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The DNC Platform Still Matters But Joe Biden Must Actually Go to Wisconsin Often During the Campaign

By Robert Weiner



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While some events will still take place in Milwaukee during the Democratic National Convention next week, it's sad that the city will not be the site of Joe Biden's acceptance speech. He could have spoken to a room of a hundred people spaced out in a ballroom. In 2012, President Barack Obama moved his acceptance speech from a stadium for 65,000 people to a smaller indoor arena for 17,000. The convention local organizing chair, former Charlotte mayor and Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, told us that he agreed that many were angry and that the action may have cost Obama the state in the general election. He had won the state in 2008. People of North Carolina felt dissed.

It is important that Biden return to Wisconsin many times before the election to show the importance that he places on the state.

However, the convention still matters. In Congress, one of the enormous and regularly missed media opportunities is all the committees' annual reports that lay out their agendas. Stories on those would be scoops on the bills to come.

That's what the Democratic Platform does, except sooner.

The upcoming convention won't have the pomp and circumstance that it has in the past. Major speeches will take place in the speaker's home or city (Wilmington, Del.). But Biden's campaign has worked with many of his former competitors in the primaries for months to put together the platform.

Right after the opening ceremonies on Monday, the body will hear and vote the Platform Committee report. It's one of the least visible but most important parts of the convention. If Democrats win control of the presidency, House and Senate in November, much in the platform will become legislation. Beyond the general themes of the convention the Biden campaign outlined Aug. 7 (America coming together, providing leadership and integrity, creating a more perfect union, and using principles to guide the nation), the platform states the bills and actions that will happen during his presidency.

Biden and Bernie Sanders released platform recommendations from their "unity task forces." Biden has worked similarly with Sens. Elizabeth Warren, Amy Klobuchar, and most of the candidates.

Economic recovery

Democrats will repeal the Trump tax cuts, reform the bankruptcy code, and set price caps on prescription drugs. The platform addresses the Biden strategy to recover after Covid-19 with testing, social distancing, meeting limitations, and research cooperation worldwide no head in the sand, rosy scenario approach. The platform would reverse the Trump Administration's lack of strategy that has resulted in more than 165,000 dead so far, three times the number of Americans who died in the Vietnam War.

The platform largely adopts Elizabeth Warren's plan for student debt relief and tax fairness. It reverses the Trump cuts for the top 1%.

Movement on healthcare

Much like Biden's position during the Democratic primary, the task force called for improving on the Affordable Care Act over Medicare for All. However, Medicare For All as an ultimate objective will be acknowledged for the first time in a major party's platform: "Generations of Democrats have been united in the fight for universal health care. We are proud our party welcomes advocates who want to build on and strengthen the Affordable Care Act and those who support a Medicare for All approach." It goes on, "Health care is a human right."

The platform proposes reducing Medicare eligibility from 65 to 60. In addition, it adds a "federal option" to Obamacare, as Biden and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) said during the primaries was a realistic step that can be passed.

New Vice Presidential pick Kamala Harris was effective on prescription drugs. On her website, she says, "In America, nobody should have to wake up at 3 a.m. worried about how they'll afford their prescription drugs and still put food on the table for their family."

Action on climate change

Acknowledging the Green New Deal, the task force led by U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) and former Secretary of State John Kerry, pledged to have a "goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions" in all new buildings by 2030, a faster timeline than put forth by Biden during the primary.

Andrew Yang's path to economic recovery

What started off as a punchline grew to be taken seriously now in Andrew Yang's most well-known policy, universal basic income. Americans who have received \$600 a week in unemployment benefits rely on it just to keep them afloat amid an economic catastrophe. The platform endorses the relief.

Police reform

For criminal justice after the horrible George Floyd murder, the task force and the platform seek the House legislation banning chokeholds and withholding police immunity.

Immigration

The platform vows to undo Trump's hateful practices of separating families and putting children in cages and decries the bluster about a wall. It calls for an end to the rhetoric of persecution of immigrants, legal and undocumented.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez will attend the Convention in person. But it is critical that Biden regularly return to Wisconsin before the election to show that he values the state and explain why the proposals in the platform are so important.

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