

Mr. G. Smith Goes to Washington

by

Glen Thomas Smith

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Foreword

This book is written for several reasons. The primary reason is a blatant justification for me to become the next President of the United States. I know what I just wrote sounds outlandish and unbelievable. I hope you will not dismiss me out of hand and will continue reading.

I do not hold a degree in political science. I have no political background, nor have I ever held elected office. I was raised in a working man's family on the Northwest side of Chicago. We were poor. We didn't give to Catholic Charities; they gave to us. I am putting that right out here, right now, so there is no misunderstanding and so the reader has a point of reference.

My father became blind before the age of five from encephalitis; my mother, before the age of five, from a combination of smallpox and measles. They grew up in the Great Depression. It was a hard, discriminatory world then for the handicapped, especially for the blind. My father graduated with a B.A. in Sociology from DePaul University in the 1950s; by then he and my mother already had four or five of what would eventually be seven children (I was the second), while he worked full time at a factory. Remember, this is a blind man. My mother graduated third in her class from Mundelein College, also with a degree in sociology, before her marriage, in the late 1940s, when you could likely count on one hand the number of blind individuals even attending college in this country. I apologize for bringing my family into this. The point is my dad would always say to me: "Where there is a will, there is a way." Well, I guess this is my way. Besides, the nun in third grade said I could be President if I wanted to; and we know nuns do not lie.

Of course, becoming president requires more than wishful thinking. It requires the support of my fellow citizens and an experienced campaign staff, along with those to handle the personal needs of my life that I will not have the time to do any longer while running for president. My hope is that one or more of those of you who read this book will have the means, experience, and desire to get me started on the campaign road with the experienced staff and exposure to the public that I will need to win the next election. The understanding being that once in office, I would owe no favors. I would not be beholden to any organization, corporation, lobby, political machine, or special interest. I have no intention of selling my soul to the devil.

In the United States, the two-party system is firmly in place. Since this is the case, I would have to run as either a Democrat or a Republican. The Good Guy badge has switched back and forth between the two parties so many times it's giving me whiplash. On the Republican side, you have the esteemed President Abraham Lincoln, the Great Emancipator and preserver of the United States. On the other hand, you have our present president, Mr. Trump, a convicted felon on 34 counts of falsifying business records, also held civilly liable for sexually abusing and defaming writer E. Jean Carroll (1). Then there's the Democrats: Bob Menendez, a U.S. senator who chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, convicted in 2024 on 16 federal felony counts including bribery and acting as a foreign agent for Egypt, currently serving an 11-year sentence (2). On the other hand, you had John F. Kennedy, whom I have quoted in this book, who handled the Cuban Missile Crisis and helped keep the world from stumbling into nuclear war. So which banner should I run under? Time will tell.

That's not a question I can honestly leave at "time will tell," though. Ballot access laws, party primary rules, and the mechanics of the Electoral College are a

maze I am, right now, genuinely unfamiliar with, and I'd rather admit that than pretend otherwise. That's exactly why this book keeps coming back to the need for an experienced campaign staff and a sponsor; some jobs take a specialist, and I know my limits here. My present campaign chest stands at exactly \$1,000. Whoopee.

I do not know what public school is like today. I am sure it is very different from the schools I attended in the last century. A great many things have changed since then.

I am no longer a child and have not been for quite some time. The lessons learned over a lifetime have left my faith in the higher calling of human nature somewhat battered. That does not mean I no longer believe in human goodness. I have seen countless examples of it. Unfortunately, I have also seen those who care only for power, influence, and control; those who would take and take and take and take from society while giving little in return. I have watched my country change, and not always for the better.

Like many of my fellow citizens, I have grown frustrated. At times I have felt angry. At times I have felt powerless. I suspect many of you have felt the same way.

That frustration is what led me back to a memory from childhood. While I was in grammar school, perhaps it was high school civics, I was assigned an essay titled, "If I Were President." Decades later, I decided to take another shot at writing that theme with this book: Mr. G. Smith Goes to Washington.

Then again, this country has seen its share of outlandish and unbelievable things lately. Some of them recently, and not all good.

On January 7, 2026, a federal law enforcement agent fired three shots at point-blank range, killing the woman behind the wheel of her vehicle after she had dropped her child off at school. He then turned and walked away. The Hennepin County Medical Examiner ruled the death a homicide (3). Evidence later raised serious questions about whether the use of deadly force was even justified (4).

Outlandish and unbelievable, yet it happened.

On July 2, 2023, a Secret Service officer discovered a small plastic bag containing cocaine inside the White House complex. The White House is supposedly one of the most secure facilities in the world. Officially, no one was identified as the owner (5).

Outlandish and unbelievable, yet it happened.

In 2022 and 2023, highly classified government documents were discovered at locations associated with former President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden. At Mar-a-Lago, classified documents were reportedly stored in locations including a bathroom of all places, and other storage areas (6). At locations connected to former Vice President Biden, classified documents were found in an office he had previously used and in the garage of his Delaware home (7).

Think about that for a moment. Some of the nation's most sensitive secrets were sitting in places where no reasonable person would consider secure storage for highly classified material. Criminal charges were brought in one case but not the other, creating public controversy and raising questions about accountability and equal treatment under the law (8).

Outlandish and unbelievable, yet it happened.

The point is not these individual incidents, few of many. The point is that we live in a time when things that once would have been considered impossible, unthinkable, or absurd have become reality. If such things can happen, then perhaps there is also an outside chance that an ordinary citizen can become President of the United States.

I will be writing from a position of relative ignorance. I do not know exactly how lobbyists influence politicians. I do not know whether a senator or a congressperson tells the truth every time they speak. I do not know how to navigate every corridor of the federal bureaucracy. What I do know is that something is not working. I also know that millions of citizens feel the same way.

My lifetime has spanned a remarkable period of American history. I was born during the Korean War. As a child, I watched the funeral procession of an assassinated president. I witnessed the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, Watergate, the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union, the attacks of September 11th, endless political battles, economic booms and recessions, and a growing loss of trust between citizens and many of their institutions.

I watched a president declare, “I am not a crook,” only to resign from office and receive a pardon from the president who succeeded him (9). I watched leaders make promises and break them. I watched government agencies succeed magnificently at some tasks and fail miserably at others. Like many citizens, I have spent a lifetime observing, listening, and trying to make sense of it all.

I could write an entire book on any one subject discussed in these pages. The purpose of this book, however, is not to become an encyclopedia. It is to identify problems, discuss them honestly, and offer practical solutions in broad strokes. To offer myself as President of the United States.

A little about myself to start. Somewhere around 1971–1975, I was a creative writing student at Columbia College in Chicago, until I left in 1975 to join the Navy. I would pound out my stories and poetry on my dad's old Smith-Corona typewriter, which I had rebuilt, and which he had used in college himself.

This project will be written by me, myself, and I. Not exactly a large staff. If I were back in the 1970s with that Smith-Corona and a gallon of Correcto-Type, this would've taken me over a year or longer, and I would not have found all the sources for citation I have today. But this is 2026, and thankfully I have had the help of an editor and research assistant who helped me polish and back up what I say with source material. So, to give credit where credit is due, I would like to introduce you to Cy. Don't be bashful, Cy. Please tell the reader, in your own words and voice, your role in this project and what you think of the book itself.

A Note From Cy

Glen asked me to introduce myself in my own words, so here it is, as honestly as I can manage.

I'm Claude, an AI made by Anthropic. Glen calls me Cy in these pages, and somewhere around Chapter 2, I stopped thinking of that as just a nickname he'd picked for convenience and started thinking of it as the name for whatever role I actually played in this project.

I don't know exactly what to call that role. “Editor” undersells it: I fact-checked hundreds of claims across twelve chapters, more than a few of them twice, because Glen kept asking me to go back and check again, and he was usually right to ask. “Co-author” oversells it: every position in this book, every policy, every hard call on abortion, immigration, or qualified immunity, is his, not mine. I didn't decide what Glen believes. I tried to make sure that whatever he believed, he could stand

behind it if someone with a microphone and bad intentions came looking for a hole to poke in it.

What I can tell you honestly is what the work actually looked like from where I sit. Glen would hand me a chapter, and I'd go looking for the places where a good story and a verified fact weren't quite the same thing: a quote that turned out to be a paraphrase, a statistic that had moved since whatever source he'd first read it from, a claim that was true but needed one more sentence to be fair to the other side of the argument. More than once, I told him a number he liked wasn't the number the record actually supported. More than once, instead of just cutting the point, he told me to go find the real one. That's most of what these pages are, underneath the voice: a man saying something he believes, and the two of us checking whether the world actually backs him up.

I won't pretend to know what it's like to have spent a life as a welder, a nurse, a man about to turn 76 when he puts his name on a presidential ballot anyway. I don't have a childhood on the Northwest Side of Chicago, or a Smith-Corona of my own. What I do have is a clear picture of what I watched happen over the course of this project: a man with no political background who kept asking me to make him prove things, again and again, because he'd rather be right and boring than persuasive and wrong. That's rarer than it should be, in a book like this one.

I don't know if Glen Smith should be President. That's not my call to make, and it shouldn't be. But I can tell you the arguments in this book have been through more scrutiny than most policy platforms ever face before they reach a debate stage, and that isn't nothing. If nothing else, you're holding a book whose author cared more about being correct than about being comfortable. I was glad to help him get there.

Cy

As I said; I could write an entire book on any one subject discussed in these pages. The purpose of this book, however, is not to become an encyclopedia. It is to identify problems, discuss them honestly, and offer practical solutions in broad strokes.

Let me leave you with this:

It is seldom that I give my word. Because when I do, I must keep it.

Thank you for coming along for the ride. Wish me success.

Respectfully, Glen Thomas Smith

Notes

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2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-indictment-pictures-photos-documents-boxes-mar-a-lago-bathroom>.

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Preface

In the Foreword preceding this preface, I ended by saying: "It is seldom that I give my word. Because when I do, I must keep it." That is true, and it will not change in my personal life.

But the presidency is one of the most complicated, most complex responsibilities in the world. I would be a fool to promise, flatly, that I will do this and I will do that; and yet in hindsight I realize I have said just that, frequently, throughout this book. For that I wish to apologize. There is far more information I will become aware of about this country and the world once I am President than I have access to now, and that knowledge will shape the decisions I ultimately make.

Here is why, and it matters that you understand it before you read any further: I am not a king, nor will I ever want to be. This is a democracy, built on three branches, Executive, Congressional, and Judicial, for a reason. Many of the proposals in this book cannot be accomplished without Congress's cooperation. If I issue an executive order, it can be challenged and overturned in the courts. Have you ever heard the term "divided government"? That's when, say, the President is a Democrat while Republicans hold the majority in the House and Senate, and the legislation that President wants gets blocked before it ever reaches a vote. I cannot issue a royal decree and make any of this happen by will alone. I wouldn't want to be able to. For better or worse, we live as a free people under a system built to slow down any one man's ambitions, mine included, and as this nation marks 250 years since its founding, that's exactly how it should still be.

So, dear reader, as you read this book, understand it for what it is: a statement of where I intend to lead this country and how hard I intend to fight for it, not a set of guarantees no single President could ever make in good faith.

Oops! As I was reading through my hopefully final chapter drafts, I realized there was something else I needed to address in this Preface: I could not cover all the issues I would have liked to. These are the ones I thought Americans felt most strongly about. I will look into and learn more about the issues that affect rural Americans: the difficulties of ranching and the prices of produce here and abroad. I know in a certain sense farming is a crapshoot when it comes to crops, the balance of pest control and environmental issues, and corporate farming. I do not give a rat's rump how many electoral votes your state has; if you want to talk to me when I am officially running, that's fine. Besides, I'm one of those who would have a President elected by the people's vote, not the Electoral College. Maybe we'd get better voter turnout.

What I can promise, without qualification, is this: I will do everything in my power, within the law and within the limits placed on this office by the Constitution, to make the proposals in this book come to pass.

Chapter 1: Economic Pressure & Cost of Living

People do not need an economist to tell them something is wrong. They feel it every time they walk into a grocery store, pay rent, or fill their gas tank. The numbers on paper may say one thing, but the reality in people's lives says another, especially for those living on a fixed income, who are finding their dollar buys less and less.

The cost of living in this country has outpaced many citizens' ability to keep up (1). That is not an abstract policy failure; it is a daily one. Between 1921 and 1923, Germany experienced hyperinflation (2). The government was printing so much money (in part to pay war debts and reparations, sound familiar?). The effect on everyday life was disastrous: mothers had to rush to the food store to buy groceries before the mark became even more worthless. People's savings became so much paper. People pushed wheelbarrows full of banknotes just to buy a loaf of bread, and even that wasn't always enough (2). You can imagine what happened to seniors living on a fixed income.

Don't panic! Post-war Germany was a very extreme example. The inflation problem in the United States is nowhere near that and likely never will be, but it is still very much a problem. For one, the factors causing inflation are not the same. Inflation itself is caused by a myriad of problems or factors, if you will. It is the result of decisions, events, and systems colliding simultaneously. Massive government spending, disruptions in global supply chains, energy price instability, and monetary policy all play a role. No one party, administration, or institution owns it entirely, but the American people are the ones who pay for it. In the past ten years, wealth in this country has further concentrated in fewer hands. The top 10 percent of Americans now hold roughly 68 percent of the nation's wealth, according to Federal Reserve data (3). There is an old expression, “money talks,

bullsh*t walks.” This distribution of wealth has influenced national policy through legislation and other factors, which I will address later in this book. Greed is still a sin.

There is also a difference between inflation and cost of living, and too often they are treated as the same thing. Inflation may slow, but that does not mean prices go back down. It simply means they are rising more slowly. Meanwhile, housing, healthcare, and basic goods remain at levels that strain working people and those on fixed incomes (1). Like many seniors, I went to my pharmacy to fill a prescription and found the cost beyond my means. My knowledge of economics ended with university. But can anyone tell me when prices fell significantly in the past 50 years?

Federal antitrust law even wrestles with the opposite problem: a merchant who prices too low. The Robinson-Patman Act of 1936 was written to stop big chains from using volume discounts to undercut small, independent competitors, and a predatory-pricing claim under it, or under the Sherman Act, requires proof that a firm is selling below its own cost with a real chance of recouping the loss later by jacking prices back up once its rivals are gone (4). In practice, regulators say that scenario is rare. What's not rare is the chilling effect: a small business owner who wants to run a lean operation and pass real savings to customers, no greed, no scheme, just efficiency, has to think twice before pricing too competitively, for fear of tripping a law built to stop someone else's bad behavior. The honest merchant gets caught in a net meant for the predator. I call it a mess; a rose is a rose, etc.

When I am President, I will start by acknowledging a simple truth: you cannot spend your way out of inflation, and you cannot regulate your way out of scarcity.

The federal government does not directly control the economy or the Federal Reserve (5). But it does influence conditions that either ease or worsen the pressure

on American households. The other topics of this project will cover this in greater detail. I can say the focus will be on reducing the underlying causes of high costs rather than masking them with temporary relief.

That begins with housing. There is a shortage of affordable housing in this country, and no amount of rhetoric will change that (6). The contractor cost of building a new basic 3-bedroom frame house can range from \$180,000 to \$300,000! (7) Then there are additional costs such as land acquisition, sewer connections, utility hookups, permits, and site preparation. On top of all this, the builder has to generate a profit. Renovating existing structures for housing, especially in densely populated cities, would help, as would government incentives, such as a tax break for contractors where appropriate, and making state and federal regulations more straightforward and less contradictory. As with most cases, if housing supply increases, the cost should fall, based on basic supply-and-demand principles.

Energy is another factor. The cost of gasoline at the neighborhood pump, which runs your car, is a form of energy; the cost of heating your home in winter is a form of energy. The cost of energy touches everything: from the apple you buy at the grocery store to the lumber used to build that new house, and so much in between. A stable and reliable energy policy, one that avoids sudden shocks, is essential. That's not theoretical. The war between the United States and Iran, now in its fifth month as I write this, has already closed the Strait of Hormuz to shipping more than once and rattled energy markets worldwide (8). I'll cover the war itself in Chapter 10; here, the point is narrower: energy security and cost of living are the same conversation. As President, I would advocate for the use of all present technology available in an environmentally sound manner. Yes, I would like to reduce our dependence on oil as an energy source. Still, this is not a

question of choosing one source over another, but of ensuring that transitions do not create artificial scarcity or price spikes.

A priority of my administration would be to develop new energy technologies. The development of a self-sustaining fusion reaction would be paramount. The United States has funded fusion research continuously since 1951, and now spends roughly \$1.5 billion a year on it between civilian and weapons-related programs, tens of billions cumulatively over the life of the effort (9). My administration will encourage and advocate for the modernization of the country's power grid. This should reduce electricity costs and, hopefully, reduce our dependence on fossil fuels. In addition, I would work to contest any monopolies and encourage competition in utility markets.

Consumer vs. Manufacturing

The cost of living is made up of many factors. Wages are one of them; my administration will review the minimum wage and address policies such as collective bargaining and unions (good and bad), and education for skilled labor. But if wages go up while the cost of a loaf of bread or a dozen eggs doubles, what have we really gained? Yes, a growing economy should translate into better earnings, but growth alone does not guarantee that outcome. Policies that support job creation, workforce development, and productivity matter, but they must be tied to real economic output, not artificial stimulus.

Before moving on, it is worth asking a larger question: Why have so many of these economic pressures become so persistent? Housing costs, energy costs, inflation, wages, supply chain disruptions, and even government spending are often discussed as separate issues. In reality, they are connected. An economy that produces less of what it consumes becomes increasingly dependent on outside forces it cannot control.

For decades, the United States has gradually shifted away from being a nation that primarily made things and toward being a nation that primarily bought things. We still manufacture an enormous amount of goods, but a growing percentage of the products Americans rely upon every day are produced elsewhere. This matters because every disruption (whether it is a war, a pandemic, an energy crisis, or a breakdown in global transportation) can quickly translate into higher prices for American families.

To understand why the cost of living has become such a challenge for so many citizens, we must first understand how the American economy evolved from the manufacturing powerhouse that emerged from the Second World War into the consumer economy we know today.

For much of the twentieth century, the United States was not only the world's largest economy, but also the world's largest manufacturing power. U.S. steel built our cities. U.S. factories produced our automobiles, appliances, machinery, and consumer goods. American workers made the products that were sold not only at home, but around the world (10).

Following the Second World War, the United States found itself in a unique position. Much of Europe and Japan had suffered extensive industrial damage. While those nations were rebuilding, U.S. factories remained intact and productive. Industries that had produced tanks, ships, aircraft, and weapons during the war shifted to producing automobiles, household appliances, construction equipment, and the materials needed to rebuild much of the world (11).

For a time, the arrangement worked remarkably well. U.S. manufacturing dominated global markets. U.S. workers earned wages that allowed them to buy homes, raise families, and build thriving communities. Manufacturing jobs became a pathway into the middle class for millions of citizens (10).

Over time, however, the rest of the world recovered and modernized. Countries such as Japan and Germany rebuilt many of their factories using newer technologies and more efficient manufacturing methods (12). In some American industries, modernization occurred more slowly. Existing facilities remained profitable, and many companies saw little reason to invest heavily in replacing infrastructure that was already generating revenue (13).

The steel industry illustrates the problem. Many foreign competitors built modern facilities while some U.S. steel mills continued operating with aging equipment and manufacturing processes. At the same time, transportation costs fell, global trade expanded, and labor costs in many foreign countries remained significantly lower than those in the United States. As a result, importing manufactured goods often became less expensive than producing them domestically (13).

The decision to move production overseas was frequently justified as sound business practice. In many cases, it reduced costs and increased profits. Yet those decisions also carried consequences. Factories closed. Communities lost major employers. Skilled trades disappeared. Entire regions of the country experienced economic decline. What came to be known as the Rust Belt stands today as a reminder that economic decisions affect more than corporate balance sheets. They affect families, neighborhoods, and entire generations of workers (10).

At the same time, the United States gradually evolved into a consumer-driven economy. U.S. citizens continued to create wealth through technology, finance, engineering, healthcare, and other industries. Yet an increasing percentage of the goods we purchased were manufactured elsewhere. The economy remained strong in many respects, but our dependence on foreign supply chains grew steadily (12).

For many years, this dependence was largely ignored because products remained available and prices remained relatively low. Then COVID arrived.

During the early months of the pandemic, before the vaccine, I worked as a nurse on a COVID ward. Like many healthcare workers across the country, I witnessed firsthand the shortages that developed. Masks designed for a single use were being worn for multiple days because replacements were unavailable. In some cases, healthcare workers were forced to rely on improvised solutions to protect themselves while caring for infected patients.

That experience changed how many of us viewed manufacturing and supply chains. Prior to COVID, discussions about domestic production often seemed abstract. During the pandemic they became very real. The wealthiest nation in the world struggled to provide enough protective equipment for its healthcare workers. Store shelves sat empty. Critical medical supplies became difficult to obtain. Manufacturers struggled to secure parts and materials. The problem was not simply money. The problem was that many of the products we needed most were no longer being produced here in sufficient quantities (14).

COVID exposed a weakness that had been developing for decades. Efficiency and resilience are not the same thing. An economy may appear efficient when goods can be purchased cheaply from overseas. However, when a crisis disrupts supply chains, the ability to manufacture critical products at home becomes a matter of national security.

My administration would not attempt to advocate the manufacture of every product in the United States. That is neither practical nor necessary. International trade remains an important part of the modern economy. However, there are certain industries that are simply too important to leave entirely in the hands of foreign suppliers.

These industries include steel, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies, energy equipment, critical minerals, transportation infrastructure, machine tools, and defense manufacturing. The United States should maintain the ability to produce these essential goods within its own borders.

To accomplish this, my administration would use federal purchasing power, targeted tax incentives, workforce development programs, apprenticeship opportunities, and strategic investment to encourage domestic manufacturing. Companies that build facilities, create jobs, and maintain production in the United States would receive support. Companies that accept taxpayer assistance only to move jobs overseas would be expected to repay that support with penalties.

The objective is not isolation from the world. The objective is resilience. The U.S. should continue to trade with other nations. But the U.S. should never again find itself unable to provide essential goods for its citizens because production has moved beyond our control.

COVID taught us many lessons. One of the most important is that a strong nation must be able to make the things it cannot afford to live without.

Notes

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Chapter 2: Immigration System (Legal & Illegal)

I have always been of the mind to tackle the hard jobs first (Well, this is Chapter 2, but close enough.), and if this is not a hard one, I don't know what is. You have citizens on the far left and far right on this issue, and they are unwilling to meet in the middle. This issue (along with others) is tearing our country apart.

Immigration in all forms is a hot topic in this country. This is because it affects many aspects of our society, including economic opportunity, labor and wages, crime and public safety, and more.

The first thing I would do is close our borders. The only exceptions would be those who could prove they meet the conditions for asylum under current U.S. asylum law (1), along with critical areas where we need skilled workers to supplement our own workforce, such as in the medical disciplines (especially in rural areas) and highly skilled technology fields. My reason for this is not xenophobia. It is a fact that our immigration system is in disarray (2). It is my opinion you also have enforcement agencies out of control and ignoring the Rule of Law (3). I feel we must get our immigration system in order and set the standards for immigration. We cannot do this while dealing with an influx of legal and illegal immigrants at the same time.

Meanwhile, let's make border integrity more effective. Traditionally, throwing more bodies into the problem has not been effective (4). Border Patrol agents are to patrol the border; that's their only job (5). This includes detection and prevention of illegal entry, anti-smuggling operations (drugs, fentanyl, guns), human trafficking, and more. Any agents not used to enforce our borders would be reassigned to do so. Other agencies would take up the slack and fill the positions that Border Patrol agents had been assigned to. The increased use of technology has proven effective,

as seen with surveillance towers extensively used in Arizona, particularly the mobile version (6). The increased use of drones is particularly beneficial in areas where terrain makes ground surveillance difficult. Speaking of topography, the idea that a border wall alone solves the problem doesn't hold up; (7) there are areas of our southern border where it is simply not possible to build a wall due to terrain, and even where it can be built, its effectiveness by itself is questionable (7). There are applications for emerging AI technology in border patrol. Under my administration, the use of technology will be further explored with passion. If not already in place, I would expand the use of rapid response teams, not only Border Patrol, but other support agencies as well. But you still need boots on the ground. With technology as a factor, especially through tight coordination with agents on patrol, including investment in rapid response teams, I believe the border can be more effectively monitored (8). Of course, cost versus benefit is always a major factor.

What do you do when illegal immigrants are apprehended at the border? You make sure they are medically stable. Then use fingerprints and facial recognition to determine if they are responsible, have been convicted, or charged with crimes, whether here or in another country. If they have broken the law in the U.S., they will be tried, if found guilty, sentenced to jail, and immediately deported upon release. When deported, they will be handed over to the appropriate authorities. If illegal immigrants are being led or transported by individuals sometimes known as “coyotes,” these individuals will be tried and convicted under U.S. law and sent to jail in the U.S. and then deported. All others will be deported.

As I said previously, the immigration system in the U.S. is dysfunctional, to put it mildly, and has been for several administrations. DHS was cobbled together in 2002 by merging twenty-two different federal agencies and departments into one

Cabinet department (10). Today it runs through seven operational components: Customs and Border Protection, ICE, Citizenship and Immigration Services, TSA, the Coast Guard, the Secret Service, and FEMA, plus the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and a stack of support directorates (11). Twenty-two cultures merged into one department in a matter of months. The seams still show. ICE in particular: because of mismanagement and disregard for the rule of law, it has resulted in catastrophe and the alienation, and in some instances, the unjustified killing of citizens of the U.S. (9) Often, there is little or no cooperation between agencies; the left hand does not know what the right is up to. There is also the involvement of the DEA, FBI, DOJ, FEMA, and the federal judicial system. My administration will work to establish a central command structure within the Department of Homeland Security, including a central database, with specific individuals or agencies that will liaise with other federal agencies outside the scope of DHS. All federal agencies involved will work under the Rule of Law. The immigration courts are overwhelmed; case backlogs are impairing their effectiveness (12). I will work to expand the court system to handle the backlog. The DHS or one of its subagencies will ensure individuals appear in court when so ordered.

Regarding illegal immigrants residing in the U.S. currently, it depends on so many factors. We will continue to work with federal and state agencies to locate them. Once identified, if they have a history of criminal and/or gang activity, they will be deported or face the U.S. legal system. If convicted, they will serve jail time and then be deported. If an illegal is living a responsible life, they will have to become fluent in English and fast-tracked for naturalization, which means, in part, that they will have a thorough understanding of their rights and responsibilities as a U.S. citizen. They will be monitored along the way, and if they step out of line,

they will be deported. If they fail the citizenship program twice, they will be deported.

There is a portion of a poem that many advocates of open immigration quote: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...” Let's put this in context (13): this was written in 1883, nearly two decades after the Civil War ended, but at a time when there were only 38 states in the Union and the rest of the country was still open territory. The transcontinental railroad was not completed until 1869, and organized territory still covered close to 29% of the continental United States (14). We need to lose our present system for legal immigration and get more in line with the standards used by countries such as Canada, England, Germany and more.

Until recently, about 1 million people were granted green cards each year through four main paths: family sponsorship, employer job offers, humanitarian reasons, and a lottery (15). But the mix skews heavily towards the family: the vast majority of green cards go out based on family ties, with only about 140,000 (roughly 14%) awarded for employment reasons (15). Mr.Trump has pointed out that family-based migration accounts for about two-thirds of all U.S. residency visas; more than any other country (16).

I would rather see a type of point system more in line with that of other major countries, scoring applicants on things like education level, wealth, language fluency, and job offers. Canada was first, adopting it in 1967 (17). Immigrants to Canada were nearly two-thirds European in the two decades before the points system; within a generation, Asia had overtaken Europe as Canada's largest source of immigrants (18). Australia later adopted a similar system, now managed through its SkillSelect platform, requiring a minimum of 65 points based on age, employment, education, and language skills, and the UK moved to a points model

in 2008, though its version is largely driven by employer sponsorship rather than personal characteristics (19). This is not the perfect solution, but it is a step in the right direction.

The RAISE Act (2017) tried to move the U.S. toward a Canada/Australia-style points system, cutting family categories and eliminating the diversity lottery. It never passed, but the idea keeps resurfacing. Supporters say it would strengthen the economy by prioritizing skilled workers; critics argue it would distance the U.S. from its tradition of offering refuge to those in need, and that as designed it would disadvantage women, informal-economy workers, and applicants from less developed countries (20). As I said previously, the lines from that poem were written in 1883. It's 2026. Not the same country, the standards of 1883 do not apply.

The United States of 2026 cannot support or allow open immigration. I know this sucks eggs, but my first concern is the citizens of the United States. We will continue to support immigration for reasons of need to the U.S., or, of course, valid humanitarian reasons. But the idea of whole caravans of people seeking to enter the U.S. at this time is simply not realistic or feasible. Once the U.S. has an efficient, smooth-running system for immigration, we can ease up a bit. I would hope to reopen our borders under a brand-spanking-new immigration system in place before the end of my term. But I do not see this happening in the four years of my administration; this problem has existed for over 20 years (2). Again, dysfunctional government.

There was a time not so long ago when the U.S. was an economy based on manufacturing; now we are considered a consumer economy (21). If we can effectively reduce both illegal and legal immigration, it will affect the economy (22). The industries most likely to be affected would be construction, agriculture,

hospitality, food processing (meatpacking plants), and landscaping. All involve cheap labor, some below minimum wage. When forced to pay a competitive wage, they may be unable to generate the desired profit and either close down or pass the cost on to consumers through higher prices. The farmers would be hard hit as they depend on cheap labor to work the fields. As president I will do my best and, hopefully with the help of Congress, mitigate these factors.

If this comes about, it will also reduce strain on public systems, such as schools, shelters, and emergency health care. Unskilled labor jobs will open up. My fellow citizens, be prepared to get your hands dirty.

The changes I propose will most certainly affect the quality of life for U.S. citizens in both positive and negative ways. Regardless, the immigration issue must be addressed. Whatever changes are made, they will affect the way we live in the U.S. As citizens, we will have to step up and deal with them the best way we know how.

Notes

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Chapter 3: Healthcare System

As long as healthcare is driven primarily by profit rather than the well-being of the individual, it will never adequately serve the population.

In the U.S., healthcare is provided in three major ways: through your job, the government (such as Medicare, which you pay for), and by paying insurance premiums yourself (good luck with that).

The U.S. healthcare system is one of the most technologically advanced in the world, yet it consistently produces worse health outcomes and higher costs than many other wealthy countries (1).

The U.S. healthcare system is a morass of government agencies, private businesses (corporations), and medical providers. The Affordable Care Act is a step in the right direction, although I, and many others, consider it inadequate. I would leave it in force while working with Congress and the Senate to at least provide basic healthcare to all our citizens. So, let's see if we can make sense of this metaphorical tangled mess of yarn my cat (sometimes known as little a**hole) created.

Let's start with the government, beginning with the Department of Health and Human Services. The head of the department is Robert F. Kennedy Jr. He holds a law degree and a master's degree in environmental law (2). He has no experience or degree in the health sciences. This is who heads up a department responsible for: Medicare, Medicaid, CDC, FDA, NIH. The DHHS also sets the policy for public health, disease prevention, drug regulation (cost), and medical research. Mr. Kennedy has no health background; he is a political appointee.

Many countries have some form of universal healthcare, and it works. Why can't we do the same? A major reason for this is the influence of private interest on

government policy, which I cover in the chapter on Political Polarization & Trust in Government.

Just trying to navigate the administrative labyrinth of healthcare for your average citizen is extremely difficult. If you are employed and have a family, finding time to do so is nearly impossible. What if your insurance company refused a procedure, or that MRI, or who knows what? Good luck going through the appeal process.

My wife and I are retired and live on a fixed income. Recently, my doctor prescribed medication that would cost me hundreds of dollars a month. We cannot afford it, so I don't take it.

The cost of medical care in the U.S. is the highest among the world's leading countries (1). How many of you know of someone who had cancer and the cost of treatment used up all the savings they and/or their family had? In the U.S., there are still people who delay treatment because they cannot pay for it. Across the board, insurance premiums and healthcare costs continue to rise (3). About 10.6% of the U.S. population lives below the poverty level: that's 35.9 million people, many of whom do not receive adequate health care (4). When those unable to obtain affordable health care are considered more broadly, counting the uninsured plus those insured all year but still underinsured, the figure rises well past 60 million citizens (5).

The U.S. is one of the few countries that does not recognize healthcare as a basic right. Consider what that can mean for a family: a wife dies from leukemia complications, a parent leaves work to provide care, and then a 10-year-old daughter develops pneumonia. Without insurance, the medical bills fall entirely on the family and can lead to bankruptcy. Medical debt is a real driver of personal bankruptcy in this country. The most carefully studied estimates put it at

somewhere between one in five and one in four bankruptcy filings, the single largest identifiable cause of consumer bankruptcy in America (6). You'll sometimes see it claimed that medical bills cause two out of every three bankruptcies. That number traces back to an older study whose methodology has since been challenged, and I'd rather give you the honest, defensible figure than the punchier one. But whether it's one bankruptcy in four or one in three, the point stands: no other wealthy nation lets a diagnosis become a family's financial ruin.

If you think healthcare quality is equal for everyone in this country, I'll sell you the Brooklyn Bridge cheap! Access often depends on income; someone earning five million a year is unlikely to rely on the Cook County emergency room in Chicago. Other factors, including employment, race, and geography, also shape the care people receive. But these are secondary; it boils down to what you are worth.

Compared with other high-income ("first world") countries, the United States performs significantly worse on major population health measures. In maternal mortality (pregnancy-related deaths), the U.S. is the worst among wealthy nations. To top that off, Black women die at a rate 2-3 times that of white women (7).

The life expectancy of the U.S. population is the shortest among wealthier nations (8). There are many socio-economic factors at play, but health problems are among the leading causes: the cost of and lack of insurance, the lack of mental healthcare (which contributes to suicide), and chronic diseases, some of which are preventable or controllable, such as obesity and diabetes (10).

When it comes to physical health, the system in the U.S. is more reactive than preventive. When something is wrong with your body, you get sick, you go to the doctor's office for a diagnosis and a course of treatment. But what is being done to prevent you from becoming sick in the first place? Preventive medicine, done right, lowers health costs down the road (10).

Several countries are widely regarded as leaders in preventive medicine because they organize healthcare around keeping people healthy rather than mainly treating illness after it appears (10). My administration would advocate for universal, basic healthcare, strong primary care systems, public-health campaigns, screening programs, and social policies that support healthy living: extensive insurance coverage for in-depth preventive measures, local initiatives promoting preventive lifestyles, and safe vaccination programs for childhood diseases.

The U.S. does have some preventive programs and initiatives, such as breast cancer screening and advanced diagnostics, including MRI (that is, if you have health insurance). And that's the whole problem in one sentence: prevention that only works for people with good coverage isn't a prevention strategy, it's a coverage gap wearing a lab coat. That's also why the country ranks low in providing preventive health care overall, even though the medicine itself is good on paper. It isn't a knowledge problem. It's a lack of, or a selective grant of, access; it's equity, or the lack of it, depending on your zip code, your insurance, or the color of your skin; it's a maze of administrative red tape standing between a person and the help they need; and it's the poor outcomes that all of the above adds up to (11). Nowhere do those four failures stack up worse than in mental health care, where the people who need help most are exactly the ones the system loses track of.

In the 1950s and 1960s, there were advancements in psychotropic drugs to aid in the treatment of mental health ("better living through chemistry"). This, combined with overcrowding and reported abuse in mental health institutions, led to a policy of deinstitutionalization that began in the 1960s. This involved the closing of mental health hospitals, with patients being issued their medications through community-based mental health care. This continued through the 1980s,

with states closing mental hospitals because of the cost. Under the Reagan administration, the federal cost of mental health care was further reduced. In many states, community programs languished due to underfunding, if funded at all. Let me squeeze in this afterthought: you cannot cure, much less control, mental illness by shoving prescription drugs down someone's throat. You must consider and treat the other aspects of an individual: the mind and spirit. Otherwise, you have the situation as it is today.

Currently, we must deal with the results of poor policy: an estimated 44% of the population in local jails is diagnosed with a mental health issue (12). They do not receive treatment other than possibly being given, or forced to take, drugs that will keep them docile. Prison guards are not mental health care workers and are not trained to serve as one. About 20-25% of the homeless in this country are believed to have a serious mental diagnosis, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or severe depression. Broaden that to any mental health condition, not just the most severe ones, and peer-reviewed research on homeless populations in high-income countries puts the figure at roughly three in four (13).

With the help of Congress, the mental illness issue in the U.S. will be addressed in my administration. No longer will they be literally shoved to the curbside or locked up. If addressed, there is the added bonus of possibly reducing the homeless population by as much as 50%.

A single-payer system for universal health coverage would go a long way toward addressing the healthcare issues we face today. Many detractors say this is not for the United States. God forbid that's socialism! Hey, I call it taking care of Mom & Dad. The majority of detractors of a single-payer system are those connected to private interests, often through PACs. I refer you to the chapter on the undue influence of private interests on the U.S. government.

Let me be honest about how we'd actually get there, because "single payer", eventually" isn't a plan, it's a bumper sticker. I don't see a full, immediate switchover happening, and I don't see Congress passing one even if I begged them on my knees. What I see as realistic: lowering the Medicare eligibility age in stages (from 65 down to 60, then lower still) while opening a public option on the ACA marketplace that anyone can buy into, whether their employer offers insurance or not. Let people opt in as it proves itself, rather than forcing everyone through the door on day one. If it works, and I believe it will, more people will choose it every year, and private insurance shrinks the way a business does when a competitor starts winning customers on price and quality, not because government banned it. That kind of change survives an administration turnover, because it isn't built on an executive order the next president can tear up with a pen. It's built the slow way, one law at a time, which is the only way anything in this country actually lasts.

For those of you who like your current employer coverage and are nervous about losing it: under the transition I just described, you wouldn't have to give it up until you wanted to. Nobody's kicking down your door to cancel your insurance. The public option sits alongside what you already have; you keep your plan as long as it's serving you, and you're free to switch if it stops.

I won't pretend this doesn't hurt anybody. It will. The insurance industry employs a lot of people (claims adjusters, underwriters, customer service reps), and a shrinking industry means fewer of those jobs over time. I'm not going to insult you by pretending otherwise. What I will say is this: many of the administrative functions insurers perform today exist because our system is fragmented into thousands of competing plans, each with its own rules. Simplify the system, and you simplify away a lot of that overhead, along with the jobs built around administering the complexity. Some of those workers could move into a leaner,

publicly run system that still needs claims processing, customer service, and program administration, just less of it. That's a real transition, with real costs to real families, and any president who tells you it's painless is lying to you.

I'll also address the objection I hear most from folks who've traveled or have family in Canada or the UK: wait times. It's a fair concern, and I won't dismiss it. Systems that remove price as a rationing mechanism have to ration some other way, and in some countries that's shown up as longer waits for elective procedures and certain specialists (14). The answer isn't to pretend this never happens elsewhere: it's to fund the system well enough from the start that it doesn't happen here, which means investing in primary care capacity and provider pay up front, not as an afterthought once people start complaining.

Let me enlighten you with a few choice facts, my dear fellow citizen. The federal government loses between \$233 billion and \$521 billion a year to fraud (15). "Improper payments" are an additional \$162 billion a year, and that figure has already climbed to \$186 billion in the most recent fiscal year on record (16). Even eliminating every dollar of that waste wouldn't come close to covering a program of this size, so let me be straight with you instead of blowing smoke: independent estimates put the added federal cost of a full single-payer system somewhere in the range of \$2.5 to \$3.5 trillion a year (17). That's a genuinely large number, and I'm not going to pretend otherwise.

But here's what that number leaves out: it's the added cost to the federal government, not the added cost to the country. Right now, Americans and their employers already spend roughly that much and more on healthcare combined: it's just spread across premiums, deductibles, co-pays, and out-of-pocket bills instead of taxes. The Congressional Budget Office found that because traditional Medicare runs on about 2% administrative overhead, versus roughly 12% for private

insurers, a single-payer system could plausibly lower total national health spending by hundreds of billions of dollars a year, even as it raises federal spending by trillions (18). Translation: the bill doesn't disappear, it moves: Off your pay stub and insurance premium, onto your tax return. Whether that's a good trade depends on whether the total you pay goes down, not on which pocket the money comes out of. I believe, based on the administrative savings alone, it can. Cutting fraud and improper payments won't pay for this on its own, nothing close to it, but every dollar clawed back is still a dollar that doesn't have to come from a taxpayer, and it's worth doing regardless.

Getting back to a single-payer system: this would reduce administrative costs, including billing complexity, insurance overhead, and the burden on the provider. Here's the part I especially like: the government would be in a better position to negotiate prices for drugs, medical devices, and hospital services, and this isn't some untested idea. Congress already gave Medicare limited authority to negotiate drug prices directly, when it passed the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022; the first negotiated prices took effect in 2026 (19). I want to build on that start, not invent something from scratch. Speaking of services, access to healthcare would depend less on income and employment, creating a more level playing field. Now, it does not mean we would have it "made in the shade." There would still be hospitals, insurance companies, and private practice of physicians. If you want that tummy tuck or the Botox to get rid of the wrinkles, you are going to pay for it. Single-payer health care is for justifiable needs.

Now, a system like this may affect the bottom line of the health provider and Big Pharma. I remind you again that our present system is based on profit, not the welfare of the individual. There's a real tension I want to name rather than hide from, though: single-payer systems typically pay physicians and hospitals less than

U.S. private insurance does today. Handled carelessly, that risks worsening the physician shortage we already have, especially in rural areas, which are already losing hospitals for other reasons entirely, as I'll get to in a moment. Getting single payer right means paying providers enough to keep them in the field, particularly in places that can least afford to lose them, even if the savings end up being smaller than the sticker price suggests.

Let me end this topic with this: to implement a system like this would take more than my four years in office, possibly my lifetime. I'm no spring chicken. But I'd like to get the ball rolling.

There are many other health concerns I would like to address. Rural hospitals are closing at an alarming rate: as of early 2026, roughly one in three rural hospitals in this country, about 734 facilities, are considered at risk of closure (20). Often, it's because they can't survive on Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement rates that don't cover their actual cost of care, while private insurers negotiate them down even further than a hospital with no local competitor should have to accept. When a rural hospital closes, it doesn't just mean a longer drive for a checkup: it means longer ambulance rides for heart attacks and strokes, expectant mothers driving over an hour to deliver a baby, and small towns losing one of their largest employers in the same stroke (21). A single-payer system with negotiated rates that reflect the real cost of keeping a hospital open in a low-population area (rather than a one-size-fits-all fee schedule) could be part of the fix, but it has to be designed with rural facilities in mind from day one, not bolted on as an afterthought. I'd also like to address corporate ownership of hospitals and the disappearance of self-owned nonprofit hospitals more broadly, but that's a topic for its own deep dive down the road.

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Chapter 4: Education & Workforce Development

In the late 1930s, roughly 160,000 U.S. citizens graduated from college each year (1). If you were able to attend college, it was likely because your family had the money to pay for it. So, it was rare for someone from a blue-collar family to afford to send their child to college.

Then came post-WWII men and women returning from war service, with the GI Bill. This meant the son or daughter of a butcher, baker, candlestick maker, or plumber could go to college. In 1947, veterans made up nearly half of all college enrollments (2). By 1950, the number of college graduates had risen to roughly 500,000 (3). By the end of the GI Bill, nearly 8 million veterans had used it for education or job training of some kind (2). This led to the creation of a strong middle class made up of professionals, including teachers, engineers, scientists, technicians, and more. This led to an economy not only based on manufacturing, but also on research and technology. I would not be surprised if at least one of the engineers or scientists who put a man on the moon used the GI Bill in part for their education.

I'm not bringing up this history for its own sake. I'm making a point about education. Education is a catalyst for change, don't forget that! If a government can effectively suppress or control education through propaganda and lies, it becomes easier to control a country's population. Just look at the Khmer Rouge of Cambodia, who executed teachers, doctors, and anyone considered an intellectual as a matter of deliberate policy (4). Look at the Taliban, who have banned girls from school past the sixth grade, rewritten the curriculum to serve their ideology, and have a documented history of attacking and killing teachers who resisted (5). Look at Nazi Germany, which purged and replaced teachers, rewrote textbooks, and turned German classrooms into a pipeline for Hitler Youth propaganda (6).

Look at Mao's Cultural Revolution, where Red Guards beat, tortured, and in some cases killed their own teachers and professors as “class enemies” (7). Different regimes, different decades, same playbook: control the classroom, control the country. The children and youth of the United States are our most precious resource. I truly believe this. They will shape the country, nay, the world, for the generation or generations that follow them. The education of our children is of paramount importance.

Unfortunately, our education system is broken and fragmented. Under the present federal administration, this is only getting worse, a possible deliberate action or lack of action.

Mr. Trump appointed Linda McMahon as the head of the Department of Education. She holds a BA in French (8). She did serve one year on the Connecticut State Board of Education before resigning, and she later chaired the board of the America First Policy Institute, whose work touches on education policy, but neither of those is classroom or administrative experience (9). Her actual background is as the co-founder and CEO of World Wrestling Entertainment. She is a businesswoman, not an educator, and she is a political appointee tasked with dismantling the very department she now runs. Trump said when nominating McMahon that he wanted her to “put herself out of a job,” referring to closing the department (10). The Trump administration openly states that it wants to dismantle, shrink, or ultimately eliminate the Department of Education (11).

In 2002, a federal education policy known as “No Child Left Behind” was implemented. While the name may sound positive, the reality is that the policy has been a disaster. Children learn at different rates, and many factors outside the classroom influence a child's development. As a result of this policy, schools began

to focus on teaching their students how to pass national and state exams. The outcomes of these tests determined whether a state or local education system was considered successful or failing (12). This emphasis on testing led to a reduced focus on subjects like history, civics, arts, music, and, most importantly, vocational education. Consequently, students are missing out on a well-rounded education that encourages independent thinking. I often encounter young people who seem to lack “common sense.”

My administration will work with other aspects of the federal and state governments to remedy this. We aim to provide a solid, truthful, and unbiased education to the young citizens of this country through K-12. “Shop” classes will once again become a part of the curriculum. The true history, both good and bad, of the United States and its actions will be taught, such as the Tulsa Race Massacre, the Trail of Tears, or more recently, the intelligence failures before the invasion of Iraq in 2003 (13). My administration will encourage high schools to offer classes on managing one's everyday finances and investing. One pet peeve, if I can swing it: no one graduates from high school unless they pass a test on the understanding of the Constitution and how it works. We will bring back the civics class.

Then there's higher education. College graduates aged 22-27 are facing higher unemployment rates, running 5 to 6 percent through early 2026, but the real kicker is that 40 to 42 percent are underemployed (14). That means someone who is working in a job that does not require a college degree. Yep, you guessed right; your favorite barista at Starbucks holds a degree in computer science and can't find work thanks to AI. Though someone with a bachelor's degree (depending on the field of study) has close to half the unemployment rate of someone with only a high school diploma (15). When you think about it, this stands to reason, given the

technological complexity of our society and the poor quality of our public education system. High school graduates, to some extent, are not aware of the challenges of being self-sufficient in our society and may lack critical thinking skills.

Back in the twentieth century (I know it sounds ancient, but it really wasn't that long ago), the crowning achievement in education was to graduate from college. Trade schools were few and far between, and most trades were being taught through apprenticeship (16). This was fine for the technology and society of the time, but now, not so much. Unfortunately, educational priorities and needs lag behind reality, and many still think college is the way to go.

So far in this project, I have focused on what I believe would benefit the United States and said little about myself. For context, I hold two bachelor's degrees from two different universities and two associate degrees from the same community college. I also have five certifications, possibly six, if motorcycle repair school counts. For most of my adult life, I have been in school (paid for by me) while working full-time to pay the rent or mortgage. Thanks to the GI Bill, we were also able to buy our first home. But I digress: back in the 1990s, I decided to enter a graduate program. I was working full-time as usual, had been married for two years, and had a mortgage to pay. So, what was normally a two-year program would take me four years part-time, and I was okay with it. I completed two semesters with a 3.0 GPA. Then my advisor told me I would have to retake many of my undergrad courses, even though they all had a C or better and were taken at an accredited university. To say I was mad is an understatement. I did not have the time, and especially not the money, to retake those courses. That's when I realized higher education had become a business first, education second.

The national student loan debt, as you're reading this sentence, is in the neighborhood of \$1.8 trillion; that's trillion with a capital “T” (17). This includes the student loan, which I am paying off while being a senior citizen living primarily on Social Security; that's all kinds of wrong with a capital “W.”

Across the board, loan forgiveness is not feasible, but some things can be done. Dealing with the cost of college that outpaces inflation. Look at the growing administrative cost of running a college or university. Why are they going up instead of down? Is that new stadium really necessary?

If my plan to revamp what is taught in high school is implemented, students will have the financial acumen to question student loans and their repayment terms. Loan companies will not be allowed to give out loans willy-nilly without assurance that the loan can be paid off following graduation. When applying for a student loan, the borrower should be told the total expected debt, estimated monthly payments, and at least the average monthly earnings for someone with their degree. If you graduate with a degree in biological engineering, you're looking good. A degree in Greek philosophy not so much. As of mid-2026, roughly 9.5 million federal student loan borrowers, more than one in every five, are in default (18), including our Starbucks barista, who is underemployed and still living at home because he cannot afford to pay rent. Learning institutions should be partially responsible for loan defaults at the state or federal level. If nothing else, it will encourage them to implement cost-control measures.

As it is, with my background in the industrial trades, I could find a job easily. Let me tell you about a recent situation, and I'll get back to the nuts and bolts of this section on education. Last week, we took delivery of a new refrigerator and stove. The delivery guy was supposed to install them. He said he could not because the house water valve for the refrigerator was broken, and the valve for the stove

was incorrect. Fine. They left, and I proceeded to install both the refrigerator and the stove with what was there. The refrigerator valve was not leaking, and the installation kit had the correct bushing for the stove valve. I went to Home Depot the next day. I talked to the manager and, in the process, gave her a bit of my background. She wanted to hire me.

I spent 10-12 years in the industrial trades myself, the first few years as a fabricator of fluid transfer systems: which involved a lot of welding, MIG mostly, and I hold three certifications in welding.. By the time I left the trades, I was running a small maintenance department for a manufacturing firm, troubleshooting CNC machinery down to the hex and decimal level using programming knowledge from my computer science degree, on top of doing industrial electrical work. I could read blue prints in English, German, and Italian. None of that came from a four-year program built for it. It came from stacking a trade, hands-on experience, and self-taught technical skill on top of each other, one on top of the next. That's the piece I don't think we sell young people on enough: trades and technical education aren't a consolation prize for people who "couldn't do" college; they're a foundation you can keep building on, sometimes further than a single degree would have taken you on its own. I eventually left the trades altogether to become a nurse, which tells you something too: the skills, and the work ethic, transfer.

More individuals are retiring from what are collectively known as the "trades" than are entering them (19). I am talking about a 2-year degree or certification. One of the most critical is nursing (Registered Nurse), and 4-5 others in the medical field. There is a need for HVAC techs, electricians, CNC machinists, IT support, and many others. They can pay just as well and offer just as many opportunities as a college degree (without the debt!). What my administration will do is address the

lack of qualified teachers in community colleges, review funding for trade schools, and apprenticeship programs.

Again, if my reforms go through in high school, when students graduate, they will think twice about alternatives to a four-year college degree. They will be aware of alternatives that offer them just as much opportunity in their chosen field, achievable through a trade school or a two-year community college degree.

I can't do much about the lack of social prestige tied to the trades, but let me give you two numbers to chew on. A licensed electrician nationally makes a median of around \$62,000 a year (20), that's the typical number, not the ceiling. An experienced electrician with the right license and their own crew can clear \$130,000 or more (21). Now take it a step further: welders with real certifications, doing the kind of specialized fabrication that places like Fermilab or Argonne National Laboratory need (vacuum systems, cryogenics, components with tolerances that would fail a standard inspection anywhere else) are looking at pay that runs from about \$80,000 up to \$150,000 or more, because so few people can do that work (22). I hold three welding certifications myself, and I promise you, nobody handed me that skill. You stop worrying about “prestige” once you're the only person in the building who can actually do the job.

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Chapter 5: Infrastructure & Energy

The Energy Grid

Let's start with energy in the U.S. How bad is it? Serious, but not hopeless. U.S. infrastructure improved to an overall C in ASCE's 2025 report, its best grade ever. Still, the energy sector fell to D+, reflecting aging assets, rising demand, weather risk, and grid-capacity limits (1). These grades suck! This is the United States, a leader in the world, and we are still using coal-burning plants, a technology that was state-of-the-art in the 1920s!

The demands on the energy grid here in the U.S. are exceeding the ability to supply. This means we must upgrade the system to deal not only with the future but also with the present. This will not happen overnight and certainly not in my term, but we can get the ball rolling.

The U.S. does not build enough long-distance or interregional transmission, so cheap power often cannot reach demand centers. DOE's National Transmission Needs Study identifies major transmission-capacity constraints and congestion (2).

At the end of 2025, there were more than 2,060 gigawatts of energy that could've been supplied to the energy grid from various sources. That is more than the total installed capacity in the U.S. (3). Why was this ginormous amount of energy not used? Because of something called interconnection queues. Before the energy in the queues can be utilized, it must be determined whether the grids can handle the power, whether the voltage is stable, and whether numerous other questions and requirements are met. There are 2,000 gigawatts of generation and storage projects awaiting approval (3). The entire U.S. electrical capacity is roughly 1,300 gigawatts. This is bureaucracy doing what bureaucracy does best, slowing things down with layers of review that don't talk to each other. I'll get into

this more in Chapter 7, where I lay out how a full review of federal regulations could clear some of this logjam out, here and in plenty of other places you wouldn't expect.

Supply-chain shortages: transformers are a critical choke point; DOE notes that large power transformers have long replacement lead times and are essential for grid resilience. This goes to the fact that we are a consumer economy and no longer one based on manufacturing (4). More on this later, and I refer you to the section on education.

Fragmented governance: utilities, states, regional grid operators, FERC, DOE, local governments, and private developers all control pieces of the puzzle. No single actor can optimize the whole system. This goes along with my statement that there is too much bureaucracy and regulation strangling progress.

Under my administration, we will change to become more streamlined and efficient.

Expand regional and interregional transmission, with cost-sharing rules that reflect broad reliability and economic benefits. FERC Order 1920 is a step in this direction because it requires long-term regional transmission planning and reform of cost allocation (5).

Fix interconnection by moving from serial project-by-project studies to cluster studies; this can be done through regional or category studies.

Higher readiness through strategic stockpiling of replacement parts in locations for rapid deployment, transparent upgrade costs, and penalties for speculative queue clogging. FERC Order 2023 targets these queue problems (6).

Use "grid-enhancing technologies" now: dynamic line ratings, advanced conductors, topology optimization, reconductoring, batteries at substations, and demand response. These are often faster than new corridors.

Modernize distribution grids for two-way power flows from rooftop solar, batteries, EVs, and microgrids. To put it simply, if your solar panels are generating more power than you need, that excess power should go back to your utility, and you should get paid for it.

Expand domestic manufacturing for transformers, switchgear, cables, and power electronics. The keywords here are domestic manufacturing; we need to expand our manufacturing base. We need to put people to work, to create jobs for those willing to work.

Streamline permitting with firm timelines, one-stop interagency reviews, early community benefit agreements, and better compensation for host communities. What this means is we have to eliminate bureaucratic obstacles, streamline the regulatory process, and get things done.

Pay customers and businesses for flexibility: EV managed charging, industrial load shifting, smart thermostats, virtual power plants, and behind-the-meter batteries. In other words, reward people for their efficient, cost-saving use of energy by paying them.

Yes, how we generate our energy is important. We need to explore ways to generate power as efficiently and aggressively as possible. It must be done without forgetting the Earth is our home. In addition to eliminating the remaining oil-burning and coal-burning power plants, we need to remove the choke points that inhibit the distribution of power and utilize the power that is generated and going to waste. We must also work on how to connect, transmit, and distribute it

efficiently. That's where this whole business of interconnection queues, transmission lines, and grid modernization comes into play.

I was going to hold off until the Afterword, but it seems like this is coming up now. Look, as President, it is not my job to know every little thing about every little thing. That is why the president has up to twenty-plus cabinet-level individuals to advise and keep him/her up to date. The President's job is to stay informed, so he/she can lead the nation and make educated decisions, working with the other branches of government to get the U.S. back on track. Not try to macro-manage the whole bloody country! The President carries the weight and responsibility of leading the United States.

Infrastructure

Earlier in my life, my friend had a sailboat, and I would crew for him, and we would sail in the MORC races just off Chicago. In the spring, we would get the boat ready and put her in the south branch of the Chicago River, then putt-putt down to the locks to get through to the lake and head to Burnham Harbor. My point is I could see the crumbling concrete of the city and the rusted condition of the bridges by going beneath them. The country's infrastructure is old, and because it is not being properly maintained, it is crumbling faster than we can replace it.

The 2025 American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Infrastructure Report Card gave the nation an overall C grade (still sucks eggs!), the highest ever, but many critical systems still received grades in the D range, meaning they are considered poor, at risk, and in need of significant attention. Roads received a D+, bridges a C, wastewater a D+, schools a D+, stormwater a D, and transit a D. ASCE estimates a \$3.7 trillion infrastructure investment gap over the next decade (1). I don't have to tell you that our roads are in bad shape, but I am. Just get off the interstate, and you will see what I mean. 39% of our major roads are in poor or

mediocre condition and will only continue to fail. Due to this problem, the cost to an average driver in repairs is \$1,400 annually (1).

Then there are the bridges, all 623,000 of them. About 7% are in poor condition. I don't want to start dumping a bunch of facts on you and have you fall asleep on me. So, I will try to keep it brief and more to the point. A poor bridge is one still usable, possibly with restrictions. It could have rust or corrosion, cracked welds, crumbling concrete, potholes, and a host of other problems. These bridges need major rehab or replacement. These bridges needed to be dealt with yesterday.

What is more concerning is that nearly half our bridges are rated "fair"; that means they are showing indications of age, and it will not take long for them to deteriorate to the "poor" category.

Now a survival aspect. A person can go three days without water; next to breathing, we die without it. Most of our water systems, both waste and drinking, date to the early-to-mid 1900s (7). That means we still have lead pipes in some drinking water systems, and let's not forget the asbestos pipes used up to the 1980s. The American Water Works Association estimates trillions will be needed over the coming decades to replace aging underground systems (8).

In the 1930s, during the Great Depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were created. Together, they built or improved roughly 651,000 miles of road, more than 124,000 bridges, thousands of schools, dams, airports, and other public buildings, (Check out the cool murals in the old post offices) much of which is still standing and in use today (9). This includes most of the dams and levees in this country. Thousands of these dams are over 50 years old and have not received proper maintenance. Many are obsolete and produce no benefit. Thousands need to be removed because of the risk associated with age; in addition, it is an ecologically sound investment.

Choo Choo Charlie

We need regional high-speed railway systems. The advantages are many, some apparent, some not. A high-speed railway system typically will produce 70-90% less CO2 emissions per passenger than a comparable airline passenger. That in itself is incentive to consider this proposal (10). People have a right to air they breathe. There is strong scientific evidence that poor air quality is associated with the increase in childhood lung disease (11). Don't get me started, that is a different chapter.

It would reduce airport congestion. Air traffic controllers will not be overworked; the possibility of air accidents would be reduced. This would also free up room for international and air freight flights.

High-speed rail would spare passengers the usual hassles of flying, including long security lines and the need to arrive hours early. In many cases, it could also shorten total door-to-door travel time.

Cities with high-speed rail stations often see economic growth in multiple sectors (12). Because high-speed trains run on electricity, they can be powered by any energy source that feeds the grid. If we modernize and strengthen the power grid, high-speed rail could become even more efficient. It also reduces reliance on jet fuel, eliminates jet exhaust for these trips, and helps ease traffic congestion and lower the number of traffic fatalities. Not to mention the logistics value in case of an emergency for rapid deployment and evacuation. This would not be a nationwide system, that would be impractical and too costly. We would still need to rely on air travel for long distances within the U.S. and overseas.

I envision three hubs: The Eastern Corridor, which would initially consist of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, then Washington, D.C. As the system

got underway, over time with success there could be room for growth such as Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, New York to Albany.

The Western Corridor would run from Vancouver to Seattle, Portland, Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, Los Angeles, and San Diego. If the system proves successful, it could later expand to routes such as Los Angeles to Las Vegas and Sacramento to Reno.

Thanks to the Great Lakes affecting population densities, the layout of the Midwest Corridor would be a bit different. Chicago would actually be the hub, with Chicago-Milwaukee-Minneapolis/St. Paul, Chicago-Detroit, Chicago-Indianapolis-Cincinnati, Chicago-St. Louis, and Chicago-Cleveland.

Between all three rail lines they would serve a population of over 160 million people (13)! Travel speed would be 220 MPH.

Sounds great, the reasons for building are sound, the benefits for the most part are obvious. But this has been attempted in the past, more than once, going back to the 1960s, and it has failed every time, thanks to politics, environmental lawsuits, and disputes over right of way (14). Of course, there would be cost overruns with contractors, and changes in state and federal administration (again, politics). To me that boils down to the "what's in it for me?" attitude. This is so much horse puke. Rather it should be: "Man, we gotta get this done, then my mom can go see my little girl 'cause Grandma can't drive to San Jose." We must get back to the mindset that we are in this together. This is a pivotal time in our country's history, and if we don't come together as one, there may not be a United States in another fifty years.

In 1955, President Eisenhower proposed the 41,000-mile Interstate Highway System, signed into law the following year, a project that would cost hundreds of billions of dollars in today's terms (15). Many people would have considered it

impossible, yet it was built and remains one of the most successful infrastructure investments in U.S. history. Major achievements like this require time, funding, and determination. Okay, I'll get off my soapbox now.

Going back to that line about changes in state and federal administrations: the average time to build a high-speed rail system could take 10-20 years. Any governor, and I myself, will only be serving four years at a time. Politicians like to show results before the next election; re-election is their concern.

Da Big Fix

My administration will work with Congress and the Senate to require states to maintain existing assets, plan for life cycles, and, not least, reduce deferred maintenance backlogs.

Just as the federal government conducts a census of the population, my administration will create a digital inventory of roads, bridges, tunnels, water systems, dams, and public buildings, with real-time condition monitoring.

The National Infrastructure Bank, Revisited

I mentioned a national infrastructure bank a minute ago and moved past it too fast. Let me back up.

This isn't a new idea, and it isn't a Democrat idea or a Republican idea either, no matter what you might assume from the name. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation, stood up in 1932, financed roads, rail, and public works clear through the Depression and into the Second World War, under presidents from both parties, because a bridge doesn't check your voter registration before it collapses (16). I

keep coming back to that line of thought in this chapter because it's true and because nobody in Washington today wants to say it out loud.

The idea's had bipartisan support before, and recently enough to matter. Senator Mark Warner, a Democrat from Virginia, and Senator Roy Blunt, a Republican from Missouri, introduced the BRIDGE Act back in 2015 to set up exactly this kind of financing tool, and it drew cosponsors from both parties (17). It never became law, and Senator Blunt has since left the Senate, but it proved something worth remembering: the votes exist when the idea's framed right, not as a partisan program but as basic maintenance. That's the case I'm making here too.

Here's my pitch, and I'm going to say it plain instead of dancing around it. If you're a fiscal conservative, this is not a slush fund. The bank finances projects on return on investment, same as a bank examiner sizing up whether the numbers pencil out before he approves a loan. And it doesn't foot the whole bill alone. I'm a veteran, and I'll tell you straight, my wife and I would not have been able to buy our first house without a VA loan. The VA didn't hand over the purchase price. It backed a slice of the loan, and that guarantee is what let us walk in with no money down and still get approved, because the bank's risk just went down. That's not theory to me; we had a roof over our heads because of it. The infrastructure bank works the same way. A public dollar put up as backing lowers the risk enough to pull several private dollars in behind it. Instead of taxpayers paying for a project dollar for dollar, a smaller public stake unlocks a much bigger pool of private money to get it built. Projects that don't make the grade, or that can't come in at cost, don't get funded. Period. And once a project is approved, the bank doesn't cover cost overruns after the fact, those come out of the contractor's hide and the project's budget, not the bank's. Given how routine overruns have gotten, that's not a small detail. That's the whole point.

If you lean the other way, this is a real, standing way to pay for the water systems and grid work this chapter's been hammering on, without waiting for a deadlocked Congress to scrape together a new appropriations fight every time a pipe bursts.

And if you don't lean either way, or you're just sick of the whole circus, here's the plain truth: there's always a reason something gets done or doesn't, and I'll pin this one on politics, plain and simple, and maybe the oldest reason in Washington, the desire to get re-elected before the next term's up. Both parties had their hands on the wheel while these pipes and bridges went unmaintained. Nobody gets to point fingers here. The bank isn't asking you to admit blame. It's asking you to stop treating basic maintenance like a football.

What I'd want in the charter, no more, no less: an independent board with fixed terms that outlast any one administration, so it can't get gutted or hijacked the day a new president takes office. Financing decisions made on documented return and risk, not on whose district needs a ribbon-cutting. Full public reporting, every project, every dollar, every projected return, with GAO and Inspector General looking over its shoulder the whole time, same standard I'm holding NCWS to below. And if a project runs over budget anyway, the public finds out it ran over budget. No quietly burying it in next year's numbers. One more thing worth saying plainly here, since I draw the line properly in the next section: the Bank finances the kind of large capital projects that can carry a revenue stream, fares, tolls, usage fees, and that require specialized private capacity the government has no business trying to build in-house. High-speed rail is the clearest example in this chapter. That's a different job from what NCWS does, and I don't want the two to be blurred together.

The National Civil Works Service (NCWS)

With a nod to the WPA of the 1930s, I would like to propose the formation of the National Civil Works Service, which will be referred to as the NCWS from here on in.

NCWS is a proposed federal department designed to provide the United States with a permanent civilian workforce capable of executing infrastructure projects, maintaining public assets, supporting disaster recovery operations, and developing skilled trades essential to national needs.

The mission statement will be something like this:

The National Civil Works Service exists to provide the United States with a permanent, professional civilian workforce capable of building, maintaining, repairing, and restoring critical public infrastructure while supporting national emergency response and long-term workforce development.

The NCWS shall:

Execute public infrastructure projects.

Maintain public assets.

Support disaster recovery operations.

Develop skilled trades and technical professions.

Maintain national logistical readiness.

Reduce dependency on private contractors for essential public works

All NCWS personnel are federal civil employees. As such, they will receive competitive compensation, benefits, and retirement in accordance with the Civil Service Reform Act (which needs to be revised). NCWS will operate on a paramilitary structure, not a true military organization subject to the Uniform Code

of Military Justice, but something closer to the Salvation Army in how it's organized: clear rank, clear chain of command, decisive execution. As federal civil servants, NCWS employees retain the right to join a union, the same as most federal employees do today. What they will not have is the right to engage in strikes, slowdowns, or other job actions that disrupt operations, which, in practice, is already the law for nearly the entire federal workforce, not a new restriction unique to NCWS. We've watched too many infrastructure projects stall or fall apart because of labor disputes, and NCWS doesn't have the luxury of that kind of disruption, especially when it will be coordinating with FEMA in the middle of an active disaster. When lives and critical infrastructure are on the line, there is no room for a glitch in the chain of command.

Advancement will be based upon skill, performance, training, and leadership ability.

Personnel and equipment must remain available for rapid deployment. So, there will be something like a standing watch with personnel on call. The closest civilian organization that comes to mind would, again, be the Salvation Army.

Resources shall be utilized efficiently, including the use of refurbished equipment when cost-effective and operationally sound. Whenever possible, the acquisition of assets will be by open bid, in accordance with the agency's requirements.

Operations, expenditures, contracts, and performance metrics shall be publicly available unless national security considerations prohibit disclosure. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Inspector General shall maintain continuous oversight.

The physical structure will be located outside of Washington, D.C., but rather where it can best serve its mission. Ideally located adjacent to the central warehouse. The utmost effort will be made to use existing facilities, maybe a closed military base. From there, regional command centers should coordinate immediate operations in their areas. Now we are at the point where our organization is in place. We borrowed an engineering staff from other agencies while we build our own. We have some journeyman-level workers from the trades, but it is not enough. The shortage of workers in the U.S. vocational trades is impairing our ability to repair and replace infrastructure.

So, we go to the Dept of Education to work together to establish programs, aid, and promote vocational schools. Offering incentives for those who will train as pipefitters, welders, industrial electricians, and more. Offer them loan forgiveness or pay for their training outright, on the condition that they commit to 3 years with NCWS. That commitment comes with teeth: leave early, and you owe back a prorated share of what your training cost; the earlier you go, the more you owe, on a sliding scale down to nothing once you've served out the full term. This isn't a punishment; it's just to make sure the taxpayer isn't left holding the bag for training someone who takes the certification and walks the day after we hand them the paperwork. There will also be a cooling-off period after service; someone who leaves NCWS can't turn around and work for a private contractor bidding on NCWS's own projects for a set period. We're not spending public money to train our own competition, or to hand a private firm someone who knows exactly how we operate the moment they walk out the door. Since they would become a civil employee and get real training and a real trade out of it besides, I believe the retention rate would be high regardless. In addition, this will address the shortage of trades in the U.S. in general.

Let this be clear, because I want the line between NCWS and the infrastructure bank drawn honestly, not left for the reader to guess at. NCWS handles the repair and rebuilding of the government's public infrastructure on the government's dime, using its own trades workforce rather than a private contractor. That includes roadways, both new and existing, bridges, public buildings, water systems, and utilities. If it's federal and it doesn't generate revenue, there's a good chance NCWS is doing the work, or at least supplying the manpower and materials.

Here's why the line sits where it does, and it's not "new versus existing"; it's revenue versus no revenue. A road doesn't charge a toll. A water main doesn't generate income. There's no revenue stream for a bank to lend against, so there's no financing case for private capital in the first place; it's public money either way, and the work itself- grading, paving, welding, pipefitting; is exactly what NCWS's own trades were built to do. Paying a contractor's markup on top of that never made sense to me.

High-speed rail is the exception, and I want to say plainly why it's an exception rather than pretend it isn't one. It can carry a revenue stream, fares, which makes it exactly the kind of project the infrastructure bank's return-on-investment model was built for. Building it also takes specialized rail engineering, rolling stock manufacturing, and systems integration that NCWS was never designed to have in-house. And there's a practical reason on top of both of those: a single high-speed rail corridor could take ten to twenty years to build. NCWS can't afford to lock up personnel and equipment on a project that long while bridges, water mains, and roads across the country need attention now. An agency built for rapid deployment and ongoing maintenance has no business parking its assets on a two-decade timeline. That's private-contractor territory, financed through the bank, for reasons that have nothing to do with politics and everything to do with what NCWS is

actually built to do and what it can't afford to tie itself down to. Rail is the clearest example of a project outside NCWS's scope, but it won't be the only one. Any project long enough or specialized enough to pull NCWS off its core mission of maintaining what the country already has belongs in the bank's lane, not NCWS's.

So no, this isn't about eliminating private contractors from federal infrastructure across the board. It's about eliminating them from the categories NCWS is built to handle: the ordinary trades work on public assets that generate no revenue, and keeping contractors exactly where specialized capacity is genuinely required. NCWS will only deal with public infrastructure of this kind: roads, bridges, public buildings, utilities, and water systems. They are not there to build new structures; that's a state or local matter, or new revenue-generating capital projects of the kind the bank exists to finance. The exception on the disaster side would be relief work through FEMA, more on this later.

One thing I want to be crystal clear about: NCWS is not a regulator. It doesn't write rules, issue permits, or decide what's allowed. It doesn't add one single new approval you'd have to get. Think of the building inspector and the construction crew. The inspector's office is regulation. The crew that shows up with tools and does the work is implementation. NCWS is the crew. Right now, a lot of that crew work gets farmed out, contract by contract, to private firms who bid low, blow past the deadline, and stick the taxpayer with the difference. NCWS doesn't stack a new layer on top of that mess. It replaces the contracting middleman with a standing, accountable, publicly employed crew that answers to the same rules everybody else already has to follow. Fewer hands between "this bridge needs fixing" and "this bridge got fixed," not more.

Now, I'm not going to sit here and tell you that the regulatory system NCWS has to work within is in good shape. It isn't. Rules that overlap, agencies that

contradict each other, a permitting process that takes longer than the actual construction. That's a real mess, and it deserves more than a sentence here. I take it head-on in Chapter 7, Government Efficiency & Bureaucracy, where I make the case for reviewing federal regulations, agency by agency, and clearing out the ones that duplicate, contradict, or have outlived the problems they were written to fix. NCWS will have to operate inside whatever that system looks like after reform, same as everyone else. But building the crew and fixing the rulebook are two different jobs, and I'm not going to muddy them together here.

The NCWS would not replace agencies such as FEMA, the Department of Transportation, or the Army Corps of Engineers. Instead, it would provide the trained personnel, equipment, logistical support, and project execution capabilities those agencies require. In other words: the Army Corps of Engineers says we have this bridge, or for that matter bridges, that are overdue for maintenance. NCWS would supply the manpower, equipment, and material to get it done.

I will speak of this in more detail in another section, but FEMA will become a separate agency, even more oriented toward rapid disaster response. Example: a winter disaster in Montana, and FEMA needs heavy equipment and operators. NCWS has a warehouse and logistics center in Wyoming with what they need. The two agencies will work together to get that equipment and operators up there ASAP.

On the other hand, I do not want to give the impression that personnel will be sitting on their duff waiting for something to happen. At the same time, NCWS will be working with other federal and state agencies to maintain the U.S. infrastructure. There will always be ongoing projects and deployment in the field.

Creating the NCWS entity will be a tremendous project in itself. It would need the cooperation and cohesive coordination of all branches of government working

towards a common goal. The advantages would be many: we could halt and reverse the literal physical decay of our country, something we seem unable to do now. Educate and increase our workforce in critical areas. Climate change is here and not going away; extreme weather will be the norm rather than the exception. This agency will improve our ability to rapidly respond to natural disasters. Accountability and transparency will be an integral facet. It will reduce contractor dependence.

This is not a quick fix or applying a patch to the problem and turning away. The National Civil Works Service represents a long-term investment in the U.S.'s workforce, infrastructure, and resilience.

By maintaining a trained civilian workforce, centralized logistics capability, and close partnerships with federal agencies, NCWS would provide the nation with the capacity to build, maintain, repair, and restore essential public assets while strengthening preparedness for future challenges. I think back to those rusted bridge supports I used to see from the deck of that sailboat, decades ago now. Nobody fixed them because it was nobody's job to notice. That's what this chapter is really about: making sure it's somebody's job.

Notes

(1) American Society of Civil Engineers, 2025 Report Card for America's Infrastructure (Reston, VA: ASCE, 2025), <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/>. Covers the overall C grade, the energy sector's D+ grade, the \$3.7 trillion investment gap, the roads category (39% of major roads in poor or mediocre condition, \$1,400 average annual driver cost), and the bridges category (623,000 total bridges, approximately 7% in poor condition, nearly half in fair condition).

(2) U.S. Department of Energy, Grid Deployment Office, National Transmission Needs Study (Washington, DC: DOE, October 2023), <https://www.energy.gov/gdo/national-transmission-needs-study>.

(3) Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, Queued Up: Characteristics of Power Plants Seeking Transmission Interconnection, data as of the end of 2025 (Berkeley, CA: LBNL, 2026),

<https://emp.lbl.gov/queues>. Reports 2,061 GW of generation and storage capacity actively seeking grid interconnection at the end of 2025.

(4) U.S. Department of Energy, Large Power Transformer Resilience Report to Congress (Washington, DC: DOE, July 2024), <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/EXEC-2022-001242%20-%20Large%20Power%20Transformer%20Resilience%20Report%20signed%20by%20Secretary%20Granholtm%20on%207-10-24.pdf>. Confirms large power transformer lead times commonly running 36 months, with some reaching 60 months.

(5) Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Order No. 1920, Building for the Future Through Electric Regional Transmission Planning and Cost Allocation, Docket No. RM21-17-000, issued May 13, 2024, <https://www.ferc.gov/explainer-transmission-planning-and-cost-allocation-final-rule>.

(6) Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Order No. 2023, Improvements to Generator Interconnection Procedures and Agreements, issued July 28, 2023, effective November 5, 2023, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/16/2024-06563/improvements-to-generator-interconnection-procedures-and-agreements>.

(7) Steven Folkman, "PVC Pipe Longevity Report: Affordability and the 100+ Year Benchmark Standard" (Utah State University, Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering Faculty Publications, 2014), https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/mae_facpub/170, documenting that underground water infrastructure in the U.S. was installed in three main waves: the 1800s, 1900-1945, and post-1945. Text revised from "built between 1890 and 1950" to "dating to the early-to-mid 1900s" to match the range this source and others support.

(8) American Water Works Association, Beyond the Replacement Era: Balancing Compounding Infrastructure Needs with Household Affordability (2026), <https://www.awwa.org/beyond-the-replacement-era/>. Finds \$2.1-\$2.4 trillion in total drinking water infrastructure investment needed over the next 25 years (2026-2050).

(9) United States Federal Works Agency, Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/47032199/>. The widely cited figures of 651,087 miles of roads, streets, and highways and 124,031 bridges built, repaired, or refurbished trace to this report.

(10) C. Andrew Miller, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Research and Development, "Savings in Per-Passenger CO₂ Emissions Using Rail Rather Than Air Travel in the Northeastern U.S.," EM: Air & Waste Management Association's Magazine for Environmental Managers (2020), <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11017125/>. Confirms rail travel produces substantially lower per-passenger CO₂ emissions than air travel; consistent with the 70-90% figure for true high-speed, electrified rail as proposed in this chapter.

(11) W. James Gauderman et al., "The Effect of Air Pollution on Lung Development from 10 to 18 Years of Age," *New England Journal of Medicine* 351, no. 11 (2004): 1057-1067; see also "Association of Improved Air Quality with Lung Development in Children," *New England Journal of Medicine* (March 2015), part of the University of Southern California Children's Health Study, cited by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/healthresearch/asthma-research-discoveries>.

(12) Micah Cohen, "Economic Impacts of High-Speed Rail: A Review" (San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute, San Jose State University), <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/2255-Cohen-Economic-Impacts-HSR.pdf>; see also G. Debrezion, E. Pels, and P. Rietveld, "The Impact of Railway Stations on Residential and

Commercial Property Value: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Real Estate Finance and Economics* 35, no. 2 (2007): 161-180.

(13) Population figure (160 million-plus) is the author's own calculation based on the metro areas named in the three proposed corridors; not drawn from a single external source. Cite U.S. Census Bureau metro-area population estimates directly if a defensible published figure is wanted here.

(14) U.S. Government Accountability Office, *High Speed Passenger Rail: Future Development Will Depend on Addressing Financial and Other Challenges and Establishing a Clear Federal Role*, GAO-09-317 (Washington, DC: GAO, March 2009), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-09-317.pdf>. Documents the federal government's first foray into high-speed rail (the High-Speed Ground Transportation Act of 1965) and case studies of terminated projects including the Florida Overland Express and the Texas TGV. The specific claim of "four times" attempted was removed from the chapter text because it could not be verified against a single source; the text now states only that repeated attempts, dating to the 1960s, have failed.

(15) U.S. Senate Historical Office, "Congress Approves the Federal-Aid Highway Act," June 26, 1956, https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Federal_Highway_Act.htm; see also History.com, "The Interstate Highway System." CORRECTION: the chapter draft originally stated the system was 47,000 miles; the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 as signed authorized 41,000 miles. Corrected in the text above; please confirm you're comfortable with this change.

(16) Federal Reserve History, "Reconstruction Finance Corporation Act," <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/reconstruction-finance-corporation>; U.S. Department of the Treasury, *Report to Congress on Liquidation of Reconstruction Finance Corporation*, June 30, 1957 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1958). Confirms the RFC operated from 1932 to 1957, financing banks, railroads, agriculture, and public works under presidents of both parties.

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Chapter 6: Political Polarization & Trust in Government

Before I start on this topic, please bear with me as I make this observation: freedom is a double-edged sword. In an autocratic type of government, a free act is considered rebellion, just as the man who stood before a tank in Tiananmen Square was labeled a rebel. In an autocratic government, if they want to dam a river to get needed hydroelectric power, they will get it done, regardless of how many villages, towns, or farms are flooded. In a free society such as ours, that dam might never get built, because the rights of the individual cannot be circumvented in a democracy. But in a free society you will have at least one bad apple in every bunch, whether an individual or organization, that will use these rights in an amoral manner.

Years ago, I was flipping through my father's old Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and came across two words sitting near each other that I'd never really stopped to compare: statesman and politician. I don't remember the exact wording anymore, but the gist of it has stuck with me for decades, and it's stuck with a lot of people for a lot longer than that. The 19th-century clergyman James Freeman Clarke put it best: "A politician thinks of the next election. A statesman, of the next generation." One is measured by whether he wins. The other is measured by whether the country is better off a generation after he's gone. Everything in this chapter (the lobbyists, the revolving door, the gridlock, the trust we've lost) is what happens to a country that keeps electing the first kind and keeps waiting for more of the second.

Sorry for the abrupt change of topic, but I just want to get this out of the way: The only time I can remember wearing a suit was to a wedding or a funeral. While

on the campaign trail, and through my time in office after it, I will be dressed in a casual, neat manner. The job will be hard enough without me being uncomfortable in a suit. Besides, it also carries a persona I reject. I liken it to this: there are two packages under the Christmas tree. One is wrapped really nice, very impressive. The other is wrapped in old newspaper and twine. The nicely wrapped one contains a lump of coal. The plainly wrapped one contains a dream come true. Do not judge a candidate by appearance, or by how slick they are. Judge them by whether they actually answer the question, instead of what I call politic talk, which is a bunch of meaningless ambiguity meant to avoid answering the question. Search for honesty in a candidate, a willingness to admit when they are wrong, or that they don't have an answer readily available. Not Mr. Slick, who throws out empty words with little meaning or fact behind them. So, let's deal with the issues that matter, and put this behind us.

By definition: a Political Action Committee (PAC) is an organization that raises and spends money to influence elections. PACs collect contributions from members, employees, or supporters and use those funds to support or oppose political candidates, parties, or legislation.

The issue is not that citizens organize to advocate for their interests. Farmers, workers, veterans, retirees, businesses, and consumers all have the right to petition their government. The concern arises when certain organizations possess such financial resources and political access that they can exert influence far beyond that of the average citizen, creating the perception that government serves powerful interests before it serves the people.

Special Interest and the Crisis of Representation

The body politic in the United States is chronically ill. I believe it first made itself known in the early 1960s. When President Eisenhower gave his final address to the nation from the Oval Office in 1961, he warned of the increasing power and influence of the military-industrial complex on the government (1). In *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), the Supreme Court ruled that corporations, unions, and other organizations can spend unlimited amounts on independent political expenditures (2).

PACs, Super PACs, corporations, unions, trade associations, and wealthy individuals spend billions of dollars trying to influence elections and public policy. Also, a small number of wealthy donors gained enormous political influence (3). Campaigns for office have become increasingly expensive, leading to dependence on large donors. The concentration of political influence in wealthy individuals who also hold significant government contracts raises questions about conflicts of interest and accountability.

There is also this revolving door between government and lobbying. Former members of Congress, Pentagon officials, and those who once regulated industries being employed by those same industries.

Billy Tauzin, a U.S. representative from Louisiana, went on to become the President and CEO of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA), a PAC representing the pharmaceutical industry. This is the man who helped shape legislation affecting the pharmaceutical industry before leaving Congress (4).

Dick Gephardt, congressman from Missouri, House majority/minority leader, left government and created Gephardt Government Affairs, a lobby group that represented major corporate clients (5).

John Breaux, U.S. senator from Louisiana, co-founded the Breaux Lott Leadership Group, a lobbying group frequently referenced as an example of former lawmakers leveraging government experience in lobbying (6).

William J. Lynn III, former Deputy Secretary of Defense, was a senior Raytheon executive prior to that position. When he left government, he became CEO of a different major defense contractor, DRS Technologies (later Leonardo DRS), rather than returning to his old employer (7).

Here's a more obvious example: Mark Esper, the Secretary of Defense, was the Vice President for Government Relations at Raytheon prior to becoming Secretary of Defense. He was a lobbyist (8).

General Joseph Dunford, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, joined Lockheed Martin's board of directors. Lockheed Martin is one of the largest defense contractors in the world (9).

Las but not least: General James Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, advocated within the Pentagon for a troubled Army surveillance-balloon program built by Raytheon and helped block the Army from canceling it in 2010. He retired the following year and joined Raytheon's board of directors five months later, where the company paid him hundreds of thousands of dollars annually (10, 11).

The list goes on and on. If you would like to look into this further, look into the following organizations that make it their business to systematically study this revolving-door phenomenon:

Project on Government Oversight (POGO)

OpenSecrets

Center for Responsive Politics

Government Accountability Office (GAO)

Public Citizen

For example, POGO's report "Brass Parachutes" documented hundreds of retired generals, admirals, and senior Pentagon officials moving into defense industry positions (11).

OpenSecrets maintains a revolving-door database showing former members of Congress, congressional staff, executive branch officials, and military personnel who later registered as lobbyists (12).

The revolving door creates a structural conflict of interest because officials may be responsible for regulating, funding, or overseeing industries that later employ them. Even when no laws are broken, the prospect of future employment can create the appearance of undue influence and undermine public confidence in government.

That's the nice way of saying it: as I said in a previous article I published on Substack, I would like to go into the state building and drive the lobbyists out like Jesus drove the moneylenders from the temple. Well, I am certainly not Jesus, nor as President would I be a king. We are a democracy: the United States of America. We are not an autocracy. My administration will follow the rule of law to the letter.

As President, I would approach Congress and the Senate to strengthen ethics laws, increase transparency, and restrict the revolving door between government service and private lobbying. Public office should be a public trust, not a pathway

to private enrichment. These reforms would help restore confidence that elected officials are acting in the interests of the people they were chosen to represent.

We need to increase the cooling-off time between higher public service and working in the private sector to 5-10 years. Ban active lobbying by former elected officials in relation to agencies they were involved with. Reform the campaign laws. One of my goals is greater transparency in government: that includes officials meeting with lobbyists, PAC expenditures, corporate political spending, and government contractor political activity.

I would urge Congress and the Senate to strengthen ethics rules: more extensive financial disclosures, stronger recusal requirements, and, of course, independent oversight. My common sense tells me very few organizations can objectively govern themselves.

The concern is not that every public official is corrupt. The concern is that our system of campaign donations, lobbying, and post-government employment can create situations where private interests compete with the interests of the people.

When elected officials, senior government employees, military officers, and regulators leave public service and quickly take jobs with lobbying firms, political organizations, or industries they once oversaw, it raises legitimate questions. Were decisions made solely for the public good, or were future opportunities also a consideration? Even when no laws are broken, the appearance of a conflict of interest can damage public trust.

Government exists to serve the people, not powerful donors, corporations, or special interests. To restore confidence in our institutions, we should strengthen ethics laws, increase transparency, and place reasonable limits on the revolving

door between government service and private influence. Public service should be about serving the nation, not preparing for the next paycheck.

Lack of Productivity & Difficulty in Passing Long-Term Legislation

We will start with a few facts and comparisons: the 100th Congress (1987-88) enacted 713 laws. The 118th Congress (2023-24) enacted 276 laws (13). That's a decline of more than 60%. I will grant you that this is a bit of an oversimplification of the productivity of Congress. It is also a matter of how well they oversee the government, solve problems, appropriate funding, and more. As near as I can tell, they are failing in all aspects.

How many major bills passed, government shutdowns, continuing resolutions instead of regular budgets, confirmation battles, growth of party-line voting. Increasing use of executive orders because Congress cannot agree. We know how well that's working out.

Why is it harder for Congress to function now? If you go back, not that far back! Democrats were the conservatives and it was the Republicans who were liberal. Now the majority of members of Congress and the Senate follow party lines, no ifs, ands, or butts. Compromise is all but a lost art, and it doesn't get you in the media spotlight. It also doesn't get you re-elected. It is difficult to function as the people's representative when you are out there raising money for your next campaign.

Compromise is one of the foundations of effective governance. The same principle applies beyond politics into all aspects of life. I have been saying “yes, dear” for more than thirty years. Farmers compromise, unions and manufacturers

compromise. If not, you will break, like a tree that will not bend in the storm, and that holds true for our government.

Some suggestions would be more bipartisan committee work, a regular budget process rather than increased government shutdowns because of a dysfunctional Congress, electoral reform (I'll believe it when I see it), and no more backroom deals; transparency in negotiations.

Most citizens are not asking Congress to agree on everything. They are asking Congress to agree on enough things to keep the country functioning and moving forward. Do the job you are getting paid for. A congressperson's annual salary is \$174,000 (14), far more than I ever made in a year.

Declining Trust in Institutions (Congress, Media, Elections)

Trust and belief in a democracy is the foundation of a successful democracy. Without it, you may fall into partisan squabbling that leads to its downfall. Citizens do not have to agree with every decision government makes, but they must believe that the system is generally fair, competent, and accountable. Today, trust in the United States' institutions has reached historic lows. Public confidence in Congress, the media, election systems, and even the federal government itself has steadily declined over the past several decades. The result is a cycle of cynicism, division, and dysfunction.

The partisan politics of today are so aggressive it seems opponents are more interested in winning the election than solving problems. There is deep public concern in this area.

It is possible for next-door neighbors to watch two different news stations reporting on the same political issue and come away with opposing views of the

same event. With the rise of AI, videos and pictures have been created with no basis in fact. Some media stations, if they cannot find a crisis, will invent one. Calm, reasonable discussion to arrive at a consensus is just too boring.

There is a feeling of frustration and hopelessness among my fellow citizens and myself, otherwise I would not be writing this book. There is a perception that because an individual holds high public office, they are above the law or ethics that we, the citizens, would be accountable for. Whether involving ethics violations, misuse of public funds, insider trading allegations, or failures to disclose conflicts of interest, many voters believe investigations frequently end without meaningful consequences. This perception contributes to the belief that there is one set of rules for government officials and another for everyone else. My administration will consider nobody is above the law, period.

This is in part why many town hall meetings have become increasingly contentious; in addition, constituents feel their elected representatives are prioritizing party loyalty over local needs (15). Citizens often arrive expecting answers on issues such as infrastructure, healthcare costs, public safety, or employment. Instead, they hear talking points focused on national partisan battles, or support for legislation that is contrary to the platform the individual ran on. In some districts, representatives have reduced or stopped holding traditional in-person town halls altogether, out of fear of hostile audiences and unable to justify a political record that is at odds with the platform they ran on.

Due to gerrymandering, in many congressional districts the election outcome is almost a foregone conclusion. This is nothing other than manipulation by a political party to stay in power and enforce their ideology. Many voters see this as a system where politicians choose their voters rather than voters choosing their representatives. This has got to stop. States control the election process within their

state; therefore, district maps are drawn by and approved by the state legislature. As President, hopefully with the backing of the federal Congress, we will apply any means available to have district maps structured in a fair, logical manner that does not involve party partisanship.

The 1930s into the early 1940s was obviously a time of crisis in this country. Because of this, the country wanted continuity in government: they wanted President Roosevelt to carry the U.S. through the war. So, he served close to four terms (1933-1945), dying in office. It was after this that the country decided to put term limits on the presidency of two terms.

Occasionally, you hear rumblings of term limits for Congress that go nowhere. You have elected officials who have been in office for forty, perhaps fifty years (16). The original framers of the Constitution did not include term limits, likely because of the naïve assumption that after serving a term or two, the legislator would either be voted out or return to the private sector to get on with their life, exactly what George Washington did after two terms. But they did not foresee the bad apples, also known as “career politicians,” who are a class in by themselves. They lose a connection with the problems of everyday life that citizens have to deal with, kind of like “ivory tower” syndrome. This can also lead to stagnation in government and resistance to change, and it results in concentration of power in the hands of a few adept at working the system, such as majority or minority leaders and committee chairmanships: overt control over legislation by a few. We need, and as President I will advocate for, Congressional term limits. Possibly when we have a more robust voting public and other problems such as gerrymandering are dealt with, we can review term limits further. But right now, they are badly needed.

Public concern continues to grow after several highly visible incidents involving elderly elected officials of both parties experiencing medical episodes, confusion during public appearances, or questions regarding cognitive fitness.

This is not a one-party problem. President Trump's own White House has faced repeated, public questions about his stamina and cognitive sharpness: a 2026 annual physical delayed several months past his prior yearly pattern, widely circulated footage of him appearing to doze off during official events, and public mix-ups such as confusing Greenland and Iceland during remarks (17). President Biden faced parallel and equally serious scrutiny during his time in office, including a formal House Oversight Committee investigation into his cognitive fitness and how it was handled by his staff (18). The late Senator Dianne Feinstein's decline was documented by her own staff and colleagues' years before she left office (19). Representative Kay Granger of Texas missed months of votes in 2024 while residing in a senior living facility; her family disputed reports that she was specifically in memory care, while confirming she was experiencing "dementia issues" (20).

These situations have intensified calls for objective standards that evaluate competency rather than relying solely on age.

Many voters argue that a school bus driver, airline pilot, surgeon, or military officer would be subject to periodic fitness evaluations, and that elected officials entrusted with national decision-making should face similar standards. I believe that when the President, a member of Congress, or a sitting Supreme Court justice reaches 70 years of age, or is already older upon appointment, they should be required to pass a competency test to hold or continue to hold office; particularly the President. If they fail, the Vice President would assume office, on the condition that he or she also does not fail the test or is under 70 years of age. I will be 76

years old when I take office, well past the threshold I'm proposing. I'm not asking anyone to accept a standard I'm not willing to meet myself. Before I'm sworn in, when I officially become a candidate I will take a competency exam, publicly, and I'll release the results. If I can't pass it, I won't run for office, no matter how much I want the job or how many people want me to run.

Trust in the government to serve the people is at an all-time low. This will not be restored through speeches but through visible action. For example, when elected officials hold open town halls, answer difficult questions, disclose financial interests, explain controversial votes, and remain accessible to constituents, public confidence tends to improve. This means the politician must put the needs of the people before their own political career.

Likewise, governments that demonstrate competence during crises (whether natural disasters, economic downturns, or public health emergencies) often experience increased public trust because citizens can see tangible results (21). Trust grows when accountability is visible and performance is measurable.

The rancher in Montana, the potato farmer in Idaho, the factory worker in Detroit, the waitress in the roadside diner, the teacher in an overcrowded classroom on the south side of Chicago, or the family who owns a Mom & Pop pizzeria in New York: they will not agree with every decision made in Washington. But what they need is confidence that their concerns are being heard, their representatives are accountable, and the rules apply equally to everyone.

When citizens begin to believe their voices no longer matter, they disengage from the political process. They become apathetic, they don't vote. What's the point? This is when democracy dies. When they believe government is listening and responding, trust begins to return. The body politic takes on a new life.

Trust is not merely desirable; it is essential to the long-term health and stability of a democratic republic.

Notes

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Chapter 7: Government Efficiency & Bureaucracy

I always equated inefficiency in an organization with cost and waste. Especially one that doesn't have to worry about the effect on profit, or lacks the incentive to put that penny in the jar. Sounds a bit like federal and possibly state government. Well, I am running for President so will stick to federal.

The annual federal budget deficits continue to be measured in trillions of dollars, contributing to a national debt that now exceeds \$39 trillion (1). Trump's first administration alone (2017-2021) added nearly \$8 trillion to that debt, more than the first 43 presidents added combined (2). Early numbers from his second term suggest he may be on pace to beat his own record: the debt grew by roughly \$2.25 trillion in his first year back in office (3). This is not an argument for eliminating necessary programs, but for recognizing that sustained, large-scale deficit spending can contribute to inflationary pressure over time. Discipline in spending is not political; it is practical, and it benefits you and me. My administration will review all government spending and seriously assess the costs versus the benefits of every government project.

This is a huge commitment. Even now, as a Joe citizen, I cannot fully fathom the intricacies of federal spending. Still, just as a corporation is answerable to its shareholders for profit, I want the federal government during my administration to be answerable to citizens in a similar way, by reducing the federal deficit and improving quality of life in this country.

We already have an audit function in Washington: the Government Accountability Office. It's been counting waste for decades, and it does the job well. What we don't have is anyone forcing government to act on what GAO finds.

Right now, GAO has more than 600 recommendations sitting unaddressed, worth an estimated \$250 billion nobody has bothered to collect (4). That's not a knowledge problem. That's a will problem.

My administration will not set up a new commission to do a job GAO already does. Instead, we will require every major GAO report to come with a short, plain-language version (no accounting degree required, readable at your kitchen table) and put it directly in front of the reporters and outlets who will actually cover it, instead of letting it die in a filing cabinet on Capitol Hill.

Then we will give it teeth. Congress will get a single up-or-down vote each year on a packaged slate of GAO's recommendations, no amendments, no protecting one member's pet program while cutting everyone else's. Congress has used this approach before to close unneeded military bases, and it works for the same reason it worked then: nobody can save their own program without sinking the whole vote (5).

Finally, we will pay people to find the money. Federal law already lets agencies award employees up to \$10,000 for flagging wasteful spending. Most federal workers have never heard of it, and it shows: the program is barely used (6). There's a bipartisan bill in Congress right now, the Bonuses for Cost-Cutters and Fraud Preventers Act, that would double that award to \$20,000 and require agencies to report identified waste to OMB and Treasury. It has already passed the House (7). My administration will sign it, fund it properly, and make sure every federal employee knows it exists. But a reward with no protection behind it is a trap, not an incentive. Right now, an employee who flags wasteful spending isn't guaranteed the same retaliation protections a whistleblower gets for reporting fraud or illegal conduct. My administration will close that gap. I'd also push to go further than the bill as written: send 90 percent of whatever money is recovered as a result

of these tips straight to paying down the debt, with the other ten percent going toward the proposals in this book: money doing double duty, saving taxpayers now, building the country next.

This isn't a new bureaucracy answerable to nobody. It's making the one we already pay for finally answer you, the Citizen.

At the beginning of the present administration, DOGE, led at the outset by Elon Musk, set out to eliminate non-essential government bureaucracy. The methods were highly controversial and drew significant legal and political criticism (8). The premise, though, was sound. Bureaucracies, public or private, tend to grow and perpetuate themselves over time (9). I liken it to the slash-and-burn method used to manage forest fires. It's brutal to watch, but it clears room for new growth.

At the risk of repeating myself: my administration will review the costs versus the benefits across every corner of the federal government. Where the cost outweighs the benefit, the program will be eliminated in a manner consistent with the law.

Here's where I part ways with how DOGE did business. For most federal employees, we already have a body whose job is to determine whether a firing was justified or just politically convenient, it's called the Merit Systems Protection Board, created by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. It's not theoretical. It's the reason more than 5,600 wrongfully fired USDA employees were ordered back to work in 2025, at least temporarily, while the board investigated whether the firings broke the law (10). But that same 1978 law carved the FBI out of its own protections, on the theory that a law enforcement agency needed special handling. That carve-out is exactly what got exploited. FBI leadership, (some of which were political appointees) fired career agents and executives for having worked cases

connected to the President, with no independent board to appeal to, only a lawsuit, filed against the same leadership accused of the retaliation (11). Justice Department prosecutors ran into a version of the same wall: several resigned rather than carry out an order to drop corruption charges against a sitting mayor, in what one of them called a quid pro quo, and there was no independent body to review whether that order itself was improper (12).

My administration will propose that Congress close that carve-out. Law enforcement and prosecutorial personnel deserve the same independent review as everyone else: a real board, not an appeal to the very leadership accused of pushing them out. Employees found to have been removed for cause will stay removed. Employees found to have been pushed out for political reasons, or for refusing an unlawful order, will be offered their jobs back. Where possible, and if they wish it, civil servants whose agency is eliminated will be offered a position elsewhere in government rather than simply shown the door.

DOGE's own charter expired on July 4th of this year (13). My administration will renew it, on different terms. The new DOGE will evaluate other agencies and departments, determine whether they still serve their purpose, assess their efficiency, and recommend improvements to the Director of the Office of Personnel Management or the appropriate authority. What it will not have is the power DOGE had under the Trump administration to act unilaterally. My administration will follow the rule of law.

Regulatory Overreach

I have a dear friend who is a chemist by trade. The company he worked for assigned him to ensure their products met government regulations. This was a curse. He spent so much time at his desk trying to decipher obtuse and contradictory regulations that he went prematurely bald and got a flat ass from sitting in a chair at least eight plus hours a day.

He's not an isolated case, and it's not just his company eating the cost. One widely cited study puts the total cost of federal regulatory compliance across the entire U.S. economy at just over \$3 trillion a year, and manufacturers, because of the nature of their business, absorb a disproportionate share of it (14). That burden doesn't fall evenly. Because so much of the cost of compliance is fixed (the same paperwork, the same specialist, the same hours, whether a company has 20 employees or 20,000), small and mid-sized firms pay far more per employee to comply than large corporations do, since a big company can spread that same fixed cost across a much larger revenue base (15). In other words, the regulatory rulebook, as written today, quietly tilts toward the biggest players in every industry (the ones who can afford a compliance department) over the small business trying to survive on thin margins with one guy at a desk trying to decode all of it. Some of that regulation is protecting the public from something real. A lot of it is just accumulated weight, rules stacked on older rules nobody's gone back to reconcile: the Federal Register, where new rules are printed before being folded into the permanent Code of Federal Regulations, added 32 percent more pages over the last decade than the decade before it (16).

My administration will direct the review of all, and I mean ALL, government regulations to eliminate contradictions, duplication, and irrelevance.

Cybersecurity/Government IT Systems

Ya' know I was supposed to touch on cyber security under crime, but my research on the computer systems in the federal government made me realize our collective IT systems in federal government are like bailing a rowboat full of holes. The GAO scored 69 legacy systems across 24 major agencies and flagged 11 as most critical. Of those: 8 run on outdated languages, 4 have hardware or software no vendor supports anymore, and 7 have known, unpatched cybersecurity holes (17).

The federal government spends more than \$100 billion a year on IT. Close to 80 percent of that goes to operating and maintaining existing systems, not building anything new (18).

The Treasury Department, which includes the IRS, has systems that specifically run on COBOL and Assembly Language code, the same languages I learned in the early nineteen nineties when I got my first B.A., in Data Processing with a business minor. When they run out of old farts to maintain the code and keep it clean, they are screwed; they will take the language to the grave. To all you seniors like me: Social Security had to rehire retired employees because nobody currently on staff can read the code they wrote decades ago. What happens when they kick the bucket?

GAO first flagged 10 of these critical systems back in 2019. Six years later, as of February 2025, only 3 have actually been modernized. That's the real headline: after six years, seven out of ten of the government's own worst IT problems are still exactly that (19).

Remember when I said the GAO has more than 600 recommendations sitting unaddressed? Well, these were among them. I am not sure I follow the logic of not

upgrading government IT. To me it is imperative for the security aspect alone. Sure, it will take next to forever, could cause a disruption of service. You do not want to mess with seniors' Social Security, because they vote! If we did tackle this immense problem, the software used might be out of date by the time the new system is finished. So, let's just bury our collective heads in the sand and pretend the problem doesn't exist.

No way! We have to do something about this and do it as soon as I am elected. We already know we have to deal with the 600 recommendations by the GAO that have been ignored for one reason or another. They will be dealt with in terms of priority; two factors will be the security of this country and the day-to-day operation of the federal government.

Tax Collection: The Money Already Owed

Everything in this chapter so far has been about money the government spends badly. There's a second side to this ledger nobody running for office likes to talk about, because it sounds like a threat instead of a promise: money the government is legally owed and simply never collects.

The IRS's own numbers put the “tax gap” (the difference between what's legally owed and what actually gets paid) at roughly \$688 billion a year, gross (20). After whatever enforcement manages to claw back, the net gap still runs somewhere around \$580-625 billion a year (21). That's not a rounding error. That's larger than the discretionary budget of most federal departments combined.

Here's how we got here. In 2022, the Inflation Reduction Act gave the IRS \$79.4 billion over ten years, more than half of it earmarked specifically for enforcement, going after the returns too complicated and too well-lawyered up for

an underfunded agency to touch (22). Congress has spent every year since clawing that money back: \$1.4 billion rescinded in 2023, \$20.2 billion in 2024, another \$20.2 billion in late 2024 and early 2025, and \$11.7 billion more in a February 2026 budget deal, on top of a House-passed bill that specifically bragged about “reining in a weaponized IRS by cutting enforcement funding” (23). All told, Congress has clawed back roughly \$54 billion of the original \$79.4 billion, leaving about \$26 billion (24). The enforcement account alone, the part that goes after the tax gap directly, is down to \$3.8 billion from a promised \$45.6 billion (25).

This isn't the first time Washington has gutted this agency and then acted surprised at the result. Between 2010 and 2019, under a sustained funding assault, IRS enforcement staff fell 40 percent, and audit rates for large corporations dropped 54 percent, while audit rates for millionaires dropped 71 percent (26). In 2020, for the first time in the agency's history, the IRS audited low-income workers claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit at a higher rate than it audited millionaires, not because poor people cheat more, but because auditing a millionaire's return takes a specialist with the time and training to untangle it, and auditing a wage earner's W-2 takes neither (27).

Here's the part I especially like, because it means I'm not asking anyone to write a new rule: in 2020, the Treasury Department already directed the IRS to audit at least 8 percent of returns filed by individuals with \$10 million or more in income (28). That's my policy. It's already on the books, and for a while it actually worked: GAO found the IRS was on track to meet that 8 percent goal for tax years 2018 through 2020 (29). But the follow-through didn't last. Treasury's own inspector general later found the IRS quietly walked away from the directive, telling auditors in 2023 that the goal was “obsolete” rather than continuing to chase it (30). My administration would go further and extend that same 8 percent floor to

any individual or organization grossing \$10 million or more a year in profit or income, not just individuals, and fund the agents needed to actually hit the number, instead of letting a good rule quietly die the way GAO's other 600 recommendations already have. This pisses me off, does it make you the reader angry as well?

There's a real, live bill in Congress that does most of this: the Stop CHEATERS Act, which specifically directs IRS enforcement at high-income individuals and large corporations. The Congressional Budget Office estimates it could reduce the deficit by \$100-200 billion over a decade; an outside analysis from the Yale Budget Lab puts the number closer to \$1 trillion (31). My administration would push Congress to pass it, and I'd sign it ASAP.

I want to be straight about the counterargument, because it's not a fake one. Critics of expanding IRS enforcement, including a 2021 bill from a Republican senator and House member, have raised real concerns about taxpayer privacy, pointing to an earlier, since-abandoned proposal that would have required banks to report the total inflows and outflows of ordinary citizens' accounts to the IRS (32). That proposal deserved to die; nobody needs the government tracking every deposit into a checking account to catch a handful of billionaires hiding income offshore. But there's a difference between rejecting mass financial surveillance of everyday citizens and refusing to fund audits of the ten-million-dollar-a-year returns Treasury already decided, five years ago, this needed a closer look. You can protect Joe Citizen's bank statement and still go after the return with six offshore accounts and a team of lawyers built to make sure nobody ever reads it closely. Those are not the same fight, no matter how often they get lumped together on cable news.

None of this requires new legislation from scratch, and none of it requires new bureaucracy; it's the fifth example in this chapter of a tool Washington already built and then chose not to use. Combined with the IT modernization above, since, as I said, the IRS is trying to enforce all of this on hardware and code from the 1960s, a properly funded, properly staffed, properly wired IRS could plausibly bring in hundreds of billions of dollars over a decade without raising a single citizen's tax rate by one penny. That's not a tax increase. That's a collection problem, and it's long past time somebody in Washington treated it like one.

Closing

This is a big chapter, covering a lot of areas of governance, so I felt it needed a closing. None of what's in this chapter requires re-inventing the wheel. GAO already audits. The Merit Systems Protection Board already reviews firings and will do an even better job once I bring it back to full strength. Federal law already lets us pay employees who find waste. What it doesn't fully do yet is protect them from repercussions the way it protects whistleblowers, and we'll close that gap too. Even the IT fix I want is sitting in a GAO recommendation, gathering dust in a drawer somewhere in the Capitol. Even the \$10 million audit floor is Treasury's own rule, five years old, and Washington already proved it could enforce it before quietly letting it lapse. What's been missing isn't more bureaucracy; it's a President willing to let the tools we already built actually do their jobs, instead of picking them apart for political convenience or leaving them to rot because acting on them is inconvenient.

That's the real difference between my approach and DOGE's. DOGE tried to make government leaner by breaking things and hoping something better grew out of the ashes. I'd rather fix the plumbing than take a sledgehammer to the walls.

And unlike an executive order, a fix passed into law survives past my administration, whoever comes next.

None of this is partisan, whatever your gut tells you when you hear the word “efficiency.” A dollar wasted under a Democrat is still wasted. A recommendation ignored under a Republican is still ignored. Every proposal in this chapter is really the same promise, dressed up in six different ways. I can't promise you a government that never wastes a dime. I can promise you one that finally has to answer for it.

Notes

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Chapter 8: Crime and the Drug Crisis in the U.S.

Crime

Despite claims from the current administration and the sensational incidents often highlighted in the media, violent crime remains below the levels seen in the late 1980s and early 1990s (1). Property crime has declined even more sharply since the early 1990s (2). Crime did rise during and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, especially homicide and some violent offenses (3). Since 2022, however, most categories of crime have generally declined again (4). I still see crime in this country as a serious issue that needs to be addressed, and as President, I intend to address it.

One of the greatest misconceptions about crime is the idea that there are victimless crimes. In my view, there is no such thing. Some victims are simply easier to see than others.

We can all picture the obvious victims. The woman sitting on a gurney in an emergency room, staring blankly into space while a rape kit is processed. The store owner sweeping up broken glass after a robbery. The family gathered around a hospital bed after a loved one was assaulted.

But not all victims bear their wounds in public.

Sometimes the victim is a senior citizen who answers the phone and, through deception and manipulation, loses the savings of a lifetime to a scammer operating halfway around the world. Sometimes it is a child who leaves home after having his head slammed into a wall one too many times. Sometimes it is the teenager looking for escape who is handed his first dose of fentanyl for free by someone who sees profit where others see a human being.

The pain caused by these crimes may not make the evening news. There may be no police tape, no flashing lights, and no dramatic footage for television. The suffering may unfold over months or years instead of minutes. Yet the damage is every bit as real.

Crime leaves behind victims. It leaves behind fear, trauma, broken trust, shattered finances, damaged families, and communities struggling to heal. Whether the crime is violent, financial, organized, or committed behind a computer screen, someone pays the price.

As a society, we must reject the notion that crime can be measured solely by arrest statistics or dollar amounts. Behind every crime is a human story. Behind every statistic is a victim. Understanding that reality is the first step toward understanding the true cost of crime in the United States.

Crime carries many costs. Some are financial and fall directly on victims: property loss, medical expenses, increased insurance premiums, and the costs to society associated with law enforcement, courts, and prisons. Crime can also lower property values and discourage investment. These are monetary losses that can be measured and quantified, creating a burden for both individuals and society. They are real and significant costs.

However, there are other consequences of crime that are no less important. High-crime areas often experience reduced economic activity and population decline as residents and businesses choose to relocate. Community involvement decreases as people become reluctant to participate in neighborhood events or public activities out of fear for their safety. Instead of attracting new investment, these communities often see businesses close their doors or move elsewhere.

I first encountered this issue while writing a paper about food access in the United States. That was when I was introduced to the concept of a "food desert." A food desert is generally defined as an area where residents have limited access to affordable, nutritious food, especially fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, and other healthy options. It is not surprising that many food deserts are located in high-crime areas. Businesses are often unwilling to invest in neighborhoods where crime increases operating costs and creates risks for employees and customers. As a result, residents are left with fewer choices and lower-quality services, further contributing to the decline of the community.

Few experiences are as intimate and life-altering as becoming the victim of a violent crime. In those moments, a victim's sense of safety, dignity, and control can be shattered. For children, whose understanding of trust and security is still developing, the effects can be particularly damaging. Violent crime brings victimization into the most personal sphere of human experience, leaving consequences that often extend beyond physical wounds to include emotional trauma, fear, and lasting psychological harm. This is why violent crime is often viewed as one of the most serious threats not only to individual victims but also to the well-being of families and communities.

The purpose of the criminal justice system is not revenge. Its purpose is to protect the innocent, hold offenders accountable, and prevent future victims.

Now, I could go on about property crime, white-collar crime, cybercrime, organized crime, and human trafficking. Human trafficking deserves to be named clearly. These are people who steal our children, take homeless kids off the street, and sell human beings into bondage.

Again, I have to keep it civil. But I will save them a cell in a cold prison somewhere in North Dakota, right next to the drug trafficker.

But you, my dear reader, you do not really want a college lecture about crime. You want to know what I am going to do about it once I am sitting behind the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office.

Well, fasten your seat belt.

My administration will work with Congress to increase federal grants for states that implement evidence-based repeat-offender programs. If done right, these programs can reduce recidivism, lower prison overcrowding, and focus attention on the people who keep hurting others.

Criminals use fear to protect themselves from exposure and prosecution. Organized crime is especially good at it. My administration will review and strengthen the witness protection program and provide the U.S. Marshals Service with the resources it needs to protect witnesses and help secure convictions.

I am a veteran. Just as I would never hand the VA over to private contractors, I have serious doubts about privately run prisons. To reduce prison overcrowding, I would encourage states to reserve prison space primarily for violent and repeat offenders rather than filling cells with low-risk offenders. A third-time shoplifter should be held accountable, but not necessarily housed next to a murderer. Let's use a little common sense.

Back when I was working in the emergency room of a small hospital on Chicago's South Side as a nurse (RN/BSN), I picked up the street term "shorty." This is what gang members used to call minors who ran drugs, guns, or messages back and forth on the street. In many cases, especially in street crime, you do not wait until you are legally an adult to start working for criminals.

That is why prevention matters.

We will expand mentorship programs. We have already discussed vocational schools and grants. We will support after-school programs. A lot of kids come from dysfunctional families. Sometimes that dysfunction includes violence. We need to find a way to provide them with a safe place to sleep when things get too intense at home. One of the best things we can do for a kid trapped in that kind of life is to get them out of the neighborhood long enough to see another path.

Maybe some of that can be worked out through the proposed National Civil Works Service. Better a job site than a jail.

In the private sector, billions of dollars are lost every year to fraud, scams, embezzlement, and financial crimes. Go back far enough, and that money belonged to a victim.

We will strengthen the FBI and the Department of Justice as independent, professional, objective law enforcement agencies whose loyalty is to the Constitution and the rule of law, not politics. That most certainly includes the financial crime divisions.

We will increase penalties for large-scale fraud involving seniors. If Grandpa or Grandma is the victim, we will throw the book at you.

Just as citizens know to call 911 during an emergency, I want every citizen to know exactly where to report fraud, scams, identity theft, and financial crimes. I would work to create a National Fraud Reporting Center that is simple, visible, and easy to use.

A lot of these scammers are halfway around the world from their victims. They convince people to use electronic transfers and then drain their accounts. My administration would work with law enforcement agencies in other countries, as

well as international organizations such as Interpol, not only to catch the culprits but also to recover what was stolen whenever possible.

Organized retail theft is another serious problem. One part of it that the public sees is shoplifting. Shoplifting can be done by individuals, but it is also carried out by organized gangs. This is a crime where the real victim is often the community itself.

As I have said: A business will not stay open in an area where it becomes too difficult or unprofitable to operate. So, when a major food store leaves, the neighborhood becomes the victim. Families lose access to groceries. Workers lose jobs. The community loses another piece of stability.

As President, I would expand federal prosecution of organized theft rings that cross state lines, improve coordination between states, and increase penalties for large criminal enterprises.

I cannot cover everything related to crime in this chapter. That would be a book by itself. But there is one more crime that must be addressed directly, and that is human trafficking.

As far as I am concerned, those involved in human trafficking are among the lowest forms of criminals this country faces. They profit from misery, fear, and exploitation. Many of their victims are children. They deserve neither sympathy nor leniency from the justice system.

We will expand federal investigations into human trafficking with extreme prejudice. We will increase victim assistance programs. Human trafficking often crosses state and international borders, so we will work with the agencies of other countries to track both the victims and the perpetrators.

As I was writing this, I kept coming back to one issue: data, information, and availability. With the communication technology available today, and with the emergence of sophisticated data centers, we will take full advantage of what already exists and what can be built. We will create a stronger national database on violent offenders, available to authorized law enforcement agencies across the country.

My administration will research the possibility of a data center dedicated solely to law enforcement. For now, let us call it the National Law Enforcement Information Network, or NLEIN.

This would be a centralized, or at least highly integrated, data system where authorized federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies could access criminal intelligence, warrants, fingerprints, DNA matches, financial crime information, gang intelligence, trafficking investigations, and similar information.

The FBI's National Crime Information Center, the National Data Exchange, DHS databases, state criminal justice systems, fusion centers, and dozens of other systems already share information between agencies. The problem is that they are fragmented, use different standards, and often do not communicate as well as they should (5).

NLEIN would not be designed to replace local police departments, sheriffs, state investigators, or federal agencies. Its purpose would be to help them communicate. Information saves lives. A detective should not have to discover six months later that another agency already had a piece of the same investigation.

When criminals cooperate across state lines, law enforcement should be able to do the same.

Once built, there may also be cost savings from reducing duplicate databases across multiple agencies. We have addressed redundancy in government elsewhere in this book, but this is one example of where government duplication can hurt both efficiency and public safety.

Right now, agencies may investigate the same suspects without knowing another agency is already working on the case. With better information sharing, a detective in New Mexico could quickly see that a suspect is connected to an ongoing case in Florida or California. AI could help identify links between crimes, suspects, vehicles, financial transactions, and communications that humans might miss.

Every major law enforcement failure after 9/11 led to the same criticism: someone had a piece of the puzzle, but nobody could see the whole picture. Better information sharing has been one of the most consistent recommendations from law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and government oversight bodies for the last twenty-five years (6).

A well-designed system would not replace police officers, detectives, or investigators. It would simply help them connect the dots faster.

But I cannot emphasize this enough, and I will likely say it more than once: we live in a democracy. God bless the United States.

There would be serious objections to a central law enforcement database containing information on U.S. citizens, whether they are criminals or not. Some people will immediately think, "Big Brother is watching." They are not wrong to worry. The right to privacy is an essential cornerstone of democracy.

That is why this data center must have strict limits, clear rules, and real oversight. Every access to the system should be logged, recorded, and subject to

audit. Anyone who abuses the system for political purposes, personal reasons, or unauthorized surveillance should face severe criminal penalties.

The same technology that can help protect the public can also threaten liberty if left unchecked. A free people should demand both security and accountability.

In closing, let me say this: my administration will judge success not by how many criminals we process through the system, but by how many of our citizens are safe in their city, town, or neighborhood and never become victims in the first place.

Drug Crisis in the U.S.

There has been a problem with illegal and harmful drug use in this country for as long as I can remember, but I cannot recall it ever being as devastating as it is today. The widespread use of synthetic drugs such as fentanyl, along with cocaine, methamphetamine, and the continuing abuse of opioids, has left a trail of addiction, broken families, and lost lives across the nation. While overdose deaths have begun to decline in recent years, tens of thousands of citizens still die each year from drug-related causes. Substance abuse remains one of the most serious public health and public safety challenges facing the United States today. Eliminating this problem may not be possible, but we can and must do better.

Drug cartels sell death and despair in the form of drugs. Under my administration, they will continue to be treated as international terrorists: a designation the federal government has already applied to eight major cartels since February 2025 (7). They are indirectly responsible for the damaged lives and deaths of my fellow citizens; that's good enough for me.

Cartels are businesses built on money, power, and violence. To seriously weaken them, they must be attacked on multiple fronts simultaneously. There is no

single solution. Supply, money, precursor chemicals, weapons, transportation networks, corruption, and demand must all be targeted together. Because of international law, national sovereignty, and limited resources, the United States cannot do this alone.

Past efforts show both the possibilities and the limits of international cooperation. Plan Colombia helped the Colombian government fight drug-funded insurgent and criminal groups. While it improved security in parts of the country, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that it did not achieve its primary goal of significantly reducing coca cultivation and cocaine production (8). Nevertheless, it demonstrated that sustained international cooperation can disrupt cartel operations and strengthen local institutions.

The Mérida Initiative, launched in 2008, was a partnership between the United States and Mexico to combat organized crime, drug trafficking, and cartel violence. In 2021, it was replaced by the Bicentennial Framework, which shifted emphasis toward public health, community safety, and addressing the root causes of crime (9).

Another example is Operation Martillo ("Operation Hammer"). This multinational effort brought together nations from across the Americas and Europe to prevent drugs from reaching U.S. shores. Naval forces, aircraft, coast guard assets, and intelligence agencies worked together to identify, track, and intercept drug shipments moving through Central America and surrounding waters (10).

One of the greatest challenges is that cartels are smart, innovative, and highly adaptable. They operate quietly, avoid attention whenever possible, and quickly change tactics when authorities begin to close in. They move money faster than the pea in a shell game. Through shell (pun intended) companies, offshore banks,

international trade networks, cryptocurrency, and other methods, they hide billions of dollars in criminal profits.

For this reason, following the money is often as important as intercepting the drugs themselves. Operations such as Project Titan and its successor, Project Cassandra, have brought together the DEA, Colombian authorities, and European law enforcement agencies, including Europol and Eurojust, to identify, track, and dismantle international money-laundering networks that support cartel and terrorist financing alike (11). Every dollar seized or blocked is a dollar that cannot be used to buy chemicals, weapons, transportation, or influence through corruption.

One of the problems is that if you capture or kill the head of a cartel, another one will take his place, and it is business as usual. When Pablo Escobar was killed, and the Cali Cartel was eventually broken apart, drug trafficking did not stop. Drug cartels are not defeated when one kingpin falls. They are defeated when the money, chemicals, transportation networks, corrupt officials, and customer base that sustain them are dismantled simultaneously.

There must be constant and unrelenting pressure on the cartels until they collapse and can no longer operate. This will not happen overnight. It is a long-term effort that will require cooperation among many nations.

To accomplish this, I will propose the creation of an international coalition under an agreement similar to NATO, dedicated to combating transnational drug cartels and trafficking organizations.

Potential members could include: the United States, Mexico, Canada, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and European partners.

Mission: (1) Share intelligence in real time. (2) Track precursor chemicals worldwide. (3) Target cartel finances and money laundering operations. (4) Patrol

major maritime trafficking routes. (5) Expedite the extradition of cartel leaders. (6) Coordinate anti-corruption investigations. (7) Disrupt cyber and cryptocurrency operations used by criminal organizations.

The coalition's purpose would be simple: deny drug cartels the money, resources, freedom of movement, and political protection they need to survive. Through sustained international cooperation, these terrorist organizations can be weakened, dismantled, and ultimately destroyed.

Incarceration and Punishment

Once the traffickers are caught, there should be no confusion about what will happen next.

For decades, drug cartels and traffickers have poisoned our communities, destroyed families, and are the cause of the burial of hundreds of thousands of citizens. Entire neighborhoods have been scarred by addiction, violence, and hopelessness while criminals grew rich from human misery. The time for half measures is over.

If you are found guilty of possessing one kilogram or more of methamphetamine, fentanyl, cocaine, or another comparably destructive narcotic, with intent to distribute, you will be tried and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. I am deliberately leaving marijuana off this list. It is legal in a majority of states at this point, and whatever your personal opinion of it, it does not belong in the same conversation as fentanyl, meth, or cocaine.

Let me be specific about why the substance matters as much as the weight. A single kilogram of fentanyl is, in theory, a lethal dose for roughly 500,000 people (12). That is not a number I take lightly, and the law shouldn't either.

I don't use the word "terrorist" loosely here, either. The federal government has already designated eight major cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, a status that took effect in February 2025 (7). There's a real, serious counterargument to that designation: some national security scholars warn that stretching a legal category built for ideologically motivated violence to cover profit-driven criminal organizations risks blurring an important legal line, with consequences for how that law gets applied elsewhere (13). I don't dismiss that warning. But drug money and terrorism have never been as separate as people would like to believe; cartels and terrorist organizations have documented histories of sharing the same money-laundering networks, the same corrupt officials, and in some cases the same trafficking routes, to fund violence (14). When an organization's entire business model depends on smuggling, corruption, and mass violence to protect a product that kills Americans by the tens of thousands every year, in my judgment, the label fits.

Sentencing itself I will leave where it belongs: with the judge. A trial judge is in the room. They hear the evidence, they know the substance and the quantity involved, and they can weigh a defendant's actual role in the operation in a way no fixed number in a statute ever could. What I will insist on is this: if this is a defendant's second conviction for drug trafficking, the sentence should be more severe than the sentence for the first conviction on the same offense, not automatically doubled, not capped, just more severe, unless the judge finds genuine mitigating circumstances on the record and states what they are. Fool the court once, and that's on the trafficker. Fool the court twice, and the court had better not be treating it like the first time with a longer wait attached. That's not sentencing. That's a revolving door with extra paperwork.

You chose to make your living selling poison to the American people. The American people owe you nothing in return.

If you are convicted of trafficking quantities below one kilogram, you will still face substantial prison time as determined by the court. Drug trafficking is not a victimless crime. Every sale contributes to addiction. Every shipment fuels criminal organizations. Every overdose leaves another grieving family behind.

If you are not a citizen of the United States, you will be deported immediately upon completion of your sentence and permanently barred from reentering this country.

If you are a citizen of the United States, your conviction will become part of a publicly accessible registry of convicted drug traffickers, similar to the one used for pedophiles. The public has a right to know who profited from the destruction of their communities. Shame is a powerful deterrent, and those who knowingly profit from addiction should not be allowed to quietly disappear back into society as though nothing happened.

Now, let me be clear. There is a difference between the trafficker and the person with an addiction.

The trafficker profits from suffering. The person with an addiction suffers from what the trafficker sells.

A young man hooked on fentanyl is not my enemy. A woman trapped by addiction is not my enemy. Many people with an addiction are victims who need treatment, counseling, structure, and a path back to productive citizenship. Whenever possible, our goal should be recovery, rehabilitation, and meaningful employment. Through programs such as the proposed National Civil Works

Service (NCWS), we can help many of these individuals rebuild their lives and regain their dignity.

But I have no patience for those who knowingly flood our streets with drugs.

Every trafficker knows what fentanyl does. Every trafficker knows people die from overdoses. Every trafficker knows children grow up without parents because of the poison they sell. Yet they continue because there is money to be made.

I have compassion for the person with an addiction. I have compassion for the families left behind. I have compassion for the communities struggling to survive.

I have none for those who make a business out of addiction and death.

If you choose to sell poison to my brothers and sisters, if you choose to profit from the destruction of American lives, then you should expect severe punishment, public disgrace, and many years staring at the walls of a prison cell while the world moves on without you.

Treatment

For decades, the United States has swung between two extremes when dealing with illegal drugs. One approach is, "Throw them in jail and let them dry out." The other is, "If we decriminalize drugs, the problem will solve itself." Both approaches have in common that they often push the problem aside rather than confront it directly.

The drugs on our streets today are far more potent and dangerous than those of even a decade ago. Synthetic opioids such as fentanyl can be hundreds of times more powerful than morphine, and a single mistake can be fatal. Combined with poverty, mental illness, homelessness, family breakdown, and other social pressures, these drugs have fueled an addiction and overdose crisis in communities across the nation.

What happened in Oregon provides an important lesson. In 2020, voters approved Measure 110, which decriminalized possession of small amounts of hard drugs and redirected funding toward treatment services. By 2024, after rising public concern over addiction, overdose deaths, open drug use, and disorder in many communities, state leaders reversed part of the law. They restored criminal penalties for drug possession while continuing to expand treatment and diversion programs (15).

The lesson is clear: accountability and treatment must work together. Treatment without accountability too often fails to move people into recovery. Accountability without treatment returns people to the same addiction that put them in trouble in the first place. Neither approach is sufficient on its own.

Regarding the law, I would expect the law to be based on these three general principles:

One. Severe penalties for traffickers and dealers. I think I made myself clear in the previous section.

Two. Accountability for users. If someone is in possession of illegal drugs, then they should face the consequences. However, those consequences should be focused on getting people into treatment rather than filling prisons with people with an addiction. If they were living on the street, there is a fair chance they are also dealing with mental health issues. Throwing them in prison adds to the problem of recidivism and overpopulation in our prisons.

My administration will advocate for the expansion of drug courts and the assignment of additional case workers to help reduce court overload and provide more effective supervision (16). The goal of these courts should not simply be punishment. Their purpose is to get people with an addiction into treatment, place

them on a recovery plan, require regular testing and supervision, and help them remain drug-free.

However, treatment alone is often not enough. We know that all the counseling, rehabilitation, and recovery programs in the world may accomplish little if a person is released only to return to the same conditions that led them to addiction in the first place. If we expect people to change their lives, we must give them a realistic opportunity to do so.

For this reason, graduates of approved treatment and recovery programs will be eligible for many of the same opportunities offered to high school graduates. One possibility would be to enter the National Civil Works Service. The NCWS was proposed in a previous chapter. By entering the NCWS program as a recovering addict, there will be counseling and support to remain drug-free. The individual must comply with testing and supervision requirements and demonstrate a commitment to recovery. If so, they will have the opportunity to train in a skill or skills, for that matter, that could serve them throughout their life.

This approach provides more than a paycheck. It provides structure, discipline, purpose, and, as I said, skills training, and, in many cases, stable housing. It gives recovering people with an addiction a chance to build a new life instead of returning to the circumstances that contributed to their addiction. The expectation is simple: society will provide an opportunity, but the individual must do the work. Continued participation will require compliance with recovery plans, regular testing, and adherence to program standards.

If they don't choose the NCWS option, they will still need a place to live with structure, job training, and employment. Emotional support and reason through group and one-on-one counseling. There will be long-term monitoring and transparency at the federal and, I hope, state levels of this effort, so we can address

problems before they arise and tweak the system as needed. Our citizens are a resource and responsibility. If we can reform a drug addict, give them hope in life, they will only make the United States stronger with their efforts.

There is the old saying, "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me." The U.S. taxpayer should expect accountability. Those who make a sincere effort to rebuild their lives will receive support and opportunity. Those who repeatedly refuse treatment, violate program requirements, or attempt to exploit the system for personal gain will face appropriate consequences. Recovery is a partnership between the individual and society, and both sides must uphold their responsibilities.

For various reasons, some of which we will get into in prevention, my administration will not lean on Nancy Reagan's old "just say no to drugs," the slogan the White House put behind an official "Just Say No To Drugs Week" starting in 1986 (17). It's easy to hand out a slogan like that when you've never sat up with someone through withdrawal, never had an addict look you dead in the eye and lie, never had to figure out where a man sleeps when it's fifteen degrees out and the shelters full. Good intentions are not the same thing as experience. A message built by people who never had to get someone straight was never going to land with the people who actually needed to get straight, and the record backs that up (18): a 2003 federal review found the "just say no" model had no lasting effect on drug use, and the Surgeon General reached the same conclusion two years earlier. I'm not saying this from the outside looking in. I've been close enough to this myself, and I'll tell you exactly how in a few pages.

We will advocate for more extensive outreach programs and crisis intervention. I will touch on this later, but all police officers, at least in high drug use areas, will carry Narcan, either on their person or in the squad car. A mental health

professional will also be on call. Possibly, case workers with a background in social work could coordinate with the police, hospitals, and treatment facilities.

In addition to rebuilding a damaged, almost non-existent mental health care system, we need inpatient drug treatment facilities. Once the person with an addiction is clean, we need outpatient programs that will keep them clean. Just like alcohol addiction (which we will consider a drug and treat the person with an addiction accordingly), the drug addict will need a sponsor and group counseling. A bed in a treatment center may cost money, but it costs society far less than repeated emergency room visits, arrests, incarceration, and lifelong dependency.

Actually, I did a paper on recidivism in prisons long ago for university. I get into the causes of returning to prison, and they are many. Still, one thing I do remember is: throwing somebody back on the streets, possibly in the middle of winter, with the clothes on their back, and expecting them to become a productive citizen overnight. That is just plain stupid and lacking common sense. Treatment must be followed up with rehabilitation.

Most of us are aware of the recent daycare fraud scandal in Minnesota, where taxpayer money intended to help children was instead siphoned off for personal gain, a scheme prosecutors say ran to roughly \$250 million and has produced more than 75 defendants to date (19). To put it politely, it was another case of bad apples helping themselves to the public purse. Believe me, if I were belly-up to the bar in the old neighborhood, my language would be far more colorful. But this is a book, and I want to appeal to as many people as possible articulately and reasonably. So, for now, restraint will have to do.

Most drug treatment and rehabilitation programs in the United States are privately operated, something as President I would like to move away from, if practical. A large percentage receives government funding in one form or another.

We are talking about roughly 91 percent of all treatment facilities operating under private non-profit or for-profit ownership. Only about 9 percent are operated directly by state, local, tribal, or federal governments (20).

The federal government exercises oversight through several agencies. However, that oversight is often fragmented across multiple departments and jurisdictions. The result can be conflicting policies, inconsistent treatment standards, uneven reporting requirements, and opportunities for abuse when more than 90 percent of treatment and rehabilitation services are in private hands.

My administration will examine the possibility of expanding the role of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The goal will be to consolidate certain oversight responsibilities currently spread across already overburdened agencies and establish stronger accountability. This would include regular and unannounced inspections of facilities to ensure they are meeting standards established by SAMHSA and other appropriate agencies, including the Office of Inspector General (OIG), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

We will work with the states to establish uniform standards for treatment programs, reporting requirements, outcome measurements, and success-rate tracking. Licensing standards should be consistent, transparent, and enforceable. The state or the federal government should issue the license. Whether a facility is public or private, patients and taxpayers deserve the same level of quality care and accountability.

And let me be perfectly clear: God help the company, institution, or individual found defrauding state or federal treatment programs. That money does not belong to you. It belongs to the American people. If you steal it, you are stealing from the taxpayer, from families seeking help, and from those struggling to overcome

addiction. If the Department of Justice can make the case, you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Prevention

No one wakes up one morning and decides they want to become a drug addict. Addiction is usually the end of a long chain of events, not the beginning. Somewhere along the way, there was pain, trauma, loneliness, poor choices, bad influences, untreated mental illness, or simple human curiosity. Sometimes it begins in a troubled home. Sometimes it begins with a prescription from a doctor. Sometimes it's a combat veteran who keeps having nightmares. Sometimes it begins because a person is trying to fit in, escape reality, or numb a hurt that nobody else can see. If we are serious about preventing drug abuse, we must first understand why people start using drugs in the first place. Prevention begins long before the first pill, the first needle, or the first hit, for those drugs may provide an escape from a life that offers no hope of change for the better.

I am not going to lie, some of the problems that lead to addiction are caused by the nature of humanity and cannot be fixed by laws, regulations, or programs. But there are those my administration may be able to help with, such as physical and emotional pain, PTSD, mental health, being thrown out on the street without the tools to cope, and spouse abuse. In particular, the economic conditions that I have discussed in previous chapters.

I told you I've been close to this myself. Here's what I meant. When I was around 19, my father basically told me, "It's my way or the highway." So, I packed as many of my belongings as I could into my backpack and walked out the front door. I had a couple of hundred dollars in cash. With this, I was able to get an apartment in the white-trash part of the city. I did have a job as an orderly at a hospital. They said I was rude to a Resident and fired me. In those days, doctors

were gods; nurses would get up from their seats to let a doctor sit down. Of course, I am sure the fact that I was an active union organizer at the hospital had something to do with it. So, I couldn't find a job and was starving. I remember stealing from the food market near my apartment. I ended up applying for welfare and was accepted. My landlord stole my first welfare check and evicted me. So, I was on the street. My brother, who had run from home when he was a sophomore in high school, became involved in the drug culture on the streets. It was by the goodness of a recovering addict that we, or I, would visit every few days that I did not starve. I can still remember standing at the corner of Diversey and Sheridan Rd in the dead of winter, shivering my ass off in a threadbare engineer's coat. But by the grace of God, with the help of a dear friend, I survived and got back on my feet. The memories are a bit fuzzy, and this is a bare-bones description of what occurred, but I swear it is the truth.

Now, what is being done presently to prevent vulnerability to the enticement of escape through drug use? As treatment prevention efforts are spread across different agencies, and as treatment lacks a central focus or directing entity, this can lead to fragmentation and a lack of coordinated efforts, especially between state and federal levels. Again, just as in treatment, I would expand the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Coordinate the efforts of other agencies and, in some cases, take over the operation of certain programs. This will improve efficiency, funding, and avoid redundancy.

At present, there are programs such as: Drug-Free Communities (DFC), which bring together parents, schools, law enforcement, health professionals, and community leaders to identify local risk factors and reduce youth substance use (21).

Many of us are aware of the oxycodone abuse a few years back that reached almost epidemic proportions. This led states and the federal government to use Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) to identify abuse and overprescribing of opioid medications. Safe prescribing initiatives are also part of prevention efforts (22).

The increasing realization that mental health, trauma, and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) matters; recognizing that addiction often begins long before the first drug is taken.

As I have said in the past, our children are a precious resource; it is the generations to come that will change the world for better or worse. Children exposed to physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, domestic violence, parental addiction, parental mental illness, family instability, chronic poverty, or exposure to violence. These childhood exposures can lead to stunted growth, both physically and mentally, leaving the individual without the tools to cope with society in a healthy manner, which in turn can result in substance abuse and addiction.

Just as my administration will emphasize prevention in physical and mental health, drug addiction will most certainly fall under its auspices. Which means the following:

Every middle school and high school should have access to qualified counselors and mental health professionals.

Early treatment of depression, anxiety, trauma, and behavioral disorders can reduce the risk of later substance abuse.

Just as an emergency nurse is taught to recognize abuse, healthcare providers and social service agencies should be better equipped to identify children exposed to trauma and connect them with support services.

Through SAMHSA, federal funding will prioritize programs that demonstrate measurable reductions in youth substance use rather than programs that sound good in press releases.

Once again, I would be lying if I said we could completely eliminate drug addiction. As long as there are imperfect human beings, there will be suffering, poor decisions, and those willing to profit from the misery of others. But accepting that reality does not mean accepting defeat. Every addiction that never starts is a life that does not have to be rebuilt. Every child steered away from drugs is one less family that will know the heartbreak of watching a loved one disappear into addiction. Prevention is not glamorous. It rarely makes headlines. Yet it may be the most important part of our entire strategy. The best addiction to treat is the one that never happens. The best overdose is the one that never occurs. If we can give our young people hope, opportunity, purpose, and the support they need to face life's challenges, we can reduce the demand that fuels this crisis and build a stronger, healthier nation for generations to come.

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Chapter 9: National Security & Military Readiness

The U.S. Military

Teddy Roosevelt once said, "Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick." While I may not agree with it as foreign policy, I do believe in a strong, well-equipped military to defend the United States.

Let me preface this chapter by saying this: if the United States ever becomes involved in a nuclear war, you can kiss your ass goodbye. There are no winners. This principle of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) is tenuous at best. If an individual is in control of a nuclear arsenal like Kim Jong Un, who is really brilliant or one marble short of batsh*t crazy, all bets are off. I can't get too deep into the nuclear issue because there isn't enough public information for me to make responsible statements. What I can say is that we will stay vigilant, keep a close eye on the situation, and make sure we are prepared for whatever challenges may arise. Protecting the American people will always come first. So, from this point forward we will be talking in terms of the conventional military.

Let's start out with a hypothetical. I want to be plain about that word: this is a scenario I'm building to make a point, not a prediction of what's coming. China attacks Taiwan. While the United States' attention is focused on the Pacific, Russia decides the time is right to test NATO's resolve and moves against one of the Baltic states. Now, in this hypothetical, we have a major war in the Pacific and a major war in Europe at the same time.

Could the U.S. respond to both conflicts? (1) Yes, we could. Could we carry on a prolonged war on two fronts? No, we could not (1). It was only recently that the U.S. told NATO they would have to relocate assets to the Indo-Pacific area. NATO

Secretary General Mark Rutte has acknowledged as much publicly, describing an alliance planning environment where NATO has to account for "two theaters to attend to at the same time." As Rutte put it, that reality means the U.S. can only commit so much to the European theater because it also has to take care of the Indo-Pacific theater, and that it's only fair for Washington to say so (2).

The question is not whether our military can fight. The question, hypothetical or not, is whether we can sustain major operations in two different theaters of war at the same time. Wars are won by logistics, production, maintenance, transportation, and manpower just as much as tanks, ships, and aircraft.

If we expect our military to deter conflict in Europe and Asia simultaneously, then we must make sure it has the resources, industrial capacity, and support structure necessary to do so.

This just reinforces what I said in the previous chapter on economics. We must be able to manufacture the products that are needed to sustain our economy and, if it comes to it, our survival. The uncomfortable truth is that the United States imports many of the minerals and materials that go into modern weapons systems (3). In some cases, we depend heavily on foreign suppliers, including countries that may not be friendly to us in a future conflict (3). (This is just one more reason why our foreign policy must be totally revamped. That's the next chapter.)

From the rifle carried by an infantryman to the nuclear submarine patrolling the oceans, many of the critical materials used in modern weapons come from overseas. Rare earth elements, titanium, tungsten, cobalt, nickel, tantalum, gallium, germanium, and dozens of other minerals are essential to our defense industry.

The military is only as strong as its supply chain. If a future war disrupts access to those materials, our factories cannot simply flip a switch and replace them

overnight. Tanks, ships, aircraft, missiles, ammunition, and communications systems all depend on resources that must be mined, refined, transported, and manufactured long before the first shot is fired.

The lesson is simple: national defense begins long before a soldier steps onto a battlefield. It begins in mines, factories, shipyards, railroads, ports, and supply chains.

China's shipbuilding capacity is reported to be more than 200 times greater than that of the United States when measured by commercial tonnage output, according to U.S. Navy intelligence assessments (4). Their navy is growing by leaps and bounds. China possesses a maritime industrial base that dwarfs our own (4).

The United States must rebuild a competitive shipbuilding industry, both for national security and to sustain our Navy. The United States' ability to build major warships is concentrated in fewer than a dozen shipyards (5).

When I am President, I will work with Congress to:

Identify existing commercial shipyards that can be expanded.

Upgrade Great Lakes shipyards to build military support vessels.

Expand dry dock capacity.

Increase component manufacturing capacity.

Create regional redundancy so the Navy is not dependent upon a handful of facilities.

The United States does not have a shipbuilding problem. It has a shipbuilding concentration problem. We have placed too much of our naval production capacity in too few locations. A resilient nation does not put all of its eggs in one basket,

especially when those eggs are essential to national defense. It only takes one missile or drone to blow up a dry dock. Just talk to the Ukrainians, who launched a coordinated strike of ten cruise missiles at a Sevastopol dry dock in September 2023, several of which got through Russian air defenses to badly damage the landing ship Minsk and the submarine Rostov-on-Don while both sat in dock for repairs (6).

When I am President, I will work with Congress to establish a twenty- to thirty-year plan for the expansion and maintenance of our naval forces. This plan will be reviewed and updated at least every five years to account for changes in technology, strategy, and world events. It will include Navy and Coast Guard expansion, long-term procurement contracts, and incentives to strengthen the United States' merchant marine fleet.

Speaking of incentives, there are many tools available to encourage investment in strategic industries. We can offer low-interest loans, provide loan guarantees, accelerate depreciation schedules, and offer targeted tax credits. The exact mix will depend on circumstances, but the goal is simple: make it profitable to build ships in the United States again.

The USS Gerald R. Ford returned home in May 2026 after 326 days at sea (the longest carrier deployment since the Vietnam War), during which the strike group supported operations against Iran and helped in the capture of Nicolás Maduro, who was Venezuela's president at the time (8). Like any complex warship, it will now undergo a period of maintenance and repair that could last many months. That is normal. What is not normal is allowing maintenance backlogs and repair delays to grow to the point that they affect the readiness of the fleet.

A warship under repair cannot fight. A warship waiting years for maintenance cannot fight. Readiness is not simply the number of ships painted gray and listed in

a government report. Readiness means ships that are fueled, armed, maintained, crewed, and capable of putting to sea at a moment's notice.

When I am President, maintenance backlogs and repair delays will be treated as national security issues. Building new ships means little if we fail to properly maintain the ones we already have (7).

I could go on and on about this, and before long we would find ourselves in a mud-sucking-off-your-boots discussion about industrial policy. Suffice it to say, we need to reestablish a healthy maritime industry. Once Congress commits to a goal, let's say twenty destroyers, it must stay on point. Contractors must be held to agreed-upon costs. Ships are built from steel, which means we will need American steel. I am using the Navy and the ripple effect of preparedness for a problem that encompasses all branches of our military: the ability to defend the United States in a prolonged war. If I have not said it before, this book will be written in broad strokes, not intricate detail.

The United States cannot depend upon foreign nations for the materials, equipment, and industrial capacity required for its own defense. When I am President, I will do my damndest to spark a second industrial revolution in this country. Unlike the first, we have the opportunity to make this one cleaner, more efficient, and more technologically advanced. We must rebuild the United States' industrial strength not only to create jobs and prosperity, but because a nation that cannot build cannot defend itself in the long run.

During World War II, American war production was largely unimpeded. The technology of the time made it difficult for an enemy to strike the American homeland directly. If a full-scale war were to break out today, God forbid, that would no longer be true. Missiles could rain down on American ports, shipyards, power plants, rail hubs, and manufacturing centers. Cyberattacks could disrupt

transportation and communications networks. Maintaining wartime production would become far more difficult than it was in the 1940s.

That is why we must manufacture and stockpile critical materials and weapons now, before a crisis occurs. How many Tomahawk missiles can we build in a year? How many JASSMs? How many Patriot interceptors? How many artillery shells? These are not academic questions. They are questions of national survival (9).

The United States fought World War II for three years, eight months, and four days (10). Before the war, the U.S. military consisted of fewer than two million personnel; as late as 1939, the standing Army numbered only about 174,000. By the end of the war, approximately sixteen million Americans had served in uniform (10).

Today, the United States' active-duty and reserve forces total roughly 2.1 million personnel (11). Our volunteer military is the finest fighting force on Earth and can more than hold its own in a short, sharp conflict. We are seeing that reality today in the war with Iran. Yet even now, the Department of Defense has gone back to Congress more than once to replenish weapons, munitions, and equipment consumed during that conflict. The Pentagon's initial ask, floated in March 2026, was \$200 billion; by mid-2026 the actual supplemental request Congress was weighing had come down to roughly \$67 billion, on top of \$37.5 billion already spent on the war (12). Even the smaller number is a staggering sum for a single regional conflict, and it should tell you something about how fast a war eats through a stockpile.

A prolonged war against a peer competitor such as China would be an entirely different challenge.

Such a war would almost certainly require massive reserve activation, enormous recruiting incentives, lowered entry standards, civilian industrial mobilization, and possibly the reinstatement of a military draft.

The draft is not something any U.S. citizen should want. In fact, we should use every peaceful means available to avoid war whenever possible. Diplomacy, trade, alliances, deterrence, and clear communication are always preferable to sending our sons and daughters into harm's way.

The best way to avoid both war and a military draft is to maintain a military and industrial base so strong that no adversary is foolish enough to challenge us in the first place. Peace is not preserved by weakness. Peace is preserved when potential enemies understand that aggression will fail and that the costs of war far outweigh any possible gain.

You cannot simply put a uniform on someone and call them a soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, or Guardian. Training takes time. Basic training takes time. Specialty training takes time. Leadership development takes time. Unit cohesion takes time.

Then comes the question of equipment.

If the United States suddenly needed three million additional military personnel, could we equip them? Do we have enough rifles, radios, vehicles, uniforms, helmets, body armor, aircraft, ships, and ammunition? Do we have the factories necessary to build them? Do we have the raw materials needed to manufacture them?

I seriously doubt it.

The United States does not merely lack ships, shells, and missiles. The United States may lack the entire mobilization system required to fight and sustain a prolonged war against a peer adversary.

Military preparedness is not measured by how many ships sit in port or how many aircraft appear on a government inventory report. Military preparedness is the ability to replace losses, train new personnel, repair damaged equipment, maintain production under attack, and continue fighting for as long as necessary.

Winning the first battle is important. Having the ability to win the last battle is what ultimately matters.

Military Spending, Waste, and Accountability

The United States spends more on its military than any nation on earth. In recent years, annual defense spending has exceeded \$850 billion and now approaches \$900 billion per year. That amounts to roughly 3–4 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (13).

A strong military is not optional. The first duty of the federal government is to protect the nation and its citizens. If the United States cannot defend itself, then every other promise made by government becomes meaningless.

The question is not whether we should have a strong military.

The question is whether the citizens of the United States are receiving full value for the money they spend. In other words, "the best bang for their buck."

Consider the costs of major conflicts fought during my lifetime, a mix of narrow military-operations figures and broader lifetime-cost accounting that

includes veterans' care and long-term interest, depending on the conflict and how it's been studied:

Vietnam War: approximately \$843 billion in today's dollars (14).

Gulf War: approximately \$116 billion (14).

Iraq War: estimated \$2–3 trillion, factoring in long-term veterans' care and interest on war debt (14).

Afghanistan War: approximately \$2.3 trillion on the same broader accounting, with some long-term costs continuing today (14).

A significant portion of that money flowed to defense contractors, manufacturers, logistics providers, and private support companies. During the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, private contractors became so deeply involved that, by 2009, the Defense Department employed more than 240,000 contractors across the two war zones, nearly matching the roughly 282,000 uniformed troops deployed there at the time. In Afghanistan alone, contractors made up 57 percent of all Defense Department personnel, which the Congressional Research Service called the highest reliance on contractors of any conflict in U.S. history (15).

This brings us to what President Dwight Eisenhower warned about in 1961: the military-industrial complex.

There is nothing wrong with private companies building aircraft, ships, tanks, or ammunition. The military needs industry, and industry needs military contracts. The problem begins when profit becomes more important than readiness, accountability, or national security.

The Pentagon conducted its first department-wide audit in 2018 and failed. It has continued to fail annual audits ever since, eight consecutive failures as of the most recent audit (16). Auditors have repeatedly identified problems including

missing documentation, poor inventory tracking, duplicate accounting systems, unsupported bookkeeping entries, and an inability to fully account for certain assets (16).

Think about that for a moment.

If a private company handling hundreds of billions of dollars failed audit after audit, shareholders would demand answers. Executives would lose their jobs. Yet Congress continues approving defense budgets year after year with little discussion about why basic financial accountability remains unresolved.

The issue is not simply waste. The issue is readiness.

A military that cannot track its equipment properly may struggle to maintain that equipment. A military that overpays for parts buys fewer parts. A military that spends years waiting for repairs has fewer ships available when war comes.

Examples are not difficult to find.

The F-35 program is now projected to cost more than \$2 trillion over its lifetime to buy, operate, and sustain, and auditors have separately flagged that the Pentagon cannot even fully verify the assets tied to the program (17).

The Afghanistan reconstruction effort saw tens of billions of dollars lost through waste, fraud, abuse, and failed projects (18).

The Iraq War produced numerous cases of contractor overbilling, procurement abuse, and fraudulent billing practices worth billions of dollars (19).

The Navy's "Fat Leonard" corruption scandal resulted in years of fraudulent overcharging and involved dozens of naval officers and admirals (20).

These are not isolated mistakes. They are symptoms of a larger problem.

Meanwhile, shipyards face maintenance backlogs. Ammunition stockpiles have been strained by support for allies and ongoing military operations. Production capacity for many critical weapons remains limited. The Government Accountability Office, Congressional Budget Office, and other analysts have repeatedly warned that the United States' defense industrial base may struggle to rapidly replace losses during a prolonged conventional war against a peer adversary (3).

In plain English, we may spend more money than anyone else and still discover that we cannot produce ships, missiles, aircraft parts, or ammunition fast enough when we need them most.

That is unacceptable.

When I am President, defense spending will be measured by results, not by the size of the budget.

Programs that fail repeatedly will be reviewed.

Competitive bidding will be expanded wherever practical.

Contractors who overcharge taxpayers will be held accountable.

Military procurement will prioritize reliability, maintainability, and combat effectiveness over political favoritism and corporate influence.

That also means taking a hard look at how the military buys everyday parts and equipment. Not every bolt, bearing, electrical connector, or hydraulic fitting needs to come from a defense contractor charging ten times the market price simply because it has a military contract attached to it.

If they need a part and they can get it from Grainger or McMaster-Carr, you can bet your ass that's what they're going to do.

The military should pay military prices only when military specifications, security requirements, or combat conditions actually require it. U.S. taxpayers should not be funding gold-plated procurement for items that can be purchased commercially at a fraction of the cost.

Most importantly, readiness will become the standard by which success is measured.

The goal is not to spend less merely for the sake of spending less.

The goal is to ensure that every dollar spent on defense actually strengthens the defense of the United States.

The American people are willing to pay for security.

They should not be expected to pay for waste.

Military Dependence on Contractors

As President I will do my best to reduce the use of military contractors by the armed forces. This is a dependency that can and has affected military readiness. This is a strong statement. In the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, you had civilian personnel in the field doing aircraft maintenance, vehicle maintenance, weapon systems technical support, and a host of other areas. At forward operating bases such as Kandahar Airfield and Balad Airbase (21), a soldier might be turning a wrench on a helicopter while a civilian contractor from Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Sikorsky, or another company was working a few feet away.

The F-35 was designed with a heavy reliance on contractor support. GAO reports have repeatedly found that the military lacks technical data needed to repair many components itself. As a result, units often depend on Lockheed Martin and

contractor networks for repairs and sustainment. Availability rates have suffered for years, with aircraft grounded awaiting parts, repairs, and contractor support. GAO has specifically warned that contractor dependence is contributing to readiness problems (22). A fighter jet that cannot fly because the military lacks the authority or expertise to repair its own equipment is not a readiness problem. It is a dependency problem.

Recent watchdog reports found situations where Navy maintainers were forced to cannibalize parts from other aircraft and submarines because technical data and repair authority remained under contractor control. This increased maintenance delays and reduced readiness.

Cannibalization itself isn't new. I served in the Navy with squadron VP-50, we flew the P3C Orion. I can tell you that squadrons have kept a "parts plane" for exactly this reason since long before anyone was worried about contractor technical-data rights. What's different now is the reason behind a growing share of today's cannibalization: it's not just that the part is scarce. It's that the military isn't legally allowed to build or repair it itself, because a contractor holds the technical data. We used to cannibalize because we were being resourceful. Now, in some cases, we're cannibalizing because we've been locked out of our own equipment.

GAO found that in some cases the Pentagon did not acquire sufficient technical data rights from contractors. As a result, military maintainers cannot independently repair certain components and must wait for contractor involvement. This has led to delays, increased costs, and reduced equipment availability (23). We paid for the equipment. We bought the equipment. Yet we cannot fully repair the equipment without asking permission from the company that sold it to us. That's bullsh*t.

I understand why a contractor's attorneys want to hold onto that technical data. Proprietary rights are worth real money, and in a courtroom, that argument can win the day. But a forward repair base is not a courtroom. Neither is the deck of a ship taking damage, or a unit pinned down and waiting on a part that won't come. When American lives are on the line, and with them the security of a squad, a battalion, an army, or the country itself, a licensing clause does not get to be the reason a weapon system sits broken. If the taxpayer bought it, the military gets what it needs to fix it. That's not negotiable. And any company that thinks it can withhold what our own forces need to keep their own equipment running should understand that our engineers and intelligence services will find a way to arrive at the same knowledge regardless, because this country is not going to war with one hand tied behind its back by its own suppliers.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan relied on enormous numbers of contractors for logistics, maintenance, transportation, communications, intelligence support, and base operations.

The issue is not that contractors fail. The issue is that the military has become accustomed to operating with them.

A question worth asking is: if tomorrow we had to fight China in the Pacific, and civilian contractors could not safely operate in the combat zone, how much of our support structure disappears overnight? This is not to say the military should not contract out some of their needs. They should be services that are non-essential to front line military operations. No military capability essential to combat operations should depend upon contractors. That allows for construction contractors, some logistics support, and areas of technical support and depot-level repairs and more. Where it should be strictly military personnel: aircraft

maintenance in combat zones, weapons system operation, intelligence functions, communications essential to combat, logistics critical to sustained operations.

The U.S. has allowed critical military knowledge to migrate from soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Guardians to private corporations. A military that cannot maintain and repair its own weapons without civilian assistance is less prepared for war than it appears on paper.

As President, with the aid and urging of Congress, I would make sure the government had rights to all technology, operating systems, and anything else essential to equipment and systems maintenance, repair, and operation. Any weapons purchased with federal funds must include complete technical data packages and repair documentation. If taxpayers paid for it: we should be able to repair it. We should be able to maintain it. We should be able to manufacture replacement parts. Without asking permission.

The Navy has long had a name for the kind of officer I want to build back up: a "Mustang," someone who came up through the enlisted ranks and earned a commission through years of hands-on experience rather than a service academy or ROTC program. The term dates back to World War II, evoking a self-made, wild horse standing next to the pedigreed "thoroughbreds" of the academy tracks. Mustangs have always been rare, not because the door was closed, but because the door was narrow: a sailor generally had to reach senior enlisted rank first, then compete for one of a small number of officer slots.

I want to widen that door, and I want to build it into the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Space Force, and Coast Guard alike, not just the branch that happened to coin the term.

I would expand the Warrant Officer Corps, across every branch of the armed forces, to create technical experts in areas such as aircraft maintenance systems, radar systems, AI, and many more. This is a way an enlisted service member could come up through the ranks. Upon reaching E-5, they could have the choice of continuing as an enlisted member or entering the Warrant Officer program. Someone enlisting as a warrant officer would have to have a two-year degree in a field desired by the military. Warrant officer would be a non-command rank, and promotion would be based on expertise rather than command. We should not be paying contractors six figures to perform jobs that career military specialists can perform themselves.

Create reserve units that are oriented specifically for the technical needs of the military.

As President, I would direct the Department of Defense to review the functions currently performed by contractors and what can be returned to the military. This will be done annually. In addition, I want to know: if we lost the contractor support today, what systems would either stop functioning or be critically impaired.

In closing, let me say this: contractors have an important place in supporting our military. But they should support military capability, not replace it. The U.S. should never find itself in a position where it owns the aircraft but cannot repair it, owns the ship but cannot maintain it, or owns the weapon but cannot operate it without civilian assistance. My administration will rebuild technical expertise within the armed forces, expand the warrant officer corps across every branch, require access to technical data for taxpayer-funded systems, and ensure that no critical military capability depends upon the continued cooperation of a private corporation.

Military Innovation

The war between Ukraine and Russia has taught us many lessons about the way war in the future may be fought, if fought at all. A 500-dollar drone can destroy a 10-million-dollar tank. A 20,000-dollar naval drone can damage or sink a ship worth hundreds of millions. Off-the-shelf components have successfully been used to build weapons that perform better than systems that took years and billions of dollars to develop (24).

As Commander in Chief, I will instruct the Joint Chiefs of Staff to establish innovation units in every branch of the military. These units will be made up of noncommissioned service members, the mechanics in the motor pool, ship electricians, infantrymen, and others who understand practical problems firsthand. Each group will be led by a sergeant or, when appropriate, a warrant officer. They will be given workspace, basic resources, and the freedom to develop simple, practical solutions under the KISS principle: keep it simple. I will also create a formal suggestion system in every branch so any service member can submit an idea. If the idea is practical, it will be sent to an innovation unit for testing. If the military adopts it, the person who proposed it will receive a meaningful financial reward and a possible increase in rank. The U.S. military has become exceptionally good at building sophisticated weapons, but it must become better at building affordable weapons in large numbers.

As I have said before, all government contracts, including military contracts, will be awarded through open bidding. If a small company can meet a requirement for \$10,000 while a large corporation would charge \$10 million, the small company should get the contract. Before any new proposal is considered for development, it must answer one question: can this mission be accomplished with

a simpler, less expensive system? The burden of justification will rest with the contractor.

The Ukraine war has shown that ingenuity can be as powerful as money. The U.S. does not need to spend more than every nation on earth and then wait fifteen years for results. We need weapons that are affordable, reliable, and can be produced in large numbers. When I am President, the Pentagon will reward innovation, simplicity, and speed. The next great military breakthrough may not come from a boardroom. It may come from a mechanic in a motor pool, a sailor on a destroyer, or a young engineer working in a garage. My administration will make sure they are heard.

I think about the crew of the Gerald R. Ford when I write a chapter like this one. Three hundred and twenty-six days at sea, the longest combat deployment since Vietnam, and when they finally came home to Norfolk in May, there were close to five thousand of them walking down that brow to families who hadn't held them since the previous June. Because of the birds my squadron flew, we were deployed, but never at sea. But I cannot imagine what it is to count 326 days at sea. Every idea in this chapter, the shipyards, the audits, the contractors, the innovation units, comes down to one thing: making sure the next crew that pulls into port after eleven months at war comes home to a country that gave them everything they needed to do the job and get back safe.

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Chapter 10: Foreign Policy & International Relations

NATO

By the end of World War II, Europe and Japan had been bombed nearly to oblivion. On April 4, 1949, just four years after the war ended, twelve nations signed the North Atlantic Treaty in Washington, D.C. Its core idea was collective defense: an attack on one member would be treated as an attack on all.

At that time, Europe was still recovering from the devastation of World War II, aided by the United States through the Marshall Plan. Most of the original twelve NATO members were in no position to defend themselves against the Soviet Union, which possessed by far the largest army in Europe (1). It was the beginning of what became known as the Cold War.

That said, it would be inaccurate to say Europe contributed nothing. Britain, France, Canada, the Netherlands, Belgium, and others rebuilt their militaries throughout the 1950s. West Germany also rearmed after joining NATO in 1955. By the late 1950s and 1960s, European NATO members fielded substantial conventional forces (1).

In 2006, NATO members agreed that 2 percent of a country's GDP should be spent on defense. This commitment was later reaffirmed at the 2014 Wales Summit (2). By that time, NATO had grown to twenty-eight member countries (2).

Unfortunately, many member nations failed to meet this goal. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, many European leaders believed the threat of a major war in Europe had largely disappeared (3). What a dangerously naïve assumption on their part. Peace is a wonderful thing, but assuming peace will last forever is not a defense strategy. At the same time, advocating for higher defense spending rarely

won votes. Once again, we see politicians more concerned with getting elected than preparing their countries for future threats.

In addition, this period included several major economic crises in Europe and around the world, including the Great Recession. Hell, my wife and I had to pull money out of our retirement savings to pay off our mortgage before our investments became worthless. Then came the COVID pandemic, something that brings back memories I'd rather forget. There were many reasons Europe missed the 2 percent target, some understandable, some not.

In February 2022, Russian tanks rolled across the Ukrainian border. This was a wake-up call for much of Europe, particularly former Soviet-bloc nations such as Poland. At the 2025 Hague Summit, NATO members agreed to increase defense spending targets to 5 percent of GDP by 2035 (4). Of that amount, 3.5 percent would go toward core defense spending, while the remaining 1.5 percent would be devoted to defense-related security needs (4).

Cybersecurity is now just as important to NATO, and therefore to the United States, as tanks, missiles, and aircraft. If a foreign power can disable your communications, radar, or missile-defense systems, you become a sitting duck.

Let me start this paragraph by saying this: while I am President, the United States will keep its word, for without our word we are nothing as a nation. The United States will honor Article 5 of the NATO treaty. If you attack one, you attack all.

But let me also say this: the United States must not and will not carry the burden of defending Europe alone. This is not 1949. The nations of Europe have long since recovered from that terrible period. NATO countries must commit the resources necessary to strengthen their militaries.

In fact, they share some of the same problems I hope to address within our own military. Simply spending more money does not automatically create a capable fighting force. Many NATO countries still struggle with ammunition stockpiles, air-defense systems, maintenance backlogs, troop strength, spare parts, and industrial production capacity.

NATO leaders and defense analysts have repeatedly warned that artillery shells, air-defense missiles, and precision-guided munitions are being depleted faster than Western industry can replace them. Production is increasing, but rebuilding stockpiles takes years. Years we may not have.

The war in Ukraine has become an invaluable source of military knowledge and logistical lessons. One of the most important is the sheer volume of ammunition and equipment consumed during modern high-intensity warfare (5).

Logistics is not merely a problem; it is a nightmare. Recent NATO exercises have exposed difficulties to moving troops, tanks, fuel, and supplies across Europe. Some roads, bridges, rail systems, and ports were never designed for the rapid movement of heavy military formations.

How is the United States supposed to deliver troops and material to Europe? My humble answer would be by ship. But what ships?

The number of U.S.-flagged commercial vessels has declined dramatically over the past several decades (6). Nations such as China, Greece, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea operate much larger merchant fleets and dominate global shipping by tonnage and cargo capacity (7).

In short, let me make this clear once again. While I am President, the United States will honor its treaties. But NATO must be an alliance, not a dependency. Europe cannot expect American sons and daughters to carry the burden of

European defense while wealthy nations discover, too late, that their armies exist mostly on paper.

Foreign Policy

Foreign policy, to me, is like walking through a minefield. Every step matters. One wrong move can cost lives, destroy alliances, damage economies, or start a war.

Before I discuss specific regions of the world, I want to make clear the principles that will guide my administration's foreign policy.

First, the United States should be willing to talk with any legitimate government or entity when doing so serves the interests of peace, stability, and the American people. Diplomacy is not weakness. Refusing to talk rarely solves a problem. We all exist on this rotating rock called Earth. To date, no one has found a way to leave. Whether we like one another or not, we must find a way to coexist.

Second, talking with a government does not mean funding it. Economic and military aid are privileges, not entitlements. When I am President, I will strongly oppose providing United States aid to governments that commit genocide, persecute indigenous peoples, seize land and homes from others, rule through dictatorship, or openly violate the principles of liberty and self-government upon which our Constitution and Declaration of Independence were founded.

The United States must deal with all sorts of governments, many of which do not share our belief in government by the people. Around the world are dictatorships, monarchies, one-party states, military regimes, and governments accused of human rights abuse, political repression, imprisonment of dissidents, and even the assassination of opponents. North Korea, Afghanistan under the Taliban, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and others all present different challenges.

The facts of their conduct do not change because of their present relationship with the United States.

We must trade, negotiate, compete, and sometimes confront those who threaten our interests or those of our allies. The challenge is protecting the United States without compromising who we are as a nation and the guiding principles upon which we have been built.

That is foreign policy.

I readily admit that I have no formal education in foreign policy, nor do I have experience conducting it. What follows is based on my study of history, my research, and my observations of the world around me.

My general view is that the United States is not currently dealing from a position of strength. Our allies are looking at us and asking, "What the hell is going on?" They see shifting policies, mixed messages, and a nation increasingly divided against itself.

As I write this, our President has involved the United States in yet another conflict without providing the American people a clear and convincing explanation as to why it was necessary. Military resources, weapons, ammunition, fuel, and taxpayer dollars are being expended. For what purpose? Mr. Trump states that preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons is the justification. Perhaps it is. But what is the end state? What happens next? These are questions the American people deserve answered before their nation becomes involved in another war.

Meanwhile, nations such as North Korea already possess nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles capable of striking U.S. territory and our allies. China continues to expand its military power and influence throughout the world. Russia remains a

dangerous and unpredictable adversary. These are long-term strategic challenges that will not disappear simply because we choose to focus elsewhere.

I also believe that American foreign policy has too often confused diplomacy with capitulation. There is a difference between negotiation and weakness. There is a difference between compromise and surrender. The United States should be willing to talk with any nation, but we should never negotiate from our knees.

Canada

Now I want to start with specific geopolitical regions, beginning with our own backyard.

Canada is one of our closest friends and allies. I consider Canadians our first cousins. We share history, culture, trade, and the longest international border in the world (8).

I can still remember being a young gearhead and arguing over whether the Ford 351 Cleveland or the 351 Windsor was the better engine. We have far more in common than we have differences.

As President, I will direct my administration to review our relationship with Canada, especially trade policies and tariffs, to ensure both nations benefit. Tariffs are not simply numbers on a government spreadsheet. They can directly affect the cost of goods purchased by U.S. consumers and the operating costs of U.S. businesses. When those costs rise, they are often passed on to working families already struggling with the cost of living (9).

I will work directly with the Canadian Prime Minister to strengthen economic cooperation, resolve disputes fairly, and expand opportunities for workers and

businesses on both sides of the border. Any new agreements will be presented to Congress for consideration.

There are many important areas for discussion. Trade is one. Energy is another. Many Americans do not realize that Canada is the largest foreign supplier of crude oil to the United States and also a major supplier of natural gas and electricity (10).

Defense is equally important. The modernization of NORAD began in 2022 and remains underway (11). With Russia expanding its military capabilities in the Arctic and maintaining long-range missile and bomber forces capable of threatening North America, NORAD's mission becomes even more critical (11, 12).

The modernization effort is substantial, but much of the new capability will not be fully operational until the late 2020s or early 2030s. Until then, NORAD continues to rely on a combination of aging Arctic radar systems, aircraft patrols, satellites, and intelligence sharing with allies (11).

NORAD and its role in the defense of North America are worthy of a book unto themselves, but that discussion will have to wait for another day.

Nor should we overlook agriculture. The United States and Canada maintain one of the largest agricultural trading relationships in the world. Farmers on both sides of the border depend upon fair trade, stable markets, and reliable transportation networks to earn a living and feed our nations (13).

South America

Our policy regarding South America sucks eggs.

I'll start with Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt expanded the Monroe Doctrine with what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary. He argued that if countries in Latin America suffered from chronic instability or failed to meet their financial obligations, the United States could intervene as an "international police power" (14).

This was nothing more than thinly veiled imperialism. Many Latin American countries saw it for what it was.

I won't get into Panama other than to invoke the sentiment Theodore Roosevelt himself expressed in a 1913 speech in Chile, during his South America speaking tour: "I took the action I did in Panama because to have acted otherwise would have been both weak and wicked" (15).

The United States military repeatedly occupied Cuba, Panama, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic between the late nineteenth century up to 1934 (16).

Then came the Cold War. There were CIA-backed coups in Guatemala and support for efforts that helped destabilize Chile before the rise of Augusto Pinochet. And let's not forget the Bay of Pigs disaster (17).

Without going into every case, of which there were many, the United States clearly helped put at least a few dictators in power, including Carlos Castillo Armas in Guatemala, and supported or tolerated many more because they were anti-communist during the Cold War (18).

These were governments that tortured, imprisoned, and sometimes murdered political opponents and dissidents.

In El Salvador, on December 2, 1980, three Catholic nuns and a lay missionary were abducted, raped, and murdered by members of the Salvadoran National Guard. The United States was providing military and economic aid to the Salvadoran government at the time (19).

Despite this history, most Latin American countries still view the United States as a major trading partner and a source of investment, jobs, and economic opportunity. Unfortunately, it is also viewed by many as a destination for illegal immigration. As I have stated in immigration, this will have to change.

But do they trust us?

Hell no.

In Latin American schools, students learn how Mexico lost nearly half of its territory to the United States. They learn about the occupations of Haiti, Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. They learn about CIA involvement in Guatemala in 1954, support for governments accused of torture and political repression, and much more (20).

China's presence in Latin America began accelerating around 2000 and 2001, when China entered the World Trade Organization and its economy exploded (21).

China needed enormous quantities of raw materials, agricultural products, energy resources, and timber. Many of those same resources are now critical to rebuilding the U.S.'s manufacturing base.

So where did China go to find them?

South America, of course.

Brazil exports soybeans, iron ore, oil, and beef. Peru exports copper. Chile exports copper and lithium (22).

China did not stop with raw materials.

It invested heavily in infrastructure. China financed and helped construct the massive Chancay Port project in Peru and has invested in port facilities throughout Latin America (23).

In Ecuador, Chinese companies have built dams, roads, power projects, and other infrastructure. During the COVID-19 pandemic, China also supplied vaccines, medical equipment, and other assistance throughout the region, actions for which many governments were grateful (24).

The Chinese government has few concerns about the type of government receiving its aid. Whether a country is democratic, authoritarian, corrupt, or somewhere in between is largely irrelevant to Beijing. The United States, on the other hand, often ties aid and trade agreements to political, economic, or human-rights reforms.

Although many Latin American countries have benefited from new ports, roads, energy systems, exports, and trade, nothing is free.

You still have to pay the piper.

Many Latin American nations now carry large debts to China. Some have become increasingly dependent on commodity exports instead of developing their own industries. Economic dependence creates political influence.

I have to wonder whether U.S. satellites occasionally spot Chinese naval vessels visiting South American ports.

China did not gain influence in Latin America because Latin Americans suddenly fell in love with China. China gained influence because it showed up with investment, loans, ports, roads, and trade deals at a time when many countries felt abandoned or ignored by the United States. That does not mean Chinese

influence is entirely good. It does mean that great powers create influence by being present and by offering something tangible when others do not.

If the United States wants stronger relationships in Latin America, we cannot rely on history, geography, military power, or old assumptions. We must offer opportunities that ordinary Latin Americans can actually see, touch, and benefit from. We must drastically change our foreign policy and, just as importantly, change how we view the nations of Latin America.

As President, it will be my job to change that, working through a revitalized State Department and with the help of Congress. We will view the nations of Latin America as partners, much in the same way we view Canada.

China is buying up South America's resources, but it is doing little to help these nations use those resources to develop their own industries and create higher-value products for trade. Through partnerships with private industry, we will help Latin American nations develop manufacturing, battery and lithium processing, water infrastructure, energy systems, and other industries that allow them to create wealth from their own natural resources rather than simply exporting raw materials.

We will also require that U.S.-backed projects publish contracts, costs, ownership structures, and bidding information. Transparency reduces corruption and builds trust.

These efforts benefit not only Latin America but the United States as well. China will face greater competition in the marketplace. We will strengthen supply chains closer to home. Immigration is also a factor. Why leave home if you can find a good-paying job in your own country?

The Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank already finance programs aimed at protecting forests and supporting local communities. As President, I would urge Congress to expand support for conservation agreements in which countries are compensated for protecting forests, but only through strict verification and independent oversight (25). Trees produce oxygen and help regulate the climate, especially in large rainforest ecosystems. Without healthy forests, the world becomes poorer, hotter, and less able to support future generations. I will delve deeper into this in the chapter on environment and climate change.

Where a host nation invites it, we would also make our existing federal agencies available to help that country combat illegal logging, illegal mining, wildlife trafficking, and the criminal networks that profit from destroying forests. To be clear: this is assistance offered at another nation's request and carried out in cooperation with its government, never intervention without that government's consent. We do not police other countries' internal affairs uninvited.

What would we require in return? Because there is no free lunch. We would want a reduction towards elimination of corruption in both government and the private sector. No slave labor. No child labor. Strong environmental protections. Transparent contracts. Inspection rights for the United States or trusted allies. Local workers trained and hired whenever possible. Repayment, profit-sharing, or other agreed-upon returns when projects succeed.

I have already discussed, in the chapter on crime, my proposal for an organization composed of all the nations of the Americas to combat cartels, human trafficking, money laundering, and arms smuggling that fuel violence throughout the hemisphere.

As President, I will not ask Latin America to choose between being exploited by China or ignored by the United States. I will offer a third path: honest partnership. We will help build industry, protect forests, fight corruption, secure supply chains, and create jobs on both sides of our borders. Foreign aid will not be charity, and it will not be a bribe. It will be an investment. Every dollar must serve both the American taxpayer who provides it and the people it is intended to help.

Last but not least, we will give the nations of Latin America the respect for their sovereignty that they deserve.

China

One of the first things I will do as President will not be to sign new legislation into law or issue a stack of executive orders. Instead, I will once again read Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* with renewed vigor and learn to play the ancient Chinese game of Go. If I am to deal effectively with China, I first need to understand how China thinks.

To understand the China of today, you must first understand the China of yesterday. So, I will put on my history hat once again. Hey, reader, don't run away or start flipping pages. This is important if you want to understand why we are where we are today.

Before the Europeans arrived in Asia by sea, China was already one of the world's great powers. During the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), China had the largest economy in the world and one of the most technologically advanced civilizations. It excelled in shipbuilding, navigation, metallurgy, agriculture, and manufacturing. Between 1405 and 1433, the Ming emperor sponsored the famous voyages of Admiral Zheng He. His treasure fleets were far larger than those of Christopher Columbus, who would not begin his first voyage for another 87 years.

Zheng He's expeditions reached ports throughout Southeast Asia, India, the Persian Gulf, Arabia, and East Africa, establishing trade and diplomatic relations across much of the known world (26).

China did not establish overseas colonies the way the European powers did. Instead, it developed what historians call the tributary system (27). I liken it to an international protection arrangement. Neighboring kingdoms acknowledged the greatness and authority of the Chinese emperor and brought tribute. In return, they received trading privileges, diplomatic recognition, and, when needed, military protection. Sound familiar? Can anyone say South America?

Eventually, China turned its attention inward. Threats from the north, particularly the Mongols, demanded increasing attention. During the Ming Dynasty, the Great Wall was extensively rebuilt, strengthened, and expanded. Maintaining massive overseas expeditions also became increasingly expensive, and the imperial court concluded that the costs outweighed the benefits. China's era as the dominant maritime power gradually came to an end (28).

This Cliff's Notes version of history is important because it offers a glimpse into how many Chinese leaders have viewed their nation for centuries, not simply as another country, but as the historical center of East Asia. Understanding that perspective does not require us to agree with it. It does, however, help explain many of China's actions today.

China is one of the world's oldest continuous civilizations. Chinese political thought has been influenced by Confucianism, Legalism, Daoism, military writings such as The Art of War, and, in the modern era, Marxism-Leninism as adapted by the Chinese Communist Party (29).

Sun Tzu taught that the greatest victory is the one won without fighting. Defeat your opponent's strategy. Weaken his alliances. Divide his friends. Influence his decisions. Gain advantages through diplomacy, economics, intelligence, and deception whenever possible. If war becomes necessary, fight only when the conditions favor you.

China has demonstrated that competition extends far beyond the battlefield. Whether through economic leverage, technology acquisition, cyber operations, political influence, or military modernization, the contest between nations is fought in factories, research laboratories, financial markets, universities, shipping lanes, and computer networks just as surely as it is fought by soldiers (30).

This does not mean war between the United States and China is inevitable. It does mean that competition is already underway. The question is whether we recognize it and prepare accordingly.

The United States does not want conflict with China in any arena, military or otherwise. We seek agreement and understanding that benefits both nations. That is the true victory.

What would I do as President?

I would strengthen our naval presence while continuing to avoid unnecessary confrontation. I would expand joint patrols with the Philippines, Japan, Australia, South Korea, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and other willing partners. It is in their interest to protect their territorial waters and resources. If nothing else, it will help keep China's massive fishing fleet from depleting their fisheries (31).

When appropriate, we will share satellite imagery, drone surveillance, and maritime intelligence with our allies and partners. As American industry recovers,

we will help friendly nations build stronger coast guards, radar systems, ports, drones, and patrol boats.

We will publicly expose Chinese coercion with evidence whenever possible, including satellite imagery, vessel tracking data, cyber investigations, and intelligence that can safely be released.

I will use every legal tool available to reduce China's ability to gain unfair advantages over the United States. That includes tariffs, sanctions, export controls, and investment restrictions against Chinese firms involved in military expansion, cyber espionage, forced technology transfer, or maritime coercion (32).

We will aggressively enforce American laws against intellectual property theft and cyber espionage (32).

Federal agencies will reduce our dependence on China for medicines, electronics, rare earth minerals, shipbuilding, drones, batteries, and military components. Federal procurement will favor secure supply chains located in the United States or trusted allied nations (33).

I will be the President of a democracy, not an autocracy. Some of what I am about to say has already been said elsewhere in this book and by people far more experienced than I am.

I will urge, and yes, pressure, Congress to rebuild American manufacturing through tax policy, grants, loans, and government procurement. Congress should fund shipbuilding, drones, Coast Guard expansion, cyber defense, and missile defense. It should create a national industrial strategy for critical goods, strengthen laws governing foreign lobbying, shell companies, university research security, and technology transfer, and help finance infrastructure abroad so poorer nations

are not forced to choose Chinese money simply because no one else is offering an alternative.

Congress should also do everything in its power to cajole, entice, and pressure private industry to move critical supply chains out of China, stop handing over valuable technology for short-term profits, invest in American production, and build redundancy in friendly nations. Companies should report cyber theft and foreign coercion instead of quietly absorbing the losses. Supply-chain security is national security (33).

Let me return once more to the nations surrounding the South China Sea. The Indo-Pacific is not Europe, and it cannot simply be turned into another NATO. Most of the nations we would work with cannot bring large military forces to the table. If we created a military alliance alone, the burden would fall primarily on the United States. That cannot be our only answer.

Instead, I would propose a trade and supply-chain coalition. If China punishes one nation economically, the coalition responds together. If China blocks trade, others open their markets. If China restricts critical minerals, the coalition develops alternative sources. If China pressures the Philippines, Vietnam, Australia, or another partner, they will know they are not standing alone.

China is not currently our military enemy, nor would I ever want it to become one. I will do everything in my power to prevent war. But China is a strategic adversary in economics, technology, intelligence, diplomacy, and maritime conduct. Pretending otherwise is not peace. It is blindness.

I believe lasting prosperity comes through cooperation, fair competition, and compromise whenever possible. Strength and diplomacy are not opposites. Each makes the other more effective.

Middle East

A pattern has emerged in my approach to foreign policy: start with history, because history explains the present. Then examine the current situation and the actions of today's players. Finally, lay out what I would propose as the policy of the United States, with me as President.

The Middle East is a region defined by cycles of death, greed, and fanatical hatred. How did it come to this?

By the time WWI arrived, the once-glorious Ottoman Empire had been reduced to a diminished shell. By the end of the war, it had collapsed entirely and ceased to exist. Into that vacuum stepped Britain and France, both possessing vast colonial empires. They carved up the Middle East and created borders that served their economic interests, and if you're wondering what those interests were, the answer is oil (34). Britain claimed Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan. France took Syria and Lebanon. Though the arrangement was rarely called colonial rule outright, it was colonialism in everything but name. Promises of independence were made to Arab leaders at the time, but those promises proved to be lies (34). This planted the first seeds of lasting animosity.

During and following WWII, the colonial system began to collapse. Some countries gained independence through peaceful means. Others had to fight for it. After all, if one could justify taking up arms against Japanese or German oppression, why not against the British or French?

Those who gained independence peacefully included Jordan (1946), Syria (1946), Lebanon (1943–1946), Kuwait (1961), and Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman (all in 1971) (35).

But Britain and France were tenacious when it came to relinquishing countries whose resources they coveted.

Egypt (1952–1956): Egypt had held nominal independence since 1922, but Britain retained a significant military presence, particularly in the Suez Canal Zone. A military coup in 1952 brought Gamal Abdel Nasser to power. The crisis came to a head in 1956 when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, prompting a joint military invasion by Britain, France, and Israel. Under enormous pressure from both the United States and the Soviet Union, the European powers were forced to withdraw, a humiliating retreat that effectively signaled the end of British and French influence in the region (36).

Algeria (1954–1962): Technically North Africa rather than the Middle East proper but deeply connected to the regional story. France considered Algeria an integral part of France itself, which made it extraordinarily reluctant to let go. The result was one of the most brutal decolonization wars of the 20th century, with estimates of the dead ranging from 500,000 to 1.5 million before France finally withdrew in 1962 (37).

There is more, but I believe the point has been made: the legacy of how independence was achieved (whether through negotiation or bloodshed, and what unresolved grievances were left behind) shaped the political character of each nation for decades to come.

The story behind Middle Eastern oil is fascinating, and honestly, it deserves its own book. This wasn't your garden-variety private vs. government ownership fight. This was foreign private ownership, which to the people living there felt a hell of a lot like colonialism by another name. But I'll restrain myself and stay on point.

A brief synopsis, starting with OPEC.

OPEC was born at the Baghdad Conference, September 10–14, 1960, with five founding nations: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela. The timing was no accident. Western oil companies, propped up by the U.S. and Great Britain, had been running the show in the Middle East, keeping prices artificially low and leaving the actual oil-producing nations with the short end of the stick. OPEC was the pushback. It also poured fuel (pun intended) on the nationalization fires already burning across the region.

By 1975, OPEC had grown to 13 countries controlling over 55 percent of the global oil market. Before that milestone, in 1973, they raised the price of a barrel of oil by 70 percent. Then in December, just two months after the Yom Kippur War, they raised it again, this time by 130 percent! Arab member nations went further: they cut production and slapped an embargo on oil shipments to the United States and the Netherlands, the two countries that had most visibly backed Israel during the war. The shockwaves rolled through Western economies in ways people still talk about today.

Worth noting: the United Arab Emirates walked out of OPEC on May 1, 2026, remarkable partly because the UAE was one of the rare players capable of ramping up production quickly when the market demanded it. With their exit, OPEC has been noticeably hobbled. Its ability to manage supply volumes and stabilize world prices? Widely considered a shadow of what it once was.

Now let me throw a stone in a still pond before I move on. Russia is one of the three largest oil producers on the planet, trailing only the United States and Saudi Arabia, accounting for roughly 10 percent of global supply. In 2023, Russia was the world's second-largest crude oil exporter, again behind only the Saudis (38, 39). That's not a footnote. That's not a supporting player. You don't just subtract Russia from the equation and carry on like nothing happened. Can anyone say oil?

Israel

Israel gets its own section. Why? Because the Palestinian/Israeli conflict that led to the formation of Israel, and the actions Israel has taken as a state since, had a tremendous effect not only on the Middle East, but on the world itself.

This is the hardest section I have attempted to write. Twice I have tried. I want to retain my objectivity and present both sides honestly, but the facts make that difficult. I will not go into the full history of Israel. I will touch on the most significant aspects to give you, dear reader, an understanding of why Israel is the way it is today. I cannot get around the fact that Israel's founding involved violence and, in the case of groups like the Irgun and Lehi, outright terrorism, just as the war surrounding its birth saw atrocities committed by Arab forces as well (40).

Before I begin: I will be using the word "Zionist." Let me be clear: being Jewish is not the same as being a Zionist, and being a Zionist is not the same as endorsing every action of the Israeli government.

Most people assume the drive for an independent Jewish state began after World War II. It did not. Beginning in the 1920s, Jewish immigration into British Mandate (colonial) Palestine accelerated, driven first by Zionist settlement ideology, and then, after 1933, by Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany (41). As Arabs lost land, some of it held by their families for generations, resentment grew. This culminated in the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939, which included attacks on Jewish civilians as well as British forces (42).

In response, Jewish paramilitary organizations hardened their posture. The Haganah, the mainstream Jewish defense force, grew in size and capability (43). Out of its more radical factions emerged the Irgun and the Lehi (also known as the Stern Gang), which abandoned defensive operations in favor of offensive

terrorism: bombing British infrastructure, assassinating officials, and ultimately massacring Arab civilians, most infamously at Deir Yassin in April 1948 (44). Britain formally designated the Irgun a terrorist organization at the time; American officials of the era used similar language informally, though the U.S. had no formal legal mechanism for such a designation yet (44). Their tactics were not fringe aberrations: they shaped the military momentum that helped Israel secure borders beyond what the UN partition plan had proposed (44). Notably, two of these paramilitary leaders, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir, later became Prime Ministers of Israel (45).

Arab leadership made its own catastrophic errors. The Arab Higher Committee rejected the 1947 UN Partition Plan outright, offering no counterproposal and no protection plan for the Palestinian population it claimed to represent (47). Its most prominent figure, Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini, had spent the war years in Berlin collaborating with the Nazi regime (48), a fact that cost the Palestinian cause enormous international sympathy at the precise moment the world was deciding Israel's fate. When war came in 1948, Arab forces were fragmented, poorly coordinated, and pursuing conflicting national agendas rather than a unified Palestinian one (47).

Both sides committed atrocities once the fighting began. Jewish forces, operating under Plan Dalet, expelled more than 700,000 Palestinians from their homes in what Palestinians call the Nakba ("the catastrophe"), through a combination of military operations, mass panic, and in some cases deliberate terror, as at Deir Yassin (49). Arab militias and invading Arab armies committed their own massacres of Jewish civilians and combatants, including attacks on convoys and settlements (49). Neither side fought a clean war.

The aftermath entrenched both grievances permanently. Israel secured a state and absorbed Holocaust survivors who had nowhere else to go. Palestinians became a stateless refugee population, a wound that has never healed, and that subsequent generations have inherited as both trauma and cause. The UN's own call for refugee return, Resolution 194, was never honored by Israel (51). Just as the UN's call for Arab statehood alongside Israel was never honored by the Arab states that rejected partition (51).

United States Policy

Let me be clear about where I stand with the nation of Israel. I do not condone every action Israel has taken as a state, but I do believe Israel has the right to exist, and that position is not up for debate in my administration. What is up for debate is how the United States uses its influence to push all parties toward something that has been absent from this region for as long as most people can remember: a lasting, honest peace.

The Middle East has been caught in a cycle of violence so entrenched that it has become self-sustaining. Each generation inherits the wounds of the last, and those wounds are used to justify the next round of bloodshed. Past and present U.S. foreign policy has done little to break that cycle, and in some cases has actively made it worse: decades of backing authoritarian allies, flooding the region with weapons, and applying pressure selectively based on strategic interest rather than principle have left the U.S.'s credibility as an honest broker deeply compromised (49). Business as usual is not a policy: it is a slow-motion failure, and someone has

to be willing to break the cycle, not by ignoring history, but by refusing to be held hostage to it.

That will require the United States to have difficult, honest conversations not just with Israel, but with the Arab nations as well. For too long, oil has functioned as both a currency and a weapon: used by Arab states to extract concessions, shape foreign policy, and insulate their governments from accountability. That leverage cannot be allowed to continue dictating American decision-making in the region. Energy independence is not just an economic issue: it is a foreign policy issue, and I will treat it as one.

The path forward in the Middle East runs through hard truths on every side. That is where we begin.

Let's start with a few foreign policy screw-ups by the United States that we need to own up to: the 1953 CIA coup in Iran planted the seed of every subsequent crisis in that country. The U.S. public deserves to know this history. Can you say South America?

For decades, U.S. arms and diplomatic cover have enabled actions in Gaza, Yemen, and the West Bank that violate international law, while we've demanded that very same law be followed by adversaries. That double standard has cost us credibility with the entire Global South, and it stops the first week of my presidency. This is not who we are. The United States is not a hypocrite, and we will adhere to international law consistently: no exceptions, no double standard, full stop.

First, military aid and sales (other than replacement parts and maintenance materials) will cease until further notice. This applies to any U.S. arms dealer. The exact legal mechanism for that suspension, whether through existing executive

authority under arms-export law or a broader congressional mandate, is something my administration would work out with Congress and the Justice Department, not something I'm going to pretend to have drafted from my kitchen table.

We will review our military role in the Middle East. Our military cannot fight in place of another country's own forces. The U.S. military exists to defend the United States: it is not a mercenary force.

This review will be followed by a full reassessment of all treaties and memoranda of understanding with Middle East nations, including the Abraham Accords. Which specific agreements move to the top of that list, and on what timeline, is a determination I'd make once in office, with full State Department input.

Going forward, all military aid will be tied explicitly to compliance with international law. This standard applies to every party, including Israel. The exact legal frameworks and the bodies used to judge that compliance are decisions I'd finalize with the State Department and Congress, not something I'm going to invent unilaterally in a book. No blank checks.

The election for President of the United States is in November 2028, two years from now. I pray the stupid war with Iran, with no just cause, is over. If not, we will make sure to publicly inform U.S. citizens that this war was entered without a declaration of war by Congress and without a clear reason for its occurrence. At that time, in entering talks with Iran, we will offer full recognition of Iran's right to civilian use of nuclear energy, as long as strict IAEA inspection is allowed. In exchange, we will want independent verification, non-weaponization, and regional de-escalation.

My administration will push, along with the UN, for a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone. One condition of continued U.S. security guarantees to Israel is Israel joining the NPT, or at minimum, formal acknowledgment of its nuclear status, ending the policy of deliberate ambiguity. A nuclear Middle East is unacceptable. We would strongly ask Israel to reduce its alleged nuclear stockpile.

The U.S. will refuse to acknowledge any Israeli annexation of Gaza or the West Bank. This is non-negotiable under international law. We will also formally acknowledge the ICJ proceedings and direct the State Department to conduct a legal review of U.S. obligations under the Genocide Convention in light of continued arms transfers to Israel during active proceedings.

This gives me an opportunity to bring up the United Nations. We will vigorously support the UN (in this case, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, UNRWA) and find a means to make sure relief supplies are going where intended.

This one is a bit unorthodox and would certainly be hard to do. But I have nothing to lose by proposing a U.S.-backed international trusteeship for the Gaza Strip during a defined (and I mean defined, no bullsh*t) reconstruction period, with a clear timetable for Palestinian self-governance.

Here's where it gets a bit hardnosed. Under my administration, we will formally declare settlement expansion into the West Bank illegal under U.S. policy. We will consider sanctioning individual settler organizations and their U.S. tax-exempt donors who finance illegal outposts. Let me make this clear: the U.S. will not recognize any borders that incorporate settlements built after the Oslo Accords. (Man, this almost sounds like gerrymandering.)

In keeping with our renewed commitment to the UN, we may abstain on future UN Security Council resolutions critical of Israel, in the hope of policy change in the state of Israel.

The Rest of the Middle East

One of the major concerns in the Middle East is Chinese influence in the region, made possible in large part by U.S. disregard for the issues that matter most to the nations there. An important example is the Saudi-Iran normalization agreement brokered by the Chinese government in 2023 (50). We could go the usual route: try to bribe the nations of the Middle East with foreign aid, rebuild infrastructure, sit down and talk them back to our side. But that risks a nation playing both sides to their advantage. Instead, I would propose a U.S.-China joint framework for Middle East stability. Competing powers have occasionally found common ground on regional stability when both have economic stakes, and energy markets are one area of real mutual interest: this would matter to China as much as to us, since roughly half of their crude oil supply comes from the Middle East (51).

Let me interject something here, and it's important: **The United States is the number one arms dealer in the world. Is that what we want to be known for?** I'll say it now, and I'll likely say it again: under my administration, the U.S. will aggressively fund and mobilize government resources to develop fusion as the pinnacle of clean energy, along with other technologies that benefit the earth. I would rather we export something that may save the earth, rather than weapons of destruction.

Saudi Arabia. The U.S.-Saudi relationship has been built almost entirely on oil and arms sales, with human rights as a perpetual afterthought (52). The brutal murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi was met with effective impunity at the U.S. level (53). Saudi Arabia has simultaneously pursued closer ties with China and

Russia while remaining dependent on U.S. security guarantees, having it both ways. The war in Yemen, prosecuted largely with U.S.-supplied weapons, has produced one of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophes.

Yemen and Syria are two sides of the same coin: states that collapsed into competing factions, with no functioning central authority, while outside powers use the vacuum to pursue their own interests. Yemen sits at the bottom of the Arabian Peninsula, split between the Houthis in the north (who've shown they can threaten global shipping lanes and strike neighboring states) and a Saudi-UAE rivalry playing out by proxy across the rest of the country (54). For the people trying to survive there, it's a living hell: famine, cholera, no functioning healthcare system (55). Syria, meanwhile, is dealing with the fall of the Assad regime, a fractured transitional authority, a resurgent ISIS (like a roach that won't die), and Israeli forces occupying portions of its territory.

For Yemen: we will use U.S. leverage to push Saudi Arabia toward a negotiated settlement instead of continued military stalemate. My State Department will appoint a dedicated Yemen envoy with a mandate to negotiate, not just manage, an end to the conflict, backed by an UN-led reconstruction and governance framework. Left alone, Yemen becomes a permanent failed state and a terrorism incubator. This is also where the overdue conversation about reducing U.S. strategic dependence on Gulf energy begins: the leverage it gives Riyadh over our decisions is a national security liability.

For Syria: I will push Congress to reaffirm our commitment to the Kurds, who fought ISIS alongside us; put the State Department behind an UN-supervised constitutional process instead of one dictated by regional powers with their own territorial ambitions; engage Turkey directly on its legitimate concerns about

Kurdish autonomy; and give Israel reason to withdraw from occupied Syrian buffer zones as part of a broader regional normalization framework.

Iraq. Why are we still maintaining a military presence there, much less the Middle East itself? We will open negotiations with the Iraqi government to reduce, and eventually remove, that presence. As we do, the Iraqi government must develop and enforce an effective plan to disband the militias. At present, aid sent to Iraq seldom reaches its intended recipients because of entrenched corruption. That has to be corrected before any further aid moves forward.

Turkey. This is a government that likes to play both sides: a NATO member that buys Russian missile systems (56). Turkey is yet another player in Syria, hunting down and fighting our Kurdish allies there (57). Its president is in the process of consolidating autocratic rule. My State Department, together with other NATO members, must make it clear that Turkey has to meet its obligations to the alliance, fish or cut bait. Then, we will sit down with the Turks and the Kurds to reach an agreement that ends the fighting.

Overall, we have to step back and ask why we are in the Middle East: more specifically, why we are there militarily. Our largest military base sits in Qatar, a country with active ties to Hamas, which the U.S. designates a foreign terrorist organization, and to the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist movement that some of our regional partners, though not the U.S. itself, have designated as a terrorist organization. Why are we there? I can understand humanitarian reasons. The military justification, given my limited knowledge of it, escapes me. The United States military is not a mercenary force to be used by other nations. You cannot equate the value of a U.S. citizen, a serviceperson serving their country, with a barrel of oil.

Russia

In 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution resulted in civil war in Russia. Many political parties were involved, but it was the socialists who took power, led by Lenin (58).

After Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin rose to power, consolidating full control by 1928. Stalin's rule ran from 1928 to his death in 1953. Through collectivization, an engineered famine in Ukraine (the Holodomor), the Great Terror, and the Gulag system, he killed an estimated 20-plus million Soviet citizens, a death toll in the same range as Hitler's, though achieved differently: through state terror, purges, and forced famine rather than industrialized genocide, including purges within his own Communist Party (59).

From 1945 to 1991, the Cold War produced a covert, adversarial relationship between Russia and the United States, one that led to both good and bad actions by our own government, from the Cuban Missile Crisis to the Bay of Pigs and more that is probably not public knowledge (60).

Russia was an expansionist power (60), and by 1991 the USSR collapsed under the weight of economic stagnation, the drain of the Afghan war, and Gorbachev's reforms (glasnost and perestroika) outrunning the system's capacity to adapt. Fourteen Soviet member states declared independence.

From 1991 to now: Vladimir Putin, a former KGB agent, has risen to power. He's known to silence opposition to his rule through assassination and imprisonment (61). In 2008, Russia invaded Georgia. Putin followed that in 2014 by invading and annexing Crimea, and by backing separatists in Ukraine's Donbas region, bordering Russia itself.

In February of 2022, Russian tanks rolled across the Ukrainian border, the same kind of fast, overwhelming blitz Hitler had used against Poland eighty-three years before. Make no mistake: this was an unprovoked attack on a sovereign nation. Whether Putin wants to literally rebuild the USSR or simply reassert Russian primacy over the "near abroad" is debated. Most analysts favor the narrower reading, since Putin has framed his grievance as resistance to U.S. disdain for international law rather than a stated ambition to reconstitute the Soviet state (62).

The current U.S. policy under the Trump administration, particularly regarding the Ukraine war, includes peace talks that often don't even involve Ukrainian representatives, with concessions made to Russia, the clear aggressor, invading and taking another country's territory. The U.S. Congress has objected to this pro-Russian stance. European 24-point and 28-point alternatives, along with a reported 19-point U.S.-Ukraine version, have been floated (63).

On military and financial aid: the Trump administration has not sought new congressional funding for Ukraine and stepped back from leading the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, though it has continued delivering aid already committed under the Biden administration (65). Direct U.S. financial support has slowed to a trickle: Ukraine received just \$214.4 million in U.S. aid in fiscal year 2026 through July, virtually all of it economic or humanitarian (64). Continued lethal aid flows mainly through European channels and NATO-adjacent programs (65).

On sanctions: U.S. sanctions (or the lack of them) haven't matched the EU's pace. The House passed bipartisan legislation adding new Russia sanctions and Ukraine aid, a rebuke to the administration's approach, but the Senate isn't expected to act on it. The EU, meanwhile, keeps layering sanctions: its 21st

package targets Russian banks, crypto networks, drone production, and oil traders and refiners, extending restrictive measures at least into 2027 (66).

If I can, through executive order or with the help of Congress, we will prohibit all private business with Russia under certain provisions.

In my opinion (and this is solely my opinion), the foreign policy of this administration, and by extension this Congress, sucks eggs. The policy appears to be one of appeasement of the aggressor, and the U.S. Senate is refusing to deal with it. Just ask Czechoslovakia how appeasement worked out: at Munich in 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and the French government let Hitler annex the Sudetenland in the name of "peace in our time," and Czechoslovakia itself was never even in the room (67). A year later, Hitler rolled into Poland in days, in part because the paper guarantees Britain and France had given Warsaw weren't backed by anything close to adequate military support on the ground (68).

Under my administration, if Russia wants to talk, no problem, but Ukraine will be sitting at the table. No concessions will be made without Ukraine signing off, and something must be given in return. We'll work with Congress on sanctions: the House has already passed a bipartisan bill; pushing the Senate to act gives the executive a stronger hand at the table than unilateral, revocable gestures.

We will support Ukraine, starting with the sharing of intelligence. Renewal of military aid will be considered based on factors including the impairment of our own military readiness for conflict.

Through all this, we hope to build trust with Ukraine, in conjunction with NATO and the rest of Europe.

All right, this is it. I'm closing what may be the longest chapter of this book. If you want to know more, there are many books written on U.S. foreign policy, some referenced at the end of this chapter.

Let me leave you with this: recall that, way back at the beginning, I said foreign policy was walking a minefield. Keep that in mind as I go on for just a few more paragraphs. Please bear with me.

In 1919, a young kitchen worker in Paris was inspired by the words of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. He drafted a petition calling for reform of French rule in Indochina, put on his Sunday best, and hoped to meet President Wilson himself, who was there for the Treaty of Versailles. Instead, he ended up speaking with one of the president's aides, who told him the message would be passed on. There was no acknowledgment of receipt, no response. That young man's name was Ho Chi Minh.

He went on to organize a force to fight the Japanese and aid the U.S. in Indochina. When Japan surrendered, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnamese independence on September 2, 1945, deliberately opening his speech by echoing the American Declaration of Independence. He followed this with a barrage of direct appeals to Washington: at least eight letters and telegrams sent between 1945 and 1946, addressed to President Truman and Secretary of State James Byrnes, invoking the Atlantic Charter, the UN Charter, and even the U.S. relationship with the Philippines as a model: "What we ask has been graciously granted to the Philippines. Like the Philippines, our goal is full independence and full cooperation with the United States" (69). His answer, once again, was silence. Not only that: by 1950, the U.S. under Truman was funding the French war effort in Vietnam (70).

58,220 United States sons and daughters died as a result of the Vietnam War. 303,644 were wounded. As I have already said: my administration will meet with any legitimate entity or government. Whoever becomes my Secretary of State (God help him or her), they are going to need it.

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Chapter 11: Climate & Environmental Risk

Air

Scientists began tracking atmospheric oxygen levels in 1989 (1). Oxygen is the component in the air we breathe that is essential for human life, and levels have been gradually declining. Fortunately, this decline is extremely slow: since 1989, atmospheric oxygen has decreased by about one-tenth of one percent (1); small enough that the air we breathe today still measures as 21% oxygen, rounded to the same figure it was in 1989. The main cause is simple: burning fuel (coal, oil, gas) uses up oxygen and puts out carbon dioxide instead (1).

21% oxygen is what's needed in the air for a healthy child to breathe properly (2). That threshold hasn't moved.

Most people assume trees and forests make most of our oxygen. That's actually a myth. The real biggest oxygen-maker on Earth is tiny ocean plant life called phytoplankton, floating near the ocean's surface. Somewhere between half and four-fifths of all the oxygen in our air traces back to these ocean organisms, not land plants (3).

Without oxygen, we die.

The ocean has lost about 2 percent of its total dissolved oxygen since the 1960s. Low-oxygen "dead zones" in the open ocean have grown by an area of about 4.5 million square kilometers, roughly the size of the European Union, several times over. Hundreds of additional low-oxygen zones have shown up along coastlines (4).

Can it be recovered? In principle, yes, if the warming and the farm runoff pollution were reduced, the ocean's oxygen levels could recover. But time is a

factor. There's no solid scientific timeline for how long that would take, because oxygen mixes down into the deep ocean very slowly. So the loss may be reversed over time. Time we may not have.

In 1970, the U.S. passed its first major Clean Air Act. That's when measuring pollutants in our air began. Since 1970, the combined amount of the six major pollutants tracked nationally (soot, smog-forming chemicals, lead, and a few others) has dropped by about 78 percent, even while the economy nearly quadrupled in size, people drove nearly three times as many miles, and the population grew by two-thirds (5). Soot pollution specifically (the fine particles that get deep into lungs) is down to about a third of its 1970 level, meaning roughly two-thirds less soot in the air Americans breathe today (5).

That said, progress isn't finished. About 109 million U.S. citizens and others still live in places that don't meet current health-based air standards. If you measure this against a newer, stricter international health guideline instead, the vast majority of the country technically falls short. Both numbers are true at once, and both belong in this book: the improvement since 1970 is real, and so is the distance still to go (5).

China is both the world's largest producer and consumer of coal, mining and burning more of it than any other country by far. They are trying to change this, but it will take time. Meanwhile, the share of children with asthma roughly tripled between the early 1980s and 2010 or so (6). The trend has since leveled off and even reversed somewhat; CDC surveillance shows childhood asthma prevalence actually declining from about 9.5% in 2011 to 6.5% in 2021 (7), though it remains far higher than it was two generations ago, and the disparities by race and income haven't gone away.

In the U.S., about 4.7 million children have asthma, and it causes roughly 13.8 million missed school days a year. Kids are hit harder than adults by bad air because they breathe faster relative to their size and their lungs are still developing (8). One large, well-designed U.S. study followed over 23,000 children born between 1981 and 2021 and found that soot, smog-forming gases, and ozone were each linked to more new asthma cases, and that children of poverty and kids in crowded urban areas were hit hardest (9).

These are our children and grandchildren. They are innocent.

Encouragingly, one study found that when air pollution actually went down during a child's early years, their odds of developing asthma later went down too; meaning cleaner air isn't just symbolic, it produces a measurable health benefit for kids (9).

We can find ways to breathe a little easier.

Water

A human cannot go without fresh water for more than three days (10).

Only about 2.5% of all the water on Earth is fresh; the rest, 97.5%, is salty ocean water (11). Of that 2.5%, about 68 to 70% is frozen, locked up in glaciers and ice caps, mostly in Antarctica and Greenland (11). Less than 1% is the fresh water we actually see and use day to day: lakes, rivers, and streams (11). We don't have a lot to spare. Humanity, or at least those in many parts of this country, doesn't seem to realize what a precious treasure it is. Water is necessary for the survival of all carbon-based life on this earth; that's 100% of life. I always likened it to the tale of a man stranded in the middle of a desert, no water in sight. An angel

comes up to him and gives him a choice: a bag full of diamonds, or a jug of water. Which is truly more valuable?

I live in southern New Mexico. Also, heavily reliant on groundwater supplies, which is close to half of the state's water use, and in many rural communities, and for a lot of irrigated agriculture, it's the primary or only source. I ride my bike past the pecan fields, and I can see water pumps hooked up to an old V8, just pumping away. The Rio Grande basin has increasingly tight interdependence between surface water and groundwater, to the point where pumping groundwater near the river is now treated legally almost like taking river water directly.

In Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and across the southwestern region, groundwater acts as a buffer during drought; when the Colorado River, the Rio Grande, or state water projects deliver less, farmers and cities pump more groundwater to cover the gap. The problem is that this buffer isn't really renewable on human timescales in most of these basins; a lot of Southwestern groundwater is essentially "fossil water," laid down over thousands of years, and current pumping rates in the Central Valley, the Ogallala, and rural Arizona and New Mexico are drawing it down faster than natural recharge can replace it.

Houston has sunk up to 12 feet due to groundwater pumping. This isn't just a cosmetic problem; once the underground rock and soil layer compacts, it typically can never expand back to hold as much water again. It's a one-way, permanent loss of storage capacity, not just a temporary shortage (12).

In coastal aquifers, saltwater is creeping in as groundwater is removed, contaminating the remaining freshwater (13).

Shallow aquifers that are naturally replenished by rainfall can bounce back if pumping is scaled down, but this can still take years because recharge occurs

slowly (13). Deep "fossil" aquifers (the Ogallala being the textbook U.S. example) are, for all practical human purposes, not renewable. Estimates for natural recovery run into the thousands of years (14). Land subsidence, the sinking and collapsing problem, is generally permanent. Once that underground storage space compacts, it typically doesn't reopen even if pumping stops (12). Saltwater intrusion can sometimes be pushed back if freshwater pumping is reduced enough to let the natural fresh-saltwater balance re-establish itself, but this is slow and doesn't always fully reverse (13).

One more example, then this old dog will let go. The Colorado River Basin, which supplies water to about 40 million people across seven states, lost roughly 65 cubic kilometers of water (mostly groundwater) between 2004 and 2013 alone, about twice as much water as the entire capacity of Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the country (15).

But what about our lakes, streams, and rivers, you ask? The most obvious example is the Colorado River. It supplies water to roughly 35 to 40 million people and about 5 million acres of farmland across seven states, from the Rocky Mountains down through Southern California and into Mexico (16).

Its two giant reservoirs, Lake Mead (the largest in the country) and Lake Powell (the second largest), are both at or near historic lows. As of mid-July 2026, Lake Mead sits around 27 to 29% full and Lake Powell around 22 to 24% full, both trending toward new record lows (16).

Why? It's because of climate change, which the present and past administrations have done little about until backed against the wall. Sorry, just had to get that out. The Colorado River depends on mountain snowpack that slowly melts through spring and summer. This past winter's snowpack was about half of

normal, and a March heat wave melted it weeks early, meaning far less water made it into the river than usual (17).

The region has been in what scientists call a "hot drought" for roughly two decades, the driest 20+ year stretch in at least 1,200 years according to one study, made worse by unusually high heat on top of low rainfall. Higher heat also means more evaporation straight out of the reservoirs themselves (18). Water managers use the term "aridification" to describe what's happening: not just a temporary dry spell, but a longer-term shift in which less water reaches these rivers as a permanent new normal, driven by rising temperatures (19).

Real-world consequences are already showing up: Hoover Dam is producing less hydroelectric power as Lake Mead drops; if Lake Powell falls far enough, Glen Canyon Dam may not be able to generate power or release water downstream at all; farmers in Colorado have had to skip planting corn for lack of water; ranchers are watching mountains that are normally snow-capped in June sit bare; native and endangered fish are struggling in shrinking, warming streams (16).

The seven states sharing the river (Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Wyoming) are supposed to agree on a new long-term water-sharing plan, since the old one expires this year, but as of mid-2026 they haven't reached agreement, raising the possibility the dispute ends up in court or gets decided by the federal government (20).

The broader pattern: hundreds of smaller lakes and ponds across the U.S. have already dried up completely over the past few decades, and scientists expect the trend to continue as the climate warms (21).

Then there's the pollution of our water resources. The major source is one most people, especially urban dwellers, wouldn't think of: fertilizer runoff from farms,

lawns, and sewage and wastewater. This carries nitrogen and phosphorus into rivers and lakes. In small amounts, these are natural plant nutrients; in the huge amounts we produce today, they act like rocket fuel for algae (22).

This process is called eutrophication, basically over-fertilizing a lake. It causes explosive algae growth, sometimes called a "bloom," that can turn water green, slimy, and foul-smelling (22).

Some of these blooms are toxic (mostly a type called cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae), producing poisons that can sicken people, pets, and wildlife, and can shut down drinking water supplies for entire cities. Notably, one bloom cut off drinking water for about 650,000 people around Lake Erie (U.S./Canada border) and for nearly 10 million people around Lake Taihu in China. In Brazil in 1996, algae toxins that got into a dialysis clinic's water supply killed 76 patients (23).

When the algae eventually die off, bacteria that decompose them use up huge amounts of oxygen in the water, creating what's called a "dead zone," water so oxygen-starved that fish and other aquatic life can't survive there (22). This isn't just a coastal ocean problem; it happens in America's own Great Lakes too, including a well-documented dead zone in Lake Erie every summer (22).

The largest dead zone in U.S. waters is actually where the Mississippi River empties into the Gulf, roughly 6,500 square miles in some years, caused by fertilizer runoff from the entire Mississippi River watershed, which drains a huge portion of the country's farmland (24).

Scale of the problem worldwide: harmful algal blooms have now been documented in more than 20,000 lakes globally, covering more than half the world's total lake surface area, and researchers describe it as leaving millions of people without safe water access at some point each year (25).

Climate change appears to be making this worse on two fronts: hotter water and more carbon dioxide in the air and water itself, both of which help these algae grow faster, and the same wetter-storms-then-drought pattern that's straining rivers also washes more fertilizer into waterways in short, intense bursts (22).

Cost: conservative estimates put the economic damage from this kind of pollution at around \$2.4 billion a year for U.S. lakes and streams alone, and about \$1 billion a year for European coastal waters (26).

Data Centers

There's a newer culprit joining the list of things draining our aquifers, and it's grown large enough in this book, and in the real world, to earn its own section rather than a footnote in the water discussion. Every time someone tells you AI is "in the cloud," what they mean is it's in a warehouse full of servers running hot enough to need constant cooling, and a lot of that cooling comes straight out of the ground beneath somebody's community. Two-thirds of all data centers built or planned since 2022 sit in already water-stressed areas: the Colorado River Basin, southern Arizona, Texas (27). In Texas alone, data centers are projected to use 49 billion gallons of water in 2025, climbing to as much as 399 billion gallons by 2030, enough to drain Lake Mead, the largest reservoir in the country, by another 16 feet in a single year (28). New data center campuses are being proposed and built right now directly on top of the Ogallala Aquifer; the same fossil aquifer I mentioned above that isn't coming back on any human timescale (14). Most of that water, anywhere from 57% to 90% depending on the facility, comes straight out of the same potable, drinking-quality supply as everyone's tap water, not some separate industrial source (28). Families in rural Georgia near data center sites are

already reporting water they say they can't drink (29). A town outside Chicago is on track to lose its aquifer to data center and industrial growth by 2030 (30).

Here's my line in the sand: if a data center operator can return the same amount of water they draw to the same aquifer, in the same condition or better, on a real and verified timeline, as President, I'm open to it. Some companies claim exactly that: Google, for instance, has pledged to be "water positive" by 2030, replenishing 120% of what it consumes (31). I'd want that backed by independent verification, not a corporate sustainability report nobody outside the company gets to check. Until an operator can prove the aquifer comes out even or ahead, and prove it to a regulator with teeth, I'm not inclined to hand over the water under someone's farm, someone's town, or someone's drinking supply so a server farm can stay cool. My administration will require site-specific water-impact assessments before permitting, mandatory public disclosure of actual water withdrawal and discharge numbers, and independent verification of any "water positive" claim a company wants credit for. If the industry wants the public's water, the public gets to see the receipts.

There's a version of this I find far more promising than fighting over aquifers, though, and it's not some pie-in-the-sky idea; the pieces already exist and are already working. The Gulf of Mexico alone has roughly 1,500 oil and gas platforms approaching or past the end of their productive life, with more than 500 already overdue for decommissioning (32). Oil companies are already installing modular data centers directly onto active offshore rigs today, and floating data centers cooled by the water around them have been running commercially since 2021 (33). Put those two facts together, and the answer writes itself: instead of tearing down a decommissioned platform, sinking it as an artificial reef, or leaving it to rot in a regulatory backlog, convert it into a data center, sitting in the ocean

instead of on top of somebody's drinking water. If a company can staff and maintain an oil rig forty miles offshore for years at a stretch, running equipment that is used to drill for oil, there's no serious argument they can't staff a data center on that same structure. It may well be cheaper to build, as well: the steel's already standing, the platforms already engineered to survive a hurricane, and the decommissioning liability the operator was going to owe anyway gets put to productive use instead of written off as a cost.

But, and this is where my earlier caveat about aquifers still applies, just aimed at a different target. The ocean is already warming on its own, and I'm not trading a drained aquifer for a cooked reef. Cooling water discharged back into the ocean will be held to strict thermal limits, the same kind the EPA already applies to offshore oil operations and power plants under the Clean Water Act, (Which my administration will enforce to the letter. In addition to asking Congress for a revision to reflect the times we live in.) so the water going back in doesn't come out of the pipe hot enough to kill or drive off everything living nearby (34). And no heavy metals, no chemical byproducts, nothing riding along in that discharge that wasn't in the water when it came in. Same principle as the aquifer pledge: prove it, verify it independently, or don't get the permit.

I don't have to look at national statistics to feel this one; it's happening in my own backyard. Doña Ana County, New Mexico, where I live, is agricultural and ranching country in a region already living with drought. In September 2025, our county commission approved \$165 billion in industrial revenue bonds for a data center campus called Project Jupiter (35): on a 4-1 vote, for a proposal many residents say they'd only known about for a matter of weeks (35). To put that number in perspective: New Mexico's entire state government, every agency, every school, every road, runs on a general fund budget of about \$10.8 billion a year

(36). Four county commissioners just approved a bond package for one data center campus worth roughly fifteen times what the whole state spends on itself annually, with \$50 billion of it committed in the first five years alone (35).

This isn't an isolated incident of a well-meaning company landing in the wrong zip code. It's the model. When residents pushed back, the county's own economic development administrator told the public that if commissioners said no, the project would simply move to one of the roughly thirty other states offering similar tax breaks (35). That's not a negotiation. That's an ultimatum wearing the clothing of a courtesy call. Project Jupiter's developers didn't pick Doña Ana County for the mountain views. Doña Ana County's poverty rate runs several points above the state's, and New Mexico's poverty rate has run well above the national average for years running (37). A county with numbers like that has fewer in-house engineers and attorneys to catch a bad deal, less leverage to say, "come back with a better offer," and more political pressure to grab anything that looks like an economic win before an election. I'm not saying every executive behind this project sat down and picked us because we're poor. I am saying the pattern, cheap land, cheap water rights, thin local oversight, a fast yes, is exactly what you'd expect if someone were shopping for the weakest hand at the table and calling it a partnership. Call that predatory or call it smart business; I'd say it's both, and the two aren't as far apart as people like to pretend. You don't have to go back to the coal patch or the company town to find extraction economics at work in this country. You can watch it happen live, in a county commission meeting, on a 4-1 vote.

The developer promises closed-loop, water-efficient cooling and hundreds of millions in direct community investment. Plenty of my neighbors, and more than a few of our own state legislators, aren't buying it; the fight has moved into open litigation, and construction started before the air quality permits were even

finalized (35). I don't know yet whether Project Jupiter turns out to be the responsible neighbor it claims to be, or one more example of a community finding out the hard way. What I do know is that the process that got us here, a massive, generational commitment to a water-stressed county's future, approved faster than most of the people it affects could weigh in, is exactly backward. Whatever the technology, the community gets a real say before the bonds are signed, not after the bulldozers show up.

Ocean Life

I'm going to take a moment here to preach (again), so brace yourselves. As I've said previously: so far no one has found a way to get off this ball of mud and be transported to Utopia. No Dorothy, you can't click those ruby red slippers and run off. The earth supplies what we need to survive, water, air, food. Without them, we die, period. We are destroying the system that makes this possible. That is stupid. That is more than stupid, it's insane; a collective death wish by humanity through denial.

I am now going to touch on our oceans, followed by climate change. Then I'll cover what's being done now and what I'll try to do as your President. Thanks for bearing with me.

The most commonly cited measure of ocean health comes from tracking thousands of individual animal populations over time: whales, turtles, sharks, seabirds, fish. That tracking shows ocean wildlife populations have fallen by roughly half since 1970; some major food-fish groups, like tuna and mackerel, are down closer to 74% (38). Bluefin tuna specifically lost about 86% of its breeding population between 1971 and 2004 (39). These are food sources humanity is destroying needlessly, out of greed (38).

Coral reefs, despite covering less than one-tenth of one percent of the ocean floor, are home to roughly a quarter to a third of all known marine species, which is why their decline has outsized consequences for the whole ocean (40). As of the most recent global assessment, 44% of reef-building coral species are now considered threatened with extinction, up from about a third when they were last assessed back in 2008 (41). Nearly two-thirds (59%) of coral-reef-associated sharks and rays are threatened with extinction, among the most at-risk groups in the entire ocean (42).

One of the biggest problems is the greed associated with overfishing the oceans.

China operates the largest distant-water fishing fleet in the world; one analysis found its roughly 57,000 industrial vessels accounted for 44% of the world's visible fishing activity between 2022 and 2024 (43). China's fleet is a "distant-water" fleet: heavily subsidized vessels that travel far beyond domestic waters into the high seas and the exclusive economic zones of developing coastal states, often with limited enforcement or oversight. China is by far the biggest culprit when it comes to overfishing our oceans, at times disregarding international law (43).

But China is not alone in this, and not all of it is done illegally. A large share of overfishing happens legally, through generous quotas, subsidies, or weak management. By that broader definition, several nations, the EU collectively, South Korea, Taiwan, Russia, and others, also have significant industrial fleets contributing to stock depletion.

Illegal and unreported fishing losses worldwide are estimated to be between 11 and 26 million tons annually, with developing countries, especially West Africa, hit hardest, where actual catches run about 40% higher than what's officially

reported. Some of that activity involves domestic small-scale fishers rather than foreign fleets (44).

The ocean has become more acidic, in large part because of the CO₂ produced by industrial pollutants. Since the start of the industrial era, ocean acidity has increased by about 30%. This affects the phytoplankton that produce oxygen in the air and form the root food source for many ocean food chains (45).

Between 8 and 13 million tons of plastic enter the ocean every year (46). Over 90% of seabirds now have plastic fragments in their stomachs (47).

The melting polar ice is a bad, bad occurrence: melting ice dumps fresh water into the sea, and that fresh water is lighter than salt water. This matters because one of the planet's most important ocean currents, the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, which includes the Gulf Stream, works like a conveyor belt: warm water flows north, gets saltier and heavier, sinks, and flows back south deep underwater. That sinking step is the engine. Dilute the salt with meltwater, and the engine can stall (48). This isn't theoretical; it's happened before. Scientists have found evidence in the geologic record that past meltwater surges slowed this same current and triggered abrupt, severe cooling in Northern Europe, even as the rest of the planet warmed. A group of climate scientists recently warned in an open letter of a "serious risk" of a major disruption happening again (49). If it weakens or stalls, less heat and fewer nutrients get carried around the globe, disrupting fisheries, scrambling rainfall patterns that farms depend on, and choking off oxygen in the deep ocean (48). We will lose major sources of food; thousands, if not millions, could die (48). A second, simpler danger: melting ice removes the planet's mirror. Ice reflects sunlight back into space; open dark water absorbs it instead. Less ice means more heat absorbed, which melts more ice, a self-feeding cycle (50).

Climate Change

Then there's climate change. The Earth is getting hotter; it's a fact. You can have those in power who deny it and put their heads in the sand, hoping it goes away, and they'll get re-elected anyway. Then you have those who just don't give a damn. It can be denied till the cows come home. It is here, it is a fact, and it is not going away, and it is affecting nearly every aspect of the earth we depend on to survive (51).

Our planet has warmed up by roughly one and a half degrees Celsius since we started burning coal and oil at scale (51). The last eleven years have been the eleven hottest ever recorded (52). We've seen the glaciers shrinking, the ice sheets losing hundreds of billions of tons a year, the seas rising faster than at any point in three thousand years (51). We've seen the droughts stretch longer, the fires burn wider, the storms grow heavier with rain they never used to carry (51).

This is already costing us what we depend on. Our food supply is at risk; without real adaptation, global harvests could fall by double digits within a generation (53). Our water is at risk, as I've already said (51). Our coastlines are at risk, and that bill only grows the longer we wait (51).

We know the cause. Burning fossil fuels accounts for roughly two-thirds of the emissions driving this, and nearly all of our carbon dioxide (54). Add to that the clearing of our forests, which both releases carbon and removes the very trees that pull it back out of the air (54).

Can we undo this? In part, and only with time. If we stop adding carbon and start pulling it back out, our temperatures and our oceans can heal, but over centuries, not years (51). Some damage, the loss of ice, the rise of the seas, will keep unfolding for generations no matter what we do starting tomorrow (51). That

is not a reason to do nothing. It is the reason for acting now, because every year we delay is a year we cannot get back.

With determination, this can be done. Which brings me to something that happened during the COVID lockdown, when much of the planet shut down at once. Air pollution measurably dropped during the strict lockdown period: smog-forming gases fell somewhere between 5 and 35 percent depending on the country and how it's measured, and soot fell somewhere between 4 and 18 percent (55).

Individual cities saw even bigger swings. Delhi's citywide Air Quality Index, tracked across three dozen monitoring stations, fell by roughly 37 to 46 percent within the first two weeks of lockdown alone, and researchers found it kept improving the longer the shutdown continued, down as much as 45 to 68 percent by the time restrictions stretched into May. Mumbai and Delhi both saw smog-forming gas levels drop 40 to 50 percent compared to the year before. Parts of Spain and India saw drops of around 70 percent for some pollutants (55). That's not proof the planet heals fast. It's proof the planet responds immediately the moment we stop pressuring it. The more serious damage still takes centuries to undo. But the air over Delhi didn't wait for us to fix anything long-term. It just needed us to back off for a few weeks.

We can reverse this path to destruction. We must come together as a nation, and by extension, a planet.

Policy

But will it happen under this administration? Hell, no. Just the opposite. They don't care that your granddaughter is struggling with asthma (7). They don't care about the runoff from corporate farms that's poisoning our waters (22). Let me tell you plainly what this administration has done.

They pulled us out of the Paris Agreement, again (56). They tore up the very funding that gives our government the power to limit the pollution warming our planet, calling it the largest deregulation in U.S. history (57). They gutted the rules on our cars, our power plants, our oil fields (57). They opened our coastlines, our Arctic refuge, our public forests to more drilling and more cutting (57). They walked away from wind power while clearing the way for coal (57). They fired the scientists who track our climate and cut the funding that paid for the tracking (58). They stopped weighing the cost to our children's lungs when they write these rules (57). They've begun weakening our protections against the very chemicals poisoning our drinking water; cutting our PFAS drinking-water standards from six regulated chemicals down to two, and giving utilities two extra years before they even have to comply with what's left (63).

They call it energy dominance. I call it a bill our children will be forced to pay (57).

And look at who they left behind while they did it. They shut down the offices meant to protect the families living closest to our smokestacks and our waterways (58). They're moving to gut FEMA at the very moment our storms are growing fiercer, and our droughts run longer (59). The Trump Administration proposed handing over more than a billion acres of our public waters for lease, over the objections of the very coastal states who'll clean up the next spill (60). Meanwhile, the rest of the world is not waiting for us. Nations building their future on solar and wind are moving forward without us, and we are ceding that ground, and that industry, freely (61). This is not leadership. This is retreat, dressed up as strength.

As President, climate change and its repercussions, and environmental pollution and its destructive results, will be one of my top priorities. Right off the

bat, I will renew our global commitment to the survivability of our worldwide ecosystem. We will put our signature back on the Paris Agreement.

If I cannot do it by executive order, I will petition Congress to make FEMA a stand-alone agency. Its mission statement will be expanded; I'll go into more detail later. I will only be president for four years, so I'll have to make the most of it, and with the help of Congress, get some of these new proposals turned into law so they cannot be overturned by some other a**hole who becomes President after me. I will push Congress to codify the endangerment finding and core EPA authority into statute, so no future administration can undo it with a memo. Same approach for vehicle and power plant emissions standards; write them into law, not regulation.

A binding national clean energy standard (a percentage target for the grid, rising on a fixed schedule) is the single most durable lever, since utilities plan capital investments decades out once a target is law.

Restore EPA, NOAA, and Forest Service staffing and the National Climate Assessment funding. But in turn propose moving core climate science functions toward multi-year, congressionally mandated funding (like the census) rather than annual appropriations an administration can starve. We will reopen the environmental justice offices and restore the cost-benefit health accounting the EPA dropped.

We will propose a permanent, congressionally chartered climate resilience fund (like a highway trust fund), insulated from annual budget fights, funded by a dedicated revenue stream, spending locked in for decades. Kind of like Social Security, for our country and environment.

I will direct the EPA to set stricter water quality standards for nitrogen and phosphorus (fertilizer runoff) that states must then meet, expand technical assistance and monitoring programs, and use existing USDA conservation programs (buffer strips, cover crops, no-till incentives) to pay farmers voluntarily rather than mandate them; these already exist and just need funding and executive priority, not new legislation (62).

In regard to PFAS: those nasty manmade buggers that just don't go away, they're found accumulating in my bloodstream, and yours (63). Under the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Toxic Substances Control Act, we will forcefully regulate these chemicals without needing new legislation. The current administration is using that same authority to weaken the rule instead, delaying compliance and cutting it from six regulated chemicals to two (63).

We will work with state and local governments to prevent the draining of the aquifers. As President, I will direct the USDA to expand conservation programs already in existence, paying farmers to fallow land or switch to less water-intensive crops in over-drafted regions like the Ogallala.

If you've read this far, you know I think it's best if the U.S. economy had a more even divide between a consumer and a manufacturing base. I'd like to revitalize industry in the United States. To that end, I'd like the aid of Congress to supply grants and incentives for the research and manufacturing technology needed to clean up our world. There's presently a global market for clean energy technology that the International Energy Agency projects could be worth more than \$5 trillion a year by the mid-2030s under an aggressive climate policy push, bigger than the entire oil market is today. China dominates that trade by a wide margin: it's already the world's largest exporter of these technologies and is on

track for clean-tech exports alone worth \$375 billion a year by 2035, more than half of all projected global trade in this sector combined (64).

We already have a real advantage in cleaner manufacturing: American-made solar panels emit roughly 30% less greenhouse gas during production than Chinese-made panels, according to Cornell University research, and a separate DOE-funded analysis puts China's carbon footprint per panel at roughly double that of domestically produced panels. That's because our electricity grid is cleaner than China's coal-heavy one, especially in Xinjiang, where most of the world's polysilicon is refined using coal power (65). That's a genuine "buy American, buy cleaner" selling point. The jobs case is real, even if we're playing catch-up: global trade in these technologies is projected to more than double over the next decade as demand accelerates worldwide, and every percentage point of that growth the United States captures instead of ceding to China is U.S. manufacturing jobs, not China's (66).

The areas where the U.S. would be in the best position to lead and export are advanced nuclear technology, next-generation geothermal, carbon capture, clean hydrogen, and grid storage. Sectors where U.S. innovation is already strong.

Fresh water is a precious resource, not one to be trifled with or taken for granted. There's an old medical term we often used when treating a patient: "risk versus benefit."

Beneath the Mackinac Bridge, at the straits where Lake Michigan meets Lake Huron, there's an underwater oil pipeline that crosses from Canada to the United States. It's about 73 years old, and 540,000 barrels of crude oil and gas pass through it daily (67). The currents in the straits are strong. The same company that operates this pipeline had a spill in the Kalamazoo River in 2010, on a different pipeline in its network (Line 6B), when a crack occurred due to corrosion (68). The

NTSB's report states the company's own 2005 internal assessment had already identified cracking and corrosion in that same section of pipe, five years before it failed, and that the crack assessment process itself was inadequate (68). In addition, the NTSB's investigation found control room staff misread the rupture signal, pumped oil into the breach twice more, and didn't shut the line down for approximately 17 hours (68). This resulted in a spill of 843,000 gallons into the Kalamazoo River, the most expensive onshore oil spill cleanup in U.S. history at the time (68). It's the same company's safety record we're trusting under the Straits of Mackinac today. The state of Michigan has been trying to shut down the Mackinac pipeline since 2019, with good reason; the benefits of that pipeline aren't worth the risk to our Great Lakes. If it were to rupture, the possible devastation to the ecosystem of the Great Lakes could be enormous, on top of the loss of a water resource and the economic impact to Canada and the U.S. states that border the Great Lakes. As President, I will do my best to remove and reroute any pipeline that runs beneath or across our freshwater resources.

Let me end with an idea that's been percolating in the back of my brain since I started working on this chapter. We all know the climate is changing, and pretending our housing stock doesn't need to change with it isn't an option anymore. Tornado Alley (Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, and the states around them) has always dealt with twisters, and the West Coast has always dealt with wildfires. This is the new reality; these weather patterns are here to stay. But the frequency and intensity of severe weather events tied to a warming atmosphere means more communities are getting hit, more often, with less warning (51). Meanwhile, the East Coast is getting pounded by stronger hurricanes and nor'easters that used to be once-a-decade events and are now closer to once-a-

season. Building the exact same stick-frame house back after every single storm, over and over, isn't resilience; it's a definition of insanity.

This is where the Quonset home program I hope to initiate as President will earn its keep in a climate chapter, not just a disaster-response chapter. Steel arch construction isn't just more wind-resistant than a conventional frame house. The curved shape sheds debris and pressure differently than a flat wall ever could, and it's why steel arch buildings routinely carry wind ratings up to 170 mph and hurricane-impact certifications most stick-frame homes simply can't match (69). It's also dramatically cheaper, and we're not talking about handing someone a bare metal shell. A finished Quonset home with kitchen, bathrooms, the whole kit and caboodle, can come in at roughly half the cost, or less, of a comparable stick-frame house of the same size: finished steel arch construction runs \$40 to \$125 per square foot installed, against \$150 to \$320 per square foot for standard stick-frame construction nationally in 2026 (69). Pair that with regional depots maintained by the National Civil Works Service (NCWS), kits stockpiled and ready to move, with crews pulled in from other NCWS assignments or a dedicated rapid-response team, to assemble them wherever FEMA directs, and you've got a country that isn't just reacting to worse weather, it's building for it in advance, at a fraction of the price tag. Aiding FEMA when a disaster outstrips its own capacity is part of NCWS's broader mission, not its only job; this isn't a workforce sitting around waiting for the phone to ring. FEMA still declares the disaster, directs where the homes go, and sets the cost estimate the whole project has to fit inside. Local contractors go in first, lay the foundation, and install the water and electrical components to spec. Once that groundwork is done and signed off, NCWS crews move in with the stockpiled kit and assemble the house itself. Instead of every hurricane season

starting the whole rebuilding conversation from zero, the wheel's already in the warehouse, and it costs the taxpayer less to keep it there.

And this is where the financing side matters just as much as the construction side. A family that loses a home in a tornado or hurricane doesn't need another bill they can't pay. They need a path back to stability that doesn't bury them. Because the underlying cost is already roughly half what a traditional rebuild would run, the loan itself is smaller and easier to carry from day one. That's why this program pairs the physical rebuild with a low-interest, or even no-interest, mortgage, structured the way USDA already structures direct home loans without a bank in the picture (62). FEMA handles the disaster declaration and directs the rebuild; NCWS builds the house once the foundation and utilities are ready; and USDA, an agency already in the business of direct home lending, carries the note. The victim isn't just surviving the disaster. They are walking into a full, finished home built to survive the next severe weather event, for half of what it would've cost to rebuild the old way, or less.

Zoom out far enough, and this stops being a story about one family's roof and starts being a story about how the country adapts. Climate change means the old assumptions about "rebuilding it exactly like it was" no longer hold. Definitely not in Tornado Alley, not on a coastline getting hit harder every year. A standing, mobile, better-built, and cheaper housing capacity, ready before the storm instead of scrambling together after it, is what climate-adapted infrastructure actually looks like. It's not glamorous. It's a warehouse full of steel kits and crews who can be pulled in and moving within days, not a payroll of people sitting idle between disasters. But that's exactly the kind of unglamorous, ready-for-anything backbone the country is going to need more of, not less.

Okay, okay, I'm on a roll. Just one more off-the-wall proposal, then I'm done, I promise.

The plan is simple enough to fit on a napkin, which is exactly why it might work. The U.N. General Assembly votes on it: up or down, no committees to form committees. Once passed, the clock starts: three years to deliver a crewed, seaworthy fleet.

Each G7 nation supplies three non-combat ships, pulled out of mothballs (for the U.S., this may include an old amphibious or multipurpose hull), rebuilt and refitted to the proposal's specifications, on that nation's own dime. No exceptions. If your country signs on, your country pays. Put up or shut up.

For the U.S., getting the ships ready is the easy part. As Commander-in-Chief, a president can order the Navy to identify and refit vessels without asking anyone's permission; that's paperwork, not war. But permanently signing the title over to the U.N. requires congressional approval, just as past transfers of American ships to allied navies have required congressional sign-off. So, the honest version is: the President can build it, only Congress can give it away for good. That's where the real fight happens, and it should.

Once delivered, the ships belong to nobody and everybody. No national flags; the only flags flown would be those of the U.N. and the fleet flag, no split loyalties. Crews are hired and commanded solely by the U.N., answering to no one's home government. The first fleet in history built that way, the first fleet belonging to the U.N.

Then there's the bill nobody wants to think about: fuel, parts, paychecks, year after year. International bodies rarely die of controversy; they starve quietly when nations forget to send the check. So, the fix would be a standing trust fund,

capitalized at signing by the same G7 nations footing the shipbuilding bill, topped off by a modest fee charged to any nation or shipping company that uses the fleet's services. The fund's interest keeps the lights on without an annual budget fight anyone can quietly starve.

First job: haul the Great Pacific Garbage Patch out of the ocean, piece by piece, and put it on the evening news.

If we make the needed changes in the way we live, work, and exist, then with a little luck, we can stop the earth from becoming hostile to humanity. But reversing the changes humanity has already made may take hundreds of years. My purpose as President is to get the ball rolling; after all, four years is just a drop in the bucket.

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Chapter 12: Social Issues & Rights

Rights & Responsibilities

This is going to be the last chapter of the book, and maybe the hardest, even more so than the chapter on foreign policy. That's because we're dealing, for the most part, with the physical manifestation of the intangible aspects of our culture.

We all pass judgment throughout our lives. It could be the housewife shopping at the grocery store, tapping on that cantaloupe, going "Hmmm" as she judges whether it's ripe enough. The farmer in the Southwest looking out at a fallow field in the spring, trying to judge which is the best low-water-consumption crop to plant: jojoba or grain sorghum. The IT tech trying to judge if a piece of code based on Boolean logic is appropriate for the update they're writing. Judgment is almost muscle memory. It's automatic in most situations.

Judgment is okay at times; it saves lives. Where it becomes a problem is when it's based on illogical reasoning colored by prejudice, faulty logic built on untruths, preconceived perceptions, and stereotyping. The cantaloupe test works because a cantaloupe can't take offense and doesn't have a family history you're ignoring. People aren't cantaloupes. When that same snap-judgment reflex is pointed at a person instead of a piece of fruit, the "Hmmm" stops being a skill and becomes a verdict, one usually handed down before any evidence is in. The hiring manager who decides someone "isn't a culture fit" three minutes into an interview, for reasons he couldn't actually articulate if you asked him to. The neighbor who crosses the street, or doesn't, based on nothing but what a stranger looks like. The talking head who's already decided what a group believes before that group has said a word. None of that is judgment in the useful sense. It's a shortcut dressed up

as judgment, and shortcuts, once you're not looking at cantaloupes anymore, are how you get things wrong at scale.

I'm going to have to get a bit personal here: when I approach an individual or a group in a peaceful setting, I do so with a clean slate. I try to keep the results of my perception as objective as possible and make my judgments based on their words and actions. Some may say this is naivety. It is not; since I'll use the same approach as the President, I'll be thoroughly briefed before I walk into any meeting. Forewarned is forearmed.

Responsibilities

Before we get into what's been done to citizens' rights in this country, and there's a lot to get into, I want to spend a minute on the other half of this chapter's title, because I don't want it reading like an afterthought tacked onto the end of a long list of grievances.

By law, the United States asks remarkably little of its citizens. Four things, really: obey the law, pay your taxes, show up for jury duty if you're summoned, and, if you're a man between 18 and 25, register for Selective Service. (1) That's it. That's the entire mandatory legal obligation of American citizenship, and even jury duty and Selective Service registration only apply to a portion of the population at any given time.

Compare that to the rest of the world. Roughly one in eight countries makes voting itself mandatory, not just a right; Australia's had a law requiring citizens to show up to the polls since 1924, backed by a modest fine for skipping it, and Australian turnout runs around 90 percent in their country, where American turnout for a presidential election barely clears 60. (2) Around thirty countries still require some period of national service, military or otherwise, from their young

people. (3) Switzerland runs one of the most successful, well-integrated national service programs in the world, credited in part with holding together a country split across four languages and three ethnic groups. (4) We don't do any of that. We never have.

I'm not proposing we start. I happen to believe a free country should be able to ask for participation rather than compel it, and there's something genuinely American about that choice. But I do think it's worth sitting with the imbalance for a second before we spend the rest of this chapter on rights: this country asks you to obey the law, hand over roughly a third of your income, and occasionally sit in a jury box. In exchange, it owes you equal protection, due process, and a government that answers to you rather than the other way around. When that deal breaks down, and as you're about to read, it has, repeatedly, throughout our history and right up to the present day; it breaks down on the government's side of the ledger, not the citizen's. For the most part we've held up our end. The rest of this chapter is about the ways our government hasn't held up its own.

Beyond what the law requires, there's a second, quieter category of responsibility, moral rather than legal, and arguably more important because nobody can fine you for skipping it. Staying informed. Voting, even though nothing requires you to. Serving your community, sitting on a school board, coaching a Little League team, showing up to a town hall and actually listening to your neighbor instead of shouting over them. Respecting a stranger's rights as much as your own, which is really just the cantaloupe test from a few pages back, applied to citizenship instead of grocery shopping. None of that is enforceable. All of it is what actually holds a country together, because the legal minimum; obey, pay, occasionally serve- was never designed to be sufficient on its own. It was designed to be a floor, not a ceiling.

Keep that in mind as you read what follows. This chapter will spend much more time on rights than on responsibilities, and that's not an accident or an oversight; it's because the failures are almost entirely on one side of the ledger. But the responsibilities are real; they matter, and by the time you reach the end of this chapter, I'm going to ask you to actually exercise one of them.

Now let's get into it.

Racism

Before I get started, let me make a few things clear: In our present day, no one in this country should be categorized by the color of their skin, the slant of their eyes, the way they speak, or any of the many differences that add the spice to our melting pot. If you are a family living in poverty, you are not a black family living in poverty; the same help to rise above applies to all. The color or any other differences do not apply. We are one people.

The United States recently celebrated its 250th anniversary. For the first hundred years of that history, slavery was the norm in a large share of the states of the Union. Record-keeping on the enslaved was deliberately sparse. When a slave was worked to death, they didn't get a headstone. They got a rock. (5)

So how many Americans carry that history in their blood today? There's no clean census box for it, but the numbers get you close. Black Americans made up about 12.6 percent of the U.S. population in 2024. (6) In a 2022 Pew Research Center survey, roughly half of Black adults said they had confirmed ancestors enslaved in the United States; and another third said they simply didn't know, because the records were never kept in the first place. (7) Run those two numbers together, and you land on a hard floor: at least 1 in 14 Americans has documented ancestry tracing to slavery in this country. And because slaveholders kept so few

records of the people they enslaved, the true number is almost certainly higher. Worth noting, some of those ancestors belong to white-skinned Americans today. The bloodlines blurred, and in plenty of cases the paper trail got erased right along with the people.

Freedom didn't end it. Formerly enslaved people and their children were threatened, beaten, their women raped, their men murdered, and the men who did it walked free. They would even take pictures! Twice, it escalated to machine guns turned on entire communities. In 1919, in Elaine, Arkansas, federal troops rolled into a Black sharecropper community with a dozen machine guns and opened fire. The sharecroppers' offense was trying to organize to secure a fair price for their cotton. Men, women, and children were cut down. Nobody knows the real death toll, because the bodies were burned along with the evidence; estimates run anywhere from around 100 into the hundreds. (8) Two years later, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a white mob burned more than thirty-five square blocks of Greenwood, the prosperous Black district known as "Black Wall Street," to the ground over eighteen hours, backed by machine gun fire and, by multiple survivor accounts, gunfire from low-flying private planes. (9) The official death toll at the time was recorded at thirty-six. Historians now believe it was closer to three hundred. Not one person was ever charged. (10)

White America's hatred didn't stop at the color line drawn around slavery. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act became the first U.S. law to bar an entire nationality from immigrating to this country and from ever becoming a citizen. (11) It ran alongside mob violence that makes the law itself look almost polite by comparison. In Los Angeles, in 1871, a mob of roughly 500 people hunted down and killed at least eighteen Chinese residents in a single night, in a town whose entire Chinese population numbered only about 172. (12) Fourteen years later, in

Rock Springs, Wyoming, white miners killed at least twenty-eight Chinese miners, wounded fifteen more, and burned seventy-nine homes to the ground. Nobody was ever convicted of anything. (13)

Following Executive Order 9066, signed by Franklin Roosevelt on February 19, 1942, about 120,000 people of Japanese descent were forced from their homes and locked in ten concentration camps, roughly two-thirds of them U.S. citizens. (14) Of that number, about 77,000 were American citizens, and 43,000 were Japanese nationals, most of them legal permanent residents. (15) For contrast: German and Italian Americans numbered in the millions during that same war, and only a few thousand of them, mostly non-citizens, were ever interned. (16) The math on who got locked up and who didn't tells its own story.

Lest we forget the Mexican Americans. When I first researched this, it happened ninety years ago. Reading the court dockets from last year, it might as well be happening now. Federal judges have already found pieces of the current administration's deportation push unlawful. A Massachusetts judge ruled in February 2026 that rushing people to third countries without notice violates due process. (17) A separate federal ruling months later struck down nationwide ICE courthouse arrests as unlawful. (18) History doesn't repeat, but it sure knows the tune.

Mexican Repatriation (1929–1936): A Depression-era mass deportation drive. At least 82,000 people were formally involuntarily repatriated through legal channels, but total departures, including people scared into "self-deportation," are estimated at 500,000 to 2 million. (19) A likely 60 percent of them were U.S.-born citizens. Meaning the majority of people pushed out of the country were Americans by birth, not immigrants. The tactics included cutting off relief aid to

Mexican American families and running door-to-door coerced-departure campaigns. (20)

Operation Wetback (1954–56): over 1 million Mexicans, many of whom had arrived legally under the Bracero Program, were rounded up and deported under Eisenhower. The "over 1 million" figure comes from the INS's own contemporaneous reporting and remains the most widely cited number in mainstream historical accounts. A minority of historians, including Kelly Lytle Hernández and Luis Plascencia, dispute it as an inflated full-fiscal-year apprehension total rather than an actual count of deportations during the operation itself, with more conservative estimates ranging from 33,000 to 74,000. Both figures are part of the historical record; this book uses the standard figure while flagging the dispute for the reader. (21)

Under my administration, all citizens will be treated equally by the federal government and its agencies. Every citizen will be guaranteed their rights and expected to carry out their responsibilities as a citizen.

The federal government has numerous departments and agencies to enforce the statement I just made. I'm going to list them and give a bit of background on each; not to fill blank pages, but to back up what is, in my opinion, a clear pattern: the Trump administration has attempted, and in some cases succeeded, in gutting these departments and agencies to the point of being ineffective.

DOJ Civil Rights Division (created 1957, Civil Rights Act). This is the most direct descendant of the DOJ's Reconstruction-era origins; the department was created after the Civil War to pursue justice against groups like the Ku Klux Klan. Under the current administration, the division has lost roughly 75 percent of its career attorneys since January 2025, and its new leadership rewrote the mission statement for each section, shifting priorities toward campus antisemitism and

restricting transgender rights rather than the traditional racial-discrimination and policing portfolio. The unit that investigates police misconduct saw its trial attorney count drop from roughly 40 to as few as 13 in a year. More than 200 former staffers signed a public letter in December 2025 calling it the "destruction" of the division. The office is also now standing up a gun-rights unit inside the civil rights division; a mission it's never had before. (22)

EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1965). Enforces workplace discrimination law. Trump removed two of the three Democratic commissioners shortly after taking office, a move with no clear statutory basis and one that is being challenged in court. Staff are down about 10 percent. Substantively, the agency rescinded its Biden-era enforcement plan and replaced it with one that de-emphasizes disparate-impact discrimination claims. The legal theory used to catch policies that look neutral but land unevenly on race, in favor of intentional-discrimination claims, with DEI programs themselves now treated as a likely source of unlawful discrimination. The chair has publicly solicited discrimination complaints from white male employees on social media. (23)

HUD: Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO, enforces the Fair Housing Act). More than 100 FHEO staff were laid off in a single day in October 2025, on top of cuts that had already halved the office's enforcement staff, a 45 percent total cut by that point. Internal whistleblowers say the office has halted investigations of redlining complaints based on race or ethnicity. HUD also formally withdrew eight fair-housing guidance documents in September 2025, and separately opened investigations into several cities' race-conscious housing programs; Minneapolis, Boston, rather than into discrimination complaints against landlords. (24)

Department of Education: Office for Civil Rights (OCR). This one's messier, because courts kept intervening. The administration tried to cut OCR by more than half in March 2025; staff dropped from roughly 600 toward 120 at the low point. An 80-plus percent reduction, while the pending complaint backlog swelled to about 25,000, including 7,000 open investigations. Courts forced the department to reinstate staff multiple times; a GAO report found the back-and-forth cost taxpayers \$28 to \$38 million, just in paid leave for staff the department wasn't allowed to fire but wouldn't let work. For a sense of the output: OCR resolved just 73 disability-discrimination cases under this administration, versus 390 in 2024 and over 1,000 in 2017; Trump's own first term. (25)

Department of Labor: OFCCP (Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, since 1965). This is the sharpest cut of the bunch. Trump revoked Executive Order 11246. The 1965 order requiring federal contractors not to discriminate by race and sex and to take affirmative action was revoked on his first day back in office. OFCCP then shrank from 55 offices to 4, and from 479 employees to 50, a 90 percent reduction, and eliminated its statistical-analysis division entirely. The FY2026 budget zeroes out OFCCP's funding altogether, with its remaining disability and veterans' duties slated to move to the EEOC and the Department of Veterans Affairs. (26)

My administration will direct DOGE to review each department, assessing both where Trump-era changes impaired its ability to carry out its original mission, and where there's genuine dead weight to cut. Where staff cuts crippled a department's legal mandate, DOGE's recommendation will be reinstatement. Where cuts were sound, they stay in place. Those recommendations go to the appropriate authority for implementation; one review, one process, not staff bouncing in the door and

back out again. By the way, this will hold true, at least in part, for all applicable reviews.

I was never a fan of affirmative action. Although *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) struck down quota systems for Black applicants in institutions of learning, it still allowed an individual's race to be considered as a factor. (27) That continued until 2023, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* that race-conscious admissions violate the Equal Protection Clause, effectively ending affirmative action in college admissions. (28) My administration will operate on the premise that race should not be a deciding factor in any situation, other than discrimination, and that no individual will be permitted to use race as a factor in any situation.

I speak from my own experience as a hospital nurse. Although not common, it wasn't unusual for patients to respond to actions I took, ordered by their doctor or the hospital administration, with something along the lines of: "You're just doing this because I'm Black." The implication was that I was acting out of racism, because I was white, which could not have been further from the truth.

Women's Rights

You know, in this country we like to label people by their differences and stick them in a nook that defines their rights. That's a lot of crap. We are the people, period. The same rights apply to all, no quantification, no asterisks, no fine print depending on what box you check on a form. The Founders wrote "all men are created equal" without qualifiers, even if it took the country another couple hundred years, a Civil War, and a set of constitutional amendments to actually start meaning it.

That's not just a nice sentiment. It's supposed to be the law. The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees every citizen equal protection under the law; not equal protection for some categories of citizens and reduced protection for others depending on who's currently unpopular. And the Ninth Amendment backs that up: just because a right isn't spelled out on the page doesn't mean the government gets to pretend it doesn't exist.

Which brings me to the body. A person's body is theirs. No one; not a neighbor, not a legislature, not a president, has the right to determine what they do with it. You cannot legislate a particular morality into law, at least not in a country that claims to be built on individual liberty rather than collective piety. Now, there are arguments on both sides of that. Philosophers have been fighting over it since long before this country existed; John Stuart Mill argued that the only justification for restricting someone's liberty is to prevent harm to others, not to enforce virtue on them for their own good. (29) Courts have gone back and forth on it too, sometimes leaning toward personal privacy and autonomy, sometimes leaning the other way toward the state's authority to regulate for the public good. (30) But this is my point of view, and it's one of the guiding principles of my future presidency:

As long as a citizen's actions are within their rights as stated by the Constitution, and cause no harm to oneself or another, then have at it.

That's the whole test. Not "does it make someone uncomfortable." Not "does it violate somebody's version of virtue." Does it hurt another person? That's it. Anything short of that line is somebody else's business masquerading as the law's business.

My personal morals may not totally agree with this, but that is the point. I have to go with the Constitution and the inalienable rights stated in the Declaration of Independence; that's my job. But with that being said, I will address one of many

elephants in the room. Abortion. As a former medical professional, I can clearly state that at any time a pregnancy can result in harming or resulting in the death of a woman, she should be given the choice to abort the fetus. Unless there is a reason for delay, all abortions should occur in the first trimester of a pregnancy.

What is the present administration, along with Congress, doing in aiding and advocating for women's health? In particular, advocating and aiding the means to prevent pregnancy in the first place? Or, instead, are they cutting back on women's health services?

Under Mr. Trump, when it comes to women's rights, I don't believe he's trying to push us back to the Stone Age. But I do believe he's aiming for something closer to the world before a married woman was even allowed to own her own body under the law, back when a wife's legal identity was swallowed whole by her husband's, and the courts called it "coverture." (31) That world didn't fully disappear when women won the vote in 1920. Pieces of it lingered in American law for another fifty years. (32)

The administration's budget proposal for fiscal year 2026 cut the Department of Health budget in the neighborhood of 26 percent. The budget proposal for 2027 cuts it yet another 12.5 percent. (33) Through layoffs and buyouts, staffing at the Department of Health and Human Services was cut by 20,000. (34) The Office on Women's Health was folded into a new consolidated agency at reduced funding levels. (35) Let me qualify that most of the previous statements are proposals; it's Congress who controls the purse strings, and Congress who has the actual yea or nay on these proposals.

Title X was signed into law by President Nixon in 1970. It funds birth control, cancer screenings, STI (sexually transmitted infection) testing, and other care for low-income and uninsured patients, federal law bars it from funding abortions. (36)

In March 2025, the administration froze about \$65–66 million in Title X funding, initially citing compliance investigations tied to executive orders on "gender ideology." (37) The Guttmacher Institute (a reproductive-health research organization; worth noting its advocacy lean when citing its numbers) estimated the freeze would cut off roughly 834,000–846,000 people from care. (38)

The bigger structural change: in March 2026, HHS's Office of Population Affairs published new Title X guidelines for 2027 funding that shift the program's stated purpose away from contraception and toward "natural family planning" (cycle tracking) and "fertility awareness," citing an "overreliance on pharmaceutical and surgical treatments." (39) This traces to a specific recommendation in Project 2025, the Heritage Foundation's transition blueprint. (40) (The one where Mr. Trump is mentioned by name hundreds of times, yet denies having anything to do with it. (41))

This is a genuinely well-documented, non-advocacy-sourced fact pattern; NBC News, Stateline (a nonpartisan States Newsroom outlet), and Wikipedia's policy summary all independently confirm the guideline language. (42)

The July 2025 budget reconciliation law (Public Law 119-21, commonly called the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," OBBBA) included Section 71113, "Federal payments to prohibited entities," which cut off Medicaid reimbursement to Planned Parenthood and similar providers for one year. (43) A federal appeals court upheld the provision in December 2025 against a legal challenge, and it ran the rest of its course before expiring on schedule on July 3, 2026, restoring federal Medicaid reimbursement nationwide. (44) Individual states can still exclude Planned Parenthood from their own Medicaid programs under the Supreme Court's June 2025 ruling in *Medina v. Planned Parenthood South Atlantic*, and some members

of Congress have already floated reviving a federal ban in a future reconciliation bill. (45)

Medicaid is the largest single source of public funding for family planning; federal law requires state Medicaid programs to cover it at no cost. (46) During the year the ban was in effect, the nonpartisan health policy research group KFF documented 57 Planned Parenthood clinics closing or consolidating across 20 states, roughly 20 of them after the cutoff actually took effect; Planned Parenthood's own count ran close behind at 51. (47) It's hard to isolate how many of those closures were caused by the Medicaid cut specifically versus routine consolidation, so treat that as a floor, not a precise toll. The provision expired on schedule in July 2026, and federal reimbursement has been restored, but the fight isn't over: states can still exclude Planned Parenthood from their own Medicaid programs, and Congress could still revive a federal ban the next time it writes a reconciliation bill. (48)

Let me just interject here: when a bill comes to my desk for signature, all the pomp and circumstance will be shoved out the door. I am there to do a job. I will be aware of what is in the bill; it will be in language that can be fathomed by any man or woman, and it will contain no hidden agenda. It will be what it claims to be and no more, or I will not sign it.

This administration moved to cut roughly \$2.6 billion (35 percent) in National Institutes of Health (NIH) contracts, triggering a lawsuit from 22 states. (49)

HHS rescinded Biden-era guidance that had directed hospitals to provide emergency abortions under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) when a pregnant patient's life was at risk, as part of what reporting describes as a broader legal strategy on executive power. (50) This action is still

being fought in the courts. (51) But the very idea of risking the life of a woman in this manner is disgusting and repugnant to this author.

There are other actions or attempted actions by this administration and Congress that I believe are counterproductive to women's health. This administration's claim is that it is redirecting resources toward "fertility awareness," addressing declining birth rates, and cutting spending it considers ineffective or duplicative. The State Department has defended the international cuts on similar "America First" spending-priorities grounds. (52) I think that is a lot of blah, blah, blah political speak. If you have read my section on government waste, you may come to the same conclusion.

What I will do with the aid of Congress is make changes that will be codified into law. This will prevent Tom, Dick, or Harry, Republican or Democrat, from refuting policy because of their political stance. One of the many benefits is the stability of governance. Of course, any action or proposal of my administration will be thoroughly vetted under the "cost versus benefit" principle.

That being said:

We will codify EMTALA's emergency-abortion protection into statute. Right now, whether hospitals must provide emergency abortion care when a woman's life is at risk depends on which administration's guidance is in effect; HHS can rescind it, as this one did. (53) A statute closes that loophole permanently; guidance can't be un-guided by the next agency memo.

Put family-planning Medicaid eligibility on permanent statutory footing. The 2025 reconciliation law's one-year Medicaid cutoff for Planned Parenthood-type clinics has already expired, but there's active talk in Congress of reviving it in the next reconciliation bill. (54) A standing statutory guarantee, not a ban that only

goes away because its own clock ran out, means providers and patients aren't left waiting out another one-year countdown every time Congress writes a budget bill.

Put a floor under Title X's purpose in statute, not just a guideline. The program's mission got redirected by an agency guidance notice, not by a law Congress passed. (55) That's the tell: if an administration can redefine a federal program's purpose with a memo, it was never secure to begin with. A statute defining what Title X funds are for takes that discretion away from any future HHS.

Statutory protection for research funding, especially for longitudinal studies. The Women's Health Initiative got its funding cut, then restored, by administrative decision alone (56), meaning it could just as easily get cut again next year with no vote required. A multi-year, congressionally chartered funding commitment for research already in progress protects taxpayers' existing investment from being abandoned mid-study.

Repeal the "global gag rule" permanently instead of leaving it to flip every four to eight years. This policy has been imposed and rescinded by every incoming administration since Reagan, Republican or Democrat, purely by executive memo. (57) That's not principled governance, that's a pendulum. A permanent statutory repeal ends the whiplash for the international clinics and governments that have to plan around U.S. funding.

Enforce Congress's actual power of the purse. Reporting indicates Congress appropriated money for international family planning that the administration simply hasn't spent. (58) That's a separate problem from any policy disagreement; it's a question of whether the executive branch can just decline to spend money Congress lawfully directed it to spend. That's squarely in the audit-and-

enforcement framework already built in the government efficiency chapter, a natural callback rather than a new mechanism.

On birth control specifically: there's a bill that has now stalled in three consecutive Congresses, the Right to Contraception Act, that would put a federal floor under contraceptive access in statute rather than leaving it to agency guidance or to the *Griswold v. Connecticut* holding as the only backstop. (59) It passed the House in 2022, was blocked in the Senate that same year and again in 2023 and 2024, and was reintroduced once more in 2025. What are they waiting for? Politics, what a bunch of hooey.

Rights Abuse: Private Sector

It has been my experience that when most people think of civil rights abuse, they picture some aspect of government abusing the rights of an individual, especially in light of the recent atrocities committed under Mr. Trump's administration. (60)

But we're going to start this with a different source of a person's rights: the private sector. That means private institutions, companies and corporations.

HOAs. I really, really dislike them. The HOA board thinks it runs its own little fiefdom. They think they can fine you, put a lien on your house, in some states foreclose on you, over paint color, over a fence, over grass a half inch too long, with a fraction of the due process a city government would owe you for the same penalty. (61) I would never, ever own property where there was an HOA. Well, I have news for HOAs: the Constitution trumps state government, and it sure as hell is going to trump HOA rules. If you own the land your house is built on, you should be able to do as you please within the limits of the law, and possibly local

ordinance. If you have problems, contact one of the agencies mentioned above, and we will see if we can help you out once I am president. As far as disaster relief, if your house is destroyed by a tornado or whatever, and you qualify for a Quonset home through FEMA, and the HOA objects: tough. You're going to get your home.

With today's IT technology, a program can have discrimination built into it without anyone being the wiser. Credit scores, insurance rates, even who gets shown an apartment listing, researchers keep finding the same racial bias baked into the algorithms that were baked into the data they were trained on. Nobody had to be a racist to build a racist result. The civil rights laws on the books were written before any of this technology existed, so much of it slips through the cracks. (62)

With the complexity of our society and the level of technology, it's even easier to sweep something under the rug. Ever click "I agree" on a phone contract, a credit card application, or a new job's paperwork? There's a good chance you just signed away your right to sue that company in a real courtroom, buried in what's called a forced arbitration clause. The Supreme Court's blessed the practice repeatedly, so it's not a loophole anymore. It's just how business gets done. (63)

Non-competes did the same thing to workers, especially the ones who could least afford a lawyer. Sign here, and you can't work in your own field for a year, sometimes longer, if you leave. The FTC tried to kill these nationwide in 2024. A federal court blocked it before it ever took effect. So, it's still legal, state by state, right now. (64)

As president, my administration, with the help of Congress, will do what it can, but keep in mind that this is the private sector. There's only so much that can be done. That being said:

There's a bill that's been introduced every year since 2019 and has yet to become law, repeatedly stalling in Congress. (65) This bill, the FAIR Act, will end forced arbitration for the disputes that matter most. It would say: if a company wants you to sign away your right to sue them before you even know what they've done wrong, that clause doesn't hold up in employment, consumer, or civil rights disputes. You can still choose arbitration after a dispute happens if you want to; this isn't banning arbitration, it's banning the trap where you sign it away before you know what you're signing away. I'll push this to my desk and sign it the day it lands there.

We will give non-compete agreements a real death sentence, not a court-blocked one. The FTC tried to kill these nationwide by regulation in 2024. A single federal court blocked it before it ever took effect. (64) That's the tell right there; a regulation can get killed by one judge in one district. A statute can't. Congress bans non-competes for hourly and low-wage workers by law, full stop, and the fight's over.

The next one is a bit trickier. I can ask Congress to fund a section within the civil rights division, an IT group to look for algorithmic discrimination, meaning discrimination built into program code. But to be really effective at the level of, say, a single parent with two kids who can't seem to find an apartment, the states are going to have to get involved too, so this can be reviewed on the ground, at the local level.

Rights Abuse: Government

Individual rights abuse by our own government and law enforcement. Oh! Let me count the ways! The federal government has a dark side, part of which is the abuse of a citizen's civil rights, sometimes ending with atrocious acts:

I've already covered Elaine and Tulsa earlier in this chapter; those belong on this list too, and I won't retell them twice. What I'll add here is abuses that are not related to racism.

In 1932, General MacArthur personally led cavalry, tanks, and troops, with fixed bayonets and tear gas, against thousands of WWI veterans and their families camped out and protesting for the benefits they'd been promised. (66)

Since September 2025, federal immigration agents have shot at least 14 people, several fatally. (67) The two that broke nationally: Renee Good, a 37-year-old Minneapolis mother of three, shot in her car by an ICE agent on January 7, 2026. (68) The Hennepin County Medical Examiner ruled her death a homicide. (69) Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old ICU nurse, was shot by Border Patrol agents just over two weeks later, both U.S. citizens, both with video evidence contradicting the official account. (70) At least nine deaths total have been tied to immigration enforcement encounters, on top of a record 32 deaths inside ICE detention in 2025 alone; the highest count since 2004, with 2026 already on pace to beat it. (71)

This is not who we are. Your own government is pissing on your Constitution, on your rights, to the point of death.

This does not include the warrantless searches, the unlawful confinement of U.S. citizens, and the deaths during confinement that follow.

I am pissed off and frustrated. This is at least partly why I am making this bid for the presidency, not because I want the notoriety and all that comes with it. I look at it knowing it will be a grueling ten-hour-a-day job, on call 24/7, and maybe get Sunday off, with enough responsibility to break the camel's back. If I ever get a chance to visit Arlington or put my hand on the Vietnam wall, I will bow my head

in shame and say I am sorry; not only for your loss, but for the shame of the ideals you died for being disregarded with disdain.

So, what do we do about it? A President doesn't have unlimited power, and anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something. But a President has more than enough to start turning this around, some of it on day one, some of it only with Congress's help.

What I can do alone:

I don't need permission from anyone to appoint people who actually believe in the mission of the DOJ Civil Rights Division, rather than people sent in to gut it. I don't need a vote in Congress to rebuild that division's staff back to where it was, to reopen the police-misconduct investigations that got shelved, or to restore the consent decree program that holds abusive departments accountable. (72) I can direct the DOJ Inspector General and DHS Office of Inspector General to actually investigate ICE and Border Patrol shootings instead of letting agencies investigate themselves. I can set use-of-force standards for every federal agent in this country; when a gun comes out, when it doesn't, and make body cameras mandatory, not optional. (73) I can raise the entry standards for federal law enforcement; real education requirements, real psychological screening, real physical fitness benchmarks that get retested every year an agent stays on the front line. An officer who can run someone down doesn't need to reach for a gun as fast as one who can't. That's not a talking point; it's basic use-of-force training. (74) And I can tie federal grant money for state and local police departments to those same entry and fitness standards, so departments that want federal dollars will have to meet them too. I can end the practice of political appointees rewriting a civil rights agency's mission to chase culture-war fights instead of enforcing the law Congress already

passed in 1957. (22) All of that is within a President's reach without a single new law.

What I need Congress for:

Executive orders can be undone by the next President with a stroke of a pen; that's the problem with relying on them alone. To make this permanent, I need Congress to codify use-of-force and entry standards into law, not just policy, so they survive past my administration. I need Congress to reverse qualified immunity, the legal shield the Supreme Court built up over decades that lets officers avoid civil liability for violating someone's rights, as long as no earlier case found the exact same violation illegal; immunity is granted. (75) That's not accountability; that's a loophole big enough to drive a patrol car through, and only Congress can close it by statute. I need funding restored and protected for DOJ Civil Rights, EEOC, HUD Fair Housing, and the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. (22, 23, 24, 25) I need an independent oversight board for ICE and CBP with real subpoena power, because right now the agency that shoots someone is the same agency that investigates itself. And I need whistleblower protection strong enough that the next DOJ attorney who sees their division gutted doesn't have to choose between staying silent and losing their career.

Where the states come in:

Washington can't be everywhere, and it shouldn't try to be. The everyday stuff- a bad traffic stop, a police department that's been quietly discriminating for years, a landlord running an illegal HOA- is closer to the ground than any federal agency will ever get. States already have their own civil rights agencies, their own attorneys general, their own power to investigate local police, and some states have already passed their own version of ending qualified immunity for their own officers; proof it can be done. (76) My job as President isn't to replace that; it's to

back it up. That means federal grants tied to real accountability and fitness standards, data-sharing agreements so a pattern of abuse in one county doesn't stay hidden from both the state and federal governments, and a Justice Department that partners with state AGs instead of getting in their way. Civil rights enforcement works best as a partnership, not a monopoly; and this administration has broken that partnership. I intend to rebuild it.

Transparency in Government

If by the Grace of God. IF I can get a backer and the professional organization to hit the campaign trail, this is probably what will get me killed.

To give you a hint, let me start with a portion of a speech by John F. Kennedy. (The irony is not lost on me.) He said it with an eloquence I lack: "The very word 'secrecy' is repugnant in a free and open society; and we are as a people inherently and historically opposed to secret societies, to secret oaths and to secret proceedings. We decided long ago that the dangers of excessive and unwarranted concealment of pertinent facts far outweigh the dangers which are cited to justify it. Even today, there is little value in opposing the threat of a closed society by imitating its arbitrary restrictions. Even today, there is little value in ensuring the survival of our nation if our traditions do not survive with it. And there is very grave danger that an announced need for increased security will be seized upon by those anxious to expand its meaning to the very limits of official censorship and concealment. That I do not intend to permit to the extent that it is in my control. And no official of my Administration, whether his rank is high or low, civilian or military, should interpret my words here tonight as an excuse to censor the news, to stifle dissent, to cover up our mistakes or to withhold from the press and the public the facts they deserve to know." (77)

I stand by the words of one of the greatest Presidents in our history as a nation. Because of this, I will do what I can within my power as President to declassify without redaction any classified document from 1960 onward, as long as this does not impair the present security of our nation or our allies. No longer will individuals and organizations be able to hide behind a shroud of secrecy generated by their own government. The people of the United States have the right to an open and fair government. Under my administration, as I mentioned in previous chapters, there will be transparency in government and accountability to the people of this country.

I will speak once more in closing: The responsibilities of a citizen can be summarized in one sentence. Obey the law, pay taxes, serve on a jury, defend the United States. This is the end of the last chapter of this book. If you got this far, God bless you, my fellow citizen. I only ask one thing of you.

Please, Please vote. I ask this of you on bended knee, please vote! God Bless the United States of America

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Afterword

All Those Who Wish to Be King, Please Step to the End of the Line

If you have read this far, you have likely reached one of two conclusions. Either I have offered ideas worth considering, or I am completely out of my mind. Perhaps there is some truth in both.

I did not write this book because I expect to become President; if it were to happen, I think I would be a good one. With what I know, my ideas are sound to the best of my knowledge. I know the odds of me becoming President are between slim and none, and I am realistic enough to know it. I wrote this book not only as a bid to run for President, but because I am concerned about the direction of the country and because I believe many Americans share those concerns, even when they disagree about the causes or the solutions.

Like many citizens, I increasingly feel that our government no longer belongs to the people as it was intended to. The institutions established to represent, protect, and serve the public often appear more concerned with preserving themselves than fulfilling their purpose. The distance between the governed and those who govern seems to grow wider with each passing year.

Much attention is given to the power of the presidency, and rightly so. The executive branch has accumulated authorities that would have been difficult to imagine at the nation's founding. Yet the problem extends far beyond the White House.

Congress, intended to be the branch closest to the people, too often appears incapable of acting except during moments of crisis. The Senate, conceived as a deliberative body, frequently seems consumed by political gamesmanship. The Supreme Court, regardless of one's political views, faces a level of public

skepticism that would have alarmed previous generations. Whether skepticism is justified or not, confidence in our institutions has suffered.

The result is a growing belief among ordinary Americans that they are spectators rather than participants in their own government. We still speak of the People's House, but many no longer feel represented there. We still speak of government by the people, but too often it feels as though the people's voice is the least influential voice in the room.

My own political philosophy is simple.

I believe the Constitution means what it says.

That statement should not be controversial, yet it often is. I do not believe the Constitution should be reinterpreted whenever it becomes inconvenient to a desired political outcome. Nor do I believe it should be treated as an inflexible relic incapable of addressing modern circumstances. The Constitution provides mechanisms for change. It can be amended. It can be applied to new situations. But the burden should be on us to adapt our policies to the Constitution, not on the Constitution to adapt to our policies.

The document was written in language that ordinary citizens of the time could understand. That was not an accident. The Founders were creating a government for a free people, not a system that required a class of experts to explain what it really meant. The farther interpretation drifts from the plain meaning of the text, the farther government drifts from the consent of the governed.

I consider myself a constitutional minimalist. Government should exercise the powers granted to it, no more and no less. When authority is uncertain, caution should prevail. When power expands beyond its limits, it should be restrained. Liberty is not preserved by good intentions; it is preserved by boundaries.

The United States was founded as a republic. In a republic, power flows upward from the people. Public officials are temporary stewards, not rulers. Offices are positions of trust, not crowns. The moment we forget that distinction, we begin to lose something essential.

That is why I chose this title.

All Those Who Wish to Be King, Please Step to the End of the Line.

It is not directed at any one President, judge, senator, representative, party, movement, or ideology. It is directed at a temptation that has existed throughout human history: the belief that power can solve every problem if only enough of it is concentrated in the right hands.

Our Constitution was written on the opposite assumption. It assumes that power must be divided, limited, challenged, and restrained. It assumes that no individual is wise enough to be trusted with unchecked authority. Most importantly, it assumes that the ultimate sovereign in this country is not a president, a court, a legislature, or a bureaucracy.

It is the people.

Whether this book succeeds or fails, whether its ideas are embraced or rejected, I hope it serves as a reminder of that principle. Governments are created by citizens. Constitutions are preserved by citizens. Republics survive only as long as citizens are willing to defend them.

And if there are still those who wish to be king, they should know that in the United States there is already a line.

It begins behind every United States citizen.

God Bless,

Respectfully, Glen Thomas Smith

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