



A BETTER WAY

OUR VISION FOR A CONFIDENT AMERICA

A Better Way to Uphold Our Constitution

Our Vision

In a Confident America, the government upholds the Constitution and works for the people, not the other way around.

Our Challenge

Just as the size of government has grown, so has its arrogance. Washington spends money it isn't authorized to spend. It takes power it isn't given. It ignores laws it is required to execute. It doesn't listen, and it certainly doesn't care to learn.

The Founders insisted on a separation of powers to protect our constitutional liberties. But over time, especially in recent decades, the executive branch has collected more power for itself, enabled by a judiciary that defers to the bureaucracy and a Congress that has yielded some of its most fundamental duties. James Madison warned that the Constitution is "a mere parchment barrier" unless each branch asserts its powers to keep the others in check. This concentration of power ultimately comes at the expense of the people, who rightly feel detached from—distrustful of—their government.

Our Vision

A constitutional government is a good, fair, and decent government—one that listens to the people and promotes their well-being. It makes sure that each of us has the biggest role to play in our lives. Instead of trying to find every which way to bypass the will of the people, it abides by the consent of the governed. No one bill is going to rebuild trust. No one decision will restore the separation of powers. But we have more tools than ever to restore self-government. Now we need to use them.

Congress must start writing laws in clear language with clear lines of authority. We must make sure agencies and bureaucracies adhere to the letter of the law. We must use our constitutional checks on spending by revitalizing the appropriations process from start to finish. We must make the government catch up with the times, and provide real transparency – after all, this is the people's business.

This is a better way to uphold our Constitution.

Our Ideas

Make government more accountable. Subject agencies and bureaucracies to more scrutiny from a Congress that writes clear laws and enforces clear lines of authority, a judiciary that expedites legal action against the executive branch, inspectors general that have more tools to root out fraud and abuse, and a public that knows what it has a right to know.

Make government more representative. Rewrite old laws and implement new ones so that regulations better reflect the will—and the input—of the people. Let's make the bureaucrats jump through more hoops—and spend less money—for a change.

Restore constitutional checks on spending. Give Congress and the people the most say—and the final word—over who is spending their money, what it's being spent on, where it's being spent, when it's being spent, and why it's being spent.

Make government more transparent. Make the government catch up with the times by publishing more data about how it does the people's business. Sunlight really is the best disinfectant.

MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE ACCOUNTABLE

- **Put the authority back in authorizing** so that committees can evaluate the need for each agency before reauthorizing or terminating it.
- **Simplify the complicated** by writing legislation in plain language and with clear instructions to bureaucrats to prevent excessive regulations.
- **Make bureaucrats fess up** when they decide not to enforce the laws of the land.
- **Expedite legal action** against the executive branch to clear up disputes surrounding the separation of powers.
- **Let the watchdogs work** by giving inspectors general more authority to go after fraud.
- **Crowdsource oversight** by strengthening the Freedom of Information Act and the preservation of records.

MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE REPRESENTATIVE

- **Take on midnight regulations** by giving Congress the power to take an up-or-down vote on rules that outgoing administrations rush through on their way out the door.
- **End judicial deference** that has enabled agencies to run amok, giving courts more power to strike down excessive regulations and Congress more incentives to write clear laws.
- **Rewrite 70-year old rules** so that the public has more details about proposed regulations, and more time to review them. Let's make the bureaucrats jump through more hoops—and spend less money—for a change.
- **Call in reinforcements** by empowering the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs—an agency actually charged with limiting red tape—to serve as a real partner in oversight.
- **Stop bad regulations in their tracks** by requiring Congress to approve all major rules. The people who are elected to make the laws should make the call on what will become law.
- **Force full disclosure** of the government's regulatory agenda so that Americans have fair warning before rules are sent their way. Sunlight really is the best disinfectant.
- **Get to the point** by making agencies publish more information in plain language. If every bullet and paragraph in this paper can be less than 100 words, so can the summaries of proposed regulations.

RESTORE CONSTITUTIONAL CHECKS ON SPENDING

- **Pass all appropriations bills** and revitalize the process from start to finish so that Congress and the people have the most say over who is spending their money, what we're spending it on, when we're spending it, how we're spending it, and why it's being spent.
- **Get a grip on autopilot spending** by conducting a complete inventory on what government is spending outside of Congress's control, and identifying reforms to restore accountability and transparency.
- **Prevent illegal spending** in the executive branch by making clear that any employee who violates the Anti-Deficiency Act and spends money beyond what is appropriated by Congress will be fired or fined.
- **Stop settlement slush funds** that bureaucrats use to funnel money to make donations to advocacy groups without congressional approval.

MAKE GOVERNMENT MORE TRANSPARENT

- **Publish more data on** the money the government spends and so the taxpayers can better scrutinize where their money is going. All data should be published in an accessible, searchable, and reliable format.
- **Link financial data to performance data** across the government so taxpayers know what programs are working—and what programs are not.
- **Toughen subpoena power** to require the executive branch to cooperate with congressional investigations.