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Democrats back Clinton, progressive platform at DNC in Philadelphia

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Sanders also stressed the need for unity when he addressed the convention on its first day, citing the **Democratic party platform** as evidence of the gains his supporters have achieved. The platform is a blueprint explaining the goals a Democratic president would pursue if elected. Past conventions, regardless of party, have usually been so scripted that reporters were often desperate for something to do and the platform document was the last place to find actual news—not so this year.

“It is no secret that Hillary Clinton and I disagree on a number of issues...that’s what democracy is about,” Sanders told the convention. “But I am happy to tell you that at the Democratic Platform Committee, there was a significant coming together between the two campaigns and we produced, by far, the most progressive platform in the history of the Democratic Party.”

Instead of scrapping the Affordable Care Act as Republicans have promised, provisions in the platform would expand the health insurance marketplaces by adding a “public option,” a non-profit health plan run by the government instead of insurance companies, similar to the federal Medicare program. As a non-profit with low administrative costs—and no shareholders seeking a profitable return on their investments—it would offer a cheaper alternative and reduce consumers’ premiums as insurers compete to offer similar value, supporters say. Democrats would also create a Medicare “buy-in,” allowing people ages 55 to 64 to pay to join Medicare, until they turn 65 and become eligible for the health care program. The platform would also allow Medicare to negotiate drugs prices with pharmaceutical companies on behalf of some 55 million—and rising—beneficiaries who use most of the prescription drugs in the US

“We have been trying to get drug price negotiations for many, many years as a means of saving millions of dollars for Medicare instead of cutting back on benefits,” said Judith Stein, executive director of the **Center for Medicare Advocacy**. The 2003 law that added drug coverage to Medicare prohibits the agency from trying to drive down prices, and instead allows private insurance companies to each make their own deals. “It would be like Wal-Mart having each of its stores negotiate prices but the reason why



PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA—JULY 28, 2016: Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton takes the stage during the final day of the Democratic National Convention, Thursday

AP Photo/John Locher

Wal-Mart’s prices are so low is because they negotiate on behalf of all of its stores,” she said.

The Democratic platform also calls for a “fully funded National Institutes of Health to accelerate the pace of medical progress.” It would provide funding to study gun violence, and also addresses opioid abuse, mental health, autism and other health issues. The platform also supports funding to respond the Zika threat by developing diagnostic tests, a vaccine and treatment.

When Clinton’s running mate, Virginia Sen. Tim Kaine, mentioned Alzheimer’s disease in his speech accepting the vice presidential nomination, “he didn’t just say it’s a problem,” said Mary Woolley, president of **Research!America**. “He also said what we need is research to defeat it.”

Clinton “has a long-time track record of talking about and putting research to work to defeat HIV-AID and...has a very strong commitment to the research that it takes to combat diseases that particularly affect women and children,” said Woolley. “She understands the importance of the government’s role in fueling research and she understands public-private partnerships.”

But a Democratic president cannot accomplish the platform goals alone, Sanders reminded the delegates. “Our job now is to see that platform implemented by a Democratic Senate, a Democratic House and a Hillary Clinton presidency—and I am going to do everything I can to make that happen.”