americans, to guarantee equal rights in areas such as housing, employment, public accommodations, credit, jury service, education and federal funding.

We support a progressive vision of religious freedom that respects pluralism and rejects the misuse of religion to discriminate.

■ Republican platform—"Israel" (p. 47)

Like the United States of America, the modern state of Israel is a country born from the aspiration for freedom and stands out among the nations as a beacon of democracy and humanity. Beyond our mutual strategic interests, Israel is likewise an exceptional country that shares our most essential values. It is the only country in the Middle East where freedom of speech and freedom of religion are found.

Therefore, support for Israel is an expression of Americanism, and it is the responsibility of our government to advance policies that reflect Americans' strong desire for a relationship with no daylight between America and Israel.

We recognize Jerusalem as the eternal and indivisible capital of the Jewish state and call for the American embassy to be moved there in fulfillment of U.S. law.

We reaffirm America's commitment to Israel's security and will ensure that Israel maintains a qualitative military edge over any and all adversaries.

We support Israel's right and obligation to defend itself against terror attacks upon its people and against alternative forms of warfare being waged upon it legally, economically, culturally and otherwise.

We reject the false notion that Israel is an occupier and specifically recognize that the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement (BDS) is anti-Semitic in nature and seeks to destroy Israel.

Therefore, we call for effective legislation to thwart actions that are intended to limit commercial relations with Israel, or persons or entities doing business in Israel or in Israeli-controlled territories, in a discriminatory manner.

The United States seeks to assist in the establishment of comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, to be negotiated among those living in the region. We oppose any measures intended to impose an agreement or to dictate borders or other terms, and we call for the immediate termination of all U.S. funding of any entity that attempts to do so. Our party is proud to stand with Israel now and always.

■ Democratic platform—"Israel" (p. 50)

A strong and secure Israel is vital to the United States because we share overarching strategic interests and the common values of democracy, equality, tolerance and pluralism. That is why we will always support Israel's right to defend itself, including by retaining its qualitative military edge, and oppose any effort to delegitimize Israel, including at the United Nations or through the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Movement.

We will continue to work toward a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict negotiated directly by the parties that guarantees Israel's future as a secure and democratic Jewish state with recognized borders and provides the Palestinians with independence, sovereignty and dignity.

While Jerusalem is a matter for final-status negotiations, it should remain the capital of Israel, an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths. Israelis deserve security, recognition and a normal life free from terror and incitement. Palestinians should be free to govern themselves in their own viable state, in peace and dignity

Concluding comments

While there are obviously many issues to be considered, the difference between these vitally important concerns contained in each party's official platform makes the question of how to vote much easier.

When I vote this November, I will be voting for the party's platform, not the name of the individual representing the party. I encourage those who are struggling with their conscience over their support of a candidate to ignore the candidate and vote the platform!