

Where Did the Democratic Party Shift in 2020?

**Third Way**

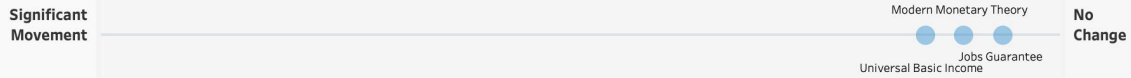
The much touted narrative in the press is that the Democratic Party has veered significantly to the left over the past few years. But while the conversation on Twitter may be dominated by far-left voices, the truth is that on most issues, the Party hasn't moved. Its platform and its President-elect embrace mainstream, center-left positions on the key issues of the day and steer clear of the most contentious far-left policies championed by other presidential candidates in the primaries.

Where Did the Democratic Party Shift in 2020?

Hover over the circles for more details

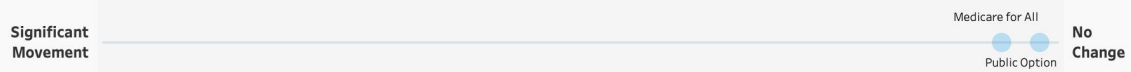
Economic Policies

The party and Biden have completely avoided all of the major left-wing positions on economic policies.



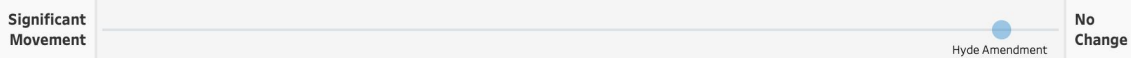
Health Care

The party and Biden have completely avoided all of the major left-wing positions on health care policies.



Abortion

The party had already coalesced around repealing the Hyde amendment, and the 2020 campaign and platform match where they were in 2016.



Climate Change and Energy

Both the party and Biden have shied away from the Green New Deal and a fracking ban. However, the party has adopted the position of banning new oil and gas operation on public lands and moved up its timeline for getting to net zero emissions.



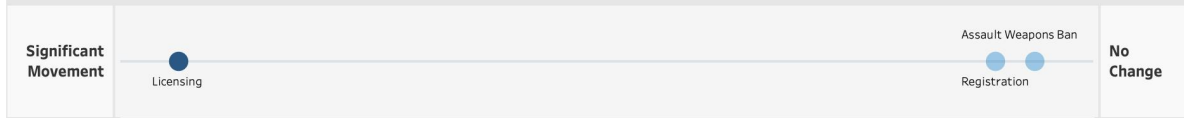
Education

Biden and the party platform have adopted some form of free college but split when it comes to the details of debt cancellation.



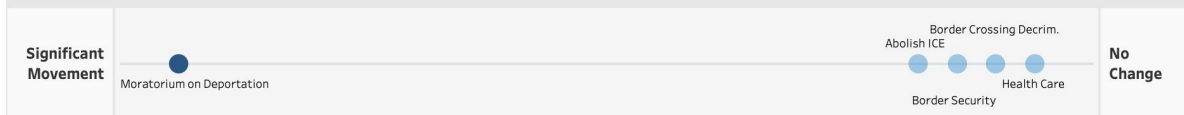
Guns

The biggest shift in the gun debate conversation is on licensing, though both the party and Biden leave actual enactment of the idea to the states. Restrictions on assault weapons and high capacity magazines are viewed as increasingly mainstream within the party.



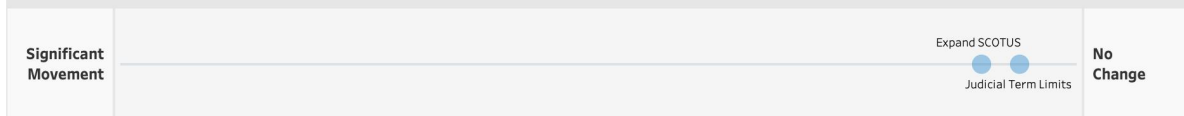
Immigration

Neither the party nor Biden embraced far-left ideas like abolishing ICE or decriminalizing the border. The biggest shift from its 2016 stance is a moratorium on deportations for the first 100 days of a new administration, with exceptions for those who committed felonies.



Judicial Reform

While the Supreme Court and the judiciary gotten drastically increased attention this cycle, neither the party nor Biden have articulated a broad proposal for judicial reform.



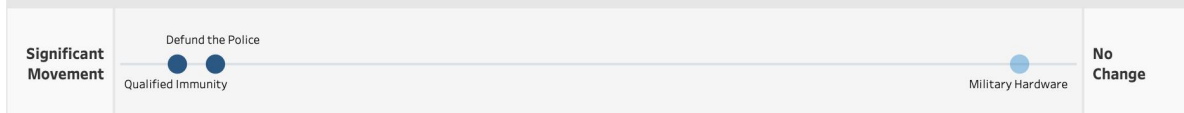
Marijuana

The party has shifted to explicitly supporting decriminalization of marijuana as opposed to the state legalization model supported in 2016. Biden however has not endorsed decriminalization.



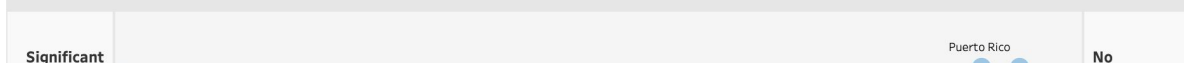
Policing

The party has newly coalesced around police reforms including around qualified immunity, though does not support the notion of “defunding the police.” These issues were not a focus in 2016, though the platform did call for restricting use of military equipment by police departments.



Statehood

The party continues to be united in its support for statehood for Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.



Economic Policy

The party and Biden have completely avoided all of the major left-wing positions in economic policies.

Universal Basic Income:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Not included
- **Biden Position:** Not included, but his emergency economic recovery plan calls for sending more checks to Americans.
- **2016 Party Platform:** Not included
- **Clinton Position:** Not included

Modern Monetary Theory:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Not Included
- **Biden Position:** Not Included
- **2016 Party Platform:** Not included
- **Clinton Position:** Not included

Jobs Guarantee:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Not included
- **Biden Position:** Not included
- **2016 Party Platform:** Not included
- **Clinton Position:** Not included

Health Care

The party and Biden have completely avoided all of the major left-wing positions in health care policies.

Medicare for All:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Not included
- **Biden Position:** Not included
- **2016 Party Platform:** Not included
- **Clinton Position:** Not included

Public Option:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Supports a public option. "Democrats will also make available on the marketplace a public option administered through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) which includes a platinum-level choice, with low fees and no deductibles." (P.9)
- **Biden Position:** Supports a public option.
- **2016 Party Platform:** Supported a public option. (P.31)
- **Clinton Position:** Supported a public option.

Abortion

The party had already coalesced around repealing the Hyde amendment, and the 2020 campaign and platform match where they were in 2016.

The Hyde Amendment:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Supports repealing the Hyde amendment. (P.42)
- **Biden Position:** Supports repealing the Hyde amendment.

- **2016 Party Platform**: Supported repealing the Hyde amendment. (P.33)
- **Clinton Position**: Supported repealing the Hyde amendment.

Climate and Clean Energy

Both the party and Biden have shied away from the Green New Deal and a fracking ban. However, the party has adopted the position of banning new oil and gas operation on public lands and moved up its timeline for getting to net zero emissions.

Fracking/fossil fuel production:

Medium Party Shift

- **Party Platform**: Does not specifically address fracking but supports banning new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters. (P.55)
- **Biden Position**: Does not specifically address fracking but supports “Protecting America’s natural treasures by...banning new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters.”
- **2016 Party Platform**: “We believe hydraulic fracturing should not take place where states and local communities oppose it.” (P.25)
- **Clinton Position**: “I don’t support it when any locality or any state is against it, No. 1. I don’t support it when the release of methane or contamination of water is present. I don’t support it — No. 3 — unless we can require that anybody who fracks has to tell us exactly what chemicals they are using.”

100% carbon free power by a certain date:

Shift in Party Position

- **Party Platform**: “We agree with scientists and public health experts that the United States —and the world—must achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, and no later than 2050. To reach net-zero emissions as rapidly as possible, Democrats commit to eliminating carbon pollution from power plants by 2035 through technology-neutral standards for clean energy and energy efficiency.” (P.51)

- **Biden Position**: Promises Net-zero by 2050 and 100% clean electricity by 2035: “At this moment of profound crisis, we have the opportunity to build a more resilient, sustainable economy – one that will put the United States on an irreversible path to achieve net-zero emissions, economy-wide, by no later than 2050.” And “Move ambitiously to generate clean, American-made electricity to achieve a carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035.”
- **2016 Party Platform**: Supports “reducing greenhouse gas emissions more than 80 percent below 2005 levels by 2050...We are committed to getting 50 percent of our electricity from clean energy sources within a decade.” (P.24)
- **Clinton Position**: “On day one, Hillary Clinton will set bold, national goals that will be achieved within 10 years of taking office: Generate enough renewable energy to power every home in America...She will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30 percent in 2025 relative to 2005 levels and put the country on a path to cut emissions more than 80 percent by 2050.”

The Green New Deal:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: Not included
- **Biden Position**: Not included
- **2016 Party Platform**: Not introduced then
- **Clinton Position**: Not introduced then

Education

On free college, the party is precisely where it was in 2016, but the debt cancellation conversation has moved left.

Free College:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: The party platform calls for making public colleges and universities tuition-free for families making less than \$125,000 (P.69).
Tuition-free community college and trade schools for all students. (P.69)

- **Biden Position**: Provide two years of community college and trade school debt free for all and make public colleges and universities tuition-free for families making less than \$125,000.
- **2016 Party Platform**: Working families should not have to pay any tuition to go to public colleges and universities. And supports making community college free. (P.27)
- **Clinton Position**: “By 2021, families with income up to \$125,000 will pay no tuition at in-state four-year public colleges and universities. And from the beginning, every student from a family making \$85,000 a year or less will be able to go to an in-state four-year public college or university without paying tuition.” And supported free community college.

Student Loan Cancelling:

Shift in Party Position

- **Party Platform**: The party platform allows up to \$10,000 in student debt relief per borrower immediately in response to the pandemic. (P.70)
 Pause interest and payments on federal student loans for those earning less than \$25,000.
 Cap payments at 5% of discretionary income for those earning less than \$25,000, then forgive all remaining federal debt after 20 years. (P.70)
 Forgive all undergraduate two- and four-year public college and university debt and federal loans at private HBCUs and MSIs for those making less than \$125,000. (P.70)
 Modernize and improve Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), expand the program by forgiving \$10,000 per year for up to five years to those who have worked less than five years for a qualifying employer. (P.70)
- **Biden Position**: Biden’s Covid economic recovery plan calls for forgiving a minimum of \$10,000 per person in federal student loans. Biden’s non-Covid position is to: Pause interest and payments on undergraduate federal student loans for those earning less than \$25,000. Cap payments at 5% of discretionary income for those earning less than \$25,000, then forgive all remaining federal debt after 20 years. And improve PSLF and offer \$10,000 of undergraduate or graduate student debt relief for every year of national or community service, up to five years.

- **2016 Party Platform**: Refinance loans at the lowest rates possible and simplify and expand access to income-based repayment so that no student loan borrowers ever have to pay more than they can afford. Significantly cut interest rates for future undergraduates. Allow borrowers with student loans to be able to discharge their debts in bankruptcy as a measure of last resort.” (P.28)
- **Clinton Position**: “Borrowers will be able to refinance loans at current rates, providing debt relief to an estimated 25 million people. They’ll never have to pay back more than 10 percent of their income, and all remaining college debt will be forgiven after 20 years.”

Guns

The biggest shift in the gun debate conversation is on licensing, though both the party and Biden leave actual enactment of the idea to the states.

Assault Weapons Ban:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: Supports the ban of assault weapons and high capacity magazines. (P.48)
- **Biden Position**: Supports the ban of assault weapons and high capacity magazines.
- **2016 Party Platform**: Supported keeping assault weapons and large capacity magazines off our streets (P.35)
- **Clinton Position**: Supported keeping “military-style weapons off our streets.”

Licensing:

Shift in Party Position

- **Party Platform**: Incentivize states to enact licensing requirements. (P.48)
- **Biden Position**: Incentivize states to enact licensing requirements.
- **2016 Party Platform**: Not included
- **Clinton Position**: Not included

Registration:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Not included
- **Biden Position:** Supports registration under the National Firearms Act for assault weapons and high capacity magazines already in existence, as an alternative to buybacks after an assault weapons and high capacity magazine ban.
- **2016 Party Platform:** Not included
- **Clinton Position:** Not included

Immigration

Neither the party nor Biden embraced far-left ideas like abolishing ICE or decriminalizing the border. The biggest shift from its 2016 stance is a moratorium on deportations for the first 100 days of a new administration, with exceptions for those who committed felonies.

Abolish ICE or Reform ICE:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** “We will ensure that enforcement mechanisms are humane and consistent with our values and international humanitarian obligations. (P.63) and “Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection personnel abide by our values and professional, evidence-based standards and are held accountable for any inappropriate, unlawful, or inhumane treatment. (P.64)
- **Biden Position:** “Ensure that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel abide by professional standards and are held accountable for inhumane treatment”
- **2016 Party Platform:** We believe immigration enforcement must be humane and consistent with our values. (P.16)
- **Clinton Position:** “Enforce immigration laws humanely. Immigration enforcement must be humane, targeted, and effective. Hillary will focus resources on detaining and deporting those individuals who pose a violent threat to public safety and ensure refugees who seek asylum in the U.S. have a fair chance to tell their stories.”

Decriminalizing the Border:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Not included

- **Biden Position:** Not included
- **2016 Party Platform:** Not included
- **Clinton Position:** Not included

Moratorium on Deportation:

Shift in Party Position

- **Party Platform:** Not included but supports ending enforcement actions at certain locations like schools, houses of worship, health care facilities. (P.61)
- **Biden Position:** Temporary halt on deportations for the first 100 days of the administration with exceptions for those convicted of felonies.
- **2016 Party Platform:** Not included
- **Clinton Position:** Not included

Healthcare for Undocumented People:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform:** Not included
- **Biden Position:** Biden said we have an obligation to see that undocumented are cared for. His plan focuses on allowing undocumented immigrants to buy into ACA plans.
- **2016 Party Platform:** “We will work to ensure that all Americans—regardless of immigration status—have access to quality health care. That means expanding community health centers, allowing all families to buy into the Affordable Care Act exchanges, supporting states that open up their public health insurance programs to all persons, and finally enacting comprehensive immigration reform.” (P.16)
- **Clinton Position:** “We should let families—regardless of immigration status—buy into the Affordable Care Act exchanges. Families who want to purchase health insurance should be able to do so.”

Border Security:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: Rescind Trump’s border wall national emergency, and “we will demand that leaders of our immigration agencies be Senate–confirmed professionals, and that Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection personnel abide by our values and professional, evidence–based standards and are held accountable for any inappropriate, unlawful, or inhumane treatment.” (P.61 & 63)
- **Biden Position**: “Today, our immigration system is under greater stress as a direct result of Trump’s misguided policies, even as he has failed to invest in smarter border technology that would improve our cargo screening.”
 “He will secure our border, while ensuring the dignity of migrants and upholding their legal right to seek asylum.”
 “Implement effective border screening.”
- **2016 Party Platform**: Not included
- **Clinton Position**: “Protect our borders and national security, and bring millions of hardworking people into the formal economy.”

Judicial Reform

While the Supreme Court and the judiciary gotten drastically increased attention this cycle, neither the party nor Biden have articulated a broad proposal for judicial reform.

Expanding the Supreme Court:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: Not included but does commit to expanding the number of circuit and district court judges. (P. 38)
- **Biden Position**: Promised to create a commission that will study and suggest reforms to the Court within 180 days.
- **2016 Party Platform**: Not included
- **Clinton Position**: Not included

Term Limits for Federal Judges:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: Not included

- **Biden Position**: Said during the primaries that he opposes term limits for Supreme Court justices.
- **2016 Party Platform**: Not included
- **Clinton Position**: Not included

Marijuana

The party has shifted to explicitly supporting decriminalization of marijuana as opposed to the state legalization model supported in 2016. Biden however has not endorsed decriminalization.

Decriminalization/Legalization:

Medium Party Shift

- **Party Platform**: “Democrats will decriminalize marijuana use and reschedule it through executive action on the federal level. We will support legalization of medical marijuana and believe states should be able to make their own decisions about recreational use. (P.37)
- **Biden Position**: Not included
- **2016 Party Platform**: “Because of conflicting federal and state laws concerning marijuana, we encourage the federal government to remove marijuana from the list of “Schedule 1” federal controlled substances and to appropriately regulate it, providing a reasoned pathway for future legalization. We believe that the states should be laboratories of democracy on the issue of marijuana, and those states that want to decriminalize it or provide access to medical marijuana should be able to do so.” (P.14)
- **Clinton Position**: “Hillary will allow states that have enacted marijuana laws to act as laboratories of democracy and reschedule marijuana from a Schedule I to a Schedule II substance.”

Policing

The party has newly coalesced around police reforms including around qualified immunity, though does not support the notion of “defunding the police.” These issues were not a focus in 2016, though the platform did call for restricting use of military equipment by police departments.

Qualified Immunity:

Shift in Party Position

- **Party Platform**: Supports changes to the qualified immunity doctrine. “We will also act to ensure that victims of federal, state, or local law enforcement abuses of power can seek justice through civil litigation by reining in the doctrine of qualified immunity.” (P.37)
- **Biden Position**: Supports reforming qualified immunity.
- **2016 Party Platform**: Not included
- **Clinton Position**: Not included

Defund the Police:

Shift in Party Position

- **Party Platform**: The party platform does not endorse defunding the police but does support increasing funding for social workers to reduce police involvement in mental health, drug cases, and in schools. “Democrats also recognize that all too often, systematic cuts to public services have left police officers on the front lines of responding to social challenges for which they have not been trained, from homelessness to mental health crises to the opioid epidemic. We can and must do better for our communities.” (P.35)
- **Biden Position**: Opposes defunding the police but supports funding programs that would reduce the need for police involvement in areas that are better suited to other professional. “The Biden Administration will fund initiatives to partner mental health and substance use disorder experts, social workers, and disability advocates with police departments.” “Biden supports the urgent need for reform, including funding for public schools, summer programs, and mental health and substance abuse treatment separate from funding for policing, so that officers can focus on the job of policing.”
- **2016 Party Platform**: Not included
- **Clinton Position**: Not included

Use of Military Equipment by Police:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: Supports restricting military hardware sales to police departments.
“Democrats believe weapons of war have no place on our streets, and will once again limit the sale and transfer of surplus military weapons to domestic law enforcement agencies.” (P.35)
- **Biden Position**: Supports restricting military hardware sales to police departments.
“Surplus military equipment for law enforcement? They don't need that," Biden continued. "The last thing you need is an up-armored Humvee coming into the neighborhood, it is like the military invading, they don't know anybody, they become the enemy. They're supposed to be protecting these people."
- **2016 Party Platform**: Supported restricting military hardware sales to police departments.
“We will encourage better police community relations, require the use of body cameras, and stop the use of weapons of war that have no place in our communities.” (P.14)
- **Clinton Position**: Supported restricting military hardware sales to police departments.
“Promoting oversight and accountability in use of controlled equipment, including by limiting the transfer of military equipment to local law enforcement from the federal government, eliminating the one-year use requirement, and requiring transparency from agencies that purchase equipment using federal funds.”

Statehood

The party continues to be united in its support for statehood for Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

Puerto Rico:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: “The people of Puerto Rico deserve self-determination on the issue of status.” (P.59)
- **Biden Position**: Supports statehood for Puerto Rico. Let the people of Puerto Rico decide.
- **2016 Party Platform**: "Democrats believe that the people of Puerto Rico should determine their ultimate political status from permanent options that do not conflict with the Constitution, laws, and policies of the United States." (P.21)
- **Clinton Position**: “The people of Puerto Rico have a proud history and a distinct heritage — and as American citizens, they are entitled to have their voices heard on critical issues that affect them. All Americans should be able to vote for the people who make their laws.”

Washington, DC:

Little or No Party Movement

- **Party Platform**: Supports statehood for DC. (P.58)
- **Biden Position**: Supports statehood for DC.
- **2016 Party Platform**: Supported statehood for DC. (P.23)
- **Clinton Position**: Supported statehood for DC.