



Every four years, the two major political parties in America publish a document outlining what they believe in. It's non-binding, but it gives a sense of where the parties want the country to go. When we're choosing between candidates we hardly know, we need some way to evaluate them. These documents are at least more concrete than a 30-second TV ad.

Each candidate is an individual, so each has a slightly different view on things. But each also has a duty to the party, and that's where knowing the difference is important. If you know which party reflects your values, you can vote for those values in government.

The 'Party Platforms,' however, are 50-page policy statements filled with high-sounding ideals and very few specifics. In short, they're a real solution to insomnia. The following summary only highlights a few positions which may be important to people of faith. It was gleaned from those pages as well as from sound bites on the nightly news.

The University of California at Santa Barbara has links to all of the party platforms since 1840.

[presidency.ucsb.edu/platforms.php](http://presidency.ucsb.edu/platforms.php)

#### How to use this guide:

Listed is a sample statement from California politics. Sample responses follow, gleaned from the 2018 governor's debates and other sources. Simply decide: Which response do you agree with?

#### Sample statement:

Government must ensure that our state's children are properly educated and cared for.

#### Sample Democratic response:

Yes. Public school attendance, medical care, and other mandatory standards must be enforced. Parents may not opt their children out with homeschooling or waivers. (Eastin, Villaraigosa, Newsom & Chiang seem to agree.)

#### Sample Republican response:

Yes and no. Everyone wants the best for kids, which is why we have laws on the books to protect them. Candidates for CA Governor are split on whether parents or government are the right judge of what's best. The national party and many supporters believe the answer is parents. (Allen is pro-parental rights. Cox might be; he has aligned with both Democrat and Republican parties in the past.)

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## What's up with the D's and R's?

### Making Sense of American Political Parties in 2018





Statement	Democrat Party position (They call themselves “Progressive.”)	Do You Agree?	Republican Party position (They call themselves “Conservative.”)	Do You Agree?
Abortion should be legal without limits.	Yes. A woman’s right to choose what happens to her own body should never be limited.	<input type="radio"/>	No. The lives of both mother and child are precious. Surely we can find an option that protects both. At the very least, a fetus that can feel pain should be protected.	<input type="radio"/>
LGBT people should be treated with respect.	Yes, and we’re the only party that does.	<input type="radio"/>	Yes. That’s so basic it’s not even an argument!	<input type="radio"/>
Religious people should endorse LGBT lifestyle choices or face penalties.	Yes. Bakers, photographers, ministers, etc. must participate in LGBT weddings (for example) whenever asked. Religious teachings on sexuality must be modernized. <small>“We support a progressive vision of religious freedom that respects pluralism and rejects the misuse of religion to discriminate.” Page 19, DNC 2016 Platform</small>	<input type="radio"/>	No. People should never be forced to participate against their conscience. Religious teachings are protected under the First Amendment and the Declaration of Independence as an inalienable right given by God. <small>Adherence to the U.S. Constitution as written is a hallmark of “Conservatism.” See page 12, RNC 2016 Platform.</small>	<input type="radio"/>
Free speech should be limited.	Yes. Free speech is constitutional, but hate speech must be outlawed. It could lead to violence.	<input type="radio"/>	No. The First Amendment protects all speech, even speech that is disliked or politically incorrect. If government defines what can be said and what can’t, America is no longer a free nation.	<input type="radio"/>
Social Security is a good thing.	Yes. Expand the program and spend more money on it.	<input type="radio"/>	Yes. It is currently on a collision-course with bankruptcy. We have to find ways to save it!	<input type="radio"/>
The minimum wage should be \$15 an hour.	Yes. Make it a federal law so it’s the same across the nation. People need to make a living wage to support their families.	<input type="radio"/>	Yes and no. Let states and local governments decide, because it costs more to live in certain parts of the country. Don’t make it too expensive to give young people a summer job.	<input type="radio"/>
Encourage job creation.	Yes. Establish a “Make it in America” program to encourage domestic production.	<input type="radio"/>	Yes. Cut taxes so small businesses and corporations can raise salaries and hire more people. <small>Note: The 2017 federal tax rate reduction resulted in bonuses paid to thousands of workers.</small>	<input type="radio"/>
Wealthy people should be allowed to keep more of their money.	No. Income inequality insults a basic sense of fairness. Level the playing field by increasing taxes on the rich. They have to pay their fair share.	<input type="radio"/>	Yes. A growing economy gives all workers the chance to earn more. Cut all taxes to spur the economy. (As of 2015, the top 10% of wage earners paid 70% of all taxes.)	<input type="radio"/>
All immigrants should be welcomed, without limit.	Yes. No matter how they got here, everyone deserves a chance to live in America. No one should be deported.	<input type="radio"/>	Yes to legal immigration, and the system admittedly needs major reforms. But America needs to follow her own laws, just like every other nation. Start by deporting only violent criminals and securing the border. Then fix the system.	<input type="radio"/>
Only citizens should vote in elections.	No. Everyone should vote. It’s illegal for non-citizens to vote in national elections, but asking for proof of citizenship is racist.	<input type="radio"/>	Yes. Canadians should only vote in Canada’s elections unless they are also US citizens. That’s the essence of self-governing.	<input type="radio"/>

How many do you agree with? Write your totals here:

Democrat Party \_\_\_\_\_

Republican Party \_\_\_\_\_

Need help narrowing it down? Pick three issues that are most important to you, and then decide which party you agree with most.