



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on August 28, 2012

Boehner: No One Reads GOP Platform

Amid all the [cheers](#) and [jeers](#) for the 2012  Republican Party platform, House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) let slip the truth about that document: He hasn't read it, and he doesn't know anyone who's ever read it or any other platform.

At a *Christian Science Monitor* breakfast August 27, *Human Events'* John Gizzi asked Boehner about his comfort level with the recently drafted GOP platform.

"The Republican platform is circulating about in different copies, online, in print," said Gizzi. "Based on the reports you've seen, is this a good document to run on fully, and in particular, the parts about auditing the Federal Reserve, number one, and the review of government agencies as to their efficiency without calling for shutting them down. Are those things you feel that Republican House members can run on comfortably?"

Boehner's response: "Well, I have not seen the platform, but from every indication that I've heard I don't see any major changes in this platform from what we have had in the past. And if it were up to me I would have the platform on one sheet of paper. Have you ever met anybody who read the party platform? I've not met ever anybody."

This, to use Michael Kinsley's definition of the word, is a gaffe: when a politician inadvertently speaks the truth. For all the haggling over the details of the Republican platform — [CNSNews.com](#) writes that "some activists work for months just to win the right to attend the convention" and influence the platform — the fact is that no one of any consequence in the party reads, much less adheres to, the party's statement of principles. It exists to convince the grassroots that the party leadership is listening to their concerns and intends to use them as a guide for formulating policy. In practice, however, it is largely ignored.

For example, every GOP platform since 1980 has called for the passage of a human life amendment to the Constitution and the restriction of taxpayer funding of abortion. Yet no such amendment has ever come close to passing Congress in the last 32 years; and Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, continues to receive [generous federal subsidies](#), including \$2.5 billion during the presidency of "pro-life" Republican George W. Bush, six years of which coincided with GOP control of one or both houses of Congress.

As early as 1996, Republicans urged the "elimination of the Departments of Commerce, Housing and Urban Development, Education, and Energy, and the elimination, defunding or privatization of agencies" such as "the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the Legal Services Corporation." Again, despite GOP majorities in Congress and eight years of the Bush administration, every one of those departments and agencies remains in existence — and with a larger budget.

This is not to say that elected officials *never* do what their platforms say they will do. The 2000 Republican platform called for passage of the [American Dream Downpayment Assistance Act](#), and Bush and his fellow Republicans in Congress made it a reality three years later, helping to set the stage for the housing crisis — one instance in which ignoring the platform would have been a good idea.



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Nevertheless, Republican voters ought not be deluded into thinking that the high-flown statements of principle in the platform will have any real bearing on the policies of a Romney administration or a Republican Congress. Nods to auditing the Fed and considering a gold-based currency are clearly intended to attract disaffected Ron Paul supporters, whose concerns will most likely be discarded the moment the polls close on Election Day. (Witness the [chicanery](#) by party elites to prevent Paul delegates even from being seated at the convention and to head off any future challenges to the party establishment.) The platform, in short, is for show. As Boehner said, no one in Washington ever reads it, let alone uses it as a guide to policy.

One more thing: Boehner, as mentioned above, suggested that the platform ought to consist of a single page. "I was on this kick about, oh, I don't know, at least 8 or 12 year ago," he told Gizzi. If the platform were just one page long, he argued, Americans "might be willing to read it." But as CNSNews.com points out, "the 48-page 'A Pledge to America' that [Boehner] and other House Republican leaders released before the 2010 election, included an introduction that all by itself was two pages long."

The house speaker, it seems, pays about as much attention to his own pronouncements as he does to the party platform.

Photo of House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio): AP Images



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