

THE LOCAL PLATFORM PROCESS

SAMPLE AGENDA

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Introductions of Attendees**
- 3. Explanation of Platform Process**
- 4. Create the Ground Rules (Consensus/Majority)**
- 5. Selection of Platform Topics**
- 6. Discussion of Platform Topic**
- 7. Finalize Position on Platform Topic.**
- 8. Writing of Platform resolution, policy, or recommendation.**
- 9. Repeat (5) and (6) for each Platform Topic chosen.**
- 10. Wrap-up. Big Hugs.**

THE LOCAL PLATFORM PROCESS

SUGGESTED MEETING TEMPLATE (Bullet Version)

When: July 19 - 27th

Call to Order

- Moderator convenes
- Introductions of DNC members and attendees

Explanation of the Platform & Process

- An official statement of the Democratic Party's position on issues.
- Each statement of policy is called a "plank"
- Traditional process is top-down; this is bottoms-up process.
- Results of these meetings will be reviewed by Platform team for possible incorporation into final Platform, ratified at the Democratic National Convention.

Decide the Ground Rules

- Consensus or Majority Vote
- Civility and debate; respect others' points of view

What We Are Asking You to Do

- Choose a Topic from provided list or suggest your own
- Impose time limits to discuss each topic
- Decide whether to:
 1. Develop a specific policy, position, or recommendation
 2. Support inclusion of a particular topic to be addressed in the Platform
 3. Support/no support for previous Platform planks

Wrap Up

- Write up results

Final Notes

- Platform Drafting Committee meets August 1-3
- Platform Committee meets August 9
- Platform Ratified at Convention on August 26

THE LOCAL PLATFORM PROCESS

SUGGESTED MEETING TEMPLATE (Full Version)

Call to Order

Welcome greeting by Policy Surrogate. Everyone should introduce themselves. If there are local elected officials and DNC members, they should introduce and identify themselves.

Explanation of the Platform & Process

The National Platform is an official statement of the Democratic Party's position on a wide variety of issues. Each statement included in the platform is a "plank." A new platform is adopted every four years at the Democratic National Convention. Examples of the 1992 and 2004 Platform have been made available to you.

Usually the Platform is drafted by a small group of individuals after a hearing or hearings where testimony is heard from interest groups. This year, we're breaking the mold. We are having literally hundreds of mini-Platform meetings around the country, in a diverse setting of neighborhoods and communities such as yours. This has never been done before by any major Presidential campaign.

For the first time, we are asking you, the everyday non-Washington non-Beltway person who cares about America to tell us your vision, your dream, your positions on the important issues of the day that you want to see become part of the Obama Platform for America.

The results of the meeting will be transmitted to the Obama Platform team. Your voices and the voices of other meetings across the country will be heard and incorporated into the final product that will be voted on by the DNC Platform Committee and which will be adopted by the delegates at the Democratic National Convention on Tuesday, August 26th, 2008.

What We Are Asking You to Do

Choose a Topic(s)

In your meeting, we ask that you select a manageable list of topics to discuss and formulate a position or recommendation. They can range from National Security, Environment, Energy, etc. (a list is attached). The list is not exhaustive. There may be issues that you believe should be addressed that don't appear on our list and haven't appeared in previous platforms. And everyone should feel that they can offer suggestions on topics that are of interest to them.

Selection of the Topics

Choose from the List -- or Create Your Own

For 5-10 minutes, seek opinion on what topics people are interested in, either from the list or from suggestions from attendees. You may want to simply read the list and ask for a show of hands; those with the highest interest become the subjects of discussion.

Allocate and Prioritize Your Time

Depending on how much time you allot for the meeting, you should obtain consensus on how many topics you want to address and divide the time accordingly. You should consider in allotting the time how many people want to speak on the topic, and how long it will take to fashion a short statement on the topic. If you only want to choose one or two topics, don't worry! Any and all input is important.

Also, limit the time for each topic if there are many topics to discuss. Quality -- a well thought out position -- is more important than quantity! Even if you only discuss one topic, that is one topic more than has ever been discussed by the American people as part of the national Platform process.

Consensus or Majority Rule

Finally, you should decide at the outset whether you will decide on how to address a particular issue or policy by consensus or by vote. Although consensus is the preferable option, sometimes you may not have consensus. As a group you should decide whether you will only take positions on issues where there is consensus, or if you will allow decisions to be determined by vote. You may wish to take votes if there are strong differences in opinion on policy or wording. You may decide to vote on taking a particular position. You may decide to vote on particular language. At the National Platform Committee meeting, when the final Platform is adopted, it too will be the subject of votes. Remember, we're working to get everyone's vote in November!

Discussion and Decisions

Everyone's Voice Counts

Make sure that everyone's voice is heard. Respect everyone's point of view. You can disagree agreeably. Do NOT get into heated arguments with people, even if you think they are outrageous or out of bounds. Debate can be cordial and respectful.

Don't Get Mad -- Stay Focused

We're not here to get goaded or baited. Always take the high road. Disagreeable people will be asked to leave, politely.

You can be passionate about a policy. We want you to care. Just respect the rights of others to be equally passionate in their viewpoints, however different.

Creating Platform policy

Within the time limits you have imposed on a particular topic, you can decide to choose among the following alternatives. Each one has value to the Platform that will eventually be written and adopted.

Alternative #1: Develop a Specific Position, Policy, or Recommendation

When we say a "position, policy, or recommendation" we generally mean the same thing. The only difference is how it is phrased. For example:

"The capital of California is Monterey" is a position.

"We believe in the right to choose the beverage of your choice, regardless of carbonation, on an airline that gives you an aisle seat on demand" is a policy.

"The capital of California should be in Monterey and be reachable by an airline that serves the beverage of your choice and which provides aisle seats on demand" is a recommendation.

The language should also be straightforward and easy to understand. Don't use double negatives, and don't use 50 words when one will do. We want to be able to understand it when we review your group and everyone else's positions on the issues. In the end, if we can't understand what you are saying then it's a good bet the American people won't either.

Your language can be broad and sweeping (i.e., promote renewable widgets) to specific (promote renewable widgets through expansion of tax credits and ending windfall subsidies to widget companies, for example). But don't get too specific (i.e., repeal section 232 of the Tax Code and replace it with a 30% graduated deduction off Schedule X receipts beginning in 2010). You have to strike a balance between the general and generic and the specific and esoteric.

Alternative #2 -- Suggest Topics to be Addressed in the National Platform

You may decide, as a group, that you have particular issues or problems that need to be addressed at the national level but for which you don't have solutions. You may decide, for example, that there are specific stories or examples of a particular problem that should be a priority for Platform policy. It could be an economic challenge, or environmental concern, or something else unique to the area in which you live.

Identifying issues to address in the Platform is just as important as identifying policies, positions, or recommendation on issues. Life stories taken from everyday Americans are frequently powerful tools to illustrate the need for change, the need for solutions, the need for attention from the next President of the United States.

Alternative #2 -- Simple Support/No Support Positions from Previous Platforms

You may simply choose to register "support" or "no support" on particular issues or positions that have been parts of previous Platforms. You may find that one method is simply to reference particular planks (each specific policy, position, or recommendation is a "plank") in either the 1992 or 2004 Platform and register support / non support / support in concept / disagree in concept. This enables you to cover many issues, but limits your ability to create your own platform position. Nevertheless, even this information will be extremely useful to us in formulating the final Platform.

Develop a Position, Policy, or Recommendation

From that list, we would like you to develop a consensus position, if possible, or at least a majority opinion within your particular group on how you would want an Obama Presidency to address that particular topic.

Write it!

The consensus language should be put in a sentence or two, at most, a short paragraph. Platforms are not known for their brevity but this year we're trying to change that!

Platforms are expressions of general policy and general direction, not specific legislative vehicles. The ideas can be broad and visionary. But keep the language simple, in a style that can communicate to all Americans.

WRAP UP

As you near the end of your meeting, give yourself some time to review all the Platform activities you have undertaken. Discuss what you have accomplished and how it will attract more Americans to the Obama campaign.

The Platform Committee deliberations have generally been broadcast on CSPAN. The National Hearing -- which will feature many Americans drawn from these meetings -- and the meeting of the Platform Drafting Committee is scheduled for August 1-3. The meeting of the full DNC Platform Committee is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, August 9th. The final Platform will be presented to the delegates for adoption at the Convention on Tuesday, August 26th.