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THE FIRST REFORM

The first priority of a Lessig administration would be to fix the corruption that has crippled Congress, by enacting legislation to restore the fundamental principle of a representative democracy: the equality of citizens.

That legislation — the Citizen Equality Act — is described in detail in the next section. Its basic objective is to give to each citizen an equal stake in our democracy, so that our government responds to all of us, and not just to the few.

Passing this legislation would make practically every other policy described on this issues page easier to achieve. In some cases, passing this legislation is the only way these other policies could be achieved. And throughout the descriptions of these other policies, I will highlight the ways in which this corrupted inequality makes achieving the right answer difficult, if not impossible.

Citizen Equality Act of 2017

The Citizen Equality Act is our vision of the reforms we need to fix our democracy.

Together, these reforms will fundamentally change the way our government works. They will fulfill the promise of American democracy: a government of, by, and for the people.

Each part is modeled off of existing proposals. As our campaign grows, we will crowd-source a process to complete the details of this reform and draft legislation by the start of 2016.

Equal Right to Vote

All citizens deserve equal access to the ballot.

The Citizen Equality Act will guarantee the equal freedom to vote by passing the Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2015 and the Voter Empowerment Act of 2015. In addition, we will enact automatic voter registration and turn election day into a national holiday.

Equal Representation

All citizens deserve equal representation in Congress.

The Citizen Equality Act will give each voter as close to equal political influence as possible by redrawing districts and restructuring election systems. It will use FairVote's "Ranked Choice Voting Act" to end political gerrymandering and create multi-member districts with ranked-choice voting for Congress.

Citizen Funded Elections

All citizens deserve an equal ability to choose our leaders.

The Citizen Equality Act will end pay-to-play politics by changing the way we fund campaigns by taking the best of Rep. Sarbanes' Government by the People Act, and Represent.US's "American Anti-Corruption Act." That hybrid would give every voter a voucher to contribute to fund congressional and presidential campaigns; it would provide matching funds for small-dollar contributions to congressional and presidential campaigns. And it would add effective new limits to restrict the revolving door between government service and work as a lobbyist.

THE OTHER ISSUES

The Economy

Americans are still suffering from the economic collapse triggered in part by Wall Street's recklessness. Though the economy has grown consistently since Congress passed Barack Obama's economic stimulus plan (described powerfully in Michael Grunwald's *The New New Deal*), the growth is still historically anemic.

One of the reasons for this weakness has been the government's need to rely primarily on monetary stimulus, rather than fiscal stimulus. We have depended on the Fed to keep interest rates at historic lows as a way to spur economic activity, rather than the more traditional strategy of sustained public spending.

This was a mistake. Following the stimulus, America should have invested massively in infrastructure, to rebuild our crumbling bridges and roads, and to build-out an information superhighway to match for the digital age what Eisenhower did for automobiles. Had we done that, we would not only have created millions of jobs, we would have given our children the gift of a nation prepared for the 21st century.

But this mistake was forced onto our political system by unequal representation in the House of Representative. The "no new taxes" rule has an amplified role in American politics today because of the polarized nature of the House. That amplified polarization is created, in part, by the way Congress elects its members. The Citizen Equality Act would change that fundamentally, and let Congress follow the will of all the people, fairly represented.

As President, I would press for an investment in infrastructure of \$1.2 trillion over 5 years, financed through Rebuild America Savings Bonds.

I would also support legislation raising the minimum wage to \$15/hr.

Tax Reform

Taxes in America should be progressive and efficient. Today they are neither — or at least, not enough. We have flattened the traditionally progressive income tax substantially. We have capped Social Security contributions at a regressively low amount. We tax corporations unequally and unfairly — and as economists have shown, regressively. And we have one of the most complex tax codes generally in the world.

But many of these problems tie directly to the corrupted system that we have in Congress right now. The rich are the most important contributors to political campaigns. That produces an arms race among politicians to keep their taxes low. Corporations in America face a high nominal tax rate, but when all the exceptions and deductions are accounted for, it is one of the lowest rates in the world. Those exceptions and deductions are opportunities for congressmen to raise money. And the same with the complexity of taxes generally: every loophole is a fundraising opportunity. Our tax code is quickly becoming a device to raise money—not for the United States Treasury, but for political campaigns.

I would work to radically simplify the tax code, while enhancing its progressivity. I would support abolishing the carried interest exemption that permits some of the richest Americans (hedge fund managers) to pay among the lowest tax rates. I would consider adding a higher marginal rate for individuals making more than \$1M a year. I would support abolishing the contribution cap for Social Security, applying the same Social Security rate to all levels of income. I would consider a proposal to offset any reduction in corporate tax with increased progressivity in income tax.

All of these changes follow directly from the principle of an efficient, progressive tax system. But they all will be vigorously opposed by the interests that dominate Washington right now. After we enact The First Reform, these changes will be easier to achieve.

Social & Financial Security

The market is a powerful engine for economic growth. We should encourage it where appropriate, and celebrate the achievements that are inspired by its freedom.

But there are spheres of social life that need to be protected from the market. Federal policy over the last 30 years has forgotten this obvious fact.

The aim of financial policy should be to secure a safe environment for finance to occur. We need to be able to trust that banks won't lose our money. Investors need confidence that massive speculation won't destroy the stability of the financial system.

For seventy years, the federal government assured this security, through regulations that kept the risk taking of large investors separated from the basic security of banks. That was achieved through many regulatory techniques, but the core was Glass-Steagall. When deregulation in 1990s undermined that separation, and Glass-Steagall was eventually repealed, this created the conditions that produced the collapse in 2008.

I support the return of Glass-Steagall, updated to modern conditions. It is critically important to Main Street that banks provide security first. That may be boring for bankers, but this part of the economy needs boring.

That change would change the economics of banking. I expect the move to consolidation would slow. But I would also consider the need to limit the size of banks to avoid "too big to fail".

The same principle of security explains the birth of Social Security. We as a society need to guarantee that when we are old, or if we are infirm, we will have the support we need. We secure that guarantee by setting these resources apart from the market. Privatizing Social Security is a sure path to insecurity for most.

Social Security has been weakened over the past 20 years. I would support increasing the benefits it pays. This is in part because private retirement resources have been decimated by the collapse of 2008 (and by the mistaken policy of moving away from defined benefit retirement plans).

I would also support removing the cap on contributions to Social Security (without necessarily proportionally increasing the benefits paid). Any increase in taxes will be incredibly difficult until The First Reform is enacted. But when Republicans and Democrats

alike are free to consider the views of voters rather than funders, we will return to the objective of Social Security: security.

National Security & Foreign Policy

Throughout our history, America's strength has come only in part from its might. Much more important are our actions for right.

Our sacrifice in World War II to save the world from fascism — and then, through the Marshall Plan, to help the defeated rebuild themselves — earned America the love of the free world. We didn't fight Hitler to get access to oil fields. We didn't enter the war in the Pacific because we really expected Japan to overrun us. Our grandparents made those sacrifices because it was the right thing to do. The free world understood that, and respected us for it.

We need to return to a foreign policy and a policy of national security that recognizes this truth.

After an horrific attack on American soil on 9/11, we reacted with understandable — and justified — anger.

But the war we fought in Iraq didn't make us any safer. The images of Abu Ghraib have recruited more terrorists against us than 100 Guantanamo Bays could hold. And the infrastructure of surveillance that we have helped build across the world has turned too many allies into critics. The world loves the American people and what we've created. But the world fears America. That is an astonishing reversal in an incredibly short time.

As America's Chief of State and Commander in Chief, I would press a foreign policy that shows the world who we actually are, and that celebrates the values that we, as a people, would defend. We need to work with allies as equals. We need to persuade the world to our view, not bully them. We need to be as great as we teach our children we have been, because we cannot survive in the modern world through force alone.

I am not a utopian. I am not a pacifist. I believe in military intervention to defend our people and for the cause of justice and humanity. I would not hesitate to use force when force is justified. And I accept that as the strongest economy in the world, we bear a disproportionate burden for defending the weak and our common interests in the world.

But we need to see that the world will never accept one nation over all others, and that a people unjustly treated will remember that injustice for many generations. When I was a student, during my days as a rabid anti-communist, I wandered through the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. I met no one who showed hatred towards Americans, and I never feared for my safety as an American. But when my children are the same age, I fear there are too many places where they would know hatred towards us, and many places where they would be unsafe simply because of their passport. It will take time, but we have to change this reality. Our security as a nation, and peace in the world, depend on it.

As President, I would vigorously support the agreement with Iran. We must exercise a cautious skepticism of course, but we must also recognize that across history, such is always how peace begins. We have fundamental disagreements with Iran. We cannot tolerate the exporting of terrorism, and we must remain committed to defending the Israeli people.

But this first step is an historic achievement. We should celebrate it, and work to make it succeed.

I recognize the frustration that many feel about Syria. After a decade, things are no better than they were. And given Russia's involvement, that will not change anytime soon. But we cannot ignore the incredible instability Syria is bringing to the region. Eleven million Syrians are displaced and effectively refugees. That fact will put enormous pressure on the region and Europe. And we cannot simply ignore that fact and hope it goes away.

I do not now support sending ground troops to Syria. But I do believe we must act with allies to secure at least humanitarian ends. I would support a policy like that which protected the Kurds. The topography of Syria will make that policy more difficult than it was in Kurdistan, but it could be effective nonetheless. There need to be safe zones in Syria. We need to work with allies to secure them now.

ISIS represents the most urgent challenge in the region. But I don't believe ISIS is like Al-Qaeda. I believe ISIS has engaged in horrific and criminal acts to recruit. But its ultimate objective is not to challenge us. Its objective is to achieve a dominant position in the region. Our strategy must be to work with the Sunnis and Iraq, to give the Sunnis a reason to support the Iraqi government against ISIS. I fear Iraq is looking elsewhere to build this anti-ISIS coalition. We need to move quickly to avoid an alliance that will only create more instability in the future.

I support the President's decision to maintain a small number of troops in Afghanistan. It may be that number should be higher than just 5,500. Those troops are not engaged in combat. They are only providing essential support. I fear that too hasty a retreat would bring to naught the sacrifices of so many Americans in that war. Obama made a commitment to get us out. But he is acting as a statesman, recognizing that rational policy doesn't necessarily track the life of an American administration.

Beyond the urgency of the Middle East, the most important long term foreign policy opportunity is China. For the first time, China is exercising its power internationally. I don't believe there is any longterm conflict between the interests of China and those of the United States. But I do believe that China will never accept a United States that doesn't treat it as an equal. We need to practice working out problems together. The progress the Obama administration has made with climate change policy is extraordinary. And we must work quickly to address the problems of cybersecurity.

The most difficult challenge we face in foreign policy is our evolving relationship with Russia. As a student of the transition in Russia, I am disappointed that the hopes for a true democracy, with powers that check each other, haven't yet been realized. But I believe that there is an enormous opportunity to build a relationship of understanding with Russia. We have different views and different values. But with allies across the world, I believe we can work with Russia for peace. That peace would be the most urgent of my foreign policy objectives.

Finally, we must recognize the instability that we induce by the very size and nature of our own defense budget. Eisenhower warned of the military-industrial complex. His original term was even better: the military-industrial-congressional complex. That complex creates enormous pressure for us to spend money on weapons of war. It puts enormous pressure on the United States government to encourage or at least tolerate the sale of

weapons in contexts that could not induce peace. And it continues to put pressure on our government to spend money in ways that cannot help our long term security. The wars of tomorrow won't be fought in Bradley tanks, regardless of what the lobbyists say. Which is why, once again, we must pass The First Reform, and secure a Congress free to lead.

Criminal Justice Reform

Our criminal justice system is an embarrassment to our tradition and our values. The #BlackLivesMatter movement is the most recent reminder of this obvious fact, and the most urgent demand for reform. That reform must happen over the course of the next presidential administration. I would commit to making that reform happen in the first two years of my administration.

But almost every problem that we see in the criminal justice system flows from the core inequality that we've allowed to grow within our society. The laws are harshest against the most politically disempowered (the poor); they are unenforced against the most politically empowered (Wall Street). And a bizarre and misguided policy of conservative Supreme Court justices to grant an expanding immunity to government officials who break the law has removed the only effective check on rogue police departments and federal agents.

As President, I would press for comprehensive reform of mandatory minimum sentences. We send people to prison for way too long, and when they get out, too many have no choice but to return to crime.

I would also direct the Justice Department to prosecute white collar crimes through penalties imposed on people first. Corporations are not people. When a corporation has been found to violate the law, we should hold its executives accountable. That includes, when the crime is serious enough or repeated, prison. And when fines are the only feasible penalty, they must be high enough to make it irrational for any corporation to risk their penalty. Too many corporations view fines as a cost of doing business. If they were a certain pathway to bankruptcy, fewer would violate the law.

I would also press Congress to ban practices that give governments an interest in finding their citizens guilty of crime. In Ferguson, for example, one of the most corrosive influences driving that crisis was a system that turned policemen into tax collectors, by making every infraction subject to a fine. Likewise with forfeiture statutes, which give the state a financial interest in crime. Any system of forfeiture should direct the assets taken to an entity unrelated to the government taking them.

I would also press for legislation that gives felons the choice to live a crime-free life again. I would press for legislation to end felon disenfranchisement, and provide support for ex-felons to transition into becoming productive members of society. These policies would cost money — but not as much as the costs of ex-felons returning to a life of crime.

Finally, I would press Congress to pass legislation that would reverse the Supreme Court's precedent that has granted government officials an increasingly large immunity when they violate the law. When police violate the law, the police department should pay. The federal government should establish streamlined alternative procedures for victims of lawless government officials to be compensated. But those who violate the law, including

especially the rights protected by the Constitution, should face certain and swift consequences.

Except for this last reform, criminal justice reform now enjoys broad bipartisan support. I would leverage that support in the early days of my administration to push for comprehensive reform before the midterm elections. It is finally time for America to deliver on this most basic commitment of a civil society — that it treat its people decently and with due process, and that no one, especially government officials, be above the law.

Health Care Reform

The Affordable Care Act (which out of respect for our President, I will refer to as Obamacare) represents enormous progress towards providing all Americans a security that citizens of other nations take for granted. We should celebrate and defend its provisions.

But we should improve them as well. I would support legislation that would add a public option to the insurance mandate of Obamacare. I would also support legislation that would repeal the ban on the government negotiating lower prices for drugs.

Beyond Obamacare, I would support reforms that would make pharmaceuticals more affordable. No one doubts that developing a safe and effective drug is expensive. But we should experiment with other mechanisms for covering the cost of that research. I would support prize fund proposals for drug research, given in exchange for waiving patent protection. And I would work to ban agreements that permit drug companies to negotiate with generic drug providers to delay entry of generic drugs into the market.

These reforms would challenge the most powerful forces in Washington today. Pharmaceutical and insurance companies are among the most profitable in the world, and also among Washington's biggest lobbyists. But the reforms are feasible once The First Reform is complete.

Achieving Equality

The fundamental aim of my administration will be to restore — or perhaps, for the first time, to achieve — the equality of citizens in America. The First Reform will begin that process.

But obviously, citizen equality is not the only equality that we must achieve or defend. In addition to that equality, we must defend victories for racial equality, by immediately restoring the protections of the Voting Rights Act. We must extend protections secured to women, by passing the Paycheck Fairness Act, securing support for Planned Parenthood, and expanding the protections against violence against women.

And we must immediately secure to the LGBTQ community the protections of federal anti-discrimination law. I would support the Equality Act. I would support openly transgendered service in the U.S. military. I would cut federal funds for adoption agencies that discriminate against LGBTQ parents. And to deal with the explosion of anti-trans violence, I would support extending the protections of hate-crime law to transgendered individuals.

None of these protections threaten religious liberty, properly understood. Religious practice is separate from the state. The state can't regulate religion. But neither should religion be able to regulate civic practice. America should defend the equality of all persons, regardless of whether particular religions share that vision of equality.

My hope is for a campaign that focuses on equality as the fundamental value. We need equality for citizens to get us a democracy back. We need a recognition of the core role that equality plays in society to secure the values of liberty. I agree with Danielle Allen (because her extraordinary book, *Our Declaration*, made this so clear) that a core commitment of the Declaration of Independence is equality. We need to make that declaration again.

The Internet

The Internet is infrastructure for the 21st century. It is the most important driver of economic and social transformation in America in our lifetime. It is an engine of growth and innovation, and the core technology protecting the freedom of speech.

But the Internet is threatened by economic and political interests that don't like the freedom and innovation that it enables. They in turn use their power, both economic and through government, to change the Internet and restrict its freedoms.

The fight to defend "network neutrality" against this threat represents one of the most important victories that Internet activists can celebrate. Millions rallied to demand the FCC protect the freedom to innovate, by requiring that the network remain neutral. Yet almost immediately after that victory, lobbyists on Capitol Hill began a campaign to undo this Internet freedom.

As President, no issue would be more natural to me. I have spent much of my career defending the freedoms of the network and fighting to expand its reach. I helped found Creative Commons. I served on the board of EFF and the Free Software Foundation, and was awarded the Free Software Foundation's Freedom Award. No one running for President could have a stronger commitment to defend the values of the Internet than I.

But the Internet will not be safe from the meddling of cronies or corrupted capitalists until we free Congress from their influence. Until the First Reform is enacted, network neutrality will be threatened. After it is enacted, the view that this network is essential infrastructure, which must be equally and broadly deployed, will be easier to sustain.

Innovation Policy

Since the founding of America, the American government has secured to creators and inventors the protection of limited monopolies, to give them the incentive they need to create.

I support this innovation policy. But I have long fought for reform in innovation policy, to fit the regulations of copyright and patent to the technology of the time.

As President, I would do the same. On copyright policy, I would convene Creative Rights Commission, composed of a broad range of disinterested but experienced individuals, who would survey the field of research and craft a blueprint for a copyright act for

the 21st century. That act must achieve the primary objective of copyright law — to secure incentives to creators. But it must also reckon the public's interest in access to our culture and the spread and preservation of our cultural past.

I would also convene a similar Invention Commission, charged with reviewing the practice patent law, and its relation to innovation in the many fields in which it now operates. It too should recommend a blueprint for patent law in the 21st century, constrained not by the tradition it inherits, but only by the ultimate objective of patent and copyright law: the progress of science and the useful arts.

While those commissions do their work, I would oppose the current extremism in American copyright policy. I would veto any statute, and not support any trade agreement, that extended the terms of existing copyrights. I would defend the vigorous protection of fair use. I would seek broad exemptions from liability for both and private archivists. I would seek legislation that solved the orphan works problem in the most efficient way possible.

Finally, I would ask the Council of Economic Advisors to consider the creation of an Innovation Council. That body, independently funded with commissioners free of ties to industry, would be charged with evaluating the economic effect of copyright and patent policies, and whether those policies are advancing the primary aim of these regulations: to secure incentives to create and invent.

These policies too will not be possible until The First Reform is enacted. That was the insight that my friend Aaron Swartz convinced me of when he convinced me to give up my work in Internet and copyright policy to pursue fundamental reform of our government. But after that reform is passed, I am confident sanity in IP policy can return.

Reforms to Support Work

Our economy is changing. We have left the time when people work for one company for their whole life. We have entered a time when workers are certain to work for many employers over the course of their career, and may in fact have many careers.

We need work policies that make this reality easier for workers. That includes increasing wage security. It means better health care protection. It means protection for the basic facts of life — we all get sick, some of us are blessed with children. It means a simple ability to migrate retirement plans. And it means policies that protect against discrimination.

I would push for an increase in the minimum wage. I would fight to make health insurance more easily and cheaply portable. I would push to enact paid family leave. I would push pay equity legislation for women. And I would support efforts to update the protections given to labor unions, to make them more meaningful and effective in the modern economy.

These changes will be fought by the most powerful economic and political forces in our economy today. Before The First Reform, they may not be possible. But after that reform, we will have a Congress responsive to the people, because as Madison put it, we will have a Congress “dependent on the people alone.”

The So-Called “War on Drugs”

The “war on drugs” has been the most self-destructive war in American history since the Civil War. Motivated by the same naive idea that led America into prohibition, the war has cost billions of dollars, and countless American lives; it has weakened the law’s protection for civil rights, and it has destroyed the security and democracy of the many South and Central American nations drawn into the illegal drug trade.

We must acknowledge the mistake of this war. Not the mistake in its objective — to protect the vulnerable against debilitating addiction. Instead, the mistake in its means. Addiction is a disease whose nature and cause we don’t yet fully understand. But we should treat it like a disease, with compassion and support, and with the hope that gives people the strength to turn away from their drug.

I therefore support the legalization of marijuana — not because I want my children to use that drug, but because I recognize the limits of government’s power in a free society. I would also press the federal government to develop plans to decriminalize other controlled substances — at least when it is clear that the cost of prohibition exceeds any benefit to society.

But we should recognize the forces that block sensible drug policy in America today. Prison guard unions have opposed decriminalization. Private prisons have spent millions to oppose policies that reduce the number of “criminals” in the system. Pharmaceutical companies have opposed changes that would create new competition to their own drugs. Alcohol and beer organizations have given millions to oppose candidates who support legalization. These forces are the corruption that The First Reform would attack. This policy change will be possible once that first reform is enacted.

Immigration Reform

America’s tradition is to welcome immigrants to this country. Almost all of us have ancestors who came here, and very few with a visa issued in advance. We need to recognize that among us Americans, there are millions of Americans who are not yet citizens, but should be. I would support the most inclusive and speedy path to citizenship for all but those proven to have engaged in serious crime.

As President, I would push to pass the DREAM Act. I would also work with Congress to pass a comprehensive immigration reform that would give all deserving Americans not yet citizens a speedy path to citizenship. I would end the inhumanity of detention centers that deny the most basic dignity to those they hold.

The forces that have blocked immigration reform in America are not directly tied to money in politics. But they are linked to the dysfunction produced by a politically gerrymandered House of Representatives. The Citizen Equality Act would change the polarized nature of Congress. It would stop the ability of a tiny fraction of America to hold our Congress, and hence our nation, hostage.

Education

Since the founding of this nation, we have recognized the need for the government to subsidize education. Education benefits the student. It benefits the society. We all gain from an educated people.

But over the last 20 years, we have lost sight of this fundamental truth. The consequence is a level of student debt that has created a national crisis. That debt now stands at \$1.2 trillion — more than auto loans (\$1 trillion), credit card debt (\$700 million), or home equity loans (\$500 million). We need a workforce that is free to experiment and learn, not one that's terrified into dead-end jobs. No one should have to sell his soul to pay his debts.

The current crisis has been caused by a system that puts the weakest player (the student) in the middle of two very powerful forces (lenders and educators).

I don't believe the data show that subsidized student loans alone have caused education costs to rise. Much more significant has been the radical reduction in aid to education. But whatever the mix of causes, we must recognize an obvious point: As colleges increase costs, and the governments reduce educational subsidies, the weakest negotiator in this mix, the student, has been put in the middle. Faced with the choice between assuming endless debt or giving up a college education, most choose debt.

We need to avoid policies that remove the incentive of colleges to keep costs low. Our government needs to recommit to the principle at the core of American values since Jefferson — that society must subsidize education.

I would therefore support a substantial increase in federal subsidies to research and public educational institutions. I would press for policies that would forgive a portion of existing student debt, and permit students to refinance their debt at a low rate. I would support policies that condition federal subsidies for public education on efforts to restrain costs. And I would oppose policies that rely exclusively on students to create market pressure to keep educational costs in check.

I would also push Congress to support the policies of open access to scientific and educational material. There is no reason the American tax payer should have to pay for access to research that the federal government has funded. That research should be freely licensed. And as Open Education Resource activists have convincingly shown, we could radically decrease the cost of education material at both the primary and secondary level if the federal government supported the use of freely licensed textbooks. If we assigned just one open text book nationally, we could reduce the cost of textbooks by more than \$2 billion.

These policies would be blocked today by the powerful lobbies that support the existing federal subsidy to banks through loan guarantees, and the powerful private education market, whose students absorb a high proportion of student debt and have the highest default rates. The banks want complete deregulation — except for the government guarantees. Their potential profits translate into a very powerful lobby against reform.

The First Reform would weaken these influences, and give Congress an opportunity to address this complicated policy problem with the students' interest, and hence, our nation's interest, kept first.

The Emerging Surveillance Society

The war on terror has led America to compromise a fundamental American value: that the state must leave us alone unless it has evidence to support invading our privacy. To protect this value, our Framers enacted the Fourth Amendment. Its central principle is that suspicionless searches are not the American way.

I would stop NSA surveillance on American citizens, wherever they may be. I would block any efforts by the NSA to outsource the violation of the Fourth Amendment to other governments or private contractors. And I would require that any surveillance system be built with both strict legal and technical protections to assure against misuse. Code must complement law, and no individual should have his or her privacy invaded unless the evidence justifying that invasion has been evaluated by a judge.

Millions of lobbying dollars will oppose this reform. The privatized intelligence industry in America has grown fat on federal contracts, and will only survive if America continues to spend billions to build the infrastructure of perfect surveillance. When we pass The First Reform, fighting these lobbyists will become easier. But long before that reform is passed, I would do everything I can as President to restore our government's commitment to the values embedded within our Constitution.

And I would export these values too. Technically, the Constitution does not protect non-Americans. But our values should. I understand the need to spy on terrorists and our enemies. But we should respect the privacy of people from wherever they come. As President, I would order an immediate review of the necessity and conditions under which we spy on non-citizens.

Finally, America owes a great debt to one of its own soldiers in this surveillance war, Edward Snowden. After concluding that every legal channel to challenge the illegal behavior that he knew our government was engaged in was closed to him, Snowden took an enormous personal risk to expose the crimes of our government. He did that with no hope of personal gain, and with the conscious recognition that the most likely consequence of his actions was that he would spend the rest of his life in prison.

It is not popular to state these obvious facts — just like it was not popular to defend Daniel Ellsberg forty years ago. But history will judge Snowden to be our generation's Ellsberg. He is a hero. And we need leaders with the courage to recognize that fact today, to at least say it, and then to act upon it.

Protecting Our Environment

Our values teach us that we don't own this planet. We hold it in trust for our children. And we must pass to them as rich and diverse a world as we inherited from our parents. This is a moral principle that it has taken too long for us to recognize, and act upon.

The most urgent environmental challenge we face — in light of this sacred trust — is climate change. The science is clear that climate change is happening — in part at least — because of human activity. In light of our values, that part alone should be enough to demand that we do something immediately to respond.

Yet it has been more than a decade since 2/3ds of America came to this view, and still, Congress has done nothing. Coal interests and oil interests have spent endless sums distorting the science and politicizing the policy, so that it is harder today to get legislation passed than it would have been a decade ago. This is one of the clearest examples of how money has corrupted our government. It is one of the biggest reasons why I took up the fight to end this corruption.

It is my view that polluters should clean up their pollution or pay the cost for the damage they've done. In this context, that principle translates into a strong demand that carbon emitters pay the price for what they do. I would support a carbon tax, which would force them to internalize the cost of what they're doing, thereby raising the price of dirty energy, and shifting demand to clean alternatives. I would support alternatives to a carbon tax only if I were convinced they could not be gamed to defeat the purpose of this fundamental moral principle.

That principle also means that we must do much more to stop the pollution of our air and waters by corporations who have convinced Congress to exempt them from this basic obligation. It saddens me to have to explain to my children why we can't eat too much of the fish we catch in Squam Lake, NH, because mercury from coal fired power plants has polluted the water and its wildlife.

Yes, clean energy would cost more. But whether we see the price or not, dirty energy costs much much more.

Of course, I also support the green energy policies proposed by the other Democratic candidates. But the rationale for those interventions would be less compelling if carbon polluters were paying the cost of their pollution. I would focus my administration's efforts on this fundamental fix first. For after it happens, there will be enormous incentives to innovate to find lower cost — and green — ways to support America's demand for energy.

But here too, the only way we will achieve this change is after The First Reform has passed. Even among Democrats, the power of oil and coal interests is strong. We have to free all representatives from this corrupting influence if they're to have the freedom to do the right thing. In my view, respecting the fundamental moral principle of the environment is the right thing.