

In closing ...

Democracy

"The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government." Washington

"The accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny." Madison

"The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country." FDR

"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction." Reagan

Freedoms of Religion, the Press, Speech, the Press, and Assembly - for All

"The liberty of the press is essential to the security of the state." Adams

"If there is any principle of the Constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other it is the principle of free thought - not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought that we hate." Holmes, Jr.

"Freedom of speech and expression ... [and] of every person to worship God in his own way - everywhere in the world." FDR

"Freedom requires tolerance ... in our first amendment protections for the freedoms of speech, association, and religion - all religions." GHW Bush

"When the public's right to know is threatened, and when the rights of free speech and free press are at risk, ... other liberties ... endangered." Christopher Dodd

Education and Civic Awareness

"The foundation of every state is the education of its youth." Diogenes

"Whenever the people are well-informed, they can be trusted with their own government." Jefferson

"We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values." JFK

Acceptance

"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Lazarus, on our Statue of Liberty

"The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respected Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges..." Washington

"We are a nation of many nationalities, many races, many religions bound together by a single unity, the unity of freedom and equality." FDR

"It is the flag just as much of the man who was naturalized yesterday as of the man whose people have been here many generations". Henry Cabot Lodge

"... America has constantly drawn strength and spirit from wave after wave of immigrants. ... they have strengthened our economy, enriched our culture, renewed our promise of freedom and opportunity for all..." W. Clinton

"[The immigrants'] talent and hard work and love of freedom have helped make America the leader of the world. ... and the most hopeful society this world has ever known." GW Bush



Make America *America* Again: Amendments and Policies to Restore American Values and Ideals

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1 The Amendments: A Bill of Democracy

The time has come for a new Bill of Democracy: a set of Amendments to address and resolve specific issues and weaknesses in our 238-year-old Constitution.

Our United States Constitution was written in 1787 and ratified in 1788. As part of the ratification process, many states demanded and were promised amendments - a "bill of rights" - that would document and guarantee the rights of individuals and states. James Madison proposed about 20 amendments, the House passed 17, the Senate passed 12, and numbers 3 through 12 were ratified by the states as the Bill of Rights in 1791. Number 2 of the 12 became the 27th Amendment in 1992.

The amendments proposed below strengthen or clarify how our government was originally intended to operate, and how it should operate in the 21st century and later. These amendments attempt to address deficiencies that have become apparent in the overreach by the executive branch and corruption within all three branches.

Benjamin Franklin told Elizabeth Willing Powel that we had not a monarchy but "A republic, if you can keep it." Amendments such as these are necessary to "keep" our republic. Just as the authors of our Declaration of Independence and Constitution rejected the concept of a "king", these amendments reject the concept of a "unitary executive" "imperial presidency" government.

These amendments will also show our own United States citizens, residents, and immigrants - as well as the rest of the world - that we are serious about returning to our position as the "shining city on a hill", as a beacon of hope and freedom. (Matthew 5:14-16; John Winthrop 1630; Ronald Reagan 1989 and other presidents including Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, George H. W. Bush, Clinton, and Obama).

2.9 **Enact Universal Childcare from Birth to School Entry**

It takes a village to raise a child - or a nation to raise the next generation. Childcare expenses have increased faster than general inflation. Childcare has become a major expense or simply unaffordable for millions of families. And childcare keeps many mothers out of the workforce.

As with universal healthcare, our federal government would assure that every child is funded for childcare and education (ECE) services, with free or low fees to the families based on a sliding income scale. Private, generally small business and not-for-profit organizations would provide such services.

ECE would: increase children's long-term academic achievement and health; enable steady parental employment and higher lifetime earnings; and increase workforce participation and tax revenues.

Providing such childcare support should cost about \$70 billion per year, certainly affordable compared to other major government programs.

2.10 **Energy: Renewables for Resilience, Independence, Cost Stability**

True resilience, independence, and cost stability will require renewable energy sources and storage facilities, while steadily reducing dependence on fossil fuel energy generation.

Remove barriers to the construction of solar, wind, geothermal, hydroelectric, ocean/tidal sources, and nuclear, as well as a variety of energy storage technologies. Distribute these sources for resilience, such as city-sized or even neighborhood-sized microgrids.

Phase out subsidies and tax breaks for fossil fuel companies.

2.11 **Pollution: Reduce Dependence on Plastics and Fossil Fuels**

Degrading plastics - microplastics - are polluting our rivers, oceans, sea life, animal life, and our own bodies. Continue to enact legislation to eliminate of single-use, non-recyclable plastics in products and packaging (with some exceptions, such as for medical and prescription supplies).

Even non-degrading plastics and other debris are overwhelming our capabilities to recycle or dispose of them, and contributing to "ocean gyres", huge patches of waste floating in our oceans. Enact legislation to mandate: reuse where possible and recycling where reuse is not possible; extended producer responsibility for end-of-life impacts of products and packaging leading to circular product design; and composting of organic waste.

Phase out fossil fuels which will reduce pollution with health benefits, and reduce global warming/climate change.

2.6 Ensure the Long-Term Viability of Social Security

Eliminate the income cap, now at \$184,500, to receive more income from high-income earners. Change the inflation index used to calculate the annual cost-of-living increase to slow the growth of benefits over time. Steadily increase legal immigration levels, to increase the pool of working-age tax-paying individuals, to support aging retirees.

2.7 Income: Raise the Minimum Wage to 50% of the Local Median

Enact legislation to increase the minimum wage per hour to 50 percent of the local median wage. This level should raise incomes without raising unemployment or placing an undue burden on businesses. This should include those previously excluded: farm, commercial fishery and cannery workers, private investigators, and others.

Raising the minimum wage would: enable a single income to support more families; enable many more Americans to pay for their own needs; reduce the number of people that need government safety net; and gradually reduce the role of government in our lives and society.

2.8 Enact Rational, Humane, and Legal Immigration Policies

Continue to strengthen our southern border with border patrol agents and technology. Add judges and lawyers to work off the case backlog and then quickly process requests by asylum seekers and refugees, as required by US law and US international treaties.

Deportation is not the only solution to illegal immigration. Another approach is to make the illegal / undocumented immigrants ... legal. Our nation should act like an adult: admit our errors by both parties for decades, and that our workforce needs these workers. Undocumented immigrants comprise up to 10 to 20 percent of the workers and are essential in the industries of: construction; transportation; business services such as waste management; personal care, beauty services, household services, and auto repair; agriculture; restaurants, food services, and hotel; and manufacturing. As taxpayers, any non-criminal immigrant should be granted a green card or a work visa, receive public benefits and healthcare - but not citizenship.

Grant legal status to persons brought to the US as children, who had no choice as children, and should not be criminalized and deported.

Steadily increase legal immigration levels, to continue to grow our GDP, avoid worker shortages in the industries listed above, and provide more working-age adults to support our growing senior population.

1.1 Fair Representation (aka End Gerrymandering) Amendment

Summary: Nationwide, congressional redistricting shall occur only once per decade and be drawn by non-partisan citizens commissions. Districts shall have the same number of people and minimize geographic distortions. Elections at all levels shall use ranked-choice voting.

Rationale: Gerrymandering enables the two main political parties to predetermine election outcomes by choosing their voters rather than the voters choosing their candidates. It also: helps the two main political parties to prevent the election of other parties' candidates; tends towards more extreme candidates, since candidates need only to please the voters in his or her party; and contributes to cynicism about elections and the government. All of this undermines the principle of "government by the people".

Ranked-choice voting: selects the candidate with the strongest overall majority support; encourages candidates to seek broad support; and eliminates the need for runoff elections.

This amendment would negate recent Supreme Court decisions which enabled gerrymandering for political gain.

1.2 Term Limits Amendment

Summary: Sets term limits for Senators (14 years), Congressional Representatives (11), Supreme Court Justices (18), and federal judges (15).

Rationale: Term limits for Congress would have the following benefits: reduce the political benefit of incumbency; lawmakers would focus on immediate policy solutions rather than avoiding difficult issues to preserve their re-election chances; end "career politicians" who may become disconnected from their constituents after decades in office; and restore our Constitution's framers' vision of a "citizen legislature", a body of temporary public servants who bring real-world expertise and return to live under the laws they passed.

Term limits for the judiciary would make it likely that presidents of any party would be able to appoint justices, would better insulate the confirmation process from partisan gamesmanship, and promote a more diverse court that better reflects the public view.

Per Chief Justice John Roberts, "setting a term of, say, fifteen years would ensure that federal judges would not lose all touch with reality through decades of ivory tower existence. It would also provide a more regular and greater degree of turnover among the judges. Both developments would, in my view, be healthy ones."

1.3 Direct Election of the President and Vice-President

Summary: The President and Vice President shall be elected by a majority of the individual voters across the nation. This amendment eliminates the Electoral College.

Rationale: This amendment would abolish the Electoral College method for finalizing the election for President and Vice President. One benefit would be increased voter turnout and engagement, because every vote in every state would count: the ballots of conservative voters in a typically blue state like California or liberal voters in a typically red state like Texas would be meaningful, rather than being overridden by each state's winner-take-all electoral college results. Other benefits would likely include: increased trust in the system - the popular vote winner would be elected; and nationwide campaigns, rather than overemphasis on "swing" states.

1.4 Natural Persons and Transparent Political Donations Amendment

Summary: Only natural persons, not corporations or other organizations, have the rights and privileges accorded to persons protected by the Constitution. Only natural persons may donate to campaigns for candidates for political offices, political parties, and political causes or action committees, limited to an amount set by Congress in any two-year election cycle. The donors for all such donations shall be publicly disclosed; there shall be no anonymous donations. Congress and the legislature in each State may enact and regulate systems of public campaign financing. Nothing in this amendment shall be construed to abridge the freedoms of speech, assembly, and the press.

Rationale: This amendment intends to remove the excessive influence on elections of big money from corporations and rich natural persons. Funding from corporations, political action committees, and super-PACs has too much influence on elections. The influence of citizens - "of, by, and for the people" - has been severely diminished. This is to the detriment of our representative democracy and its electoral process.

As Representative Pramila Jayapal succinctly stated, "Corporations are not people and money is not speech."

This amendment establish the constitutional principle that money does not equal speech, and would negate the Supreme Court decisions Citizens United v. FEC (2010) and SpeechNow.org v. FEC (2010).

2.4 Improve Government Efficiency, Incrementally and Steadily

A large part of reducing the federal deficit and debt will be improving the efficiency in government operations and the reduction of waste and abuse.

Mandate that all government agencies start or continue and maintain persistent and ongoing - and legal - continuous process improvement. This is one aspect of successful businesses. For businesses, the goal is to increase profit through more efficient and productive operations. For our government, the goal is to provide Congressionally-mandated services while intelligently reducing the costs to provide those services.

Mandate a continuous review of regulations as they are applied, and determine means by which regulations can be simplified, combined, or eliminated. This should reduce both the direct cost of government operations and the indirect cost to businesses and residents interacting with our government.

Where applicable - where Congress has the expertise to do so - Congress should provide legislation that specifies in more detail the regulations to be applied, reducing the discretion of the Executive Branch in defining those regulations.

Empower and expand the offices of Inspectors General to: monitor the procedures listed above; use improved auditing methods including data analytics and AI to monitor, review, and analyze program operations and compliance; continue the powers to review all agency documents, issue subpoenas, execute search warrants, and receive hotline tips; and recommend administrative fixes where flaws are discovered.

2.5 Balance a Strong Defense with Budgetary Discipline

Rebuild and modernize our military capability with updated operational concepts and less expensive technologies that replace older more expensive technologies. This can be accomplished while maintaining defense expenditures at about 3 percent of GDP, not increasing to a deficit-and-debt-breaking 5 percent. Fiscal prudence should be helped by our allies increasing their own defense expenditures, reducing the burden on American funding.

The defense budget must include funds to eliminate homelessness for veterans, perhaps by constructing small apartments in multi-unit buildings on federal lands including VA hospital locations.

2.2 Enact Fair and Simplified Corporate Taxation

A corporation is a creation of the government, so the government can and should set the rules and boundaries for how the corporation operates to the benefit of our society.

Restore a progressive corporate tax rate schedule, ranging from a low rate (e.g., 10 percent) up to a high rate (e.g., 45 percent), while simplifying the tax code and eliminating many exclusions and deductions.

Remove the corporate deduction for employer-sponsored health insurance. Universal healthcare will eliminate the need for these deductions.

Limit the maximum total compensation for any corporate employee or contractor to 300 times that of the full-time equivalent compensation for the lowest paid employee or contractor. Any compensation beyond that limit would be taxed and paid by the corporation at the progressive corporate tax rate for that corporation. For example, if the minimum wage is \$20 per hour which equals about \$40,000 per year, the maximum total compensation for any employee or contractor would be \$12,000,000; any compensation beyond that limit would be subject to corporate taxation.

2.3 Enact Universal Healthcare

No person or family should suffer any of the following to lack of access to healthcare: avoidable discomfort, pain, debility, or death; having to choose between medications or treatment and food, rent, or utilities; or bankruptcy due to medical costs.

Universal healthcare will provide at least the following benefits: better health outcomes such as lower hospitalization and mortality rates, and longer life expectancy; a more productive population due to better health; rural hospitals, clinics, and doctor's offices kept open; reduced personal stress regarding healthcare, especially for lower income households; less overall cost to society for healthcare due to lower administrative costs, elimination of corporate profits, and preventative care that results in far fewer emergency room visits.

Other developed nations provide successful examples that our United States should adopt, of variations of universal healthcare, including single payer and highly regulated not-for-profit insurance company approaches. If a single payer approach is enacted, Medicare-like healthcare taxes will increase. But overall healthcare costs in the US could reduce by as much as 5 percent of GDP, due to the elimination of current healthcare premiums.

1.3 No immunity for the Government Officers Amendment

Summary: There shall be no criminal immunity for any officers of the United States, including the President, Vice President, members of Congress, and appointed officers requiring confirmation by the Senate. No person or appointed officer requiring confirmation by the Senate convicted of a felony of dishonesty or violence shall be elected or appointed to a federal office.

Rationale: Basic principles of our Constitution, American law, and common practice include: all persons must be treated equally, under the law; no person is above the law, holding government officials to the same standards as private citizens; and no person in our United States should be able to act with impunity with unchecked power.

This will negate the 2024 immunity decision in Trump vs. U.S.

1.4 Trust in Federal Officers and Congress Amendment

Summary: Members of Congress shall receive the same income, health, retirement, and life insurance benefits as very senior civil servants. The President, Vice President, members of Congress, and Supreme Court Justices, and their spouses or dependent children, shall place their personal investments in a blind trust. Any candidate for President or Vice-President shall make public recent tax returns. No officers as listed above shall have his or her name affixed to any government-affiliated building, airport, aircraft, ship, or geographical feature while in office nor within one year of leaving office. No person shall have his/her name or likeness appear on stamps, coins, or currency issued by the United States government until after death.

Rationale: Elected and appointed officials are referred to as public servants; these officials should only be serving the public and not themselves.

This should correct many of the real and perceived excesses of, and restore some measure of trust in, these officials and our government.

1.7 Right to Vote Amendment

Summary: Citizens, and only citizens, have the right to vote, and must have a government-issued ID to register to vote. Each state must ensure that every citizen has reasonable means to acquire such an ID, at no cost or onerous process to the citizen.

Rationale: This amendment acknowledges a concern about the validity of only citizens being enabled to vote. This also provides the essential protection for the voting right of citizens by making the states responsible for ensuring this right to vote is assured for all citizens.

1.8 Pardons Limitations Amendment

Summary: Limits the scope of presidential pardons to natural persons - i.e., not companies or organizations. Prohibits pardoning the President and his/her close family members, current or former members of the President's administration or campaign staff, and others. Prohibits preemptive pardons. Subjects all pardons to approval by a panel of federal judges appointed by the Chief Justice.

Rationale: The pardon power must be constrained to avoid the President from using this power to reward political allies and donors, and to prevent egregious pardons of felons convicted of major crimes.

1.9 Separation of Religion and Government Amendment

Summary: No government department or agency, nor government-associated organization, shall favor nor disfavor one religion over any other. No such organization shall prohibit the personal expression of religion - e.g., prayer - by any person associated with that agency or organization.

Rationale: This amendment would explicitly clarify and strengthen the separation of religion and government, For example: If a school chooses to display some of the Judeo-Christian Bible's Ten Commandments, that school must also allow, without onerous barriers, comparable principles from other religions, such as Islamic, Buddhism, and others.

1.10 Separation of Powers Amendment

Summary: Each branch of the federal government - Legislative, Executive, Judicial - shall not delegate its Constitutionally-specified powers to another branch of government.

Rationale: This amendment would prohibit Congress, for example, from delegating powers to the President explicitly given to the Congress. This would prohibit the President from the following: offensive military actions without authorization by Congress; setting tariffs; disbanding or withholding funds from agencies authorized by Congress; withholding funds authorized by Congress from organizations such as universities; ignoring laws and international agreements regarding immigration, refugee, and asylum procedures; deploying federal agents such as ICE where they legally have no jurisdiction; and others actions.

(This amendment was proposed by James Madison in May, 1789, as a possible 16th Amendment.)

2 The Policies: Of, By, and For the people

One necessary goal is to restore fiscal responsibility - very little else will matter if our United States doesn't stop the increase of our federal debt, and then reduce it to a manageable level.

There will always be people that are richer, even much richer, and some that are poorer, even very poor. However, the poor need not live in "poverty". Government policies should and must "raise the floor" - enable even the poorest to avoid poverty by having access to all of these: shelter; healthcare; food; clean water; high quality education; and transportation.

These policies are capitalistic: these intend to ensure that the benefits of capitalism are fairly distributed for everyone. In the past, labor's share of GDP has been as high as 64 percent; in 2025, it was 54 percent. If that 10 percent difference were paid to labor instead of to capital (profit, etc.), on average a household's income would increase by \$23,000. This would enable many households to avoid relying on the government safety net.

These policies do not promote socialism just social democracy. Socialism requires that the government owns the means of production and services. None of these policies advocate for government ownership.

2.1 Enact Fair and Simplified Individual Taxation

Restore much more progressive marginal income tax rates. This would not be a wealth tax, but income tax rates based on the relative wealth of the taxpayer. One such set of federal marginal tax rate brackets could be: 75 percent on incomes above \$700,000; 35 percent above \$150,000; scaling down to 5 percent on incomes below \$30,000.

Tax: realized capital gains as regular income. Tax the value of a loan borrowed against an unrealized asset as a "deemed sale", subject to capital gains taxes. Limit the overall estate step-up in basis at death to a specific amount (e.g., \$2 million), indexed for inflation.

Phase out itemized deductions for mortgage interest, and for medical expenses which universal healthcare (see 2.3) will make unnecessary. Keep only state and local taxes and charitable donations as itemized deductions.

Simplify the federal income tax code, drastically. Eliminate many forms, schedules and exclusions and deductions that enable legal tax avoidance. Reduce the tax statutes and regulations from over 12,600 pages to 1,000 pages by simplifying the statutes and derived regulations.

Substantially increase the number of IRS agents, to minimize illegal tax evasion by large corporations and high-income individuals.