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Candidate Profiles

Pat Donnellson

Pat Donnellson graduated from one of the top law schools in the country. Donnellson then clerked for a Supreme Court justice for two years before taking a position with a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children. Donnellson worked diligently to get states and the federal government to pass health care and welfare laws that would help children. Donnellson then joined a prestigious law firm in Chicago, Illinois, and worked there until becoming a U.S. senator from Illinois 10 years ago. Donnellson is married with one child, an eight-year-old daughter.

Donnellson is an outspoken opponent of the death penalty and supports a federal constitutional amendment to ban its use regardless of the circumstances. Instead, Donnellson advocates investing heavily in education and community policing, which will help curb violence. Donnellson also opposes the private ownership of any type of firearm, no matter what its intended use.

The most important crisis facing our country and the world, Donnellson feels, is global warming. For this reason, the United States needs to require trucks and sport utility vehicles to meet the same emission standards as cars. In addition, the United States should set the goal of having all cars run on alternative fuels by 2025. Donnellson supports raising the gas tax to pay for research into alternative fuels and providing government subsidies for oil companies that transition into producing alternative fuels or for auto manufacturers that transition into producing vehicles that run on alternative fuels. Donnellson also wants to provide federal funding for mandated environmental education in schools.

Donnellson feels strongly that the United States is damaging its reputation around the world by not using diplomacy in actions toward other countries. The United States should not take military action without

UN approval, Donnellson believes, unless directly attacked by another country. Donnellson would also like to create a U.S. Department of Peace.

At home, the lack of available health care insurance for all citizens is a vital concern. Donnellson wants to create government-sponsored health care that would be available for all. Individuals could still subscribe to private health care insurance, but those plans would be taxed to help pay for the government plan. Donnellson also wants to end private, for-profit hospitals.

To improve every person's quality of life, Donnellson wants the federal government to raise the yearly income level at which a family is considered to be in poverty. This way, more people at the lower end of the income spectrum would qualify for transitional assistance. Donnellson also wants to make housing a "right" for all Americans. In one of the most affluent countries in the world, no one should have to be homeless.

The United States is a country of immigrants, and for that reason, Donnellson strongly supports an "open borders" policy. As such, Donnellson advocates a less-restrictive immigration policy. Donnellson argues that the president should grant amnesty to all undocumented immigrants currently in the United States and then put into place an immigration policy that will allow the families of these new citizens to immigrate more easily. The United States should have no quota system for immigration—anyone who wants to come should be able to.

Terry Lankan

After college, Terry Lankan worked as an antipoverty advocate in Houston, Texas, and fought for after-school programs to keep kids out of trouble and away from gangs. Lankan then served on the Houston City Council for nearly a decade before becoming mayor. After two terms as mayor, Lankan served eight terms as a U.S. representative from Texas. Lankan has been married for 20 years and has twin sons, who are 17, and a 13-year-old daughter.

Lankan opposes the death penalty for all crimes but terrorism because the death penalty has never proven to be a deterrent for committing a crime. Instead, Lankan argues that the United States should place a greater emphasis on preventing crime and rehabilitating first-time offenders. Lankan also believes that citizens should not be allowed to own handguns, because those guns are most frequently used to commit crimes. However, Lankan is not opposed to ownership of other types of firearms.

The environment is a serious concern for Lankan, who supports tax credits for both individuals and businesses who voluntarily commit to reducing carbon emissions through the use of solar power, hybrid cars, and other methods. Lankan also supports tax credits for businesses that invest in alternative energy research and feels that the government should offer other incentives to the oil and auto-manufacturing industries to encourage them to turn to alternative fuel production and consumption.

On foreign policy, Lankan worries that the United States is viewed abroad as an aggressive, imperial nation. Lankan would like to see the United States play a lead role in strengthening the United Nations and expects that this would take some of the pressure off the U.S. military to act as the world's police force. Lankan also wants to expand the State Department's role in military planning.

Lankan supports providing publicly subsidized health insurance to needy children and to any elderly or disabled person who applies for it. Lankan also feels that publicly subsidized health insurance for the needy should cover 100 percent of prescription drug costs.

Reducing poverty levels is important to Lankan, who grew up in extreme poverty and now supports universal, full-day preschool and kindergarten for all children living in poverty. Lankan wants to expand subsidized housing and Medicaid, the publicly subsidized health insurance program for the poor, to include new immigrants. Lankan also supports time limits on welfare benefits so that people will move toward financial independence rather than relying on government handouts.

Lankan is in favor of an immigration policy that encourages undocumented immigrants to apply for permanent resident status rather than deporting people who are in the country illegally. Lankan wants to see the process for becoming a citizen become less rigorous and time-consuming and thinks that a more straightforward approach for attaining citizenship will discourage people from coming to the United States illegally. Lankan also wants to put in place a program that will encourage businesses to help undocumented-immigrant employees apply for citizenship.

Cory Mathews

Cory Mathews is a decorated veteran of the U.S. Air Force. Mathews served as a combat physician during Operation Desert Storm and earned a Purple Heart after saving the lives of three fellow soldiers when their helicopter was shot down. Upon returning from Desert Storm, Mathews worked as an emergency room physician before running for office. After serving two terms as a Democrat in the Florida legislature, Mathews was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and has served five consecutive terms. Mathews has been married for more than 20 years and has two daughters, ages 19 and 14.

Mathews opposes the death penalty except for instances of terrorism. To keep communities safe and to prevent crime, Mathews wants to expand federal funding for community-policing initiatives.

Mathews is a strong environmentalist who has co-authored and consistently voted in favor of clean air and water laws and legislation to enact tougher restrictions on car emissions. To help the United States end its dependence on oil, Mathews wants to encourage the development of alternative fuel sources. As president, Mathews would work to end subsidies for oil and gas companies and reinvest the savings in research to develop alternative fuel sources.

Mathews believes that although the United States needs to be a strong and independent nation, it also needs to rely on diplomacy, rather than military action, to solve global problems. Except for instances in which U.S. security is directly threatened or the United States is directly attacked, Mathews would like to see the United Nations take more responsibility for peacekeeping missions. Mathews believes that the lives of our young people are too precious to squander and that U.S. military action should be used only as a last resort.

At home, Mathews would like to see Medicaid, the publicly subsidized health insurance program for the poor, expanded to include any children who do not have health insurance. Mathews also wants to allow the federal government to bargain with drug companies in the United States and abroad to acquire the safest drugs at the lowest prices for people on Medicaid.

During a lengthy career in public service, Mathews has fought to roll back tax cuts that help the wealthiest individuals in order to fund public education and social programs for the poor. Mathews is a strong believer in the need to eradicate poverty in America. Through a minimum wage hike and additional job-training programs, Mathews believes that the United States can eliminate poverty and strengthen the middle class.

Although illegal immigration is a problem, the only way the United States will solve the problem is by offering a realistic solution that appeals both to Americans and to undocumented immigrants. Mathews proposes that a guest worker program be created. This would allow people to come to the United States for up to three years to obtain work. At the end of that three years, they could continue to work in the United States if they begin the process of becoming a citizen. Otherwise, they would need to return home. Anyone currently in the United States illegally, Mathews believes, should be admitted immediately to the guest-worker program. The government should also provide English-language classes for people enrolled in the program, as not knowing English is often a major impediment to applying for citizenship.

Taylor Andrews

Taylor Andrews attended Oxford University in England as a Rhodes Scholar, eventually earning a PhD in political science. Andrews then spent several decades as a professor at a prestigious university in California before becoming the president of a university in New Jersey. Andrews has been married for 27 years and has a son and daughter, ages 22 and 20. After a distinguished career as a scholar, Andrews retired from education and ran for governor of New Jersey. Andrews is currently serving a second term as New Jersey's governor.

Andrews supports minimum-sentencing laws for criminals but wants to increase funding for local law enforcement in order to make streets safer and to prevent crime. Andrews supports the death penalty as currently used. Andrews does not support any additional limits on an individual's right to own weapons and feels that the United States needs to focus on criminals who possess weapons illegally, not citizens who own them legally.

Andrews is a strong believer in the power of unregulated business to improve the American quality of life. Andrews thinks that minimal environmental restrictions are necessary, but also believes there is no need for additional restrictions. Instead, Andrews feels that government needs to focus on areas of the country, such as toxic waste sites, that need to be cleaned up. Cleaning up these sites and rebuilding on them, Andrews believes, will create jobs and provide future sites for businesses and homes.

Andrews believes that the United States needs to be a moral leader in the world. It should fight for freedom and democracy wherever there is a need. While this will ideally involve diplomacy rather than military action, Andrews says that the country should not hesitate to use its military when U.S. interests are threatened or attacked. However, Andrews feels that American forces should never be deployed to another country without having an exit strategy.

Andrews advocates keeping the current publicly subsidized health insurance programs, Medicare and Medicaid, but wants the federal government to provide no additional funding for health programs and no federal funds for stem cell research or cloning.

Andrews feels strongly that any American can succeed with hard work and perseverance. The answer to society's problems is not to require the federal government to put more money into social programs but to encourage individuals to take responsibility for themselves. Andrews wants to see federal tax cuts across all income levels so that Americans can keep more of the money they earn. Additional tax cuts for U.S. businesses will encourage those businesses to use the additional revenue to create more jobs. Andrews also wants to allow faith-based organizations to compete for federal funds to provide social services for the poor, rather than the federal government providing those services.

Finally, Andrews feels that the government needs to do more to encourage legal immigration and discourage illegal immigration. Andrews feels that the most effective way to do that would be to create a guest worker program that allows people to come to the United States for up to three years to obtain work. At the end of the three years, they could continue to work in the United States if they begin the process of becoming a citizen. Otherwise, they would need to return home. Anyone currently in the United States illegally would need to return to his or her home country to apply for the guest worker program.

Casey McMahon

Casey McMahon is a Hollywood star who became politically active while campaigning for Ronald Reagan when he ran for president. McMahon then decided to run for the Senate and served three terms as a U.S. senator from California. McMahon has been married twice and has no children.

McMahon feels that the best way to prevent crime in America is to keep criminals off the streets. Thus McMahon supports expanding mandatory minimum-sentencing laws and supports the death penalty as currently used. McMahon also feels that it is important for law-abiding Americans to be able to protect themselves and their families and wants to see all bans on an individual's right to own firearms removed. Instead of preventing law-abiding citizens from owning firearms, McMahon wants the government to step up its efforts to seize illegal firearms to prevent them from being used in criminal activities.

McMahon feels that it is not the government's responsibility to protect the environment and wants to see current environmental restrictions on businesses rolled back. Instead of imposing legal restrictions, the government should offer businesses tax incentives for voluntary compliance. Global warming is definitely a problem, but McMahon feels that its threat is exaggerated by alarmists who want the government to prevent manufacturing and energy companies from being successful.

Around the globe, the United States needs to act to promote its national interests, ideally using diplomacy and multinational actions, but should act alone if necessary. Freedom and democracy are basic human rights, and the United States should fight for them wherever there is a need.

The current publicly subsidized health insurance plans, Medicare and Medicaid, must be maintained to prevent a health care crisis in the United States. But McMahon wants the government to allow private companies to administer parts or all of the plans in order to make them more cost efficient. McMahon also opposes allowing Medicaid to cover any part of the cost of an abortion.

McMahon opposes having the federal government provide social services. Instead, federal funds should be distributed to states based on their poverty rates. States should then be responsible for administering any social service programs appropriate for their population. This will allow states to focus on the issues most important to their citizens. McMahon also supports a federal law requiring all states to fund full-day kindergarten in districts with a child poverty rate above 20 percent.

Illegal immigration is a serious problem. McMahon believes that the way to solve the problem is to strengthen security at U.S. borders and enact much stricter punishments for people who enter this country illegally. McMahon proposes adding 20,000 troops to guard the borders. Because deporting undocumented immigrants often does not deter them from reentering the country, and because putting them in jail actually punishes U.S. taxpayers, McMahon thinks that the business owners who hire undocumented immigrants should be punished with fines and jail time. When business owners stop hiring undocumented immigrants, people will stop coming to this country illegally.

J. A. Curley

J. A. Curley served as an economic adviser to presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush. Afterward, Curley founded a conservative interest group designed to reduce the size of the federal government and then ran for attorney general of South Carolina. Curley served two terms as attorney general and one term as South Carolina's governor. Curley is married with six children, ages 12 to 22.

Curley feels that the United States should have a zero-tolerance policy for criminal behavior and that increasing the penalties for crimes is the best deterrent for criminal behavior. For this reason, Curley supports the expansion of mandatory minimum-sentencing laws and wants the death penalty to be applied automatically to felonies that involve drug trafficking or terrorism.

Curley wants to see national parks privatized so that companies can efficiently manage them and determine the best use for the land. In some instances, Curley argues, there might be better uses—such as mineral or oil extraction—for the land than preservation. Curley disputes global warming as a theory perpetuated by alarmists and does not support increased federal funding for alternative fuel research or any laws that would require businesses to adopt costly, environmentally friendly policies.

The United States, Curley feels, is the champion of democracy and freedom and should defend those ideals wherever they are threatened. Curley feels that the United States should act alone to promote the country's national interests when necessary and has called for the UN headquarters to be moved from New York City to Switzerland.

Curley has also called for an end to the publicly subsidized health care programs, Medicare and Medicaid. Instead, federal health insurance programs should be opened to private-sector competition to decrease the cost of administering such programs. Curley also opposes the use of federal funds for stem cell research, abortion, and cloning.

Curley has called for an end to federally funded welfare programs, arguing that it is not the government's responsibility to provide social services. A much more fiscally responsible approach to helping people, Curley argues, is to provide full federal funding for faith-based social service agencies that can administer social services to the needy.

The United States has long been overly tolerant of people who enter this country illegally, Curley believes. Since deportation does not seem to deter undocumented immigrants from returning illegally, the United States needs to do more to protect its borders. Curley wants the government to build a fence along the length of the U.S.-Mexico border to prevent undocumented immigrants from crossing into the country. Curley also wants to station 10,000 to 15,000 soldiers along the border with Canada to prevent illegal immigration across that unprotected border. Anyone who wants to come to the United States can go through the legal immigration process.