

The 2012 PUNDITALIA Presidential Platform

Four years ago we posted on this website our 2008 Presidential Platform, a list of forty-one moderate proposals as to what an aspiring president should set as goals to make the USA a better country. Barack Obama was elected and four years later, one out of our forty-one suggestions has been partially carried out, when some US troops were redeployed from Iraq to Afghanistan. Meanwhile, strident neo-cons such as Paul Ryan have consistently made headlines by proclaiming the need for radical measures designed to eliminate the middle class and transfer its wealth to the richest 1% of the population. Such demands have been accompanied by threats to shut down the government if all non-military expenditures are not slashed.

While we stand behind our 2008 platform, it's time to stop pussy-footing around and raise the volume as we pare down this year's goals to the essential.

1. Ten years after 9/11, with the objective of finding and eliminating Osama Bin Laden finally realized, it's time to bring all troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan.
2. In keeping with the current nostalgia for better times and traditional values, restore income tax rates to those in effect when the last great Republican president (not counting Barack Obama), Dwight D. Eisenhower, left office in 1961. That means a top marginal rate of 91%.
3. Immediately pass a constitutional amendment making clear the obvious, that "persons", for the purposes of constitutional rights, shall be defined as individual human beings, and that shall mean all human beings who have been born.
4. Have the Justice Department investigate the possibility of charging the five person majority of the Supreme Court with treason, for their scandalous, irresponsible and unconstitutional decision in Citizens United, which opened the doors for US elections to be influenced by non-citizens.
5. Restore the Glass-Steagall Act of 1933 as written, thus separating commercial and investment banking.
6. Corporations shall be forbidden from making contributions to candidates or occupants of political office. This essentially would restore the Tillman Act of 1907, a good law which was flawed by its lack of a compliance mechanism. In our revised version, penalties shall be mandatory jail terms for the executives in charge of such corporations, and should the amounts exceed a figure to be established by Congress, jail terms shall be extended to the entire Board of Directors.
7. Corporations shall be subjected to a three strikes and you're out provision. With the third violation of the refurbished Tillman Political Contributions Act, the corporate charter will be revoked and the corporation disbanded.
8. Legislators shall be required to disclose all sources and amounts of campaign (or other) contributions and shall disqualify themselves from presenting, arguing, or voting on any legislation that may provide direct benefit to their contributors. Penalties shall be immediate removal from office and the loss of all accrued benefits. Additional fines and jail time may be applied.
9. Judges, especially those on the Supreme Court, shall disqualify themselves from sitting on cases the outcomes of which shall provide direct benefit to themselves or their immediate family. They shall be forbidden from accepting gifts or payments from anyone who is party to a case coming before them. Violations will bring immediate removal from the court.

10. Penalties for crimes against property, e.g. robbery, theft, embezzlement, fraud, and insider trading shall be roughly proportional to the value of the items illegally taken from the victim. Thus, if a \$100 theft from a grocery store yields a 30 day jail term, the embezzlement of \$100,000 of pension funds would yield a 30,000 day prison term. We acknowledge the practical difficulties of this concept. Heavy penalties may be necessary to discourage relatively minor property crimes, whereas sentences of 500 or 1000 years of jail time would be relatively meaningless. In for a dime, in for a dollar. Given the high cost of housing criminal offenders and the record number and percentage of Americans who are incarcerated, the policy could be modified so that anyone convicted of a property crime amounting to more than \$50,000 could be required to pay the full cost of his or her incarceration. We would urge caution to avoid unintended consequences. Given the record low level of taxation currently in vogue, some states may find it remunerative under this law to find reasons to jail all their bankers.
11. Disband the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Former officials will be offered a bronze parachute, acceptance of which will exempt them from prosecution for most of their misdeeds.
12. Guantanamo will be closed as an off-shore concentration camp for people the US doesn't want to prosecute and converted into a retirement home for former officials of the above-named organizations. Guests will be provided with comfortable accommodation, as befits their station, but there will be no electronic communication with the world beyond the island, nor will visitors or off-island excursions be permitted.
13. Country of Origin labeling will be required on all products sold in the United States. This is in conflict with WTO rulings, but as stated above, the WTO is to be eliminated.
14. To combat the inexorable tide of the outsourcing of American jobs to Asia, Indian telephone responders will be imported into the US to teach their American counterparts the fundamentals of courtesy and diction.
15. In the current political climate there is a big push for testing school children to assure their job-readiness. In that spirit, we advocate literacy tests for presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Had this policy been in place earlier, we might have been spared the disastrous first eight years of the new millennium. It could cull the herd of young elephants currently charging the White House but wider application to the entire Congress might result in overly swift and radical changes to the country.
16. Given the clear need to render the US Military less bellicose and the Justice Department more aggressive, we propose the following Cabinet appointments:

Secretary of Defense-	Dennis Kucinich
Attorney General-	Elliot Spitzer
17. Now that we've seen Barry Bonds standing trial for lying to Congress under oath about his personal use of performance enhancing drugs, we believe that The Justice Department should take a similarly tough stance with regard to other members of the citizenry, less famous perhaps, but more closely linked to the health of the nation. A few prominent and well documented examples come readily to mind. Donald Rumsfeld, Colin Powell and George W. Bush all lied to Congress about WMD in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq. Chief Justice John Roberts stated under oath at his confirmation hearings that he was opposed to judicial activism, yet he has proved to be the most activist Chief Justice in Court history. Members of various intelligence agencies lied to the Congressional Committee investigating 9/11 about what was known to them about the imminent attacks on the WTC and the Pentagon. The list is long and while we don't condone professional athletes breaking their rules, we consider government officials violating the Constitution, and banksters devastating the economy, to be more deserving of immediate Congressional oversight and subsequent prosecution.