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PLATFORM COMPARISONS

Sometimes a party platform is mere rhetoric, swept under the rug and forgotten after the convention is over. Other times, the party platform can be a powerful political tool to motivate volunteers and to elect candidates to office.

The Democratic and Republican party platforms which emerged from San Francisco and Dallas are very different. This is one presidential year when the party platforms, as well as the candidates, clearly offer the voters a choice, not an echo. Let's compare.

In the 1984 election, the economy and taxes are the front and center issues. The Republican Platform states, "Our most important economic goal is to expand and continue the economic recovery and move the nation to full employment without inflation. We therefore oppose any attempts to increase taxes." In contrast, Walter Mondale and the Democrats have pledged to increase taxes.

The Republican Platform endorses "equal pay for equal work" but, with equal emphasis, opposes the concept of Comparable Worth because "the free market system can determine the value of jobs better than any government authority." The Democratic Party endorses Comparable Worth (a system of wage-setting by bureaucrats, judges, and "evaluators").

The Republican Platform reaffirms its longstanding support for the right of states to enact "right-to-work" laws under Section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act. The Democratic Platform supports the repeal of 14(b).

The Republican Platform endorses the vigorous enforcement of laws to control obscene materials which degrade everyone, particularly women, or depict the exploitation of children. The Democratic Platform is silent about pornography.

The Republican Platform affirms our country's "right to control its borders" and the necessity for those desiring to enter to comply with our immigration laws. The Democratic Platform makes no such statement; it ducks this vital issue.

The Republican Platform supports Congressional efforts to restrict the jurisdiction of the federal courts (a power given to Congress by Article III of the U.S. Constitution).

The Democratic Platform makes no such statement (obviously content with judicial activism).

The Republican Platform commends the President for "appointing federal judges committed to the rights of law-abiding citizens and traditional family values." The Democratic Platform takes a strong position against the outstanding judicial appointments made by President Reagan.

The Republican Platform opposes forced taxpayer financing of political campaigns. The Democratic Platform supports taxpayer funding of Congressional campaigns.

The Republican Party espouses parents' rights in education and opposes the development and production of classroom materials by the Federal Government. The Democratic Platform endorses more spending on education by the Federal Government.

The Republican Platform proclaims the fundamental right to life of the unborn child and opposes taxpayer funding of abortion. The Democratic Party aggressively supports abortion as a "fundamental human right" plus the taxpayer funding of abortion.

The Republican Platform applauds the liberation of Grenada. The Democratic Party attacks the liberation of Grenada and labels the exclusion of the press from that military maneuver as "a chilly precedent."

The Republican Platform promises to "increase law-enforcement and counter-intelligence efforts to halt Soviet commercial espionage and illegal exploitation of our technology." The Democratic Platform doesn't even recognize this as a problem.

The Republican Platform endorses the use of "superior American technology to achieve space-based and ground-based defensive systems as soon as possible to protect the lives of the American people and our allies." The Democratic Platform rejects this promise, taking the position of despair that "an effective population defense is not possible."

The rationale behind these differing planks is spelled out in the two platforms. The Democratic Platform embraces the strategy of Mutual Assured Destruction, whereas the Republican Platform answers "yes" to President Reagan's question of March 23, 1983: "Would it not be better to save lives than to avenge them?"

Unlike some previous presidential years, there is more than "a dime's worth of difference between the two parties."