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A Look Through the Eyes of the Democratic Party

Today the Democratic Party unites the people of the United States of America. With an upcoming historic election of a new president, political tensions are high and many Americans are trying to figure out who deserves their vote. However, at the same time, many Americans may be unaware of the specific beliefs that each of these political parties bases their campaigns on. Because politics is mainly about convincing and gaining the support of the people, much of political literature is structured in such a way to appeal to a certain audience. It is for this reason that political literature needs a more in depth look. More specifically, the platforms of each of the major political parties. Through proper analysis, one will not only have a better understanding of the message behind each party's beliefs and values but can also determine if the argument being conveyed is justifiable. Through the Toulmin-style of rhetorical analysis, one must first determine the main points highlighted within the source. It is the claim of an argument that forms the basis for the supporting details.

In the preamble of the Democratic Party Platform, the warrant driving the party's beliefs is implied through their strong beliefs in cooperation, unity, and empowerment. To me, this demonstrates the Democratic Party's value for the "common man," or the hard-working individuals—from all ethnicities—that make this country great. Through embodying this ideal, the party is able to establish their pathos, or warrant an emotional response in its audience. In order to sanctify this belief, the Democratic Party goes on throughout the preamble to list key

issues that are facing our nation. Through the power of repetition, or using statements like: “We believe...,” or “Democrats believe...,” the message of a unified group of individuals sharing common beliefs on these important issues is highlighted. These beliefs include basic rights to education, protecting civil liberties, the promotion of equality, and much more.

The particular plank of the platform I decided to focus on was the Democratic Party’s perspective on the environmental state of our planet. As stated in the preamble, one of the main claims of the party is to become the clean energy superpower of the 21st century. By building a clean energy economy, securing justice for the environment, and protecting our nation’s lands and waters, the Democratic Party believes that it can accomplish this feat. The party helps their readers easily comprehend the focus of their claims by addressing the main points, or thesis of the particular plank, at the beginning of its section. However, a claim means nothing without proper evidence and support. The Democratic Party breaks up their claim into three major aspects in order to highlight what they believe to be the important aspects. By supplying their audience with supporting evidence, the Democratic Party is able to convey how it will lead the United States of America to become the clean energy superpower of the 21st century.

In order to combat climate change and lead our nation toward a cleaner, brighter future, one must first address the issues that are associated with climate change. “Cities from Miami to Baltimore are already threatened by rising seas. California and the West have suffered years of brutal drought. Alaska has been scorched by wildfire. New York has been battered by superstorms and Texas swamped by flash floods.” (2016 Democratic Party 27). By providing facts and detailed accounts of real world scenarios, the Democratic Party is able to draw in their audience through emotional appeals and ultimately demonstrate that climate change is a serious issue. The Republican Party’s nominee, Donald Trump, has claimed that climate change is just a

“hoax” (27). The Democratic Party refutes this claim in regards to this year being on track to break global temperature records. This can be analyzed as the rebuttal or the disproving of the Republican Party’s viewpoint on this topic. As a result, climate change is, in fact, a “real” issue still facing our nation (27). However, this evidence could be made clearer. “The best science tells us that without ambitious, immediate action across our economy to cut carbon pollution and other greenhouse gasses, all of these impacts will be far worse in the future” (27). Notice how the Democratic Party does not specifically state who they are referring to in regards to “the best science.” The party also fails to mention exactly how increased pollution will be bad for our nation’s future, possibly leaving skepticism in the audience. However, as highlighted in the following sentence, another appeal to pathos can be seen through the fact that future generations will be the ones left with the damage being ignored in the present. By discussing these important issues in an emotional sense, the Democratic Party is able to gain more support rather than raise more questions.

In support of their claim of becoming a global leader in clean energy, the Democratic Party claims that we as a nation must first build a clean energy economy. In order to achieve this goal, and further support their claim, the Democratic Party goes on to list the possible ways that they will transform America. The important aspects I found included: reducing oil consumption, implementing legislature like the Clean Power Act, and furthering research in technologies that reduce greenhouse gasses. The Democratic Party was able to establish a compelling argument through the use of detailed support. For example, the party provided the reader with deadlines, numerical statistics, and specific legislature to provide backing for their proposed ideas. The warrant of these proposed ideas is aimed to help protect the nation’s environment. From there the party’s platform described how they would secure justice for the environment.

In terms of environmental justice, the Democratic Party opened their argument with a real-world example. The scenario emphasized in this part of the platform was the recent water crisis in Flint, Michigan. By connecting to a topic that has been in the mainstream media, the Democratic Party is able to better connect with the “common man,” those who follow current events, and especially those experiencing the effects first hand. Another warrant that I believe is implied in the platform is equality. The Democratic Party values equality for all Americans. The backing that I found to support this warrant comes from the fact the Democratic Party is very adamant about “big businesses” being held accountable for their cause of climate change. Not only do they want these corporations to own up to their wrongful doings, but also give back to society. “All corporations owe it to their shareholders to fully analyze and disclose the risks they face, including climate risk. Those who fail to do so should be held accountable. Democrats also respectfully request the Department of Justice to investigate allegations of corporate fraud on the part of fossil fuel companies accused of misleading shareholders and the public on the scientific reality of climate change” (29).

The final supporting detail for the Democratic Party’s viewpoint on climate change and the state of our planet’s environment dealt with the conservation of our own nation’s lands and waters. The Democratic Party was able to provide logos or a logical appeal on the issue of salmon fisheries in Alaska. Knowing that these fisheries are some of the largest in the world as well as a major economic industry, the party demonstrated a proactive approach to handling the proposed Bristol Bay drainages. “We support efforts by the EPA under the Clean Water Act to establish proactively science-based restrictions on discharges of dredged or fill material” (30). Through this logical approach, both the economic and geological well-being of the nearby area can be sustained. “In order to be effective in keeping our air and water clean and combating

climate change, we must enlist farmers as partners in promoting conservation and stewardship” (30). Another appeal to logos came from the fact our nation is made up of almost 50 percent agricultural lands. The Democratic Party wanted to make it clear that agricultural practices have a significant impact on our water, land, oceans, and climate. By partnering up with farmers and promoting conservation, the Democratic Party will be able to further its agenda on combating climate change and ultimately becoming a clean energy superpower.

After further analyzing the Democratic Party’s platform for the presidential campaign, I can conclude that the issue of climate change is, in fact, a “real” concern. Not only does the Democratic Party make sure this issue is highlighted in their platform, but they state their claim of becoming the clean energy superpower of the 21st century. Through a Toulmin-style argument, the Democratic party was able to effectively provide evidence and propositions to dealing with our planet’s climate concerns. Although, all parts of the Toulmin-style argument may not have been highlighted—like a qualifier, or a statement limiting the claim—the evidence and the argument as a whole are effective. After this analysis, I have gained further insight into the Democratic views on climate change and our nation’s environmental issues.

Works Cited

"2016 Democratic Party Platform." *2016 Democratic National Convention*. 21 July 2016. Web. 6 Sept. 2016.