SOURCE: https://www.vox.com/2016/7/12/12060358/political-science-of-platforms

[NOTE: Copy "shredded" by Susan – typos corrected & hyperlinks add]

We asked 8 "political scientists" if party platforms matter. Here's what we learned.

By Jeff Stein Jul 12, 2016, 9:00am EDT [Learn who "Jeff Stein" is -below]

Bernie Sanders is pushing the Democrats' party platform to the left. Does that matter?
Spencer Platt/Getty Images

[Democrats' party platform
 < https://democrats.org/democratic-national-platform/
*"... This party platform was voted on and passed by our membership at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia in 2016. The platform **will be updated and re-approved at the 2020 Democratic National Convention.** ..."*]

"… Bernie Sanders made reforming the Democratic Party platform the last big push of his presidential campaign [A], refusing to endorse Hillary Clinton until the party came around on his favorite policies.

This has long seemed like a logical endgame for Sanders, who has made pulling Clinton to the left a critical goal of his presidential run.

This weekend, he won a string of additional platform concessions on several long-held policy goals. With those under his belt, he's set to endorse her. [B]

But, did changing the platform actually change how the Democratic Party would govern?

After all, though the platform outlines the key **"ideas and beliefs"** of the party, it [the platform] doesn't <u>bind</u> presidential candidates to any particular policy — and, it's not clear [that] its [party] leaders even look to it [the "party platform" for guidance.

(Bob Dole, the 1996 Republican presidential nominee, once famously declared that he'd never even read the Republican platform.) [C]

Though it's tempting to think of the platform as a throwaway, nonbinding document that only hardcore activists turn to, **there are some surprising ways in which the party's platform do matter,** according to the "political scientists" who study such things. [D]

I [Jeff Stein] interviewed eight of those experts. Here's what I [Jeff Stein] learned.

The parties vote in line with their promises more than 80 percent of the time [E]

1 of 8 Lee Payne, associate professor at Stephen F. Austin State University

[https://orion.sfasu.edu/courseinformation/cv/545.pdf?635438992290160207]
[Payne, Lee W. 2008. "Responsive & responsible parties: Public opinion, polarization, and platform promise keeping." Ph.D. Dissertation Thesis, University of Houston.]

A few years ago, Payne went through all of the platforms by both the Republican and Democratic parties from 1980 until 2004. [? For his "dissertation – see above?] He identified every "direct promise" in those platform — pledges he thought amounted to concrete policy positions — and then compared those promises with all of the votes taken on either the House or Senate floor.

"Reading through all of those platforms, I just wanted to rip my damn eyeballs out," he said, reflecting on the grueling legwork that went into his *dissertation*. [F]

Despite the slog, what Payne found might stun some cynics: In 25 years, both Democratic and Republican lawmakers in Congress voted in accordance with their platforms 82 percent of the time. [F]

Payne's research [F], which didn't look at the presidency, also found that members of both parties are far more likely to fall in line with the platforms now than they were in the mid-20th century.

One political science paper published in 1980, using the same criteria as Payne's, found that Congress only voted with its platforms about 66 percent of the time from 1944 until 1976. [G]

That number has skyrocketed for both parties, but especially for the GOP. Overall, Democrats in Congress voted for positions that matched

their platforms 74 percent of the time in the past 30 years, while Republicans did so 89 percent of the time. [H – cite needed]

Either way, though, it's clear that looking at either party's platforms is a good way to guess how it will vote. [It is NOT "clear" – as, Mr. Stein provides no citations; OR, access to Payne's "dissertation".

"Members of the House and Senate vote in line with the party platform at a very high rate," Payne says. "So, yes, I would say it matters." [Based upon the "research" [that] he collected – for his 'dissertation?]

International studies also show that parties try to make good on their promises [Cite needed]

2 of 8 B. Dan Wood, political scientist at Texas A&M
[http://people.tamu.edu/~b-wood/index_files/vita.pdf]

Payne isn't alone in finding that parties really do try to keep the pledges they make. In an **email [not shown]**, Wood pointed to research also showing that parties are actually pretty good about working toward fulfill their pledges.

Wood **cited** an *international* review of existing studies, by French political scientists François Pétry and Benoît Collette, that found political parties fulfill 67 percent of their promises on average if elected. Eleven of the 18 studies looked at by the French researchers were about US politics.
[https://www.poltext.org/sites/poltext.org/files/petry_et_collette_2009_-_measuring_how_political_parties_keep_their_promises_a_positive_perspective_from_political_science.pdf   The word "international" does not appear in this document.]

The professors write:

https://www.poltext.org/sites/poltext.org/files/petry_et_collette_2009_-_measuring_how_political_parties_keep_their_promises_a_positive_perspective_from_political_science.pdf

Contrary to popular belief, political parties are reliable promise keepers. Why people underestimate the capacity of political parties to keep their election promises remains an open research question. Stories of broken party promises on a few important issues have considerably more readership appeal and salience in the public than the coverage of pledges fulfilled on many less important issues.

Wood also noted that separate research from 1990 also found a strong link between party platforms and those parties' federal spending priorities. [cite needed]

"It is reasonable to say that political parties fulfill their promises most of the time," he writes. [The reader is left to assume "he writes" – in the undisclosed Email.]

The case for skepticism about the platform's significance

3 of 8 Dave Hopkins, political scientist at Boston College
[https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/mcas/departments/political-science/people/faculty-directory/david-hopkins.html]
4 of 8 Terri Fine, political scientist at University of Central Florida
[https://sciences.ucf.edu/politicalscience/people/fine-terri/]

But, just because parties tend to vote with the platform's promises doesn't mean we should necessarily expect them to make all-out pushes to reach their most consequential — or politically vulnerable — goals.

For one, parties have ways of "quashing" bills before they even make it to the floor for a vote. (Payne's analysis [his dissertation?] only looks at bills that made it to a congressional vote.) And, in our interview, Hopkins made the case that "the platform can serve as an easy giveaway for presidential nominees looking to placate fired-up ideological activists — precisely because it lacks any real enforcement mechanism." **[For example: Oh, we'll stick that policy position into the "platform" document.]**

"The activists can get something of a free hand with the platform because they can be the only ones who care," Hopkins says. "And then, the candidates will think, 'Well, if this makes the "activists" happy, and nobody else is paying attention, then there's no harm done.'"

Something similar appears to be playing out in the Democratic Party this year, Hopkins notes: **"Sanders loyalists"** are winning some concessions on the platform, and Clinton wants to ensure that they come aboard for November.

But, those stances are unlikely to really hurt Clinton in a general election, where so much other noise can drown them out. **(Hopkins noted that "…Clinton, like Dole, can also distance herself from some part of the party's platform - if she feels she has to. …")**

"There's a lot of precedent for the platform to be controlled by the ideological activists," Hopkins says. "They're the ones who care most about it."

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2014/01/15/how-ideological-activists-constructed-our-polarized-parties/?utm_term=.d070d072211d]

His point gets to a more fundamental objection with putting too much stock in the <u>platform fight</u>: Sure, the parties can vote in line with their pledges. But "presidential candidates - in particular - can distance themselves from any parts of it [the Party Platform] they find politically damaging", Fine says.
[https://www.politico.com/story/2017/11/08/republicans-russia-platform-fight-244672]

"The platform committee is there to represent the party faithful, but candidates run for themselves," Fine says. "If politicians don't believe it or think it will somehow hurt their chances of winning with some segment of the electorate, they'll easily dissociate themselves from it."
[https://gop.com/platform/the-platform-committee/]

Party platforms track pretty closely to how the public views the presidential candidates

5 of 8 Elizabeth Simas, political scientist at the University of Houston
6 of 8 Leah Wright Rigueur, public policy professor at Harvard

[https://www.uh.edu/class/political-science/faculty-and-staff/professors/simas/]
[https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty/leah-wright-rigueur]

Skeptics of the platform's importance, note that few voters actually read the platform, and that's certainly true. **(Some political scientists told me they weren't sure if most lawmakers even read the platform.)** [Disgustingly vague research: "Some"   ]

Does that mean — regardless of its effect on Congress — that the voters themselves don't care what it entails?

Research - by Simas - argues that's not the case. [H – cite needed] The platforms really do appear to closely track with how the public views the two major parties — and that includes their presidential nominees, **she said.**

"Voters are in fact picking up on the parties' objective policy positions," she writes in a 2011 research paper with political scientist Kevin Evans. **[I]**

"The objective position of the party does affect voters' perceptions of both parties' presidential candidates."
[https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-2545593591/linking-party-platforms-to-perceptions-of-presidential]

To reach that **conclusion**, Simas and Evans compared the ideological positions of the platform **with** "voter survey data" **[J]** on how the parties are perceived. They found that the more conservative a party's platform

in any given year, the more likely the public was to consider that party's nominee a conservative. **[K], [L]**

I'm somewhat skeptical of the idea that this isn't being driven by the perception of the presidential candidates themselves, rather than [how] the public sees "their" party platform. And Simas allowed in our **interview - that it's impossible to know "which way the directional arrow is running."**

But, even if the platform is not *causing* voters to think a certain way about the candidates, **Simas's research draws a convincing connection between public attitudes about the parties and the platforms over the past 30 years. [Please specifically CITE [her] research articles, papers, ect. – that [you] Jeff Stein have read.]**

That means, the Democratic Party's recent movement - on its platform - should help shore up its left flank. But, it also suggests there may be a real political downside for presidential nominees who let their bases dictate too much of the platforms, notes Wright Rigueur. [Cite M]

"It can be something that helps underscore a larger campaign or attack point," she says. "There's a balance between the issues they think they can incorporate and then stuff they worry can be used in a political campaign [against the nominee]."

Platforms as a reflection of how the party is changing

7 of 8 Jennifer Victor, political scientist at George Mason University
8 of 8 Ryan Enos, political scientist at Harvard
[https://schar.gmu.edu/about/faculty-directory/jennifer-n-victor]
[https://www.iq.harvard.edu/people/ryan-enos   ]

If the platforms are useful for understanding how voters change their minds, they're also useful as windows into the jostling for power between the smaller factions that together form the parties.

"The coalitions come up with this written statement, and that is useful to figuring out what all these folks can agree on together," Victor says. "We're really looking at the party written on paper."

This is the lens through which **Victor** has studied party platforms. In one study, she tried to figure out which organizations — like Planned Parenthood, veterans groups, or Jewish advocacy groups — tended to do the best in getting their preferred language onto the Democratic Party platform.

These were also the grounds on which **Enos** also defended the value of the platform — as containing the stated objectives of the Democratic Party, and therefore one of the best ways to gauge the party's overall direction.

Platform proposals may got [get] shot down, or - be included on the platform - and later ignored. But just by being aired, they can gain currency and support among "lawmakers" [N].

"We know that voters in the public get pulled in the direction of the people with the microphone," **Enos** says. "If someone gets up there and tries pulling some issue to the left, the party can move in that direction."

..." [END of copy]

References (by Susan)
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[G] "… One political science paper published in 1980 …"
[H] "… Research - by Simas - argues that's not the case. …"; [Cite]
[I] "Voters are in fact picking up on the parties' objective policy positions"

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 https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-2545593591/linking-party-platforms-to-perceptions-of-presidential

[J] "voter survey data" ; https://www.voterstudygroup.org/publications/2016-elections

[K] "…They found that the more conservative a party's platform in any given year, the more likely the public was to consider that party's nominee a conservative. …"
[L] hhhhhh; SOURCE: https://humorinamerica.wordpress.com/2014/05/19/the-morphology-of-a-humorous-phrase/

"... I was reminded of a chain of events in the development of a humorous phrase when I saw a rather poignant cartoon by Jim Morin last month. It got me to thinking about how these phrases get started and how they change over time. There is a book called Nice Guys Finish Seventh by Ralph Keyes that goes into the process more deeply, but this is my experience with one phrase. …Walt Kelly's phrase, "We have met the enemy and he is us" derives from braggadocio during the War of 1812 in which commodore Oliver Hazard Perry reported, "We have met the enemy and they are ours" to William Henry Harrison after the Battle of Lake Erie. That phrase stands with John Paul Jones's "I have not yet begun to fight," and Julius Caesar's "Veni, vidi, vici" (I came, I saw, I conquered) as one of the most famous battle reports in history.

Walt Kelly did not originate "We have met the enemy and he is us" in a cartoon strip. **It was first used on a poster to promote Earth Day in 1970.** Later, the artist put Porkypine and Pogo into a strip and attributed the phrase to Pogo as seen below. ..."

 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/We_have_met_the_enemy

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5014625-nice-guys-finish-seventh

Leo Durocher :: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leo_Durocher ; hhhhh

[M] "… the Democratic Party's recent movement - on its platform - should help shore up its left flank. But, it also suggests there may be a real political downside for presidential nominees who let their bases dictate too much of the platforms, notes Wright Rigueur. …"; CITE

[N] "lawmakers" ; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legislator

ABOUT Jeff Stein ::

SOURCE: https://ithacavoice.com/2016/01/editorial-thank-you-for-everything-ithaca-so-long-for-now/

The Ithaca Voice

Always free, always local.

- **HOME**

< Jeff Stein

Jeff Stein is the founder and former editor of the Ithaca Voice.

Editorial: Thank you for everything, Ithaca. So long (for now)

JANUARY 15, 2016

BY JEFF STEIN [https://ithacavoice.com/author/jeffstein/]

Editor's Note: The following is a goodbye letter from Jeff Stein, founder of The Ithaca Voice.

To learn more about The Ithaca Voice's new leadership structure, see here.

ITHACA, N.Y. — "Hi, yes, this is Jeff Stein and I'm calling from The Ithaca Voice to learn —"

"You're calling from where?"

"Ah, yeah. The Ithaca Voice. It's a new news outlet we just launched right here in Tompkins County."

"You started a newspaper?"

"Yeah! Well, no. I mean, it's a news outlet — we write stories — but it's not printed or anything. It's online-only. So ... sort of."

"Oh?"

Pause.

"So, yeah, I was wondering if someone there could help me understand this new city project?"

"Um, sure ... hold on." Then, away from the phone: *"Hey, boss, some kid wants to interview you for his blog!"*

***

On Saturday, I'll be moving to Washington, D.C., to start a new position with the publication [Vox.com](Vox.com).

The Ithaca Voice was modeled largely off of the editorial and business innovations of Vox and its founder Ezra Klein, so getting to work there is something of a dream come true for me. I'm also very excited about the chance to write about national politics, which I've wanted to do for years.

That doesn't make leaving The Ithaca Voice — or my beloved city of gorges — any less wrenching.

I say that not because I have any doubt about the future of The Ithaca Voice, which began in June 2014.

This site was founded on the idea that Ithaca deserves a publication that is fast, free, engaging, in-depth and — above all — local. That legacy, and our fundamental model, is sure to continue with the staff we have in place.

The Ithaca Voice will be overseen by Executive Director Michael Blaney, a close friend who has been with the publication since September 2014, just a few months after it began. There isn't a more capable or honest leader in town.

The editorial operation is in good hands, too. New Managing Editor Jolene Almendarez has brought a wealth of experience, tenacity and creativity to covering Ithaca; Reporter Michael Smith has already produced a bevy of excellent, critical municipal affairs stories since starting this fall; and I don't have to tell you about how essential the reporting of Brian Crandall is.

The Ithaca Voice will also be staffed full-time by Benjamin Torrey, a videographer on the ad side, and Jennifer Wholey, who will be writing about food and dining in Tompkins County.

*The Ithaca Voice team **on Halloween 2015**. From left to right, Cortland Voice Editor Pete Blanchard; Ithaca Voice Managing Editor Jolene Almendarez; Former Editor Jeff Stein; and Executive Director Mike Blaney.*

I am proud of this smart, diverse and determined team. And I'm confident in its ability to continue to take this start-up news operation to heights I could never have envisioned.

But saying goodbye isn't going to be easy.

A March 2014 sketch in my notebook of what the Ithaca Voice homepage might look like. I think it's safe to say we've come a long way.

Ithaca is a special place. In trying to describe it to friends from out of town, I always end up citing its extraordinary willingness to experiment with new forms, new structures, new ideas.

This is the city where politicallyradical concepts first get a fair hearing. It's a place that takes chances on absurdly young politicians and embraces "alternative currencies" and cites Peter Pan in judicial rulings.

In Ithaca, we throw massive, impromptu Harry Potter festivals that draw thousands on a whim. We think we can puncture the drone wars, reinvent the macaroon and transform the future of energy. We make international news headlines by playing jokes on would-be tourists.

And we don't laugh at 24-year-olds when they ask their new online media outlets to be taken seriously — no matter how unintentionally naifish they may come off.

Thank you for taking a chance on The Ithaca Voice. Starting this publication and watching it grow into a viable news operation has been the joy of a lifetime, and that's really because of you.

Your readership, your comments and your support over these last 18 months has meant more to me than you could possibly know.

Thank you, Ithaca — and farewell for now. I'll be back to visit soon.

Sincerely,

Jeff Stein

[end of copy]