

Washington Square Citizens League

Discussion Forum

7:00-8:15 pm

Monday, September 9, 2024

Contrasting Harris and Trump on Their Domestic Policy Plans and Proposals in the 2024 Election

Gary Mucciaroni, moderator

Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump have put forward very different domestic policy priorities, positions, and proposals. These differences are even more pronounced if we consider “Project 2025” -- a document that the Heritage Foundation, with close links to the MAGA movement, has developed. In this session, we will focus especially on the differences between the presidential candidates on 4 key issues: inflation and the economy, abortion, immigration, and poverty. We will also try to gain some overall understanding of Project 2025 and consider whether supporters of Kamala Harris should develop a document similar in scope and ambition.

Harris and Trump Offer Worlds-apart Contrasts on Top Issues in Presidential Race

by Will Weissert, Jill Colvin, and Seung Min Kim, AP, August 19, 2024

Vice President Kamala Harris has replaced President [Joe Biden](#) atop the presidential ticket, but his “finish the job” campaign mantra can still largely apply to her top policy goals. She’s promising to continue a lot of what Biden was doing during the past four years if she’s elected to four of her own.

Former President [Donald Trump](#), for his part, is itching to get back to the White House and accomplish what he didn’t during his first term.

Since Biden [stepped down last month](#), the vice president has announced few major policy proposals beyond a new push to prevent price gouging by food producers and grocers and plans to cut taxes for families, attempt to bring down homebuying and rental prices and reduce medical debt. Harris also used a recent rally in Las Vegas, where the economy runs on the hospitality industry, to call for [ending taxes on tips paid to restaurant, hotel and other service employees](#). That came more than a month after Trump used his [own Las Vegas rally](#) to promise the same on tips.

Despite her lack of specifics on policy, the vice president has committed generally to some major policy positions on various matters, promising to sign sweeping legislation that’s unlikely to clear Congress.

Those include measures codifying the federal right to an abortion, increasing the federal minimum wage, imposing an assault weapons ban, requiring universal background checks for firearm purchases and advancing several long-stalled voting rights measures.

While details are still rather vague, there’s no doubt that whoever prevails in November will seek to shape the landscape of American life in ways wholly distinct from their opponent.

On nearly every issue, the choices — if the winner gets his or her way — are sharply defined.

The onward march of [regulation and incentives to restrain climate change](#), or a slow walk if not an about-face. Higher taxes on the super rich, or cuts to benefit high-wage earners. Abortion rights reaffirmed, or left to states to restrict or allow as each decides. Another attempt to legislate border security and orderly entry into the country, or [massive deportations](#). A commitment to stand with Ukraine or let go.

Here's where each candidate stands on some top issues:

Abortion

HARRIS: The vice president has called on Congress to pass legislation guaranteeing in federal law abortion access, a right that stood for nearly 50 years before being overturned by the Supreme Court. Like Biden, Harris has criticized bans on abortion in Republican-controlled states and promised as president to block any potential nationwide ban should one clear a future GOP-run Congress. Harris was the Democrats' most visible champion of abortion rights even while Biden was still in the race. She has promoted the administration's efforts short of federal law — including steps to protect women [who travel to obtain abortions](#) and [limit how law enforcement collects](#) medical records.

TRUMP: The former president often brags about appointing the Supreme Court justices who overturned *Roe v. Wade*, ending the constitutional right to an abortion. After dodging questions about when in pregnancy he believes the procedure should be restricted, Trump announced last spring that decisions on access and cutoffs [should be left to the states](#). He said [he would not sign](#) a national abortion ban into law. But he's declined to say whether he would try to limit access to the [abortion pill mifepristone](#). He [told Time magazine](#) that it should also be left up to states to determine whether to prosecute women for abortions or to monitor their pregnancies.

Climate/Energy

HARRIS: As a senator from California, the vice president was an early sponsor of the Green New Deal, a sweeping series of proposals meant to swiftly move the U.S. to fully green energy that is championed by the Democratic Party's most progressive wing. Harris also said during her short-lived 2020 presidential campaign that she opposed offshore drilling for oil and hydraulic fracturing. But during her three and a half years as vice president, Harris has adopted more moderate positions, focusing instead on implementing the [climate provisions of the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act](#). That provided nearly \$375 billion for things like financial incentives for electric cars and clean energy projects. The Biden administration has also [enlisted more than 20,000 young people](#) in a national "Climate Corps," a Peace Corps-like program to promote conservation through tasks such as weatherizing homes and repairing wetlands. Despite that, [it's unlikely that the U.S. will be on track](#) to meet Biden's goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 — a benchmark that Harris hasn't talked about in the early part of her own White House bid.

TRUMP: His mantra for one of his top policy priorities: "DRILL, BABY, DRILL." Trump, who in the past cast climate change as a "hoax" and harbors a particular disdain for wind power, says it's his goal for the U.S. to have the cheapest energy and electricity in the world. He'd increase oil drilling on public lands, offer tax breaks to oil, gas and coal producers, speed the approval of natural gas pipelines and roll back the Biden administration's aggressive efforts to get people to switch to electric cars, which he argues have a place but shouldn't be forced on consumers. He has also pledged to re-exit the Paris Climate Accords, end wind subsidies and eliminate regulations imposed and proposed by the Biden administration targeting energy-inefficient kinds of lightbulbs, stoves, dishwashers and shower heads.

Federal government

HARRIS: Like Biden, Harris has campaigned hard against “Project 2025,” a plan authored by leading conservatives to move as swiftly as possible to dramatically remake the federal government and push it to the right if Trump wins back the White House. She is also part of an administration that is already taking steps to make it harder for any mass firings of civil servants to occur. In April, [the Office of Personnel Management issued a new rule](#) that would ban federal workers from being reclassified as political appointees or other at-will employees, thus making them easier to dismiss. That was in response to Schedule F, a 2020 executive order from Trump that reclassified tens of thousands of federal workers to make firing them easier.

TRUMP: The former president has [sought to distance himself](#) from “Project 2025,” despite his close ties to many of its key architects. He has nonetheless vowed an overhaul of the federal bureaucracy, which he has long blamed for blocking his first term agenda, saying: “I will totally obliterate the deep state.” The former president plans to reissue the Schedule F order stripping civil service protections. He says he’d then move to fire “rogue bureaucrats,” including those who “weaponized our justice system,” and the “warmongers and America-Last globalists in the Deep State, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the national security industrial complex.” Trump has also pledged to terminate the Education Department and wants to curtail the independence of regulatory agencies like the Federal Communications Commission.

Immigration

HARRIS: Attempting to defuse a GOP line of political attack, the vice president has talked up her experience as California attorney general, saying she walked drug smuggler tunnels and successfully prosecuted gangs that moved narcotics and people across the border. Early in his term, Biden made Harris his administration’s point person on the root causes of migration. Trump and top Republicans now blame Harris for a situation at the U.S.-Mexico border that they say is out of control due to policies that were too lenient. Harris has attempted to counter that by arguing that [a bipartisan Senate compromise](#) that would have included tougher asylum standards and hiring more border agents, immigration judges and asylum officers was poised to clear Congress before Trump came out in opposition to it. Harris now says that Trump “talks the talk, but doesn’t walk the walk” on immigration. The vice president has endorsed comprehensive immigration reform, seeking pathways to citizenship for immigrants in the U.S. without legal status, with a faster track for young immigrants living in the country illegally who arrived as children.

TRUMP: The former president promises to mount the largest domestic deportation in U.S. history — an operation that could involve detention camps and the National Guard. He’d bring back policies he put in place during his first term, like the Remain in Mexico program and Title 42, which placed curbs on migrants on public health grounds. And he’d revive and expand the travel ban that originally targeted citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries. After the Oct. 7 Hamas attack on Israel, he pledged new “ideological screening” for immigrants to bar “dangerous lunatics, haters, bigots, and maniacs.” He’d also try to deport people who are in the U.S. legally but harbor “jihadist sympathies.” He’d seek to end birthright citizenship for people born in the U.S. whose parents are both in the country illegally.

Project 2025: A wish list for a Trump presidency, explained

By Mike Wendling, BBC News, August 16, 2024

It is billed as a policy "wish list" for the next Republican president that would vastly expand presidential powers and impose an ultra-conservative social vision on the US.

Donald Trump has disavowed the Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 document, though many of its authors worked for his previous administration. Links between the Trump campaign and Project 2025 have been highlighted by the former president's critics, and this attack line will likely continue at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago this month.

Here's your guide to what the document contains.

Who wrote Project 2025?

It is common for Washington think tanks of all political stripes to propose policy wish lists for potential governments-in-waiting. The conservative Heritage Foundation first produced policy plans for future Republican administrations in 1981, when Ronald Reagan was about to take office. It has produced similar documents in connection with subsequent presidential elections, including in 2016, when Trump won the presidency. A year into his term, the think tank boasted that the Trump White House had adopted nearly two-thirds of its proposals.

The Project 2025 report was unveiled in April 2023, but liberal opposition to the document has ramped up now that Trump has extended his polling lead. The Republican nominee himself has distanced himself from the proposal. "I know nothing about Project 2025," he posted on his social media website, Truth Social. "I have no idea who is behind it. "I disagree with some of the things they're saying and some of the things they're saying are absolutely ridiculous and abysmal."

But the team that created the project is chock-full of former Trump advisers, including director Paul Dans, who was chief of staff at the Office of Personnel Management while Trump was president. Mr Dans left the project in late July, clearing the way for Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts to take over. He said he was leaving during the presidential election season in order to "direct all my efforts to winning, bigly".

Russell Vought, another former Trump administration official, wrote a key chapter in the document and also serves as the Republican National Committee's 2024 platform policy director. More than 100 conservative organisations contributed to the document, Heritage says, including many that would be hugely influential in Washington if Republicans took back the White House.

The Project 2025 document sets out four main policy aims: restore the family as the centrepiece of American life; dismantle the administrative state; defend the nation's sovereignty and borders; and secure God-given individual rights to live freely.

Here's an outline of several of its key proposals.

Government

Project 2025 proposes that the entire federal bureaucracy, including independent agencies such as the Department of Justice, be placed under direct presidential control - a controversial idea known as "unitary executive theory". In practice, that would streamline decision-making, allowing the president to directly implement policies in a number of areas.

The proposals also call for eliminating job protections for thousands of government employees, who could then be replaced by political appointees.

The document labels the FBI a "bloated, arrogant, increasingly lawless organization". It calls for drastic overhauls of this and several other federal agencies, as well as the complete elimination of the Department of Education.

What does the Republican party platform say?

The party platform includes a proposal to "declassify government records, root out wrongdoers, and fire corrupt employees", pledges to slash regulation and government spending. But it stops short of proposing a sweeping overhaul of federal agencies as outlined in Project 2025.

Immigration

Increased funding for a wall on the US-Mexico border - one of Trump's signature proposals in 2016 - is proposed in the document. Project 2025 also proposes dismantling the Department of Homeland Security and combining it with other immigration enforcement units in other agencies, creating a much larger and more powerful border policing operation.

Other proposals include eliminating visa categories for crime and human trafficking victims, increasing fees on immigrants and allowing fast-tracked applications for migrants who pay a premium.

What does the Republican party platform say?

Not all of those details are repeated in the party platform, but the overall headlines are similar - the party is promising to implement the "largest deportation programme in American history".

Climate and economy

The document proposes slashing federal money for research and investment in renewable energy, and calls for the next president to "stop the war on oil and natural gas". Carbon-reduction goals would be replaced by efforts to increase energy production and energy security.

The paper sets out two competing visions on tariffs, and is divided on whether the next president should try to boost free trade or raise barriers to imports.

But the economic advisers suggest that a second Trump administration should slash corporate and income taxes, abolish the Federal Reserve and even consider a return to gold-backed currency.

What does the Republican party platform say?

The party platform does not go as far as Project 2025 in these policy areas. The platform instead talks of bringing down inflation and drilling for oil to reduce energy costs, but is thin on specific policy proposals.

Abortion and family

Project 2025 does not call outright for a nationwide abortion ban. However, it proposes withdrawing the abortion pill mifepristone from the market, and using existing but little-enforced laws to stop the drug being sent through the post.

The document suggests that the department of Health and Human Services should "maintain a biblically based, social science-reinforced definition of marriage and family".

What does the Republican party platform say?

On this issue at least, the document differs fairly substantially from the Republican platform, which only mentions the word "abortion" once. The platform says abortion laws should be left to individual states and that late-term abortions (which it does not define) should be banned.

It adds that that access to prenatal care, birth control and in-vitro fertilisation should be protected. The party platform makes no mention of cracking down on the distribution of mifepristone.

Tech and education

Under the proposals, pornography would be banned, and tech and telecoms companies that allow access would be shut down.

The document calls for school choice and parental control over schools, and takes aim at what it calls "woke propaganda" It proposes to eliminate a long list of terms from all laws and federal regulations, including "sexual orientation", "gender equality", "abortion" and "reproductive rights".

Project 2025 aims to end diversity, equity and inclusion programs in schools and government departments as part of what it describes as a wider crackdown on "woke" ideology.

What does the Republican party platform say?

Project 2025's proposals in this policy area are broadly reflected in the Republican platform, which in addition to calling for the abolishing the Department of Education, aims to boost school choice and parental control over education and criticises what the party calls the "inappropriate political indoctrination of our children".

Social Security

Although Heritage has long supported reforming the country's public pension plan, Project 2025 barely touches this third rail of American politics.

What does the Republican party platform say?

The platform says Social Security is a "lifeline" for millions of retired Americans and Republicans will "restore Economic Stability to ensure the long-term sustainability" of the programme.

Project 2025 is backed by a \$22m (£17m) budget and includes strategies for implementing policies immediately after the presidential inauguration in January 2025.

Heritage is also creating a database of conservative loyalists to fill government positions, and a programme to train those new workers.

Democrats led by Jared Huffman, a congressman from California, have launched a Stop Project 2025 Task Force.

And many of the proposals would likely face immediate legal challenges from Trump's opponents if implemented.

Harris and Trump Offer a Clear Contrast on the Economy

By Jim Tankersly for *The New York Times*, Aug. 16, 2024

Both candidates embrace expansions of government power to steer economic outcomes — but in vastly different areas.

Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald J. Trump flew to North Carolina this week to deliver what were billed as major speeches on the economy. Neither laid out a comprehensive policy plan — not Ms. Harris in her half-hour focus on housing, groceries and prescription drugs, nor Mr. Trump in 80 minutes of sprinkling various proposals among musings about dangerous immigrants.

But in their own ways, both candidates sent voters clear and important messages about their economic visions. Each embraced a vision of a powerful federal government, using its muscle to intervene in markets in pursuit of a stronger and more prosperous economy.

They just disagreed, almost entirely, on when and how that power should be used.

In Raleigh on Friday, Ms. Harris began to put her own stamp on the brand of progressive economics that has come to dominate Democratic politics over the last decade. That economic thinking embraces the idea that the federal government must act aggressively to foster competition and correct distortions in private markets.

The approach seeks large tax increases on corporations and high earners, to fund assistance for low-income and middle-class workers who are struggling to build wealth for themselves and their children. At the same time, it provides big tax breaks to companies engaged in what Ms. Harris and other progressives see as delivering great economic benefit — like manufacturing technologies needed to fight global warming, or building affordable housing.

That philosophy animated the policy agenda that Ms. Harris unveiled on Friday. She pledged to send up to \$25,000 in down-payment assistance to every first-time home buyer over four years, while directing \$40 billion to construction companies that build starter homes. She said she would permanently reinstate an expanded child tax credit that President Biden temporarily established with his 2021 stimulus law, while offering even more assistance to parents of newborns.

She called for a federal ban on corporate price gouging on groceries and for new federal enforcement tools to punish companies that unfairly push up food prices. “My plan will include new penalties for opportunistic companies that exploit crises and break the rules,” she said, adding: “We will help the food industry become more competitive, because I believe competition is the lifeblood of our economy.”

Questions remain over the rest of Ms. Harris’s agenda, including which tax increases she would favor to offset those tax cuts and spending programs. The nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, which is focused on deficit reduction, estimated on Friday that the plans she unveiled would raise the federal deficit by \$1.7 trillion over the next decade, if not paid for.

But the main thrust of Ms. Harris’s vision is clear: a mixture of government intervention and government assistance, all meant to help Americans climb their way into the middle class.

As Gene Sperling, a former economic aide to three Democratic presidents who is a senior economic adviser to Ms. Harris, put it: “Her focus on an opportunity economy and her stress on homeownership show she is focused like a laser on both lowering costs to help families make ends meet and being able to get ahead by owning a home or starting a small business.”

Mr. Trump’s pitch is simpler: He says that he made America rich the first time he was in the White House, and that he would do it again. He also blames Ms. Harris and Mr. Biden for a surge in inflation under their administration. “I gave Harris and Biden an economic miracle, and they quickly turned it into an economic nightmare,” he said in Asheville on Wednesday, omitting the job and income losses of the 2020 pandemic recession on his watch.

Like Ms. Harris, though, Mr. Trump offered a string of pledges on how he would wield government power to intervene in markets and help consumers. He said he would direct his cabinet to somehow bring down the cost of car insurance in the first 100 days of his presidency, or possibly even the first week. He said he would cut energy prices in half.

He said he would deport millions of immigrants to bring housing prices down.

Mr. Trump also ratcheted up a promise to impose new taxes on imported goods — from every country the United States trades with — in a bid to force more companies to make products in America. Previously, Mr. Trump said he would tax imports at a 10 percent rate; in Asheville, he said the rate could be as high as 20 percent. Those tariffs are paid by U.S. importers, not foreign countries. Economic research suggests they would, to some degree, raise prices and serve as a tax on consumers.

This, too, is a clear vision of federal power reshaping the economy. It is a foundation of Mr. Trump's economic agenda and, in many cases, a break from the conservative economic orthodoxy that long dominated the Republican Party.

But Mr. Trump has not abandoned all of that tradition. He pledged to continue cutting taxes, including extending cuts for individuals that he signed in a 2017 tax overhaul and eliminating federal income taxes on Social Security benefits and tip income. He also promised to roll back federal regulations of business, including environmental regulations and restrictions on oil drilling on some public lands.

An analysis based on reports from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget suggests that Mr. Trump's tax cuts could add \$7 trillion to the deficit over a decade, only some of which would be offset by tariffs or a repeal of tax breaks signed by Mr. Biden. Economists warn that higher deficits could stoke more inflation. Trump aides say his agenda will lower prices. "If you were to cut taxes, deregulate the economy, produce more energy — all of those policies are deflationary, not inflationary," Stephen Moore, a co-founder of the conservative Committee to Unleash Prosperity and a policy adviser to Mr. Trump, told reporters on Friday.

In North Carolina, Mr. Trump and Ms. Harris each sought to cast the other's philosophy of federal power as a threat to the economy and working families.

Mr. Trump warned that Ms. Harris would cause a 1929-style stock crash if elected. Ms. Harris said Mr. Trump's tariffs would amount to "a Trump tax on gas, a Trump tax on food, a Trump tax on clothing, a Trump tax on over-the-counter medication."

There was little overlap in the speeches. Ms. Harris pledged a small amount of deregulation, saying she would cut "red tape" to speed housing construction. Both candidates spoke highly of Medicare.

Ms. Harris had said in recent days that, like Mr. Trump, she supports exempting some tipped income from federal taxes. In Raleigh, she did not mention that particular source of agreement.

Five ways Philly's economy could be shaped by a Harris or Trump presidency

by Layla A. Jones, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 28, 2024, 5:00 a.m. ET

Former President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris are offering very different economic agendas. Here's what that could mean for Philadelphians.

Harris rolled out a series of economic promises this month. She said she'll ban grocery price gouging, provide a subsidy for first-time homebuyers, make a \$40 billion investment in constructing affordable housing, and expand the child tax credit.

Trump has also homed in on the economy, but is offering different solutions. Trump pledged to sign an executive order to lower inflation and, in a campaign speech, he announced plans to increase U.S. oil drilling and halve energy prices within 18 months.

He's also expected to extend his 2017 tax cuts and promised a tariff of at least 10% on imported goods.

“In the end, the policy differences between the candidates are really quite dramatic,” said Stephen Herzenberg, an economist who runs the left-leaning Keystone Research Center. But what could all this mean for Philadelphians? It turns out, quite a bit. Here’s what to know.

How would Trump and Harris address the cost of goods?

People care about how much everything costs. Both candidates are addressing that with pitches that aim to lower individual expenses and increase cash on hand, but voters trust Trump with the economy more than Harris, according to an August New York Times/Siena College poll of Pennsylvania voters.

“If I’m a strategist in either party, I’m telling you to talk about the economy in a plain way,” said Frank Robinson, a former director at Philly-based consulting firm Econsult Solutions. “That’s how you’re going to get the votes.”

Harris has promised to ban price gouging on food and groceries, an idea that Sen. Bob Casey has made a hallmark of his Senate campaign. Casey promoted the proposal during last week’s Democratic National Convention.

Harris also vowed to go after mergers and acquisitions that consolidate too much power with too few grocery-related corporations.

Economist Joshua Mask, an assistant professor at Temple University, said that approach could actually lead to higher prices. Mask estimates that Harris’ approach would reduce supply, which could increase hoarding, increase grocery prices, and increase inflation.

“If you’re blaming inflation on corporate profit margins, that’s not going to be the culprit,” Mask said.

Trump wants to eliminate taxes on Social Security income, a move the nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget said could add \$1.8 trillion to the national deficit over 10 years. Trump also wants to restore his high tariffs on foreign imports, which he believes will protect U.S. production. Economists, including Mask, said the tariffs would cause inflation and basically be a tax on U.S. consumers.

How do Harris and Trump differ on tax policy?

Another Harris proposal that could mean a lot to Philadelphia families is a restoration of the Biden-Harris administration’s expanded child tax credit, with an additional \$2,400 to families with babies younger than 1. In Philadelphia, the poorest big city in the nation, those extra dollars went far for families during the pandemic.

The expanded tax credit was in effect during the 2021 tax period under President Joe Biden’s American Rescue Plan. He sought to make it permanent, but it was blocked in the Senate. Harris’ plan would revive and expand it.

Under the Biden-Harris expansion, the childhood poverty rate dropped from 9.7% to 5.2%.

One of Trump’s biggest policy wins as president was the tax cuts he signed into law in 2017. If he returns to the White House, Trump wants to further cut the corporate income tax rate from 21% to 15%, a move he claims would spur investment and create more jobs. Harris wants to raise taxes for big business. Her campaign has pledged to increase the rate to 28%. Before Trump’s cuts, the tax rate was 35%.

Harris has also proposed lowering taxes for the middle class. The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, found that Harris’ corporate tax increase could reduce the U.S. deficit by \$1 trillion over 10

years. Trump's cuts, on the other hand, could increase the deficit by nearly \$5 trillion according to the Senate budget committee.

Both campaigns drew sharp contrasts between the other in responses to The Inquirer. The Harris campaign said Trump and his running mate, Sen. JD Vance of Ohio, want "tax giveaways for their billionaire friends."

Kush Desai, a spokesperson for Trump's campaign in Pennsylvania, contended that the former president offered a better economic agenda for the state. "Pennsylvanians remember the low inflation, hot job market, and rising wages that they experienced under President Trump, and no amount of spin is going to change that reality," Desai said.

Harris' affordable housing agenda could be a 'boon' to Philadelphia.

Lack of specifics from both Harris and Trump make it hard to know exactly what would happen in Philly if either won the November election, experts said. Harris' housing agenda is one that stands to have a pronounced and positive impact on Philadelphians, if it's done right, Robinson and Mask said. Harris' housing affordability package includes \$25,000 in down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers, an incentive package for builders, and a \$40 billion fund to incentivize local governments to build affordable housing. "We need the housing, we need the jobs, we need to continue to build our businesses," said Robinson, who left Econsult in August to become director of economic development in Montgomery, Ala. "We need all those things, and if we do it right, it could be a boon." Mask, the Temple University economist, said that, in concert, all those housing proposals could be effective.

Trump's focus on fossil fuels helps parts of Pa., but Philly benefits from Harris' clean energy agenda. Trump's commitment to "drill, baby, drill" for fossil fuels might bode better in parts of the state, such as Southwestern Pennsylvania, bolstered by the fracking industry.

In Philadelphia, the Biden-Harris administration's investment in clean energy is bringing hundreds of jobs to the city, said Mark Muro, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. The \$750 million Mid-Atlantic Hydrogen Hub coming to Philly, Delaware, parts of South Jersey, and parts of Southeastern Pennsylvania is expected to bring a total of 20,000 jobs across the region.

On the flip side, Harris would need to counter clean energy's disruption to traditional fossil fuel jobs, said Muro. "I have been a critic of, in the past, our ... neglect of transition costs," Muro said of the impact that comes with shifting from one economic engine to another. In the past, "we didn't do as much to help people hurt or left behind."

Pennsylvania's economy does better when Democrats run the White House

A recent study from the Keystone Research Center found that the state's economy has performed better under Democratic presidents for four out of five economic indicators. The unemployment rate is lower, employment growth is higher, household income grows more and more equally, and the gross domestic product or GDP growth rate is higher when a Democrat is leading the country, Herzenberg and other researchers found. Starting in 1949, Pennsylvania lost about 140,000 manufacturing jobs under Republican presidents, including Trump, while gaining 60,000 manufacturing jobs under Democratic presidents, including a gain of 28,000 during Biden's administration, according to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics cited by Keystone.

Under Republican administrations, the real median wage is higher, but low-wage workers see more growth under Democratic presidents.

“The choice is whether we want to lock in shared prosperity or we want to get back to an economy for the 1%, and that contrast basically describes the partisan divide,” Herzenberg said.

Trump and Harris Embody a Stark Partisan Divide on Fighting Poverty

The New York Times, By Jason DeParle, Aug. 26, 2024

The two presidential candidates can both point to records of pushing poverty rates down, but their approaches could hardly be more different. The presidential race between Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald J. Trump presents the sharpest clash in antipoverty policy in at least a generation, and its outcome could shape the economic security of millions of low-income Americans.

As the onset of the pandemic in early 2020 threatened to decimate the economy, Mr. Trump signed a large stimulus package that included substantial aid for the poor. When President Biden and Ms. Harris took office in 2021, their administration pushed more big aid expansions through Congress as part of their pandemic-recovery plan, driving the poverty rate still lower.

But if the two candidates’ responses to that extraordinary period had elements in common, the lessons they took from it were very different.

In the pandemic-era programs, now mostly expired or reduced, Ms. Harris and other Democrats found reinforcement of their faith in the government’s power to ameliorate hardship. If elected, she would seek to sustain or expand many of them, including subsidies for food, health care and housing, and revive a change to the child tax credit that essentially created a guaranteed income for families with children. Those policies helped temporarily cut the poverty rate by more than half from prepandemic levels. She backs a \$15 federal minimum wage, which Republicans have fought, and is a vocal supporter of programs like subsidized child care and paid family leave meant to help balance work and family.

Mr. Trump says little about his role in pandemic-era poverty programs, which many Republicans view as having been excessive and fraud-ridden. Instead, he touts his 2017 tax cuts, which he credits for boosting the economy and reducing poverty to a prepandemic low, and he has vowed to extend them when they expire next year. Most of the direct benefit from those cuts went to corporations and the wealthy.

Mr. Trump’s poverty plans are otherwise vague, but his record is one of animosity toward the programs Ms. Harris would defend or expand. He sought to remove millions of people from Medicaid and food stamps, many of them low-wage workers. He has sought to reduce the number of people with subsidized housing and raise their rents.

While Democrats would build on pandemic policies, Republicans blame trillions in federal spending under President Biden and Ms. Harris for triggering inflation and say the aid discouraged work.

“The parties are further apart than they have ever been, at least in my memory, and I’m pretty old,” said Isabel V. Sawhill of the centrist Brookings Institution, who has been tracking antipoverty policy since the Kennedy administration. “The Democrats have gone left and the Republicans have gone right.”

There is often a difference between how candidates campaign and how they govern, and either aspirant’s power to carry out their policies will depend on who controls Congress.

Both candidates have been short on detail, and there are divisions within the parties. Senator JD Vance of Ohio, Mr. Trump’s running mate, recently suggested a large tax credit for families with children, though it is not clear whether it would be available to the poor or if it has Mr. Trump’s support.

But their records while in office provide a road map to their priorities and approaches. Poverty was already falling when Mr. Trump won his tax cut in his first year in office, but the pace of decline more than doubled in the next two years, to 11.8 percent in 2019, then a record low, using a Census Bureau figure that includes taxes and aid. While economists debate whether tax cuts were responsible, the episode reinforced Republican faith in them.

Still, about twice as many Americans would have been poor that year without safety net programs for food, housing, health care and other needs — many of which Mr. Trump sought to cut — according to an analysis of census data by the Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy. “I don’t see how you can say these programs don’t make a difference,” said Christopher Wimer, the center’s director.

When pandemic aid kicked in, the poverty rate fell further, to 9.1 percent in 2020 under Mr. Trump, and to 7.8 percent in the first year of the Biden-Harris administration. That is a reduction of a third from prepandemic levels, despite the crisis. As the aid fell, poverty rose to 12.4 percent in 2022, the last year for which there is data.

Here is a look at the partisan differences on anti-poverty programs:

Health Care

No anti-poverty measure costs more, affects more people or divides the parties as much as health care. The 2010 Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare, added millions of people to Medicaid, subsidized private insurance and cut the share of Americans who are uninsured nearly in half. Democrats regard it as a generational achievement.

Republicans say it costs the government and consumers too much and stifles innovation. They voted to repeal it dozens of times, and Mr. Trump’s high-profile effort to do so failed only narrowly. He then took action to suppress enrollment in the private plans and last year wrote, “Obamacare Sucks!”

Mr. Trump says he is no longer committed to killing the law but would make it “much better” without saying how. The Republican Study Committee, a Trump-aligned faction of House Republicans, recently proposed cutting \$4.2 trillion over 10 years from the subsidies, Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program, a reduction of more than half. Democrats call such plans a repeal by another name.

Ms. Harris previously supported a version of “Medicare for all,” a government-run system for everyone, but now says she would focus on strengthening the Affordable Care Act. Her campaign suggested she would preserve temporary increases in the subsidies for private plan, which led to record enrollment. The latest Biden White House budget also seeks new aid for people in the 10 states where Republicans declined to expand Medicaid.

Nutrition

The modern food stamp program was created a half-century ago in a bipartisan deal and has intermittently retained bipartisan support. But Republican criticism of the program grew after a large increase in the rolls during the Great Recession proved enduring.

Mr. Trump has been especially critical, arguing that the program discourages work and attracts fraud. He repeatedly sought to shrink eligibility and expand work requirements, and every budget he issued would have cut spending on it by at least 25 percent, according to a forthcoming analysis by Robert Greenstein of the Brookings Institution. Alleging abuse, Mr. Trump once warned of a “food stamp crime wave.”

Where Republicans see “welfare,” Democrats see “nutritional support.” The Supplemental Nutrition Program, as food stamps are formally known, “must not only be protected but expanded,” Ms. Harris said as a senator, while proposing a large increase in children’s benefits.

By revising nutritional standards over Republican objections, the Biden administration raised average benefits by more than a quarter, the largest gain in the program’s history. About one in eight Americans now receives a monthly benefit of about \$210 a person.

Similar fights have emerged over free school meals, which were offered to all students during the pandemic. Supporters say universal meals reduce stigma, and the Biden administration changed the program’s rules to encourage more schools to provide them. Republicans see wasteful spending. At least eight states have adopted universal meals, including Minnesota, where Ms. Harris’s running mate, Gov. Tim Walz, championed the change.

Housing

New construction for affordable housing in Kalamazoo, Mich. A Biden-Harris administration plan including expanded housing aid for the poor was narrowly rejected by Congress. Credit...Jamie Kelter Davis for The New York Times

Ms. Harris and Mr. Biden broke new ground in their 2020 campaign with a party platform that promised housing aid “for every eligible family,” seeking to address funding shortfalls that have left only a quarter of eligible households receiving help and wait times extending to years.

But they made little progress.

Mr. Biden and Ms. Harris included expanded housing aid for the poor in the 2021 “Build Back Better” plan, a multitrillion-dollar package of domestic initiatives. It would have renovated public housing and significantly increased the number of vouchers available to rent private apartments. Congress narrowly rejected the plan (which the conservative Heritage Foundation called the “largest welfare increase in U.S. history”) and the administration did not return to the issue in a significant way.

While Ms. Harris emphasized housing in a recent economic plan, she focused on home buyers and housing production, not subsidies to poor renters. This year’s party platform trims the ambition of the promised voucher expansion to low-income veterans and people leaving foster care.

Mr. Trump pursued opposite aims. He proposed to reduce housing vouchers by 250,000, or about 10 percent, a cut about the same size as the increase the Biden-Harris team proposed. He unsuccessfully sought new work requirements and rent increases. And he undid a high-profile rule meant to reduce racial discrimination, saying it would “destroy the suburbs.” The Biden administration has worked to reinstate it but has not finalized a new rule.

The parties clash on homelessness policy, too. The Biden-Harris administration embraces “Housing First,” which provides apartments to the homeless without demanding treatment for problems like drug abuse or mental health. Getting people off the streets saves lives, supporters say, and treatment is more effective when people have homes.

The Trump administration said the approach encouraged self-destructive behavior and urged Congress to curb it. Mr. Trump has campaigned on putting homeless people in camps.

The Child Tax Credit

On one issue, the candidates sometimes sound the same: Mr. Trump and Ms. Harris both helped expand the child tax credit and both boast about it. But they support very different plans.

Mr. Trump doubled the credit in his 2017 tax cut, giving families up to \$2,000 per child to defray child-rearing costs. But his measure omitted the poorest children. About a third failed to get the full credit because their parents earned too little, and a tenth received nothing. Republicans saw a simple principle: tax cuts aid taxpayers, not low-income people who pay little or nothing in federal income taxes.

Democrats revamped the credit during the pandemic, temporarily raising it to \$3,000 per child (\$3,600 for the youngest children). Most notably, the money went to all poor and middle-class children, regardless of whether parents had jobs. That turned a tax credit into a policy the United States had never embraced: a guaranteed income for families with children, at a one-year cost of more than \$100 billion. Child poverty fell by more than half from prepandemic levels as a result of the credit and other pandemic aid.

That measure expired after one year, and the Biden administration, facing unified Republican opposition, lost a fight to extend it. The credit reverted to its Trump-era form and child poverty returned to the highest level since 2018.

Ms. Harris has called the return of the broad credit a top priority and would add a \$6,000 benefit for infants. In Minnesota, Mr. Walz won a state credit of \$1,750 that includes all low- and moderate-income families. “This is what takes children out of poverty,” he said.

Most Republicans have called such programs welfare schemes, warning that unconditional cash aid will discourage work and marriage, leading to more poverty.

The seemingly fixed lines blurred a few weeks ago when Mr. Vance suggested in a television interview he might back a \$5,000 per child credit. He is loosely affiliated with a conservative faction sympathetic to working-class aid, and some saw his comments as an effort to reposition the party. But Mr. Vance has not said if the poor would qualify, and queries to his campaign went unanswered.

Taxes and Budget

Aid for the poor depends in part on tax policy: More revenue makes it easier to provide help, less makes it harder. The candidates diverge in profound ways.

Mr. Trump would permanently extend his 2017 tax cut, which expires next year, at a 10-year cost of roughly \$4 trillion, with the benefits concentrated among corporations and the richest Americans. Republicans argue the costs can be offset by increased growth and decreased spending. But his previous tax cuts swelled deficits.

Each of his budget proposals while in office sought large Medicaid and food stamp reductions. An analysis by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal group, found he would have reduced nondefense discretionary spending to its lowest level as a share of the economy since Herbert Hoover.

The Harris campaign has said she would preserve the tax cuts for households making \$400,000 or less, around 98 percent of Americans. The administration’s most recent budget, released in March, also called for about \$5 trillion in new taxes on corporations and the wealthy over the next decade.

It aimed to divide the new revenue between deficit reduction and new programs, including two of Ms. Harris’s priorities — the \$3,000 child tax credit that includes the poorest families and paid family leave.