

# An All-Principles Libertarian Unity Platform

2004 Platform	2008 Platform Committee Report
<b>Personal Secession:</b> "We support the right of political entities, private groups and individuals to renounce their affiliation with any government, and to be exempt from the obligations imposed by those governments"	We support the right of political entities to renounce their affiliation with any government, and to be exempt from the obligations imposed by that government
<b>Immediate Unlimited Immigration:</b> "Transitional Action: We call for the elimination of all restrictions on immigration"	We support control over the entry into our country of foreign nationals who pose a threat to security, health or property
<b>Child Prostitution:</b> "We call for the repeal of all laws that restrict anyone, including children, from engaging in voluntary exchanges of goods, services or information regarding human sexuality, reproduction, birth control or related medical or biological technologies."	Consenting adults should be free to choose their own sexual practices and personal relationships. Government does not have legitimate authority to define or license personal relationships. We favor the repeal of all laws creating "crimes" without victims
<b>Private WMD:</b> "We further oppose all attempts to ban weapons or ammunition on the grounds that they are risky or unsafe."	We oppose all laws at any level of government requiring registration of, or restricting, the ownership, manufacture, or transfer or sale of firearms or ammunition.
<b>Sell Off All Parks:</b> "Such parks and wilderness and recreation areas that already exist should be transferred to non-government ownership"	Where property, including land, has been taken from its rightful owners by the government or private action in violation of individual rights, we favor restitution to the rightful owners.
<b>Abolish the Dollar:</b> "We call for the elimination of all government fiat money and all government minted coins"	Individuals engaged in voluntary exchange should be free to use as money any mutually agreeable commodity or item.
<b>Privatize All Streets/Pipes:</b> "We call for the privatization of air traffic control systems, water works, public roads and the national highway system"	We seek to divest government of all functions that can be provided by non-governmental organizations or private individuals.
<b>Only Torts To Police Pollution:</b> "Strict liability, not government agencies and arbitrary government standards, should regulate pollution"	Pollution of other people's property is a violation of individual rights.
<b>Open Season on Citizens Abroad:</b> "Adhere rigidly to the principle that all U.S. citizens travel abroad at their own risk. We call for the withdrawal of all American military personnel stationed abroad"	American foreign policy should seek an America at peace with the world and its defense against attack from abroad. The United States should abandon its attempts to act as policeman for the world
<b>Immediate End of Taxation:</b> "We support ending all taxation. All criminal and civil sanctions against tax evasion should be terminated immediately"	All persons are entitled to keep the fruits of their labor. We call for the repeal of the income tax and the abolishment of the Internal Revenue Service.
<b>Abortion Absolutism:</b> "We oppose government actions that either compel or prohibit abortion"	We recognize that abortion is a sensitive issue and that people can hold good-faith views on both sides. Taxpayers should not be forced to pay for other people's abortions, nor should any government or individual force a woman to have an abortion.
<b>Hate the Poor?</b> "We oppose all government welfare, relief projects and "aid to the poor" programs."	The proper source of help for the poor is the voluntary efforts of private groups and individuals.
<b>Isolationism?</b> "We advocate a complete and unilateral withdrawal of the United States from all international trade agreements"	We support the removal of governmental impediments to free trade.

At printing, the leading Restore04 proposal included the 9 non-italicized positions of the 2004 platform. Much of the PlatCom language above is from the 2004 platform.

**Strengthening the Dallas Accord.** At the 1974 Dallas convention, anarchists agreed that the LP would not explicitly call for abolition of the state as long as the originally minarchist Platform/SoP no longer said that "protection of individual rights" is a "legitimate function of government" in a libertarian society. However, the Dallas Accord became an effective veto power for anarchists over any Platform statement that didn't uphold anarchist abolitionist principles. By contrast, minarchists had no equivalent veto power over the many abolitionist Platform statements that conflicted with their own small-government principles. PlatCom's proposal does not include any new assertions about the role of government. Instead, it removes the 13 most explicitly abolitionist positions (above left), and leaves statements (above right) that are **consistent both with incremental reform and an anarchist destination.**

# An All-Principles Libertarian Unity Platform

At PlatCom's Vegas meeting, no member voted against recommending the deletion of all 15 planks from the 2006 Platform. With a quorum varying between 13 and 15 members, only 5 of 27 planks attracted more than one nay for adoption, and only 2 of them more than two. (The Financial Markets plank attracted some nays for its novel language, and there was a close vote between two similar Labor Markets planks.)

In the February survey answered by 2,616 Libertarians, the responses from likely delegates gave the median PlatCom plank an 85% level of approval. All but 3 planks earned over 80% approval, and none earned less than the 2/3 approval needed for adoption. 85% of likely delegates approved of PlatCom's recommendation to delete the "cult" language from the Statement of Principles. For all of these questions, the approval from the non-delegate respondents was always higher, by about 3-5 percentage points.

A January survey sent to 80,000 libertarians drew 5,047 responses. The responses from likely delegates (below) rejected both the approach of the flawed 2004 platform as well as the early Reform Caucus prescription of a short Contract-with-America-style platform. These answers encouraged PlatCom to adopt an all-principles draft that emphasizes direction over destination but does not flinch from comprehensive issue coverage.

State our positions even if most voters disagree	76%
Educate the public, not appeal to our sympathizers	70%
Short platform on fewer issues, not longer on more	71%
Clean slate, not amend existing language	59%
Little to no implementation detail, not comprehensive detail	77%
Emphasize direction (next few years) over destination	62%

## Uses Of The Pre-2006 Platform To Attack The LP

- "prescription for anarchy" - *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*; 2000-07-14
- "extreme views like the cessation of all taxation" - *Dallas Morning News*, 1998-11-08
- "problematic esoterica [like] a reliance solely on tort law and 'strict liability' to govern pollution, and the right of individual political secession. When libertarianism is presented as an all-or-nothing bargain, interested voters are more likely to leave the whole package on the table." - *Reason*, 1996-07-01
- "settle environmental clashes in court, permit open immigration [...] if taken literally, the Libertarian platform is so far out of the mainstream as to be high and dry" - *New York Times*, 1992-10-22
- "[opposes] minimum drinking ages [...] restricting immigration [...] police, armies, and roads" - George Will, *Washington Post*, 1992-07-09. Syndicated in e.g. *Chicago Sun-Times*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Rocky Mountain News*
- "several citizen panelists agreed that they found the anti-government platform of his Libertarian party too extreme". *Philadelphia Daily News*, 1997-10-20.
- "the Libertarian Party platform takes liberal-rights mania to its absurdly logical conclusion." Don Fedder, *San Antonio Express-News*, 1992-09-22.
- "abolition of child labor laws (they inhibit the freedom of children)" - *Miami Herald*, 1992-10-25
- "no minimum drinking laws" - *Birmingham News*, 2005-08-02
- "To mainstream voters, the Libertarian Party platform might seem extreme, even a little bit kooky." - *Indianapolis Star*, 2002-07-06
- "[The candidate profile] focused on the Libertarian Party's support for child pornography, which is how the reporter interpreted the LP national platform." - Carol Moore paraphrasing Mark Schrieber's report from his race for Lt. Governor, 2002

•[All emphasis on this page is added.]

## Radical Praise For PlatCom's Approach

**David Nolan** (LP founder and Restore04 signer #1) on 2008-01-12:

I actually rather like your proposal. Clearly, you spent a lot of time researching past platforms, and did a good job of synthesizing key elements. And from a quick scan, it appears that about 75% of it appears in the '04 platform, so in a sense it is a step toward what the Restoration Caucus proposes. [...] What you have proposed is basically an expanded, more detailed version of the Statement of Principles.

**Starchild** (Restore04 signer #9) on 2007-08-29

Your draft platform is much better than I might have expected. It even includes the Non-Aggression Principle, though not as prominently as I would like to see it affirmed. While there are no doubt things from our pre-2006 platforms that should be included, it doesn't sound like an attempt to run headlong away from solid libertarian principles. If this is what the "reform" faction supports, we're in better shape than I thought.

**Steve Kubby** (Restore04 signer #5) on 2008-01-17:

Go back to the beginning to that 2004 document and distill out of that the essence in the simplest possible terms of how we can draw all those different planks together and make an attempt to consolidate and condense that down to certain basic fundamental principles. But I think we have to go back to 2004 to start because it represents sort of the tradition, the long-term accumulation and accretion of thoughts that need now to be analyzed and filtered down with the goal of making our new Platform as short as possible without sacrificing our principles, without diluting our beliefs, without trying to sell libertarianism as something other than what it is. If somehow we can retain its libertarianism in its most potent form, that's the goal.

**Rob Power** (Restore04 signer #11) on 2007-12-31:

The goal is simple — to not have the LP be silent on issues as important as war, taxation, and civil rights, as it has been since 2006 in Portland. [PlatCom's draft corrects all three kinds of silence; see other side of this sheet.]

**George Phillies** (Restore04 signer) on 2007-12-18:

I hold no position on the length of the platform. I do hold a position on writing quality, namely that the 2004 platform was abysmally repetitive.

**Tom Knapp** (prominent LP radical) on 2007-08-02:

As usual, it looks like you're taking a constructive approach. [...] We want a broad framework, not a laundry list of issues positions. Hit the principles, then either create a biennial or quadrennial program, or just trust the candidates, to turn those principles into policy positions. [May 12:] The "Pure Principles" draft under consideration by the platform committee is reasonably radical.

**Allan Wallace** (Restore04 #32, Outright moderator) on 2008-02-16:

I have to admit that it [the gay rights plank] is better language (with the phrase, "such as in marriage, adoption, immigration, or military service") than I expected

**Alex Peak** (Restore04 signer #44) on 2008-04-07:

Since we both agree that the government is way, way too big, too powerful, too costly, and too interventionist in our lives, it behooves our two factions to continue to work together. Once we reach minarchy, we can debate amongst ourselves whether to stop there or keep going. There's plenty of time for our factions to bicker once we reach the minimal state. Let's not let our differences divide us now, when we need each other the most.

# You've Heard The Fiction About The Platform Committee. Now Judge The Facts.

## **Fiction: The moderates tried to “block” dissemination of minority reports.**

**Fact:** When the Secretary was first told (May 15) that four members considered the Power draft ready to distribute, he asked Power for a cover letter and said he was willing to use his personal email account to help Power email it out (just as the Chair had to do for the Committee's report). When Power instead posted his “open letter” the next day, the Secretary emailed Power's material to the delegate list only 2 hours later. Power falsely claimed he was delayed 9 days, which one of his co-signers called “clearly an exaggeration”.

## **Fiction: PlatCom was “stacked” by “liars” on LNC.**

**Fact:** Two PlatCom candidates were incorrectly said not to have submitted sample planks to LNC, but were elected alternates anyway. When the error was corrected that same session, its minutes say LNC was invited “to reopen the Platform Committee appointments if the LNC believed this misinformation has improperly influenced the outcome of the election. No one on the LNC apparently believed their votes were unfairly influenced and no one requested we reconsider Platform Committee assignments.” Still, PlatCom started last summer with 11 who lean moderate (including 8 Reform Caucus members), and at least 7 who lean radical. PlatCom's draft was heavily influenced by 2 of the radicals, one of whom was elected Vice Chair. Three moderates did not vote against seating alternates. In Vegas the PlatCom rejected both the reformers' Contract-With-America-style approach as well as their brochure approach.

## **Fiction: Alternates were not told the rules before traveling to Vegas.**

**Fact:** On Oct 2, four months before the Vegas meeting, the Chair quoted to PlatCom the rule that convention committee alternates are seated for “vacancies”, and not for absences as LNC's own special rules provide.

## **Fiction: Two alternates were unfairly kept from voting in Vegas.**

**Fact:** Bylaw 1.7.4 says “Ranked alternates may be named by the appointing bodies to fill any vacancies in the Convention Committees.” All four parliamentarians who have looked at this agreed, even LP Vice Chair Chuck Moulton: “[The PlatCom] Chair's reading was correct in my opinion. And I researched Robert's and the Bylaws for several days hoping she was wrong.”

It made no difference in the voting, even without the votes of the two absent Reform Caucus members. No member voted against deleting all 15 planks from the 2006 Platform. Only 6 of 30 plank recommendations attracted more than one nay for adoption, and only 3 of them more than two. PlatCom worked for 21 hours over 2 days, and spent much time debating hopeless proposals extracted from a rejected radical draft, proposals that often ended up being defeated N-2 or even N-1. The rules did not allow limiting debate, and were followed to the letter.

## **Fiction: PlatCom's draft is tainted by a Republican infiltrator.**

**Fact:** Steve Burden was working on the Ron Paul campaign, as were two of the PlatCom radicals. Nobody on PlatCom knew until after Vegas that Burden was trying to become a Paul delegate and had joined his county GOP organization. He then resigned from PlatCom. He did not vote in Vegas, and only 1 of his 25 subcommittee votes changed its draft – by keeping out “right to commit suicide” language that nobody in Vegas re-proposed. (Ironically, the 2004 platform was itself based on work by two men, Rothbard and Evers, who went on to leave the LP for the GOP and endorse Republicans like Pat Buchanan and G.W. Bush.)

## **Fiction: PlatCom ignored Restore04.**

**Fact:** PlatCom payed close attention to Restore04, even though Restore04 ignored the draft that PlatCom members had been publicly working on for months. Five weeks after Restore04 was announced, its leader David Nolan still got 6 out of 7 claims wrong about lack of specificity in the emerging PlatCom draft. (His 7<sup>th</sup> complaint was that it didn't mention Iraq, but neither did 2004, nor does the latest Restore04 draft.) The Vegas meeting was 7 weeks after Restore04 announced, but Restore04 offered no draft and did not forward the petitions it said it would. (There was only one mention of Restore04 among the thousands of Platform survey respondents, and it was negative.) None of the 5 radical-leaning PlatCom members in Vegas were Restore04 signers, and no motion to restore any of the 40 deleted planks was made. PlatCom looked at every clause of the 2004 platform, as well as 13 other past LP platforms, and rescued the best language from them all for its unity platform. Nevertheless, PlatCom in Vegas passed a resolution asking Restore04 to propose a draft as soon as it could. When an error-ridden first draft was published a month later, it contained 9 of the 12 most extremist positions of the 2004 platform, and seemed unlikely to garner much more support than the 4 members needed for a minority report.

## **Fiction: The Chair sent a “push poll” to LP members in January.**

**Fact:** The Chair's January survey in fact revealed a lack of support for the earlier Reform Caucus Contract-With-America-style platform, as well as meager support for a brochure-like platform. The survey confirmed that likely delegates want a platform that neither hides Libertarian principles nor buries them under implementation details. Its results could have easily favored either the 2004 platform or the original Reform Caucus agenda, but they favored neither.

## **Fiction: The Chair sent a “push poll” to LP members in February.**

**Fact:** PlatCom worked for 21 hours in Vegas and adopted 30 recommendations – 16 unopposed, and 8 more with only one nay. Unless PlatCom changes them in Denver, the delegates will be voting on these recommendations, and so it would have been irresponsible of the Chair not to try to communicate PlatCom's early work results and seek maximum input on them from the membership while there was still time to change them if necessary.

## **Fiction: PlatCom ignored the Outright Libertarians.**

**Fact:** The way the Chair of the Outright Libertarians initially engaged the PlatCom's moderates was to publicly post on Oct 3: “The Reform Caucus hasn't (yet) called for changing the platform to endorse anti-gay laws (I suspect they're saving that for 2010 or 2012).” However, the subcommittee drafting what became the PlatCom proposal took verbatim the Principles section of the Outright-endorsed Sexuality and Gender plank that the Portland convention had created. Acting on the advice of Power (then a PlatCom alternate), the subcommittee bent its own guideline against novel language and proposed to call out in its Personal Relationships plank the issues of marriage, adoption, immigration, and military service. The subcommittee Chair twice forwarded the draft language to the Outright forum, and received only one response (positive).

Power predicted on the Outright forum that the new phrase would be among many novel-language amendments at the end of the PlatCom report, saying “these guys know full well that there won't be time for all of these proposed novel language amendments”. In fact it was only one of two such amendments adopted in Vegas and was adopted inline with the plank itself. When the plank came up for discussion, the subcommittee Chair left the room to seek out Power and another Outright leader, and invited them to help improve the plank. He moved adoption of both of their recommendations (“gender *identity*” and “*current laws*”).

Ten weeks after Vegas, censorship on the Outright forum still ensured that Power's false prediction was never corrected, and the Vegas outcome hadn't been reported to the Outright membership. Instead, an Outright leader wrote that “the people behind the platform nuttury are getting more deranged by the day.” Power himself had publicly written two weeks before the Vegas meeting: “As the desperation of the lies being told by LNC members and their puppets on the Platform Committee increases, it's becoming more and more obvious to the delegates that the right thing to do is to reject the Platform Committee's majority report in Denver.”

Even after having taken his advice, PlatCom was warned by Power that gay-rights groups like eQualityGiving would punish the platform in their scorecard. So the PlatCom Secretary sent the plank to eQualityGiving, and it turns out they read it as earning the score Power said an ideal plank ought to earn.

## **The LP's Rules On PlatCom Alternates**

Adopted voluntarily by the LP – not imposed by any government

LP Bylaw Article 11.7.4: Ranked alternates may be named by the appointing bodies to fill any vacancies in the Convention Committees.

LP Convention Rule 2.3: Duly selected alternates may be freely substituted for any members of their delegation who are temporarily or permanently absent from the floor, provided the procedure has been clearly specified by the affiliate party in advance of the Convention, and the Secretary has been provided with lists of the affiliate party's delegates and alternates as well as a copy of the affiliate party's rules governing substitutions. [Thus the convention rules do not assume that “alternates” fill absences, but rather feel it necessary to spell this out.]

RRONR p. 571, lines 24-35: If the bylaws authorize certain things specifically, other things of the same class are thereby prohibited. There is a presumption that nothing has been placed in the bylaws without some reason for it. There can be no valid reason for authorizing certain things to be done that can clearly be done without the authorization of the bylaws, unless the intent is to specify the things of the same class that may be done, all others being prohibited. [Thus specifying alternates are “to fill any vacancies” precludes filling absences.]

RRONR p. 17, lines 4-18: In some organizations a particular practice may sometimes come to be followed as a matter of established custom so that it is treated practically as if it were prescribed by a rule of order. However, if such a practice is or becomes in conflict with the parliamentary authority or any written rule of the organization, and a Point of Order citing the conflict is raised at any time, the custom falls to the ground, and the conflicting provision in the parliamentary authority or written rule must thereafter be complied with, unless a special rule of order (or, in appropriate circumstances, a standing rule) is added or amended to incorporate the custom. If there is no contrary provision in the parliamentary authority or written rules, the established custom should be adhered to unless the assembly, by a majority vote, agrees to do otherwise. [Thus alleged precedents from previous PlatComs do not govern. Also, PlatCom had apparently not met in advance of convention week since 1983.]

RRONR, p. 483, lines 23-28: Committees of organized societies operate under any applicable rules stated in the bylaws, the special rules of order, the parliamentary authority, and standing rules adopted by the society. Committees may not adopt their own rules except as authorized in the bylaws or in instructions given to the committee by the society.

RRONR, p. 469, lines 11-16: In an organized society the board operates under the bylaws, the parliamentary authority, and any applicable special rules of order or standing rules of the society, except as the bylaws may authorize the board to adopt its own rules.

LP Bylaw Article 8.1: The National Committee shall adopt rules of procedure for the conduct of its meetings and the carrying out of its duties and responsibilities.

LNC Policy Manual (Aug 2005) I.2.D: Free substitution of Alternates for Regional Representatives at LNC meetings is permitted. [Thus LNC can and does make its own rules about alternates. Convention committees cannot.]

## Bugs In The 2004 Platform

**Non-Existent Government Agencies.** The 2004 platform had grown more bloated than the LP's current processes can competently maintain. While it advocated against recreation of two government bodies that hadn't existed in decades, it also called for the abolition of four government institutions that hadn't existed under the referenced name since the mid-1990s. And in one case, it called for abolition of something that has never been a government institution at all, but is rather the name of a government pamphlet! *Before voting for any attempt to "restore" the 2004 platform, ask its advocates if they've bothered to check whether the government agencies named in their draft even exist any more.*

**Behind the Times.** The 2004 platform did not mention Iraq or the 300,000 American troops there, but it called for the removal of American troops from the Philippines. However, the last U.S. base there closed in 1991, and by 2004 there were only 55 U.S. troops anywhere in that country.

Since at least 1990 the Platform had talked about "the continuing high level of violent crime", but in fact there had been a massive drop in violent crime levels in the ten years before the 2004 platform was adopted.

**Multiple Redundancies.** There were at least 8 instances in the 2004 platform in which different parts of it repeated exactly the same position. *Before voting for a platform based on 2004, ask its authors if they've eliminated all 8 redundancies.*

**"Transitional" Action.** The four-section Squyres format introduced in 2004 made an unmaintainable Platform even more impossible to maintain. Many planks had no language that fit into a "transitional action" section, so random policy positions were declared to be "transitional". In several cases, the "transitional action" was to oppose recreation of government bodies that hadn't existed for decades. In other cases, "transitional action" included

- "Eliminate all restrictions on immigration, and a declaration of full amnesty for all people who have entered the country illegally"
- "All criminal and civil sanctions against tax evasion should be terminated immediately."
- "Default is preferable to raising taxes or perpetual refinancing of growing public debt."
- "Repeal all laws prohibiting the production, sale, possession, or use of drugs."
- "Repeal of the Uniform Code of Military Justice"
- "Abolition of the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Federal Reserve System and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation."

**Bill of Rights.** The 14,000 words of the 2004 platform omitted 9 different items covered by the BoR, including: petitioning government, grand jury indictment, double jeopardy, self-incrimination, public trial by impartial jury, confronting witnesses, and cruel and unusual punishment. The Sixth Amendment right of the accused to subpoena witnesses is not only omitted, but is overruled by anarchist theory.

## Questions To Ask About Rob Power's 2004-Based Draft

1. Where precisely in your draft are the hundreds and hundreds of words of novel language that somebody created for it?
2. With the Platform in unprecedented disrepair, why did you choose this year to introduce more new language than any convention has been able to debate and approve in several decades? Why did you not instead follow PlatCom's policy of not introducing even a single sentence that hadn't already gone through the Platform vetting process?
3. Your draft drops at least 4000 words from the 2004 platform, including at last count at least 40 specific policy positions. What are they, and why aren't you "restoring" them?
4. Three of those un-restored positions are 1) unlimited immigration, 2) amnesty for illegal immigrants, and 3) defaulting on government debt. Is it coincidence that these positions are opposed by the candidate (George Phillies) endorsed by the Outright Libertarians of which Rob Power is Chair? How many of the other 37 omissions are similarly coincidental?
5. Two more of those un-restored positions are 1) opposition to hate crime laws and 2) specific opposition to laws against employers testing employees for AIDS. How many other omissions are similar attempts to "water down" the Platform to make Outright outreach easier?
6. Does your draft yet contain the word "Iraq"? If so, why did your first three drafts not?
7. How do you know that all of the laws and government agencies named in your draft even exist any more, either under that name or any other? How do you know you caught all the mistakes of this kind that the 2004 platform made?
8. How do you know that none of the 8 blatant redundancies in the 2004 platform were contained in the language cut and pasted into your platform?
9. Why does your draft repeat the 2004 platform's mistake of listing only four of America's five inhabited colonial possessions, omitting the one that has 10 times the population of the rest combined?
10. Have you fixed the numbering and grammar errors that still plagued your draft two weeks before the convention?

### The Abortion Plank

The Platform's traditional abortion language scored at the 2002 NatCon only 53% approval (dead last), and its 42% approval in 2006 (58<sup>th</sup> out of 62) would have deleted it except for the technicality that it had been approved for consolidation with the old Population plank.

The original 1972 LP Platform called for "repeal of all laws restricting voluntary birth control or voluntary termination of pregnancies during their first hundred days." Recent LP presidential nominees have distanced themselves from the Platform's abortion absolutism, and have echoed Ron Paul's position that the federal government should stay out of the issue.

In the February Platform survey responses from 5,047 Libertarians, 82% of likely delegates (and 88% overall) approved of the PlatCom's abortion plank (shown on in the big table earlier in this handout).