

Ensuring Civil Rights and Justice for All

By Howard Dean, M.D.

One of the reasons that I am running for president is to restore the ideal of the American community. Unfortunately, this ideal is under assault by the current Administration. The President pushes forward an agenda and policies that divide us. He divides us by race by using the word quota. He divides us by gender by attacking a woman's right to make her own health care decisions. He divides us by sexual orientation by supporting senators who have slandered gay Americans.

This is a campaign to unite and empower people everywhere. It is a call to every American, regardless of party, to join together in common purpose and for the common good to save and restore all that it means to be an American.

We seek an America where it is not enough to protect our own rights under the law, but where it is a duty and an obligation for each of us as Americans to make sure every American is equal under the law.

We seek an America where it is not enough to proclaim the words freedom, self-government, and democracy, but where it is a duty and a responsibility to participate together in common purpose with the sacrifice required of each of us to give those words meaning.

We seek an America where it is not enough that our own children have health care and good schools, but where our neighbors' children do as well.

This campaign is about who we are as Americans. It is the ideal of the American community that we seek to restore.

Fundamental to the restoration of the American community is the reaffirmation of the principles of Civil Rights and Justice. As President, I will work tirelessly to promote these principles:

- I will support affirmative action, from which we have all benefited, because it has strengthened our institutions and provided opportunity.
- I will unflinchingly defend a woman's right to choose against those who would take away this right.
- I will nominate federal judges with outstanding legal credentials, records of professional excellence, and demonstrated commitment to the constitutional principles of equality, liberty, and privacy.
- I will work to expand equal rights to same-sex couples and ban workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, strengthen federal protections against anti-gay violence, give federal employees the right to name same-sex partners as beneficiaries, remove bias from our immigration laws, and end the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.
- I will work to ensure that racial profiling ends and I will direct my Attorney General to use regulatory authority under existing anti-discrimination laws the 1964 Civil Rights Act to define racial profiling as discrimination, and to withhold federal funds from state and local law enforcement that violate those regulations.
- I will appoint an Attorney General who sees our constitution not as a document to be manipulated, ignored, and violated, but who recognizes and respects it as the fabric that binds the American community together.
- I will oppose expansion of the Patriot Act, efforts to remove sunset clauses included in the act, and I will seek to repeal the portions of the Patriot Act that are unconstitutional.
- I will put the weight of my office behind the Innocence Protection Act, proposed by Senator Patrick Leahy, which would expand access to DNA testing and strengthen the quality of lawyers for defendants facing the death penalty.
- I will protect the civil rights of immigrants detained by the Department of Homeland Security.
- I will work for federal legislation to restore the right to vote in any federal election for ex-felons who have paid their debt to society.

Together we have the power to halt this President's divisive, destructive policies. Together we can restore the ideal of the American community. Integral to this restoration is the reaffirmation of the shared belief that everyone, regardless of race, sex, creed, sexual orientation, or immigration status is entitled to equal protection and justice.