

Blue Jean Nation "More scaffold than platform"

Written by Mike McCabe, Blue Jean Nation
Friday, 17 February 2017 10:09



The platforms created by both the Republican and Democratic Parties last year are excessively wordy campaign advertisements with nothing enduring or permanent to say. Neither is likely to satisfy the strong yearning Americans have for a government that serves them for the benefit of all.

ALTOONA, WI - For one week a year, party platforms are relevant . . . to a few thousand people who are delegates to their party's convention. More than 300 million other Americans pay them no mind that week or any other. The Sunday morning TV news programs don't examine them. The radio talk show hosts don't discuss them. After all the balloons and confetti have dropped and the conventions have broken up, even party insiders stop paying any attention to their own platforms. Candidates don't follow them. Neither do elected office holders as they conduct the public's business. Anyone willing to actually read the major party platforms can see why.

Reading the platforms is a painful exercise. They are dreadfully long. Page after page induces the gag reflex. They are excessively wordy campaign advertisements aimed at influencing who knows who. What becomes clear as you plow through them is that there is nothing enduring or permanent about them. They really are scaffolds, not platforms.

The [Republican scaffold](#) drones on for [nearly 60 pages](#) and in it the party declares itself the "Great Opportunity Party." It takes repeated swipes at President Obama, insisting that for "the past 8 years America has been led in the wrong direction" but making no acknowledgement that Republicans held a majority of seats in Congress and controlled most of the nation's statehouses for nearly that entire time.

The authors boast the document "lays out — in clear language — the path to making America great and united again." It goes on to call for everything from "protection against an electromagnetic pulse" to "confronting Internet tyranny." There's a section on Africa that touts "AIDS relief under PEPFAR" without explanation. There is a reference to the "Dodd-Frank law, the Democrats' legislative Godzilla" with no description of what the law is or does or fails to do. In another whack at Obama, it refers to the "Solyndra debacle" and assumes readers remember what that was.

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The [Democratic scaffold](#) runs [45 pages](#) and contains a whole section on the Postal Service and addresses everything from reforming the criminal justice system to promoting arts and culture. It is chock full of platitudes, proclaiming for example that "bridges are better than walls" and offering a "simple but powerful idea: we are stronger together."

As the Republicans repeatedly took shots at the man who was president, Democrats directed their gaze at the man who would replace him in the Oval Office, with declarations such as "Donald Trump may talk tough, but he has consistently outsourced his own products."

Considering how little attention politicians pay to American territories such as Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, it seems odd that both party scaffolds discuss them at length. Neither actually says much, but both spill a lot of ink saying it. The Republicans call for "Puerto Rico's future admission as the 51st state of the Union" but reject the idea of statehood for the District of Columbia. The Democrats stop short of promising statehood to Puerto Rico or any other U.S. territory while supporting statehood for D.C.

Reading the two documents, one thing that becomes clear is that the Democratic establishment was very comfortable and satisfied with its 2016 presidential nominee, the Republican establishment not so much. In the GOP scaffold, a disclaimer is very prominently displayed saying the document was "Not Authorized By Any Candidate Or Candidate's Committee." The Democrats saw no need to include such a disclaimer.

What Democrats spent more than 26,000 words to say and what took Republicans over 35,000 words to express is not likely to satisfy the strong yearning Americans have for a party that could plausibly stand on a platform that can be summed up in one sentence: *The will of the people is the law of the land, and what government does is done for the benefit of the whole of society*

— Mike McCabe