

Democrats' addition to abortion stance lauded by some faith leaders: New provisions aimed at reducing the number of abortions

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Progressive evangelical and Catholic leaders voiced their support for the Democratic Party's platform plank on abortion, citing new provisions aimed at reducing the number of abortions by improving women's health care, adoption services and income-support programs.

In a conference call sponsored by his progressive evangelical group Sojourners, Jim Wallis called the platform position a "historic step forward" in reconciling the party's support of abortion rights with the concerns of Christians who oppose the practice.

"We're moving from symbolism to substance here, [offering] practical solutions toward in fact making abortion more rare," Wallis said August 12.

Wallis was joined by five other evangelical and Catholic voices, including Orlando megachurch pastor Joel Hunter, a registered Republican who has advocated expanding conservatism beyond "traditional values" issues.

A 51-page draft of the platform was approved August 9 in Pittsburgh. It was to be voted on at the convention in Denver, August 25-28.

While the platform again affirms a woman's right to choose, it differs from previous years by offering more tangible support for addressing the issue of abortion. The platform calls for programs to "reduce the number of unintended pregnancies" and stresses the need for income-support and adoption programs.

"We worked hard to provide language that gives evangelicals and Roman Catholics the sense that they can participate in the Democratic Party without compromising their convictions," said Tony Campolo, a Baptist minister who served on the party's

platform committee.

Catholics contributing to the Sojourners' discussion included Lisa Cahill, a professor of theology at Boston College, and Chris Korzen, executive director of Catholics United and author of *A Nation for All*.

The 2004 Democratic Party platform stated that "abortion should be safe, legal and rare" and supported family planning and adoption incentives. It did not, however, provide specific language on how to reduce the number of abortions.

"They've broken through the narrow traditional barrier that only focused on a woman's right to choose on abortion, and now support in writing and in legislation a woman's right to choose life," Hunter said.

Carlton W. Veazey, president of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, said in a statement that "the draft platform shows a growing understanding that reproductive choice and rights include not only abortion but also the right to have the resources to care for children." -*Religion News Service*