
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Platform Pledges and Proposals and Their Fulfillment

The primary duty of a Governor is to the people of the State. I have from time to time made reports to the people covering the wide range of administration and legislation on all of the principal topics which are of immediate interest and concern to the electorate.

In addition to this responsibility, and because of our American form of party government, a Governor has an obligation to report to the official representatives of the party to which he belongs. Candidates for office run on unofficial documents called "platforms" which are, in effect, statements of what these candidates propose to do, if elected, for the conduct of government itself. Therefore, it is right that at this time I should give you a brief summary of the high spots of accomplishment, or lack of accomplish-

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ment, of the pledges and proposals of the Democratic Party made during the last State-wide campaign in the Autumn of 1928. It is clearly and distinctly not within my province at this time to lay down or set forth in any way the issues between the parties during the Autumn of 1930. Those issues will be delineated by the State conventions and expounded by the candidates for State office four months hence.

I start this report by telling you, the members of the State Committee, that I think we all have a right to be positively happy, not merely as party representatives but especially as citizens, because of the definite, practical and progressive series of accomplishments made during the past eighteen months. This period has continued and added to the long series of advances in the science and practice of government during the long Administration of my distinguished predecessor, Governor Smith. I come before you, therefore, in a happy and cheerful frame of mind, with thankfulness to you for the fine support which you have given to me and also thankfulness to the millions of people throughout the State, who, regardless of party, have cooperated with my Administration in furthering the ends of progressive government.

Now as to some of the major questions affecting our State during this eighteen months' period:

First, on the subject of water power, an economic and political contest lasting twenty long years has terminated in a way which I am confident will bring tangible benefits to every household throughout the State of New York in the years to come. The principle of State development of State-owned resources for the primary benefit of the consuming public has at last been acceded to by the Legislature. There is no doubt in my mind that the people of this State understand and will continue to support this basic principle which will prevent private exploitation of public property. The soundness of the Democratic position maintained year after year at last has been accepted.

Hand in hand with water power goes the general subject of the control of utilities. I am confident that the Public Service Commission today is functioning again in accordance with the purposes for which it was originally organized under Governor Hughes in 1907. This is not enough. New theories and new business practices have grown up, so that now many utilities claim the essential right to earn far more than a reasonable rate of return on their investment. They have tried to wipe out any distinction between a public utility and a wholly private corporation engaged in wholly private enterprise. They seek in many instances to earn not seven or eight per cent but thirty, forty and fifty per cent on a large portion of their investment. A Legislative commission appointed a year ago brought in a series of proposed changes in the law, ninety per cent of which changes would have served no useful purpose whatsoever, and left the basic question just where it was before. The proposals of the minority members of this commission, appointed by me, were disregarded by the Republican leaders, but I am not surprised, for under the present conditions of Republican leadership, it requires at least two or three years before public opinion compels these leaders to accept any progressive proposal, whatever it may be, if it happens to be made by a Democrat.

More than this, existing Republican leadership has gone even so far as deliberately to try to thwart and overturn the already expressed will of the voters, as witness the famous Budget Case of last year. The issue in that case was very simple. The voters had approved, through a Constitutional Amendment, an Executive Budget, that is a plan of government expenditures made by the Governor and his administrative officers, this plan to be followed by the Legislature with the right, of course, to eliminate items recommended by the Governor and to add items of their own, subject of course to veto by the Governor. That was the simple purpose of the Executive Budget. The Republican leaders in 1929, the very first year of its operation, sought definitely and deliberately to become budget-makers with the Governor; to have the Budget made up by the Governor and the Legislative Chairmen and furthermore to have these same Legislative Chairmen made responsible

for the actual administrative spending of the money, a positive violation of the Constitution. This had to be carried all the way to the Court of Appeals in order to establish the unsoundness of the position taken by the Republican Attorney-General and the other Republican leaders. The point I want to emphasize is that this great Budget decision which terminated a drag-down and knockout fight between the Republican leaders and myself has established once and for all the functions of the Legislature on the one side and the Governor on the other, as intended by the Constitution, and from now on the Government of our State will proceed in a more orderly and constitutional way. Here is just another illustration of the soundness and constitutionality of the Democratic position in this State consistently held over a long period of years.

Another good illustration of the pressure of a public opinion which understood and supported the Democratic platforms throughout many years relates to Labor legislation. It took years of hammering before we were able to compel a reduction in the hours of labor for women and children in industry. This year that reduction was strengthened and improved by the amendments to the Labor Law which will result in half holidays in our industrial and commercial establishments. By the same token, while a year ago the Legislature had not yet seen the light, this year they capitulated to the law prohibiting the granting of temporary injunctions in industrial disputes without notice of hearing. Also in the matter of occupational diseases we obtained some grudging, half-hearted amendments which go at least a part of the way toward the attainment of a great goal of social justice.

Along the same line, it is worth noting that it was the Democratic Party which first came out squarely in favor of Relief against Old Age Want in its platform of 1928. Last year the Legislature upon my urging took the first steps toward this great essential need, and this year passed what is the beginning of actual relief.

Another excellent illustration of results obtained by constant hammering is on the great subject of Judicial Reform. It is interesting to note that my insistence on a study of the whole subject by citizens representing not only the bench and bar but also laymen, went unheeded in 1929, but this year, apparently to avoid a campaign issue, a commission was named and will soon start its work, the commission carrying out the theory that laymen as well as lawyers should have a hand in the reform of justice.

In one great purpose of our party we must point to a blank record. Purely partisan considerations have prevented the Legislature from doing anything to improve the structure of county and town government. The result is that we continue to operate under a system which is archaic and wasteful and is tending to create a condition of serious financial strain and vastly higher taxes in the local government units throughout the State. Our position does not in any way ask for the consolidation of counties, but does ask for legislation to permit local governments to put through reforms, based on good business organization, if and only, if the localities themselves so desire. It is a practical application of the Democratic belief in Home Rule.

I come directly to a subject which has been prominent in our minds especially during the past two years, the broad question of the so-called welfare of the wards of the State. It became evident over a year ago that the housing conditions in our State Hospitals and Prisons would have to be dealt with drastically and in accordance with a new plan. As a result of surveys by my administration, we fixed on a definite date, the year 1935, by which time a proposed program would give to the State adequate accommodations for all of the patients and prisoners in its charge. This involved the outlay of approximately one hundred million dollars. In spite of definite efforts to try to play politics with the whole subject, the past Legislature gave us appropriations of thirty million dollars toward this end. Nevertheless, by doing this out of the surplus of the State, instead of by a bond issue, as recommended by me the previous year, these buildings appropriated for this year will be built out of current funds, even though they will last for many generations. Thus, the surplus in the State Treasury has been materially reduced. It was only because this year the Republican

leaders were afraid that a continuance of this policy would compel either increased taxes or a stopping of the building program next year that they finally gave in and authorized the submission to the voters this autumn of a fifty million dollar State Institutions Bond Issue. Anybody, who has been in Albany during the past two years, knows the absolute truth of these statements and will willingly testify to their truth unless they are actuated solely by party motives. I trust that the definite program for our institutions will be carried through so that five years from now we will have modern accommodations for every one of the wards of the State, men, women and children.

I am not going to say much about the Agricultural Program which is today a part of the laws of the State. I will merely quote a statement made to me by one of the great agricultural leaders of the West, who, by the way, is an ardent Republican. He said:

"The State of New York in the past two years has accomplished more practical results for the relief of the farmer along the line of lower taxes, better education and more good roads than has the Federal Government or any other state of the Union in the past ten years."

Let me, once and for all, make clear that I give due credit to the Legislature for the enactment of many progressive and useful measures, but in the last analysis people are of a mind to go further back and find out who first initiated those measures. The Agricultural Program is a very good illustration. The Legislature deserves all possible credit for passing the agricultural bills and appropriations, but at least some credit should be given to the Governor's Agricultural Advisory Commission which met first in November, 1928, as an unofficial committee appointed by me, and at that time, two months before any legislative leader had even thought of the proposals, laid down what has since become the law.

Certain measures proposed by the Democratic Party in their 1928 platform or by me subsequently, have been, as usual, pigeonholed in the Legislature. Bills, for instance, to strengthen and safeguard our Elections have never seen the light of day. The bill to carry out the intent of the revision of the Constitution by providing a four-year term for Governor was, as usual, thrown into the waste-paper basket.

On the whole, however, the accomplishments have far and away outweighed the failures.

On the strictly administrative side, the State Government has had to initiate an enormously enlarged organization for the construction of public works of all kinds and during the past year and a half the progress of State contracts has shown a marked speeding up, so that we are not only taking care of the new projects in reasonable time, but are eliminating many of the delays under the old contracts.

All that I can ask of you, the members of the State Committee, is that you will tell the simple truth in regard to the actions of the State Administration during the past year and a half. I want no glossing over, no exaggerations, no claiming of credit for which the Administration is not responsible. At the same time, it is your duty and privilege as citizens to see to it that the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth is told to the voters of this State this summer and autumn. Let us remember that we will be confronted by partisans who on many occasions will tell a part truth with the clear intention of giving a distorted or false picture of the actual situation. That is why I emphasize the request that the whole truth be told. Half a truth is often worse than a deliberate lie. Make it clear that your campaign is directed against the Republican leadership which continues to play politics, to emphasize non-essentials, to straddle or shut their eyes to real issues, refusing to come out squarely and definitely pro or con on proposals which affect and involve the individual lives of the men, women and children of this State.

The record shows that the Democratic Platform is not regarded either by Democrats or other citizens of the State as a mere scrap of paper. It has been a definite declaration of purpose to accomplish certain things in certain ways. That will be our attitude and determination in the future as it has been in the past.