

# Child care missing from party platforms <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Source:** Huffington Post blog

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 12 Sep 2012

## EXCERPTS:

The conventions are over and the platforms have been approved. The Republican and Democratic platforms were disappointing this year in their lack of focus on child care. At a time when 11 million American children under the age of 5 spend part of their day most weeks in child care, addressing the child care needs of families with child would seem an opportunity for both parties. This is especially true as the annual per child cost of child care can be above \$13K a year in some states in the northeast and state and local revenues are squeezed. Moreover, given the importance of women voters and the attention both campaigns are paying to them it is surprising that more attention is not being paid to child care.

While the GOP platform discusses families, flexibility, and education, it makes no mention of child care. It does continue GOP support for child tax credits but does not directly address the child care needs of families. This is not too surprising as recent GOP platforms have not emphasized it either. However, given the gender gap, it is a missed opportunity for the GOP. Even mentioning the child care needs of families could demonstrate empathy for GOP candidates who too often this cycle face a gender gap with Democratic candidates. Offering policies that address the affordability, access and quality of child care in America could help close it.

The Democratic platform takes a step back in its focus. In 2008, the Democratic platform touched on such issues both in a "Work and Family" section and it included a section on "Children and Families," while in 2012 the similar section dropped the word "children" and is called simply "Families." While a long list of policies, from tax credits to fatherhood to EITC to work/family to foster care and adoption are included, child care is not directly mentioned. In 2008, the Democratic platform included child care explicitly ("We will make an unprecedented national investment to guarantee that every child has access to high-quality early education, including investments in Pre-K, Head Start, and Early Head Start, and we will help pay for child care.") In some ways a shift to early childhood education has taken its place but the platform still misses the opportunity to address child care directly.

In the 1988 campaign, both George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis emphasized child care. As the Romney and Obama campaigns now sprint towards November 6, the opportunity remains for them to discuss the child care needs of American families.

-reprinted from Huffington Post

**Region:** United States <sup>[2]</sup>

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