

DEMOCRACY-NEXT

Power Flows From Ethics

First Draft — May 2026

Preface: Before the Storm

There is a moment in every historical catastrophe — visible only in hindsight — where the outcome is still negotiable. Where the right framework, ready and waiting, could change what people reach for when everything falls apart. We are in that moment now. This is an attempt to make sure something better is ready.

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Something is wrong.

You feel it. Not as an abstract political opinion — you feel it in your chest when you open the news in the morning. You feel it when you watch your kid graduate with a degree and debt into a job market offering wages that have been stagnant for fifteen years. You feel it when your insulin costs twelve dollars in Canada and three hundred dollars at the pharmacy two blocks from your house. You feel it when you watch a family in Sudan starving on a phone screen between advertisements, and then you scroll past because what else can you do?

Something is wrong. And you've known it for a long time.

The arguments about *what* is wrong are everywhere. Left and right, conservative and progressive, nationalist and globalist — everyone has a diagnosis and everyone has an enemy. Your enemy is the immigrants. No, your enemy is the corporations. No, it's the elites. No, it's the socialists. No, it's the deep state. No, it's —

And while we fight each other, the same thing keeps happening. The wealthy get wealthier. The wars keep starting. The housing gets more expensive. The wages stay flat. The planet gets hotter. The politicians get richer. And somehow, no matter who wins the election, the trajectory barely changes.

That is not an accident.

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But this is not a book about despair. It is not another catalog of everything broken, with a shrug at the end. You have enough of those.

This is a book about recognizing a pattern — and offering a solution.

Because here's what's remarkable: the same mechanism is operating from the factories of Bangladesh to the streets of Tehran, from the frozen trenches of Ukraine to the crumbling apartment blocks of American rust belt cities, from the inflation-ravaged middle class of Argentina to the tech workers of Silicon Valley being told their twenty years of expertise is worth less than it was in 2009.

The machine is the same.

Adam Smith saw it in 1776 and called it the "vile maxim of the masters of mankind": *all for ourselves and nothing for anyone else*. Hannah Arendt saw it consuming Europe in the 1930s and wrote about the machinery of mass psychosis that makes ordinary people first accept, then participate in, their own subjugation. You see it right now, today, in your feed — the rage, the tribalism, the exhaustion, the feeling that the world is coming apart at the seams.

It is not coming apart. It is being *taken* apart. Carefully. Deliberately. By people who understand exactly what they are doing and have been doing it for a very long time.

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We cannot fix everywhere. We want to be honest about that up front. We cannot rewrite the constitution of Iran or halt the ambitions of authoritarian strongmen by the force of our good intentions alone. The humanitarian catastrophes unfolding in Sudan, in Ukraine, in Gaza, in Myanmar — they will not be resolved by the pages of this book.

What we can do is fix ourselves. Build something here — a new architecture, a new framework, a proof of concept — and then extend the invitation outward.

Because here is the strategic logic that makes this more than idealism:

The global elite — the people who benefit most from the current machinery — are jurisdiction shoppers. They park their money where the taxes are lowest, incorporate

where the regulations are friendliest, buy politicians where the laws allow it. Their power depends on having somewhere to go. On playing nations against each other: give us tax breaks or we'll move the factory.

That leverage evaporates when there is nowhere left to shop.

One nation building a better architecture is a start. A dozen nations doing it is a movement. And a movement is the beginning of a world in which the vile maxim has no refuge left.

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We know what you're thinking.

"This is interesting. But does it really matter? Can one book change anything?"

The Weimar Republic had brilliant people who saw the dangerous rise of Fascism clearly. They wrote beautifully about what was wrong. They understood the machinery of authoritarianism with devastating clarity.

What they didn't have was something ready to grab.

When the economic catastrophe hit — and it had been building for years before it finally broke — people reached for whatever was organized, whatever was loud, whatever had answers. The democratic forces were still debating. The authoritarian movement had a plan.

We know how that ended.

The catastrophe may already be in motion. The question is whether the framework exists before disaster peaks — so people reach for it instead of something worse.

History doesn't wait for the perfect moment. It just arrives. And whatever framework is ready gets grabbed.

This book is an attempt to be ready.

There is a word for what this book is proposing.

Etharchy.

Power flows from ethics. Not from land. Not from conquest. Not from whoever has the most money or the loudest microphone. From the morals we choose to agree on — together, openly, with the humility to know we'll get things wrong and the built-in mechanisms to fix them when we do.

That's the whole idea. Everything else is the case for it, and the blueprint.

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A word about "we."

This wasn't written from inside a university or a think tank. It was written by people who've lived what this book describes — the wages that don't stretch, the job that disappeared, the new one that pays less. We're not speaking to you from somewhere else. We're standing on the same ground.

And "we" doesn't stop there. If something in these pages rings true — you're part of it now. This book is meant to be shared, argued about, built upon and passed hand to hand. Every person who reads it and recognizes something true and tells someone else — that's the "we" growing. Not an organization. Not a party. Just people, finally calling the thing by its name.

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What follows is in four parts.

Part One is the history you weren't taught — not because the facts are different, but because the pattern was never named. Same machine, different centuries, different costumes.

Part Two is the playbook — how wages got suppressed one quiet move at a time over fifty years, and how the people doing it made sure you'd blame your neighbor instead of them.

Part Three is the architecture — what Etharchy actually looks like, built from scratch, designed specifically to resist the capture that has undone every previous attempt. A pay ratio that ties the CEO's paycheck to the janitor's. Healthcare that is actually free. An Ethics Board whose only job is to ask whether a law is *right*, not just whether it passed. Civic service that puts the CEO's kid and the janitor's kid on the same job for a year — so they stop being strangers to each other.

Part Four is the documents. A constitution. A social contract. Not a direction to consider. A blueprint, drafted and ready.

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The Federalist Papers didn't suggest that America *try* a better system. They described one that already existed on paper and made the case for it.

That's what this is.

By the time you finish, you'll have a word for what you've always felt was possible.

Etharchy.

PART ONE

THE DIAGNOSIS

The Vile Maxim — A User's Guide

Chapter One: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly — An Honest History of America

The Operating System of Civilization

To understand what America means to the world, you have to understand what came before it.

For thousands of years — not hundreds, *thousands* — there was essentially one way that great nations became great nations. They built an army. They sent that army to find people who had things you wanted — land, gold, spices, labor, resources. And then they took it. They killed whoever resisted, enslaved whoever was useful, and called it civilization. They wrote histories about their own glory and the enemy's savagery. Then built monuments to their generals and kings. And then the next empire did the same thing to them.

From the Assyrians to the Persians. From Alexander's Greece to Rome. From the Mongols to the Ottoman Empire to the Spanish Armada to the British Empire upon which the sun famously never set — the mechanism was identical. Power flows from conquest. Conquest flows from force. Force belongs to whoever holds it longest.

This was not considered evil. It was considered *natural*. The strong take from the weak. That is how the world works. That is how the world *had always worked*.

And then something happened that was so genuinely unprecedented that most of us have lost the ability to understand how strange it actually was.

The Most Radical Sentence Ever Written

A group of men — imperfect men, some of them slaveholders, all of them products of their deeply flawed time — sat down and wrote a document that said:

Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Not from God. Not from conquest. Not from hereditary right or the size of their army.

From the *consent of the governed*.

That sentence alone was a revolution in human thought. Not a military revolution — a *philosophical* one. The most radical political concept in recorded history, stated plainly in one line. And then they built — imperfectly, incompletely, with tremendous contradictions baked in from the start — a nation designed to prove it could work.

Before we go any further, we need to stop and let that land.

Every empire that had ever existed operated on the premise that power was something that was taken. The American founders — for all their failures, and there were many — operated on the premise that power was something that had to be *given*. Voluntarily. By the people over whom it was exercised.

Nobody had ever seriously tried to build a nation on that idea before. Not really. Not at scale. The Greek city-states came close, for a narrow slice of their population. The Magna Carta nibbled at the edges. But this — a written Constitution, a Bill of Rights, a framework for peaceful transfer of power — this was new.

The document wasn't even the most extraordinary part.

The Man Who Said No

George Washington was not, by most careful military assessments, a particularly remarkable general.

He lost more battles than he won. He was outmaneuvered repeatedly by British commanders. Several generals who served under him — Nathanael Greene, Henry Knox, Daniel Morgan — were by most accounts more tactically gifted. The British, for their part, were fighting a colonial holding action while simultaneously managing France, their Caribbean possessions, and an empire that spanned the globe. They were not exactly bringing their full attention to bear on a ragged Continental Army freezing in Pennsylvania.

Washington did not beat the British through military genius. He beat them by *not losing*. By keeping an army in the field long enough, through Valley Forge and a hundred smaller miseries, that the political will to continue the war eventually collapsed on the other side of the Atlantic. That took extraordinary character and resilience.

But it did not make him the greatest man in the world.

What happened *after* the war is what made him that.

Washington was beloved. He was trusted. He had the army. He had the loyalty of the men who had bled with him through eight years of war. He had the charisma. He had the moment. And when the war was won, when the new nation was gasping its first uncertain breaths —

They offered him a crown.

Not metaphorically. Literally. His officers approached him — some with sincere admiration, some with calculated self-interest — about becoming King of America. The machinery was there. The will was there. Every precedent in human history said: *this is what you do now*. You take the power. You consolidate it. You become the thing you just defeated.

He said no.

And then, at the end of his second term as President — when nobody wanted him to leave, when the fragile young nation felt it could not survive without him — he stepped down. Voluntarily. And went home to Mount Vernon.

King George III of England, upon hearing that Washington actually intended to relinquish power and return to private life, reportedly said:

"If he does that, he will be the greatest man in the world."

A king — a man whose entire existence was built on the premise that power is never voluntarily surrendered — recognized in that moment that something had happened that had never happened before.

A man had held ultimate power. And given it back.

Washington wasn't a superhuman hero. He was a man — flawed, ambitious, a slaveholder who knew slavery was wrong and did not free his enslaved people during his lifetime. He was human, in all the complicated ways humans are human.

And that is precisely what makes what he did so remarkable.

Because it means it's possible. It means a human being — with all the ordinary hungers for power and legacy and security that every human being has — can look at the crown and choose the principle instead.

That is the foundation this country was built on. Not just the document. The *act*. The demonstration. The proof of concept that power could be held and willingly limited.

The Good

America has genuinely been a force for good in the world. This needs to be said clearly, and meant — not as a prelude to "but," not as a rhetorical setup, but as a honest accounting.

We began with the original sin of slavery written into our founding compromise. Enslaved human beings counted as three-fifths of a person for the purposes of congressional representation — not as people, but as a mathematical convenience for their enslavers. The distance between "all men are created equal" and the reality of American life in 1776 was not a gap. It was a chasm.

And then we fought the bloodiest war in our history to close it.

Six hundred and twenty thousand dead — brother against brother, neighbor against neighbor, the country tearing itself apart along the seam of its original contradiction. The Civil War was not a clean moral triumph. It was horrific, and its aftermath was a century of Jim Crow brutality that made a mockery of the victory. But the country that enslaved people also bled to free them. That tension — between our worst impulses and our stated ideals — is the engine of every step forward America has ever taken.

We have been ugly to immigrants. Every wave that came — the Irish, the Italians, the Chinese, the Eastern Europeans, the Japanese, the Mexicans, the Vietnamese, and every group since — was met with suspicion, hostility, and often violence. Laws were passed to keep them out. Neighborhoods organized to keep them separate. Slurs were invented to keep them small.

And yet. The words are still on the statue in the harbor:

"Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free."

And generation after generation — they came. And built this country. And were built by it.

Here is the thing almost no other nation could say: you can *become* American. You cannot become Japanese, or — for most of their history — French or German, in the same way. Those identities were rooted in blood and soil: in ancestry, in the long shared memory of one people on one piece of ground. American identity was rooted in something else entirely. A *proposition*. An idea you could walk up to and join.

And look at the pull of that idea — because this is the remarkable part.

Every single group that came was hated first. The Irish were filth. The Italians were criminals. The Chinese were barred by an actual federal law with their name on it. The Eastern Europeans, the Japanese, the Vietnamese — each wave met the same wall of suspicion and slurs and locked doors.

And the idea won anyway. Every time.

One generation off the boat they were the enemy. Two or three generations on, their grandchildren were just Americans — running for office, coaching Little League, indistinguishable in the crowd. The hatred was loud, but the proposition was stronger. It kept reaching out and pulling people in, dragging the country toward its own stated ideal even as parts of the country dug in their heels. That is not a small thing. That is the most powerful idea in the modern world, doing its slow, stubborn work against real resistance — and winning.

And here is what should make any American sit up:

The idea was so strong it outran us.

The blood-and-soil nations of the old world — the very ones where you supposedly could never truly *belong* — spent the last several generations moving toward exactly the model America invented. Belonging by participation. By shared commitment. By the

proposition, not the bloodline. They watched what we built, and they built their own versions of it.

That is the real measure of American greatness. Not the size of the army. Not the reach of the carrier groups. The *idea* — and the fact that we didn't keep it locked inside our own borders. We sent it out into the world. Our culture, our films, our music, our restless argument about what people are owed and what they owe each other, our insistence that ordinary people could govern themselves — it traveled. And where it landed, it took root.

The thing that made America exceptional was never that we hoarded our greatness. It was that we *offered* it. And the most valuable thing we ever had to offer was not the weapons or the wealth.

It was the ethics.

The idea that power should answer to something higher than force, higher than money — that it should answer to the principles we choose, together, about how human beings ought to be treated. That is what the world reached for when it reached for us.

It is also, exactly, the idea this book is built on.

Etharchy.

When World War II ended and half the world lay in rubble, America could have done what every previous great power had done with defeated enemies: extract, dominate, exploit. Strip the factories. Annex the territory. Bleed the losers for generations, the way the victors of the *first* World War had bled Germany — and watched that humiliation curdle straight into the next war.

We did the opposite. We built the Marshall Plan and spent billions rebuilding the economies of the nations we had just defeated. We helped write constitutions for Germany and Japan — constitutions deliberately designed to prevent the concentration of power that had produced the catastrophe in the first place. We stood up the institutions meant to replace the old logic of conquest with something better: the United

Nations, NATO, a whole architecture built so that the next dispute might be settled across a table instead of across a battlefield.

No empire in history had ever done that with the people it defeated. We rebuilt our enemies into friends. On purpose.

And then we did something stranger still. We stayed.

Every empire in history that ever won a war did one of two things afterward: it occupied what it conquered and bled it, or it went home and let the map sort itself out. America did neither. We picked up something heavy and just... kept holding it.

Call it the shield.

After the war, America built the most powerful military the world had ever seen — and then, instead of using it the old way, mostly used it to hold an umbrella over everyone else. The Navy took ownership of the oceans. Not to plunder them — to keep them open. Any country's cargo ship, friend or former enemy, could sail from any port to any other port and reasonably expect to arrive, because the United States Navy had quietly made the sea lanes safe and kept them that way, year after year, decade after decade, at staggering expense.

Think about what that one fact made possible.

Trade exploded, because trade could finally count on getting where it was going. And the countries living under that shield got to do something they had never been able to do in all of human history: they got to stop spending their treasure on armies.

Look at Germany. Look at Japan. Look at most of Western Europe. For seventy years they ran small militaries — because they didn't need big ones. America was the shield. And all the money they *didn't* have to pour into tanks and warships and standing armies, they poured into their own people instead. Healthcare for everyone. Real pensions. Trains that run on time. Six weeks of vacation. College without a lifetime of debt.

The social safety nets that Americans look at with envy were built, in part, with money those countries saved by standing under an umbrella America was holding.

That was the deal, even if nobody ever wrote it down. We carry the shield. You build the peace underneath it. And for the longest stretch in modern history, there was no great war between the great powers — no continent-swallowing catastrophe of the kind that had come, like clockwork, every few generations for a thousand years.

It held. And the world that grew up underneath it — safer, richer, freer than the world that came before — is the world most of us were born into and assumed was simply normal.

It was not normal. It was held up. On purpose. By somebody carrying something heavy.

The GI Bill sent a generation of working-class men to college who would never otherwise have gone, and created the largest expansion of the middle class in human history. The interstate highway system connected a continent. The Apollo program put human beings on the moon — not because it was easy, as Kennedy said, but because it was hard, and we wanted to show the world what free people could accomplish when they decided to.

Civil Rights. Women's suffrage. Labor protections. Environmental legislation that cleaned rivers that had literally been catching fire. These were not gifts from the powerful — they were ordinary people grabbing the founding documents and saying: *you wrote this. Now live up to it.* And, eventually, the country did.

That mechanism — ordinary people, founding documents, demanding the gap be closed — is the most important thing America ever invented. More important than the Constitution itself. Because the Constitution is just paper. That mechanism is *alive*.

The Bad

For every step forward, there has been a countermove. Documented. Deliberate. Financed.

The railroad barons of the 1860s and 70s received 170 million acres of public land — larger than the state of Texas — as a gift from the federal government. This was the original corporate welfare, and it created the first generation of companies too powerful to regulate. The template for everything that followed.

The 14th Amendment was written in 1868 to guarantee citizenship and equal protection to freed slaves. Within a few decades it was being used, more than anything else, to protect corporations. The vehicle was a single case: *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad*, in 1886.

Here's the part that should stop you cold. The Supreme Court never actually ruled that corporations are "persons" under the 14th Amendment. The decision itself was about a narrow tax dispute over railroad fences. The personhood language showed up in the *headnote* — the summary written by the court's reporter, a man named J.C. Bancroft Davis, who happened to be a former railroad company president. A headnote has no legal force at all. It's a convenience for busy lawyers, like the summary on the back of a book.

Davis may have meant nothing sinister by it. The Chief Justice had made an offhand remark before argument, Davis wrote it into his summary, and the Justices let it stand. No grand conspiracy required at the moment of creation.

The weaponizing came after.

Because once that line existed — a line with no legal authority, attached to a case that decided nothing of the kind — lawyers for the largest corporations in America began to *use* it. They cited the headnote. Then they cited the cases that cited the headnote. Brick by brick, decade by decade, deliberately, they built a doctrine of corporate personhood on top of a note that was never supposed to carry any weight at all. An amendment written to free enslaved people was turned, over the span of a century, into the legal shelter of the corporation — and the foundation of the whole structure was a summary a railroad man jotted down in 1886.

Read that again slowly.

That is not paranoia. That is the historical record. You can look up the letters

When workers organized, the corporations fought back with force — often literal, armed force. This is the part of American history that gets quietly dropped from the high school curriculum.

Throughout the late 1800s and early 1900s, large companies maintained what were effectively private armies. The most famous was the Pinkerton National Detective Agency — a firm that corporations hired to infiltrate unions, break strikes, and when it came to it, shoot strikers. At the Homestead steel strike of 1892, Pinkerton agents and striking workers fought a pitched gun battle that left men dead on both sides. The Pinkertons weren't the only such outfit. They were one of several — private, for-hire, armed, and answerable to whoever signed the check.

Then there was Ludlow.

In 1913, coal miners working for the Colorado Fuel & Iron Company — owned by John D. Rockefeller Jr., the richest family in America — went on strike over starvation wages and lethal working conditions. The company evicted them from their company-owned homes. Twelve hundred miners and their families spent the winter in a tent colony.

Rockefeller's company hired a private security firm — the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, cut from the same cloth as the Pinkertons — and armed three hundred of them. They harassed the camp for months. They mounted a machine gun on an armored car and drove it past the tents, spraying fire, until the miners dug pits beneath the tent floors to shield their children from the bullets. The miners named that car the Death Special.

When even that failed to break the strike, the company got the governor to call out the Colorado National Guard. And here is the detail that matters most: Rockefeller paid the Guardsmen's wages.

Sit with that. The *National Guard* — soldiers of the state, wearing the uniform of the public — were on a private payroll. The line between the government's army and one man's hired muscle didn't just blur. It disappeared.

On April 20, 1914, the Guard and company forces opened fire on the tent colony and set it ablaze. When the smoke cleared, some two dozen people were dead. Eleven of them were children, suffocated in a pit beneath a burning tent where their mothers had hidden them to keep them safe.

This happened in America. To Americans. Carried out by a private army and a public one that had become impossible to tell apart — both serving the interests of a single man who, asked later whether he knew his workers had been living in tents through a Colorado winter, said he could not say.

The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 was passed to great fanfare as trust-busting legislation. In its early decades it was used more aggressively against labor unions than against the corporate monopolies it was supposedly designed to break.

In 1971, a corporate lawyer named Lewis Powell — shortly before being appointed to the Supreme Court by Richard Nixon — wrote a secret memorandum to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. It was a declaration of class war, written down and filed:

Corporations must mobilize politically. Fund think tanks to shape intellectual discourse. Influence universities. Capture the courts. Fight back against consumer and environmental movements. This is not a short-term project. Think in decades.

The Powell Memo was executed with remarkable discipline over the following fifty years. The think tanks were funded. The universities were influenced. The courts were captured. The regulations were dismantled. And the results are visible in every economic indicator that measures the distance between the top and everyone else.

And the machine did not stop at the water's edge.

Remember the institutions we built after the war — the ones meant to replace the old logic of conquest with something better, to settle disputes across a table instead of a

battlefield. The World Bank. The International Monetary Fund. Founded in idealism. Funded, in large part, by the USA.

By the 1980s they were being used for something else.

When a wave of poor nations across Africa, Asia, and Latin America fell into debt they could not pay, the IMF and World Bank arrived with rescue loans — but the loans came with conditions. Cut public spending. Gut the health budget. Gut the schools. Sell off whatever the state owned — the water system, the power company, the railroads — to private buyers, often foreign ones. End the subsidies that kept bread affordable. Open your markets to outside capital, and let it come and go as it pleases.

The official name was Structural Adjustment. The honest name was a demand: dismantle the protections your people depend on, or get no help at all.

The results were as predictable as gravity. In Kenya, the share of people living in poverty climbed from about a third in the early 1980s to more than half by the end of the 1990s. In Jordan, when the bread subsidies were cut on the IMF's instruction, there were riots. Across dozens of countries the same pattern repeated: the schools emptied, the clinics closed, the public wealth was sold for parts, and the poorest people paid the steepest price.

And here is the part that should sound familiar by now. A central reason the United States pushed these programs so hard was to make sure those nations kept paying their debts — debts owed largely to Wall Street banks. The same move you have already watched play out at home: when the powerful make a bad bet, the public is made to cover it. We simply ran the play on a planetary scale.

The institutions we founded to lift the world up had been quietly turned into instruments for holding much of it down.

In 1987, Reagan's FCC eliminated the Fairness Doctrine — the requirement that broadcasters present controversial issues in a balanced way. Within months, Rush Limbaugh's national syndication launched. A decade later, Fox News. The infrastructure

of partisan tribal media was built on the rubble of a single regulatory decision that most Americans have never heard of.

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled in *Citizens United* that corporations have First Amendment rights to political speech and that spending money on elections is a form of protected expression. The majority opinion was built on decades of legal precedent laid quietly, brick by brick, going back to that railroad executive's footnote in 1886.

None of this was hidden. All of it was documented. The playbook has been sitting in plain sight for anyone willing to read it.

The Ugly

Then there are the things that don't fit neatly into "bad policy" or "captured institutions." The things that sit heavier.

Slavery. For more than two hundred years before the United States declared its independence, and for nearly ninety years after it, human beings were held as legal property on this continent. Men, women, and children — taken from Africa, transported across the Atlantic in conditions of deliberate brutality, and put to work for nothing, for generations, with no recourse and no horizon. The cotton, the tobacco, the sugar — the foundational wealth of the American economy was built by people who were considered by law to be things, not people. The same men who wrote "all men are created equal" owned human beings. That is not a contradiction that can be resolved with clever argument. It simply has to be held.

The genocide of the First Nations peoples of this continent — the hundreds of distinct nations, languages, and civilizations that existed here long before European arrival — was not a side effect of westward expansion. It was the *method*. Deliberate displacement, deliberate starvation, deliberate destruction of language and culture and family structure. Children were taken from their families and placed in government boarding schools specifically designed to erase their identity — the explicit goal, stated plainly by the system's architects, was to "kill the Indian, save the man." The Trail of Tears — the forced march of the Cherokee people from their ancestral lands in the 1830s — happened after the Supreme Court ruled in their favor. President Andrew Jackson

looked at the ruling and said, in effect: make me. A president of the United States openly defied the Supreme Court to complete an ethnic cleansing. The court did nothing.

The internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. In 1942, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States government ordered the forced removal of everyone of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast — one hundred and twenty thousand people, two thirds of them American citizens born on American soil — from their homes and into prison camps in the desert. They lost their houses, their businesses, their savings. They were imprisoned without charge, without trial, and without evidence of any wrongdoing beyond their ancestry. The Supreme Court upheld it. German Americans and Italian Americans — whose ancestral nations were also at war with the United States — were not interned. It wasn't overturned. It was apologized for, decades later, with a small check.

For nearly a century after the formal end of slavery, a system of laws — known as Jim Crow, named after a racist caricature — enforced rigid racial segregation across the American South and in practice across much of the rest of the country. Black Americans were legally barred from the same schools, restaurants, hotels, hospitals, water fountains, and voting booths as white Americans. The separation was enforced not just by law but by economic terror and physical violence. Lynchings — the extrajudicial murder of Black Americans by white mobs — were public events, sometimes advertised in advance in local newspapers, sometimes photographed and made into postcards that people mailed to each other. More than four thousand documented cases between the end of Reconstruction and 1950. This was not the fringe. This was the system.

And then there are the people who were here first — and were made foreign anyway.

When the United States took the northern half of Mexico in 1848, it did not take an empty land. It took towns that had been standing for over a century — San Antonio, Laredo, Goliad — full of families who had been there for generations before there was a Texas, let alone a United States. They did not cross any border. The border crossed them. One day they were Mexican; the next, by treaty, they were American citizens, with their language and their property formally guaranteed.

The guarantee did not hold. Their land slipped away through debt and intimidation and the slow grinding pressure of being outnumbered. Their votes were thinned by rules written to thin them. And their belonging — the thing the treaty promised — was quietly revoked in practice, over and over, by people who had arrived after them.

In 1878, when the Texas legislature debated forcing all laws to be printed in English only, the people who would be cut off objected: the treaty promised us we could read the laws we live under. The supporters of the English-only rule had a one-word answer for families who had been on that soil for a hundred and fifty years. They called them foreigners.

Someone on the floor asked the question that still hangs in the air today: *Do you call the native population of this state foreigners?*

They lost the vote.

And the pattern they lost it to never went away. The test of who counts as American has rarely been how long you have been here, or what you have built, or what you have given. It has been something quieter and uglier — whether you look and sound like the people who hold the power to decide. The proposition said anyone could join. The practice kept a filter on the door. And the filter is not a relic. It is running right now, today, on people whose families were here before the flag was.

And then there is the shield itself — turned around.

In the Good, we held an umbrella over the world: the Navy keeping the sea lanes open, the threat of American force standing between smaller nations and the wars that used to swallow them. That was real. But the same hand that shielded could also strike — and when it struck, it did not always strike tyrants. Often it struck the elected.

The imperial adventures. The Philippines, acquired after the Spanish-American War of 1898, were "pacified" in a brutal counterinsurgency that killed hundreds of thousands of Filipinos. Guatemala, 1954: the CIA overthrew an elected democratic government because it threatened the profits of the United Fruit Company, a U.S. corporation. Iran,

1953: the CIA overthrew an elected democratic government because it threatened British oil interests. Chile, 1973: the CIA helped overthrow an elected democratic government, ushering in a military dictatorship that tortured and murdered thousands of its own citizens. But Chile was more than a coup. It became a laboratory. The economists who took over Pinochet's economy — a group trained at the University of Chicago and known as the "Chicago Boys" — used the dictatorship as a chance to impose, by force, a set of free-market ideas that no democracy would have voted for: gut public spending, privatize everything, break the unions, replace pensions with private accounts. Milton Friedman himself flew down to advise. What could not be done to a free people was done to an unfree one — and the results were later sold back to the United States and Britain as a model worth copying. Vietnam: fifty eight thousand Americans dead and an estimated two million Vietnamese, in a war prosecuted on the basis of a fabricated incident and sustained by deliberate deception of the American public by its own government. Iraq, 2003: launched on the basis of weapons of mass destruction that did not exist — and the administration knew the case was thin even as it made it. Its own internal memos found little evidence linking Saddam Hussein to al-Qaeda, yet the connection was asserted to a frightened public again and again until most Americans believed it.

So if not the weapons, why?

There was no single reason. There was a stack of them. A circle of Washington hawks had wanted Saddam gone for years, as part of a grander vision of unchallengeable American dominance — and the shock of 9/11 gave them the opening to act on it. There was the raw demonstration of power: after being struck at home, the United States would show the world what happened to anyone who defied it. There was oil — not in the cartoon sense of seizing the wells, but in the older strategic sense of controlling the most important region on the energy map. And there was profit. The reconstruction of a country you have just bombed flat is worth tens of billions of dollars, and the companies best positioned to collect — Halliburton chief among them, until recently run by the sitting Vice President — collected exactly as much as you would expect.

Notice the pattern. The men who beat the drum loudest for the war were, with remarkable consistency, the men who stood to gain the most from it — in power, in standing, or in money. The bill came due elsewhere: roughly four thousand five hundred American dead, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, a region thrown into a chaos it has still not climbed out of, and a generation of veterans we are still failing to care for.

That is the recurring shape of it. Sometimes a war is driven by a genuine threat. More often, when you trace it back, the threat turns out to have been the costume — and underneath it was the oldest motive there is: power, and the money that buys more of it.

These are not footnotes. They are not things that happened and were corrected and can now be set aside. They are the *other* half of the ledger — and any honest accounting of America has to hold both halves at the same time.

The good was real. The bad was real. The ugly was real.

And they are not in tension with each other. They are the same country, the same people, the same ongoing argument about what the founding documents actually mean and who they actually cover.

One thing decides which way that argument breaks. Ethics become law — law is just ethics with teeth — and our laws have been captured: bent to serve the few while still speaking the language of serving everyone. When the law answered to the people, we built the good. When it was captured, we built the ugly.

The problem was never that we strayed from good laws. The problem is who the laws now serve. And laws written by people can be rewritten by people — which is what the rest of this book is about.

Etharchy.

We Have Been Here Before

Mark Twain named the era he lived in the Gilded Age — gilded meaning gold on the surface, rot underneath. And he was *furious*. Not politely concerned. Not academically troubled. Furious.

The Gilded Age of the late 19th century is not ancient history. It is a mirror.

Rockefeller controlling oil. Carnegie controlling steel. Vanderbilt controlling railroads. JP Morgan controlling money itself. These weren't villains from central casting — they were brilliant, driven men who simply followed the vile maxim to its logical conclusion. Monopolize everything. Suppress wages. Buy politicians. Control the narrative. It worked spectacularly.

And the parallels to today are almost embarrassingly direct:

Rockefeller's Standard Oil controlling energy markets. Today's fossil fuel companies funding climate denial while controlling energy policy. Carnegie's steel monopoly controlling the price of the material civilization was built from. Today's platform monopolies — controlling search, controlling social media, controlling commerce, controlling the infrastructure of the information economy. Company towns, where workers were paid in scrip they could only spend at the company store. Today's gig economy, where workers bear all the risk and own none of the upside. Senators who voted however the railroad barons needed them to vote. Politicians today who vote however Citizens United-funded super PACs need them to vote.

The costume changes. The mechanism doesn't.

And then — as it always has when the pressure builds past a certain point — something happened.

Ordinary people grabbed the founding documents and started making noise. Upton Sinclair wrote *The Jungle* and forced the Pure Food and Drug Act into existence. Ida Tarbell spent years documenting Rockefeller's tactics and broke Standard Oil into public consciousness. Labor organizers died for the right to an eight-hour workday. Women marched for decades for the right to vote. Theodore Roosevelt — a Republican, worth noting — used the Sherman Antitrust Act to actually bust trusts.

The experiment lurched forward. Imperfectly. Painfully. Forward.

The Hundred-Year Echo

Here is where we must pause and notice something that history does not always make convenient to notice:

We have been in this exact political moment before. One hundred years ago. Almost to the decade.

The 1920s: Post-war exhaustion. Why did we just bleed for Europe? Isolationism as the dominant political mood. Economic nationalism — the Smoot-Hawley tariff, shutting the world out. Immigration restriction acts in 1921 and 1924, essentially closing the door. The Ku Klux Klan at peak membership — not thousands, *millions* of members, marching openly in American cities, including Washington D.C. Wealth concentration at its apex. President Coolidge announcing that "the business of America is business."

And today: Post-war exhaustion. Why did we just bleed for Iraq and Afghanistan? Isolationism as the dominant political mood. Economic nationalism — tariffs, shutting the world out. Immigration restriction. White nationalist movements in the open. Wealth concentration at its highest point since the 1920s.

The sentiment underneath all of this — *America should prioritize Americans* — is not wrong. That is the thing we must say clearly and mean. Of course America should prioritize its citizens. Every nation should prioritize its citizens. That is what nations are *for*.

The *method* is catastrophically wrong. Every time. Without exception.

You cannot be strong at home if the world burns. That is not idealism. That is physics.

When the world destabilizes, trade routes collapse. Energy prices spike. Refugee crises overwhelm neighbors and eventually your own borders. Authoritarian powers fill the vacuum you left. And eventually — always, eventually — it arrives on your doorstep anyway. The isolationist never actually gets isolation. They get a worse war, later, at higher cost.

World War I: America stayed out as long as it could. Then the Lusitania. Then the Zimmermann Telegram. Then we went anyway — into a war that was already catastrophic.

World War II: The America First movement was powerful. Charles Lindbergh — beloved national hero, the man who had flown solo across the Atlantic — argued openly that America should stay out. Let Europe sort itself. Then Pearl Harbor. Then we went anyway — into a war that had by then killed tens of millions, and out of which we emerged having to rebuild the entire world from rubble.

The 1920s isolationism did not protect America. It helped create the conditions for the Great Depression and then World War II. And in between — in the Weimar Republic, in the economic catastrophe that followed — people reached for whatever was ready. Whatever was organized. Whatever had answers, however monstrous.

There was no viable democratic framework ready to grab.

We know how that ended.

What "Great" Actually Means

When someone says "make America great again," the feeling underneath it is legitimate. Something was lost. Something real. Something that mattered.

They're not wrong about that.

There was a time when America was greater — for more of its people — than it is today. That is not nostalgia. That is data.

In the 1950s and early 1960s: union membership at its peak, representing a third of the workforce. Single-income families could buy a house. A factory worker could raise children, own a car, take a vacation, and retire with dignity. The CEO-to-worker pay ratio was roughly 20 to 1. The top marginal income tax rate was 91 percent — under Dwight D. Eisenhower, a Republican and a five-star general. Social mobility was real and measurable. The American Dream was not a punchline.

What the "great again" sentiment gets wrong is not the longing. It's the diagnosis.

What was lost was not lost because of immigrants. Not because of globalists or coastal elites or a shadowy deep state. It was lost because of a deliberate, documented, systematic dismantling — the Powell Memo, the union busting, the Fairness Doctrine

repeal, Citizens United, the pension-to-401k conversion, the offshoring, the regulatory capture — executed over fifty years with remarkable discipline by people who understood exactly what they were doing.

The anger is correct. The diagnosis is wrong.

And someone — several someones, with considerable resources and a fifty-year plan — worked very hard to make sure the anger got aimed sideways, at neighbors and immigrants and people of different colors and religions, rather than upward at the machinery that actually took the thing people are mourning.

That is the division machine. And it is the subject of the next chapter.

Churchill Was Right

Winston Churchill — or someone wise enough that we gave him the credit — once observed that Americans can always be counted on to do the right thing, after they have exhausted every other option.

That's us. That has always been us.

We exhaust every option. We make every mistake. We fight about it loudly and publicly and sometimes at great cost. We go through the isolationism and the nativism and the gilded rot and the captured courts and the stolen wages. We let the pressure build past the point where reasonable people would have acted.

And then, eventually, we do the right thing.

The labor movement. The New Deal. The GI Bill. Civil Rights. The Clean Air Act. The arc bending, as King said, toward justice — not automatically, not inevitably, but because ordinary people kept grabbing the founding documents and saying: *you wrote this. Now live up to it.*

We have not lost our soul. We have lost our way. There is a difference. The blueprint is still in the founding documents, in the amendments, in the blood and argument and sacrifice of everyone who ever demanded the gap between promise and reality be closed.

And we are overdue.

The storm may already be in motion. The catastrophe may not wait for us to be ready.
But the framework exists now — drafted, complete, waiting.

When people start reaching, this needs to be what they find.

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The masters of mankind have always had a vile maxim: all for ourselves and nothing for anyone else. Democracy-Next is the first system built from the ground up to make that maxim impossible. Not because anyone is certain it will succeed. Because we all know what happens when the storm comes and there is nothing ready to grab.

Chapter Two: The Masters of Mankind

Who They Are, How They Operate, and When They Declared War

The Machine Has Names

It would be convenient if the mechanism described in Chapter One were the product of impersonal historical forces. Market dynamics. Structural inevitabilities. The natural

tendency of complex systems toward entropy. If it were nobody's fault in particular then nobody could be held responsible and nothing could be done differently.

It is not impersonal. It is not inevitable. And it is not nobody's fault.

Adam Smith — the economist most frequently cited to justify the very system he warned against — identified the engine clearly in 1776. He called them the masters of mankind. The merchants and manufacturers of his era who used their economic power to shape policy in their favor, to suppress wages, to eliminate competition, and to ensure that the rules of the game were written by and for the people who already held the most chips.

The specific names change with each generation. The mechanism never does.

Rockefeller. Carnegie. Morgan. Vanderbilt. Their Gilded Age successors in the early twentieth century. And today — a different set of names, different industries, different public personas, the same fundamental operation: concentrate capital, suppress labor, manufacture justification, capture the institutions that might otherwise constrain you.

This chapter is about how that operation works. Not in the abstract. In the specific, documented, paper-trailed detail of what actually happened — and is happening — in America.

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The Mechanism

The mechanism has four components that have remained essentially constant across centuries and civilizations.

Concentrate capital. The first move is always accumulation. Not merely earning — accumulating at a scale that changes the relationship between the accumulator and everyone else. Standard Oil didn't just make John D. Rockefeller wealthy. It gave him the ability to set prices for an entire economy, to make or break competing businesses, to determine which railroads survived and which didn't, to effectively control the fuel that powered American industry. At sufficient scale, private wealth becomes private power. Power that operates outside democratic accountability because it was never subject to democratic authorization.

Suppress labor. The second move is always the same: ensure that the people who do the work receive as little as possible of the value they create. The specific tools change — in Rockefeller's era it was the Pinkertons and company towns and scrip wages. In our era it is union busting and gig reclassification and the AI threat. But the goal is identical: keep the floor as low as possible, keep workers divided and competing against each other rather than organizing collectively, and capture as much of the value created by human labor as possible for capital rather than labor.

Manufacture justification. The third move is the most sophisticated and the most important. Naked power is unstable — it generates resistance. Power that has convinced its subjects that it is natural, inevitable, and just is far more durable. So the masters of mankind have always invested heavily in the intellectual and cultural infrastructure that manufactures consent. The think tanks that produce academic-sounding arguments for why unions are bad for workers. The media ecosystems that convince working class people that their real enemies are other working class people of a different color or background. The economic theories that explain, with great mathematical sophistication, why the current distribution of wealth is the optimal and natural outcome of free markets rather than the result of deliberate policy choices. The church and civic organizations that moralize individual virtue while ignoring systemic vice.

Capture the institutions. The fourth move is the one that makes all the others durable. Laws that limit power can be changed. Regulations that constrain accumulation can be weakened. Courts that protect workers can be stocked with judges who interpret those protections away. Regulatory agencies that oversee industry can be staffed by industry insiders who regulate in industry's interest. Elections that might produce representatives of working people can be flooded with money that shapes who runs, who wins, and what they do once in office. The capture of institutions is not corruption in the crude sense of brown envelopes changing hands — though that exists too. It is something more structural: the colonization of public power by private interest, conducted legally, gradually, and with enough patience that each individual step seems reasonable even as the cumulative effect is the elimination of meaningful democratic accountability.

These four moves, executed in sequence and maintained indefinitely, produce the world described in Chapter One. Not as an accident. Not as an inevitability. As the intended outcome of deliberate, sustained, well-financed effort.

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They Fund Both Sides

Here is the part that is hardest for people to accept — because it requires abandoning the comfortable framework of partisan politics that the machine itself has worked so hard to install.

The masters of mankind fund both sides.

Not always. Not every donor. Not in perfect symmetry. But the concentrated wealth that shapes American politics does not have a single partisan home because concentrated wealth's primary interest is not in which party wins. It is in the game continuing. In the argument staying horizontal — us versus us — rather than going vertical — us versus them. In ensuring that whichever party holds power, the fundamental architecture of concentrated wealth remains intact and the people with the most to protect from genuine democratic accountability remain protected.

The Sheldon Adelsons of the world fund Republican candidates who cut taxes on the wealthy and appoint judges who protect corporate interests. The George Soros of the world fund Democratic candidates and causes that expand civil rights and social programs — while the financial sector that made Soros his fortune remains largely unreformed, the trade deals that hollowed out American manufacturing proceed, and the fundamental architecture of concentrated wealth stays intact.

Different jerseys. Same owner's box.

This is not a statement of false equivalence. The parties are not identical. The specific harms done by each are different in ways that matter enormously to real people's lives. Healthcare access. Reproductive rights. Environmental protection. Immigration policy. These are not trivial differences and the people who bear the costs of those differences are real people with real lives.

But on the fundamental question — who controls the economic architecture, who owns the floor, who writes the rules — the record of both parties over the past fifty years tells a consistent story. The Democratic Party that deregulated the financial industry and signed the trade deals that exported American manufacturing. The Republican Party that cut taxes on the wealthy and broke the unions. Both parties that took the money, served the donors, and left working people with the rhetoric of care and the reality of betrayal.

The most honest political statement that can be made in contemporary America is this: the current Republican leadership is doing genuine and immediate harm to vulnerable people AND the Democratic Party establishment has systematically failed the working class it claims to represent.

That statement gets attacked from both sides simultaneously.

Which is proof that it's pointing at the right ceiling.

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The Apex

To understand the counter-mobilization — the deliberate, funded, systematic effort to dismantle the postwar middle class prosperity described in Chapter One — you have to understand what it was responding to.

The 1960s represented the American experiment trending closer to its stated ideals than at any point since the founding. Not because the problems of the previous century had been solved — they hadn't — but because ordinary people had successfully used the founding documents to force the gap between promise and reality to close, measurably, in ways that threatened the economic architecture that had always benefited from that gap.

Union membership was at its historic peak. A third of American workers had collective bargaining power. The Civil Rights Act had passed. The Voting Rights Act had passed. Medicare and Medicaid had been created. The Great Society programs were expanding the social safety net. Environmental protection legislation was being enacted. Consumer

protection laws were being passed. The women's movement was gaining momentum. The anti-war movement was challenging the imperial adventures that served corporate interests dressed in national security costumes.

The gap was closing. Too fast. Too much. In too many directions simultaneously.

The masters of mankind noticed.

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The Declaration of War

On August 23rd, 1971, a corporate lawyer named Lewis F. Powell Jr. sent a confidential memorandum to the United States Chamber of Commerce. The memo was titled "Attack on American Free Enterprise System." Two months later, Richard Nixon appointed Powell to the Supreme Court of the United States.

The Powell Memo is the clearest, most documented starting gun of the modern counter-mobilization. It is not a conspiracy theory. It is a historical document, now declassified, that can be read by anyone.

Powell's argument was blunt: American business had failed to defend itself politically. The free enterprise system was under attack from consumer advocates, environmental groups, labor organizers, and academics who had shifted the intellectual and cultural climate against corporate power. Business needed to fight back — not through individual companies pursuing their narrow interests but through a coordinated, long-term, well-funded mobilization of the entire corporate sector.

The prescription was specific and comprehensive:

Fund think tanks to produce intellectual ammunition — academic-seeming arguments for free market ideology that could counter the growing influence of consumer and labor advocates. The Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, the American Enterprise Institute — all funded and expanded in the years following the Powell Memo.

Infiltrate universities — fund business school programs, endow chairs, sponsor research, shape the intellectual environment in which the next generation of

economists, lawyers, and policymakers would be trained. The Chicago School of Economics and its gospel of deregulation and market fundamentalism became the dominant intellectual framework in American economic policy over the following three decades.

Capture the courts — invest in the legal infrastructure to produce judges and legal arguments that would interpret the Constitution in ways favorable to corporate interests. The Federalist Society, founded in 1982, became the primary pipeline for conservative and corporate-friendly judges at every level of the federal judiciary. Every Supreme Court justice appointed by Republican presidents from Reagan onward has been a Federalist Society member or affiliate.

Dominate the media — fund media outlets, cultivate friendly journalists, and develop the communications infrastructure to shape public opinion. The Fairness Doctrine, eliminated in 1987, had required broadcasters to present both sides of controversial issues. Its elimination opened the door to the partisan media ecosystem that followed.

Engage in politics — business must become politically active at a scale it had never previously attempted, funding candidates, shaping legislation, and making clear to elected officials that corporate support was contingent on corporate-friendly policy.

Powell was not describing what was happening. He was prescribing what should happen. And over the following fifty years, with remarkable discipline and patience, the corporate sector executed his prescription.

The results are visible in every economic indicator that measures the distance between the top and everyone else. In the decline of union membership from thirty five percent to six percent in the private sector. In the CEO-to-worker pay ratio expanding from twenty-to-one to four hundred-to-one. In the transformation of the tax code from a progressive instrument that funded public investment into a mechanism for redistributing wealth upward. In the capture of regulatory agencies by the industries they were supposed to regulate. In the Supreme Court decisions — culminating in *Citizens United* — that turned the legal architecture of democracy into a mechanism for the exercise of private economic power.

The Powell Memo was a declaration of class war. Written down. Filed. And executed.

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Keeping It Horizontal

The most important tactical insight in the counter-mobilization was not the think tanks or the court capture or the media strategy. Those were the infrastructure. The most important tactical insight was this:

The conversation must always stay horizontal.

Horizontal means: us versus us. Workers versus immigrants. White working class versus Black working class. Religious conservatives versus secular progressives. Rural communities versus urban communities. Men versus women. Each group's legitimate grievances redirected toward other groups with legitimate grievances, while the people actually responsible for those grievances watch from a comfortable distance and continue their work undisturbed.

Vertical means: us versus them. The people at the bottom and the middle looking up and seeing clearly who is actually taking what belongs to them. That conversation — the moment when a white factory worker in Ohio and a Black service worker in Cleveland look at each other and recognize that they have the same enemy and it is not each other — is the conversation the masters of mankind have spent fifty years and billions of dollars preventing.

Every tool in the division machine described in Chapter Six serves this single strategic purpose: keep the conversation horizontal. Keep people angry at each other. Keep the identity conflicts loud enough that the economic conflict stays quiet. Keep the culture wars hot enough that the class war stays cold.

The abortion debate. The immigration debate. The gun debate. The critical race theory debate. The transgender rights debate. Each of these involves real people with real stakes and genuine moral complexity. None of that genuine complexity is being honored by the people who fund and amplify these debates at the scale at which they currently exist in American political life. They are being weaponized. Kept hot. Kept

identity-based. Kept resistant to resolution — because a resolved cultural conflict is a population that might start looking around for what else needs resolving.

The most dangerous thing that could happen to concentrated power in America is not a progressive president or a labor-friendly Congress. Those can be managed — captured, co-opted, or waited out. The most dangerous thing is a coalition of working people across racial, religious, and cultural lines who recognize their shared economic interest and act on it together.

That coalition has almost formed several times in American history. The Populist movement of the 1890s. The labor movement of the 1930s. The Poor People's Campaign of the late 1960s. Each time, the machine found a way to break it — through violence, through co-optation, through redirecting the anger sideways before it could travel upward.

Understanding this is not optional for understanding what this book is proposing. Because every element of the architecture in Part Three is specifically designed to create the conditions under which that coalition can finally form and hold. The civic service program that puts people from different communities to work together toward shared goals. The elimination of corporate money from politics that removes the primary tool of co-optation. The pay ratio cap and a Universal Basic Income that give working people of all backgrounds a shared material interest in the system's success. The justiciable social rights that give everyone — regardless of race, religion, or geography — a common legal claim against the state when it fails them.

The machine has kept the conversation horizontal for fifty years.

It's time to change the subject.

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The vile maxim of the masters of mankind has always been the same: all for ourselves and nothing for anyone else. For fifty years they have executed that maxim with remarkable discipline, patience, and sophistication. The question is not whether we can match their discipline.

The question is whether we can match their patience. Part Two explains what they built. Part Three explains how we dismantle it.

PART TWO

THE PLAYBOOK

"How they did it"

Chapter Three: The "We Can't Afford It" Lie

The Most Effective Weapon Ever Deployed Against Ordinary People

The Money Always Appears

When was the last time you heard a politician say we can't afford a war?

Think about that for a moment. Really think about it.

The United States has been in a state of continuous military engagement for most of the last eighty years. Korea. Vietnam. Grenada. Panama. The Gulf War. Afghanistan — twenty years. Iraq — twice. Syria. Libya. And now Iran. Drone campaigns in countries most Americans couldn't locate on a map. The annual defense budget currently exceeds eight hundred billion dollars. Each of the Navy's eleven carrier strike groups costs approximately twenty six billion dollars to build and billions more to operate annually.

Nobody ever asked how we were going to pay for them.

No senator stood up during the Authorization for Use of Military Force and said "I'd love to support this but we really need to talk about the deficit first." No committee hearing was convened to determine whether the nation could fiscally sustain another decade in Afghanistan. The money appeared. It always appears. Because it always can.

Now ask yourself when was the last time a politician proposed universal healthcare.

How are we going to pay for it?

Free public college.

We simply can't afford it.

School lunch programs for hungry children.

Where does the money come from?

Insulin pricing reform. Childcare subsidies. Housing assistance. Infrastructure that isn't crumbling. Clean water in Flint, Michigan — a crisis that stretched on for years in a country that was simultaneously spending two trillion dollars in Afghanistan.

We'd love to help but the math just doesn't work.

And then there is the argument that has terrified older Americans for decades: Social Security and Medicare are running out of money. The trust fund will be depleted. Benefits will have to be cut. The program your parents paid into their entire working lives — that you have paid into your entire working life — may not be there when you need it.

This argument — that Social Security and Medicare are going broke — has been used to justify every attempt to privatize, reduce, or dismantle the two most successful social programs in American history. Programs that work. Programs that are overwhelmingly popular across party lines. Programs that represent the clearest proof that government can in fact provide reliable, meaningful support to ordinary people when it chooses to.

The math. For hungry children. For elderly people who worked forty years. In the richest nation in the history of human civilization.

The math is not the problem. The math is the excuse.

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When the Money Appeared

In 2008 the global financial system collapsed. Not because of anything working people did — because of deliberate, documented fraud by the largest financial institutions in the country. Mortgages were bundled into securities that the people selling them knew were worthless, then sold to investors they knew were being deceived.

It is worth pausing here to be honest about something. Some of the people who took out mortgages they could not sustain made poor decisions. A balloon mortgage — one that starts with low payments that balloon dramatically after a few years — is a financial instrument that should be understood before signing. Some people borrowed more than their income could support.

But those individuals did not cause a global financial crisis. What caused the crisis was a system specifically engineered to create those borrowers at scale — to find people who didn't fully understand what they were signing, to offer them terms designed to appear

manageable and then become impossible, to package those doomed loans into financial products and sell them around the world while the architects of the scheme collected their bonuses and headed for the exit. The predatory lending was not incidental to the system. It was the product. The person who borrowed more than they could afford was foolish. The people who designed the machinery to manufacture millions of those transactions were criminal.

When it unraveled, millions of ordinary Americans lost their homes, their savings, their jobs, their retirements. The unemployment rate doubled. Families who had done everything right — bought modest homes, made their payments, saved what they could — lost everything because the financial system had been turned into a casino with their lives as chips.

Not one senior banking executive went to prison.

What did happen was this: the federal government deployed approximately seven hundred billion dollars through the Troubled Asset Relief Program — TARP — to stabilize the financial institutions whose fraud had caused the collapse. The Federal Reserve deployed several trillion dollars more in emergency lending. The money appeared within weeks. There were no extended hearings about whether we could afford it. No town halls about the deficit. The decision was made, the money materialized, and the institutions were saved.

The people whose fraud caused the crisis were made whole by the public treasury.

The people whose lives the fraud destroyed received a foreclosure notice.

And then — when someone proposed that perhaps the government should invest in job creation, mortgage relief, or healthcare for the millions of Americans now unemployed — suddenly the deficit mattered again.

That is not a coincidence. That is a pattern.

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How Money Actually Works

So how does a government "find" trillions of dollars for wars and bank bailouts and then claim it cannot afford school lunches? The answer requires understanding something about money that sounds radical until you think about it carefully — and then sounds completely obvious.

The United States government is the sole issuer of the United States dollar. It does not collect taxes and then spend them the way a household earns a paycheck and pays its bills. The comparison to a household budget — which you will hear constantly from politicians arguing against social spending — is not just misleading. It is fundamentally, structurally wrong. A household cannot print dollars. A household cannot set interest rates. A household that runs out of money is in genuine crisis. A government that issues its own currency is in a categorically different situation.

Here is how it actually works, explained the way any small business owner or bookkeeper would recognize immediately:

Every financial transaction has two sides. When the federal government spends money — on a highway, a hospital, a soldier's salary, a tax cut, a bank bailout — that spending is recorded as a debit on the government's ledger. But it is simultaneously a credit on someone else's ledger. The money goes somewhere. It does not evaporate. By the iron laws of double entry accounting, every debit must have a corresponding credit. The books must balance.

This means the national "debt" — the number politicians wave around to frighten people — is by accounting identity the exact same number as the national "credit" held by everyone who received that spending. Dollar for dollar. It has to be. That's not ideology. That's arithmetic.

Which means the question was never "how much debt are we running up." The question was always: *who is receiving the credit on the other side of that ledger?*

And there are really only a few options. The credit goes to working people — through infrastructure, healthcare, education, social programs that build productive capacity and circulate money through the real economy. Or the credit goes to wealthy individuals and corporations — through tax cuts, subsidies, bailouts, and defense contracts that often

park the money in offshore accounts or financial instruments that generate no downstream economic activity. Or it goes overseas, to foreign holders of U.S. Treasury bonds.

That's it. Those are the buckets. The money always goes somewhere. The debate about "the deficit" is really a debate about which bucket it flows into — and the people who benefit most from the current allocation have a very strong interest in ensuring that debate never gets framed that way.

Economists who study this system — a framework sometimes called Modern Monetary Theory, though it is less a theory than a description of how the monetary system actually operates — make the point plainly: the real constraint on government spending is not solvency. A government that issues its own currency cannot run out of that currency. What it can do is create inflation — too many dollars chasing too few goods. That is the genuine constraint. Not "can we afford it" but "will this cause inflation, and if so how do we manage that."

Those are answerable, technical questions. Questions that economists and policymakers navigate constantly when deciding how much to spend on defense. Questions that somehow become unanswerable philosophical impossibilities when the spending would benefit ordinary people.

Stephanie Kelton, one of the clearest voices on this subject, has observed that the attacks on this description of how money works are rarely mathematical. They are political. Because if the public understood that "we can't afford it" describes a choice rather than a constraint — the obvious follow-up question would be: whose choice? And why?

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What Happens When We Actually Invest

We don't have to speculate about what happens when governments invest strategically in people and infrastructure. We have done it. We have the receipts.

The GI Bill — the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 — sent a generation of working class men to college, provided low-cost mortgages, and offered unemployment

insurance to returning veterans. It is estimated to have returned between five and twelve dollars for every dollar invested, through increased tax revenue, reduced social costs, and the economic productivity of an educated, housed, financially stable middle class. It did not cause runaway inflation. It built the greatest middle class expansion in American history. The credit side of that ledger went to working people — and working people spent it back into the economy, which generated the tax base that funded everything that followed.

The Interstate Highway System, launched under Eisenhower in 1956, cost approximately half a trillion dollars in today's money. It transformed American commerce, reduced transportation costs across the entire economy, connected rural communities to markets, and generated returns estimated at six dollars for every dollar spent. The credit went to the American economy broadly — to every business that moved goods, every family that drove to work, every town that gained access to national commerce.

The Apollo program — putting human beings on the moon between 1961 and 1972 — cost roughly two hundred and fifty billion dollars in today's terms. NASA estimates it generated returns of between seven and fourteen dollars per dollar invested, through spinoff technologies, workforce development, and the economic activity generated by the aerospace industry it created. Tang and Velcro are the famous examples. Less famous: the advances in computing, materials science, water purification, and medical imaging that came directly from the investment in getting to the moon.

Strategic investment in people and infrastructure compounds. It generates returns that exceed the original outlay. It expands the tax base that funds future spending. It is not a cost. It is an investment with a measurable, documented, positive return.

Now consider the alternative. A carrier strike group costs twenty six billion dollars to build and billions more annually to operate. It is an extraordinary feat of engineering and in certain circumstances serves genuine national security purposes. But it does not build schools. It does not train nurses. It does not house families, educate children, or create the productive economic activity that generates wealth. It does not return seven dollars for every one spent. The credit on that ledger goes to defense contractors —

companies that, it is worth noting, spend considerable resources ensuring the political conditions that guarantee their next contract.

When we choose to build carrier groups instead of investing in people — and it is always a choice — we are not being fiscally responsible. We are making a value judgment about whose needs matter and whose don't. And we are disguising that value judgment as a mathematical inevitability.

There is nothing mathematically inevitable about hungry children in the richest country on earth.

There is nothing mathematically inevitable about Americans rationing insulin.

There is nothing mathematically inevitable about elderly people who worked forty years wondering whether Social Security will be there when they need it — while the trust fund debate conveniently never extends to asking why the payroll tax that funds Social Security has a cap, meaning a billionaire pays the same Social Security tax as someone earning one hundred and sixty thousand dollars a year, and not a penny more.

There is nothing mathematically inevitable about a generation beginning their adult lives under crushing debt while the financial industry that profits from that debt spends lavishly on the politicians who keep the system intact.

These are not the results of fiscal constraints. They are the results of choices.

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Whose Choice?

"We can't afford it" is the most effective political weapon ever deployed against ordinary people — because it disguises a choice as a fact. It takes what is fundamentally a question of values — *whose needs get met* — and reframes it as a question of mathematics, where the answer is predetermined and the conversation is over before it begins.

The economy is not a force of nature. It is a set of rules. Rules written by people, for people. And rules written by people can be rewritten by people.

Every time you hear "we can't afford it" — ask the accounting question. If this spending is a debit on the government's ledger, whose ledger receives the corresponding credit? If not the people who need healthcare, who? If not the students drowning in debt, who? If not the elderly person who paid in for forty years, who?

The credit always goes somewhere.

Follow it.

The question was never whether we can afford to do better. We demonstrably can. We do it constantly — selectively, for the people with the most power to demand it.

The question is whether we *choose* to.

And that question — *whose choice, and who benefits from keeping it that way* — is what the next chapter is about.

Chapter Four: The Wage Suppression Playbook

Same Play. Different Costume. Every Decade.

What Was Actually Great

There is a deep and genuine irony at the heart of modern American politics that almost nobody says out loud.

The people most loudly demanding that America be made great again — the voters who feel most acutely that something precious was lost, that their parents had something they don't have, that the country took a wrong turn somewhere — are almost universally pointing, when you ask them, at the same era.

The 1950s. The early 1960s. Dad had a good union job at the plant. The family owned a house on one income. The neighborhood was stable. College was affordable. Retirement was secure. The American Dream wasn't a punchline — it was a reasonable expectation for anyone willing to work for it.

That world was real. The grief for it is legitimate. Something genuinely was lost.

And here is the part the people who mock that grief refuse to understand: it was lost for almost everyone. Not just for one group. The factory wage, the single-income house, the secure retirement — those are gone now for the Black family and the white family, the immigrant and the native-born, the city and the small town alike. Whatever that world was, and it was not the same world for everyone in it, the dismantling that came after did not discriminate. It took the floor out from under all of us.

But that world was also unfinished. The prosperity was real — and it did not yet reach everyone. Black Americans were locked out of it by Jim Crow. Women were largely shut out of the professions. Gay Americans were criminalized and forced into hiding. The good union job and the affordable house were real things — they were simply not yet open to every American who deserved them.

And that gap pointed to two possible futures. One was to *widen* the circle — to take the thing that worked and finally open it to everyone it had left out. The other was to let it be torn down for nearly all of us, so that the question of who got to share in it became moot, because there was less and less left to share.

And so — as it always has when the gap between America's stated ideals and its lived reality becomes too wide — people grabbed the founding documents and demanded to be included. The Civil Rights movement. The women's movement. The gay rights movement. The greatest leap forward in democratic inclusion since the founding of the Constitution itself, emerging directly from the tension between the postwar prosperity and who was systematically excluded from it.

The experiment worked. The arc bent. And almost immediately — the counter-mobilization began.

The Powell Memo was written in 1971. The corporate playbook launched almost the moment the gains of the 1960s were secured. That timing is not coincidental. Concentrated power had lost significant ground in a single decade. It was not going to lose quietly.

Here is the full irony that should stop every nostalgic voter cold:

Every single policy that created the world they're mourning — unions, high top marginal taxes, CEO pay constraints, robust federal investment in people and infrastructure — is opposed, actively and consistently, by the political movement that claims to want it back.

Against unions. Against taxing the wealthy. Against regulating CEO compensation. Against federal spending on social programs. Against every structural element of the architecture that built the thing they're grieving.

The nostalgia and the policy positions are in direct, irreconcilable contradiction.

That contradiction did not happen by accident. It was engineered. And the engineering has a name, a timeline, and a paper trail.

The Playbook

What follows is not a conspiracy theory. It is a sequence of documented policy decisions, each one building on the last, each one shifting power and money upward, each one sold to the public under a different label while accomplishing the same fundamental goal: suppressing wages, eliminating worker power, and ensuring that the gains from economic growth flowed to capital rather than labor.

The playbook has been running for fifty years. Here it is, in order.

Move One: Break the Unions

On August 5th, 1981, President Ronald Reagan fired eleven thousand four hundred and fifty nine striking air traffic controllers and banned them from federal employment for life.

The Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization — PATCO — had gone on strike demanding better pay, shorter hours, and improved working conditions in one of the most stressful occupations in the country. Reagan invoked a law prohibiting federal employee strikes, gave them forty eight hours to return to work, and when they didn't, terminated them all.

The signal this sent to every corporate employer in America was immediate and unmistakable: you can break unions now. The federal government will not protect them. Strike and you lose.

Union membership fell sharply in the years following. From roughly thirty five percent of the workforce in the mid 1950s to under twenty percent by the end of the 1980s. Today it stands at approximately ten percent — and in the private sector, where most Americans work, closer to six.

As union membership fell, so did the wage floor for everyone — union and non-union alike. Unions don't just raise wages for their members. They establish a floor. When organized workers at one employer win a living wage, nearby employers have to

compete or lose workers. Remove the union, remove the floor. Wages for everyone drift down.

The nurse who lost overtime protections when her hospital was acquired by a private equity firm. The teacher whose union was defunded by right to work legislation. The warehouse worker whose organizing drive was crushed before it could get off the ground. The autoworker whose plant closed and reopened non-union at half the wage. Different industries, different decades, same direction. Always down.

This was not an unintended consequence. It was the point.

Move Two: Shift the Risk

In 1978 Congress passed the Revenue Act, which included a provision — section 401(k) — that allowed employees to defer a portion of their compensation into tax-advantaged retirement accounts. It was intended as a supplement to existing pension plans, a small additional savings vehicle for higher earners.

What followed was one of the most consequential bait-and-switches in American economic history.

Over the following two decades, corporations systematically eliminated defined benefit pension plans — the kind that guaranteed a specific monthly payment for life regardless of market conditions — and replaced them with 401(k) plans. The language used was empowerment. You're in control of your retirement. You can invest it however you choose. You're not dependent on the company.

What actually changed: the risk moved entirely from the corporation to the worker.

A defined benefit pension is a promise. The company guarantees a specific amount every month for the rest of your life. If the market crashes, the company absorbs the loss. If you live longer than expected, the company keeps paying. The risk belongs to the corporation.

A 401(k) is a bet. You contribute money, the company may or may not match some of it, you invest it in whatever options the plan offers, and when you retire you have whatever the market left you. If the market crashes the year you retire — as it did in 2008, wiping

out trillions in retirement savings for people who had no time left to recover — that is your problem. The corporation has no further obligation.

The switch transferred trillions of dollars of retirement risk from corporate balance sheets onto the backs of individual workers. It was framed as freedom. It was the elimination of a guarantee.

The people who lived through the 1950s and 60s and remember that world fondly? Their parents had pensions. Real ones. The kind you couldn't outlive and the market couldn't take away.

Move Three: Export the Jobs

Through the 1990s and 2000s, the architecture of American trade policy was restructured to make it easier and more profitable to manufacture goods wherever wages were lowest and worker protections were weakest, then sell them back into the American market. The argument was efficiency. Comparative advantage. Lower prices for consumers. And there was some truth in it — consumer goods did get cheaper.

What also got cheaper was American labor. Not because American workers became less productive — they became more productive, consistently, decade after decade. But because the implicit threat was now always present: if you ask for more, we will move this somewhere else. The factory will close. The jobs will go to wherever the wage floor is lowest and environmental regulations are most easily ignored.

Entire American communities were hollowed out. The manufacturing base that had employed generations of working class families — that had provided the economic foundation for postwar middle class prosperity — was systematically dismantled and rebuilt elsewhere. The towns didn't recover. The jobs that replaced them — service sector, retail, gig — paid less, offered fewer benefits, and provided none of the stability that had made the postwar prosperity possible.

The corporations that moved the jobs posted record profits. Their executives received record compensation. The workers whose jobs left received a severance package and a pamphlet about retraining programs that largely didn't work.

Move Four: Import the Pressure

For jobs that couldn't be moved overseas — skilled technical work, engineering, software development — a different tool was deployed: the H-1B visa program.

The H-1B was designed to allow American companies to hire highly skilled foreign workers when qualified American workers were genuinely unavailable. The theory was reasonable. The practice became something else.

The program was systematically used to bring in workers at below-market wages, undercutting the leverage of American workers in the very sectors where wages had remained strongest. The visa ties the worker to the sponsoring employer — meaning they cannot easily leave for a competitor or negotiate aggressively without risking their immigration status. They are, structurally, less powerful than an equivalent American worker in the same role.

The result was downward pressure on wages in exactly the sectors that had maintained middle class compensation through the offshoring era. Workers who might have commanded strong salaries found themselves competing against visa holders offered significantly less — and unable to leave their employer without consequences.

This is not an argument against immigration. Immigrants built this country and continue to enrich it in ways beyond calculation. This is an argument against the deliberate use of a visa program to suppress wages in specific industries — a use that was understood and intended by the corporate interests that lobbied aggressively for the program's expansion.

Move Five: Eliminate the Benefits

The gig economy arrived wrapped in the language of freedom and flexibility. Be your own boss. Set your own hours. You're an independent entrepreneur, not an employee.

What the classification of workers as independent contractors rather than employees actually eliminated: minimum wage protections. Overtime pay. Health insurance contributions. Unemployment insurance. Workers' compensation. Paid sick leave. Retirement contributions. Every benefit and protection that a century of labor

organizing had secured — gone, by reclassifying the employment relationship as something else.

The worker bears all the risk. The platform takes the margin. And because the worker is technically "independent," the corporation has no obligation beyond the per-task payment.

A taxi driver in 1975 might have had a union, a pension, health insurance, and a guaranteed hourly minimum. A rideshare driver today has none of those things — and is told to be grateful for the flexibility.

The gig economy did not emerge spontaneously from technological innovation. It was a legal and lobbying strategy. When California passed a law requiring gig companies to classify their workers as employees, those companies spent over two hundred million dollars — the most expensive ballot initiative in California history at the time — to overturn it. They won. The workers remained contractors.

Two hundred million dollars to ensure workers had no benefits. The return on that investment made complete sense to them.

Move Six: The Newest Threat

Each previous tool suppressed wages by eliminating jobs, moving work to lower-wage environments, removing worker protections, or shifting risk onto individuals. The newest tool works differently — and in some ways more efficiently.

Artificial intelligence is genuinely transformative technology. The capabilities are real. The disruption coming to certain categories of work is real. Nobody serious disputes that.

But here is what the playbook has already understood, and what workers across every industry and wage level have not yet fully absorbed:

You don't have to fully deploy the AI. You just need workers to believe you could.

The credible threat of replacement is enough to reset the negotiating table. The accountant. The paralegal. The graphic designer. The customer service manager. The

writer. The radiologist reading scans. The software developer. The warehouse logistics coordinator. The teacher being told their curriculum can be delivered by an app. Across industries and income levels the message is identical: we have options now that we didn't have before. Don't push too hard.

The wage anchor gets reset lower. Workers across the entire economy accept less because the alternative feels like replacement. And even if the AI capabilities prove less disruptive than advertised in certain domains — even if the bubble deflates — the anchor has already moved. Getting it back requires exactly the kind of collective power that the previous five moves in the playbook were specifically designed to eliminate.

The playbook is remarkably elegant in this way. Each move makes the next move easier. Break the unions so workers cannot organize collectively. Eliminate the pensions so workers are financially precarious and cannot afford to push back. Export the stable jobs so the ones that remain feel precious and fragile. Import wage pressure into the sectors that held on. Strip the benefits so the relationship becomes purely transactional. And then introduce a credible technological threat so that even the transactional relationship feels uncertain.

By the time the sixth move lands, the worker has almost no leverage left. And they are not entirely sure who took it.

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The Costume Changes. The Play Doesn't.

Union busting. Pension elimination. Job export. Visa program manipulation. Gig reclassification. AI threat inflation.

Six moves. Five decades. One consistent result: wages suppressed, worker power eliminated, the gains from productivity and economic growth flowing to capital rather than labor.

Each tool arrived with its own language and its own justification. Breaking the unions was law and order. The pension switch was empowerment. Exporting jobs was free trade

and efficiency. The visa program was filling skills gaps. The gig economy was entrepreneurship and flexibility. AI is innovation and progress.

The costume changes with the decade. The direction never does.

And here is what every worker — at every wage level, in every industry, of every political persuasion — deserves to understand clearly:

Every single one of these moves was opposed by the people and organizations fighting for worker power. And every single one was championed, lobbied for, and financed by the same concentrated corporate interests that simultaneously spent fifty years telling working people that their real enemies are each other.

The people who took the world you're mourning are the ones telling you someone else did.

That mechanism — the deliberate redirection of legitimate anger away from its actual source — is the subject of the next chapter.

It is called the division machine. And understanding it is the key to everything that follows.

Chapter Five: The Division Machine

The Oldest Tool in the Playbook

Bread and Circuses

The division machine is not a modern invention.

The Roman Empire — at its peak the most powerful administrative and military force the ancient world had ever seen — understood something that every concentrated power structure since has quietly internalized: you do not need to make people's lives good. You need to make them too busy fighting each other to notice who is actually picking their pockets.

The Roman strategy was called bread and circuses. Keep the population fed enough not to riot. Keep them entertained enough not to think. And when genuine grievances began to build — as they always did, in a society of vast inequality managed by a tiny elite — redirect that energy. Find an enemy. A neighboring tribe. A religious minority. A political faction. A scapegoat of any convenient description. Make the anger flow sideways, toward whoever is standing next to the aggrieved, rather than upward toward whoever is actually responsible.

And the Romans did not leave this to chance. The poet Juvenal, who coined the phrase around the year 100, was sneering at a public that had once handed out armies and high office and now wanted only two things — cheap grain and a good show. The grain was real: a state dole that fed hundreds of thousands. But the "circuses" were the sharper tool. The chariot races were run by rival factions — the Blues, the Greens, the Reds, the Whites — and the people of Rome did not just watch them. They *belonged* to them, the way people today belong to a sports team, a party or a flag. They brawled over their colors. They rioted over them, sometimes by the thousands. All that passion, all that capacity for rage in a city of staggering inequality — funneled into the stands and aimed at the rival faction. At each other. Never at the palace.

The specific content of the division almost doesn't matter. It just needs to meet three criteria.

It needs to be emotionally activating — something that produces fear, disgust, or outrage rather than calm analysis. Calm analysis is dangerous. Outrage is manageable.

It needs to be identity-based — connected to who people feel they fundamentally are rather than what they think about a specific policy question. Policy positions can be changed by evidence. Identity cannot.

And it needs to be resistant to factual correction — ideally structured so that any attempt to fact-check it can itself be framed as evidence of the conspiracy. The best division issues are ones where being shown you are wrong just makes you more certain that you're right.

That formula is approximately two thousand years old.

It has never stopped working.

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The Moment It Becomes Identity

Here is the mechanism, stated as plainly as possible:

There is a threshold in any political or social conflict. On one side of that threshold, the conflict is about an issue — a policy question, a factual dispute, a disagreement about priorities or values that reasonable people can discuss, argue about, and potentially resolve through evidence and persuasion.

On the other side of that threshold, the conflict is about identity. About who you are. About which team you belong to. About what kind of person believes what you believe.

Once a conflict crosses that threshold, everything changes.

Nobody changes who they are based on a newspaper article. Nobody abandons their fundamental sense of self because a debate opponent made a good point. When your position on a political issue becomes part of your identity — when believing a certain thing is what makes you a good Christian, or a real American, or a loyal member of your community — then evidence against that position doesn't land as information. It lands as an attack. On you. On your people. On everything you are.

And attacks get defended against, not considered.

This is not a failure of intelligence or education. It is a feature of human psychology that applies equally across the political spectrum and at every level of sophistication. Highly educated people are in some ways more susceptible, not less — they are better at constructing elaborate justifications for positions they arrived at through identity rather than reason. The psychology literature calls this motivated reasoning. The division machine calls it a feature.

The goal is never to win the argument. The goal is to make sure the argument never ends — because an argument that never ends is a population that never looks up.

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When Identity Determines Facts

Hannah Arendt — the political philosopher who spent her career trying to understand how ordinary people in ordinary societies end up participating in extraordinary atrocities — wrote in the mid-twentieth century about a phenomenon she observed in the rise of totalitarianism in Europe.

She described a process by which entire populations lost their grip on shared factual reality. Not because they were stupid. Not because they lacked access to information. But because the political movements they belonged to had successfully made factual reality itself into a team sport.

Your team's facts. Their team's facts. And the act of accepting the other team's facts — even when they are simply, verifiably, demonstrably true — becomes an act of political betrayal.

She was writing about 1930s Germany. She might as well have been writing about this morning's news feed.

We have arrived at a moment in American political life — and in political life across much of the democratic world — where team identity determines facts rather than facts informing team identity. Where which party you belong to predicts not just your policy preferences but your beliefs about what is physically real. Where a study showing that a

policy you support doesn't work will be dismissed not because you've examined the methodology but because the study came from the wrong people.

This is called tribal epistemology. It is the condition in which the source of information matters more than its content. In which "my side said it" is sufficient reason to believe something and "their side said it" is sufficient reason to disbelieve it — regardless of evidence, regardless of verification, regardless of what a person's own eyes and experience tell them.

Tribal epistemology does not emerge spontaneously. It is cultivated. It requires an infrastructure of media, of political messaging, of social reinforcement that constantly signals: here is what your people believe. Here is what the other people believe. Here is why believing what they believe would make you one of them.

That infrastructure was built deliberately, over decades, with considerable financial investment by people who understood exactly what they were building and why.

The Fairness Doctrine repeal. The explosion of partisan media. The social media algorithms that discovered — because engagement drives revenue and outrage drives engagement — that feeding people content that makes them furious about the other team is the most profitable thing they can do. Not because anyone planned the social media piece specifically. But because the financial incentives of the attention economy happen to align perfectly with the political incentives of the division machine.

The machine found a new engine. And the new engine runs on advertising revenue.

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The Knife Cuts Both Ways

Here is where this chapter has to be honest in a way that will make some readers uncomfortable.

The division machine is not a Republican operation. It is not a conservative phenomenon. It does not belong exclusively to any one ideological camp. Concentrated power funds both sides — because concentrated power's primary interest is not in who

wins. It is in the game continuing. In the argument staying horizontal. In the population staying divided.

The Bernie Sanders movement of 2016 was a genuine bottom-up revolt. Working class people, young people, people who had watched the system fail them for decades, organizing around an explicit critique of concentrated wealth and corporate power. It pointed directly at the ceiling — at the people actually responsible for the conditions being protested.

It was absorbed. The mechanisms of the Democratic Party establishment — superdelegates, media framing, institutional pressure — neutralized it. Twice.

The Tea Party movement of 2009 and 2010 was also, at its origin, a genuine bottom-up revolt. People furious about bank bailouts, about the sense that the rules were different for the connected and the powerful, about a government that seemed to serve everyone except them. It also pointed, initially, at the ceiling.

It was absorbed. Redirected. Funded by the very concentrated interests it had originally been angry at, rebranded as a movement about immigration and cultural grievance, and pointed sideways.

Barack Obama's presidency was historic in ways that were real and genuinely meaningful. The first Black president of the United States. Intelligent, eloquent, a man of evident personal integrity who inspired millions of people around the world.

He was also, in terms of economic policy, almost entirely non-threatening to Wall Street. The banks that caused the 2008 collapse were saved. Not one senior financial executive was prosecuted. The regulatory response was modest. The recovery that followed was the slowest and most unequal in postwar history — GDP recovered, corporate profits recovered, stock prices recovered, and wages for working people stayed flat for years.

The Clinton political operation — across both administrations — championed the trade deals that exported American manufacturing jobs, the financial deregulation that set the stage for 2008, the telecommunications deregulation that enabled media consolidation.

These were not Republican policies imposed on reluctant Democrats. They were Democratic policies, enthusiastically pursued.

None of this is said to create false equivalence. The parties are not the same. The specific harms being done today by one political movement are not equivalent to the harms being done by the other. There are genuine differences in degree that matter enormously to real people's lives.

But the structural point stands: the division machine runs on both sides of the aisle. And the clearest sign that you are seeing the situation accurately is that you can say "this political figure is doing genuine harm" AND "that political figure sold out the people they claimed to represent" — and get attacked from both directions simultaneously.

If you are being attacked from both sides, you are probably pointing at the right ceiling.

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The Conversation That Must Never Happen

To understand what the division machine is designed to prevent, you have to understand what concentrated power fears most.

It is not protest. Protests can be tolerated, managed, photographed, and waited out.

It is not elections. Elections can be influenced, funded, gerrymandered, and when necessary litigated.

It is not even legislation. Legislation can be weakened in committee, gutted in implementation, challenged in courts that have been carefully stocked over decades with sympathetic judges.

What concentrated power fears — what it has always feared, across every civilization and every era — is the moment when the people being divided against each other look at each other and say:

We have the same enemy. And it is not each other.

The white working-class family in one town and the Black working-class family in the next have far more in common with each other than either has with the private equity firm that just bought the hospital where they earn their living — and cut their benefits to make a quarterly number .

The evangelical Christian small business owner and the secular progressive teacher are both watching their kids struggle to afford housing in a market that has been turned into a financial instrument. They are both one medical crisis away from bankruptcy in a healthcare system designed to extract maximum revenue rather than provide maximum care. They are both paying into a retirement system that has been deliberately made precarious so that the risk sits on their shoulders rather than on the institutions that profit from their labor.

The moment those two people stop arguing about what's in the school curriculum or who gets to use which bathroom and start asking together why neither of them can afford a house — the machine is in serious trouble.

So the machine works constantly, tirelessly, at enormous expense, to make sure that conversation never happens.

It works by making the cultural issues feel more urgent than the economic ones. By making the fight about identity rather than material conditions. By ensuring that the white working class voter's primary political identity is racial and cultural rather than economic — so that they vote against their own economic interests because the economic framing has been replaced by a cultural one.

It works by making sure that every policy proposal that would actually help working people of all backgrounds gets labeled as radical, or socialist, or a handout, or an attack on freedom — so that the people who would benefit from it have been pre-loaded with reasons to oppose it.

It works by funding media ecosystems on both sides that specialize in making each side maximally infuriating to the other — because a population busy being furious at its neighbors is a population not paying attention to who is actually running things.

The division is the product. The outrage is the service being delivered. And the people paying for it are getting exactly what they paid for.

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You Cannot Fact-Check Your Way Out

Here is the hardest truth about the division machine:

You cannot argue your way out of it.

Not because the arguments aren't good. Not because the facts aren't clear. But because the division machine doesn't operate in the domain of argument and facts. It operates in the domain of identity and belonging. And identity doesn't respond to argument the way a policy position does.

Every study that has attempted to reduce political polarization through information — through fact-checking, through exposure to the other side's arguments, through media literacy programs — has produced results ranging from modest to counterproductive. Showing people that their beliefs are factually wrong, when those beliefs are identity-constituting, frequently makes people hold those beliefs more tightly. The psychology literature is unambiguous on this point.

What does work — what the research consistently shows reduces prejudice, builds cross-group empathy, and creates the conditions for political solidarity across lines of difference — is something much simpler and much harder to engineer at scale.

Contact. Genuine, sustained, equal-status contact between people from different groups, working toward shared goals, in conditions where the contact is supported rather than adversarial.

Gordon Allport, a psychologist writing in the 1950s, identified this as contact theory — the finding that prejudice between groups diminishes reliably when members of those groups actually work alongside each other as equals toward common purposes. Not when they are lectured about each other's humanity. Not when they are shown statistics about each other's conditions. When they *work together*. When they share a goal. When they learn each other's names and eat lunch together and discover that the person they

had been taught to fear or despise is, inconveniently for everyone who profited from that fear, a human being

The military figured this out imperfectly and partially. The integration of the armed forces — ordered by Truman in 1948, implemented slowly and incompletely over the following decade — produced something unexpected: soldiers who had trained and served together across racial lines showed dramatically reduced prejudice compared to the general population. Not because of lectures about equality. Because they had depended on each other. Because the person in the foxhole next to you stops being an abstraction.

The division machine wins as long as we remain abstractions to each other. As long as "those people" are a category rather than a neighbor, a coworker, someone whose kid plays on the same team as yours.

The solution to the division machine is not a better argument.

It is a structure that forces — gently, purposefully, at scale — the contact that turns abstractions into people.

That structure exists. It is in the documents at the back of this book. And it is the subject of Part Three.

The pipe has been leaking long enough. It's time to fix it.

PART THREE

THE ARCHITECTURE

"Fix the Pipe"

Chapter Six: Phase Changes

Power Flows From Ethics

The Question Nobody Is Asking

The system is broken.

Almost nobody actually disagrees with that. Left, right, the people who never vote at all. The sense that something fundamental has stopped working is one of the few things this fractured country still shares. The argument was never about the diagnosis. It's about the remedy.

The disagreement is not about the diagnosis. The disagreement is about the remedy.

The mainstream remedies are all variations on the same theme: fix the people running the system, fix the rules the system operates under, apply enough pressure that it produces better outcomes. Elect better candidates. Pass better laws. Appoint better judges. Protest louder. Vote harder.

These remedies share a common assumption: that the system itself is fundamentally sound and the problem is how it is being operated.

Parts One and Two make a different argument. The system is not being operated badly. It is operating exactly as it was designed to operate after fifty years of deliberate architectural modification. The outcomes are not bugs. They are features — installed by people who understood exactly what they were installing and why.

Which means the remedies that leave the architecture intact will continue to produce the same outcomes regardless of who is operating them. You cannot sustainably fix a leaking pipe by mopping the floor. The water always finds its way through.

The question nobody in mainstream politics is asking is the only question that actually matters: what does the architecture look like if you build it from scratch?

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How Governance Actually Changes

Here is something the history books consistently underemphasize: major transitions in how human societies organize power have never been reform projects. They have been phase changes.

A phase change is what happens when water becomes ice. The molecules are the same. The elements are the same. But the fundamental organizing principle has shifted — and the result is not a wetter or drier version of water. It is a qualitatively different thing.

Feudalism did not get *reformed* into something gentler. It was dissolved — slowly, then all at once — and replaced by an entirely different engine. Under feudalism, power flowed from *land*: who held the soil held everything, and a man's whole life was fixed by his relationship to it. What ended that world was not a kinder feudalism. It was capitalism — a new organizing principle in which power flowed from *capital* instead of acres, where a merchant with money could come to outweigh a lord with fields. The molecules were the same. The people, the territory, the church bells all carried over. But the principle underneath had changed, and everything reorganized itself around the new one.

The American founders did not reform the British monarchy. They rejected its premise. Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. That sentence did not improve on divine right — it replaced it. Entirely. With something that had never been seriously attempted at scale before.

Each transition was terrifying to the people whose power depended on the old organizing principle. Each was declared impossible by the conventional wisdom of its time. Each produced outcomes — for more people, more consistently — that the previous system had been structurally incapable of producing.

We are due for another one.

Power has flowed from land. It has flowed from capital. The next principle — the one this book is built on — is that power should flow from *ethics*. That principle has a name: Etharchy.

The People Are Not the Problem

Democracy's organizing principle — power flows from the people — was the most radical political idea in human history when it was articulated. It remains genuinely important. The consent of the governed is not a platitude. It is the foundation of legitimate governance.

It is that people can be manipulated. All people. Frightened, inflamed, fed a steady diet of outrage until they are certain — *certain* — that the real threat is the people in the next town, the next tax bracket, the next pew, the other party. You already know this is true. You have watched it happen. You have seen people you know swallow something obviously absurd, defend it, build their identity around it, and call you a fool for not seeing it too.

Here is the uncomfortable part. The people you watched get fooled were watching *you* the same way. Certain you were the one who'd been played. And the same machinery that has been running on all of us, from every direction, the whole time. You already have a name for it: the culture war. A war that never ends, never resolves, and never — not once — sends anyone's anger *upward*. It does not care which side you're on. It only cares that you stay aimed sideways.

A majority assembled this way — frightened into agreement, pointed at a target — is still a majority. And a system where power flows from nothing but majority will has no defense against the moment that majority has been captured. When the crowd has been turned, the person standing outside it has nowhere left to stand.

The founders partially understood this. That is why they built in the Bill of Rights — explicit limits on what majorities could do to minorities. That is why they created an independent judiciary. But those protections proved insufficient because they were capturable. The courts that were supposed to protect rights became instruments of the concentrated interests that captured them.

Which points toward the next organizing principle.

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Power Flows From Ethics

The organizing principle of Democracy-Next is simple enough to say in four words.

Power flows from ethics.

Not from land. Not from divine hereditary right. Not even from the people — because pure majorities can vote to do terrible things and history is full of the evidence.

From ethics. From the morals we choose to agree on. Collectively. Revisably. With full acknowledgment that we will get things wrong and with built-in mechanisms to correct them.

Ethics are not divine law handed down from above. They are not the preferences of whoever happens to hold power at a given moment. They are the morals we have chosen to agree on — not imposed but chosen, not permanent but revisable, not simple but contested and refined over time through the hard work of democratic deliberation.

The difference between ethics and mere preferences is that ethics represent a broader and more durable consensus than the preferences of a momentary majority. They are what a society, thinking carefully and over time about what kind of community it wants to be, has agreed to hold as its foundational commitments. They can be wrong. They can be revised. But revising them requires more than a majority on a given Tuesday.

This is the idea that has always been struggling to emerge from democracy's best moments — from the abolitionists who said a majority vote cannot make slavery right, from the suffragists who said a majority vote cannot make the exclusion of women right, from the civil rights movement that said a majority vote cannot make segregation right. Those movements were all saying the same thing: there are ethical commitments that constrain what majorities may do.

Democracy-Next makes that implicit argument explicit. It builds the ethical constraints into the architecture from the beginning. It creates an institution — the Ethics Board —

specifically tasked with asking, of every proposed law: does this honor our foundational ethical commitments, or does it violate them? It establishes a 25-year review convention that allows those commitments to evolve as our collective understanding deepens.

The preamble of this constitution says what previous constitutions have only implied:

PREAMBLE — Democracy-Next

We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, secure justice, liberty, and equality, promote sustainability, and ensure the welfare of present and future generations, do ordain and establish this Constitution. We seek to maximize freedom while minimizing inequality, and to create a society in which opportunity, dignity, and civic responsibility are shared by all.

Power flows from ethics. And ethics are ours to define.

That principle is bigger than any single design. A different people, in a different place, could honor it in a different form. What this book offers is one form, worked out in full. A specific constitution and social contract called Democracy-Next. Etharchy is the idea. Democracy-Next is what you build with it. The way democracy is an idea, and a nation is what a people build to live by it.

Here is what that looks like, provision by provision.

Chapter Seven: The Anti-Capture Architecture

Designing for the Adversary You Know

Building for Capture

Every previous governance system was eventually captured. The Roman Republic lasted five centuries before it became the Roman Empire. The Athenian democracy was captured, restored, captured again. The great constitutional republics of the modern era — France, Italy, Weimar Germany — were captured within decades. The American constitutional order has been undergoing systematic capture for fifty years and the process is visibly advanced.

The question is not whether a governance system can be captured. Given enough time and sufficiently motivated adversaries with sufficient resources, every system can be captured. The question is how long it takes, how much effort it requires, and whether the capture can be reversed before it becomes permanent.

Most governance systems were not designed with capture-resistance as a first principle. They were designed to be functional. Capture-resistance was assumed to emerge naturally from the separation of powers, from competitive elections, from an independent press. Those assumptions have proven inadequate.

Democracy-Next is designed from first principles to be capture-resistant. Not capture-proof — nothing is. But capture-resistant in ways that previous systems were not, specifically targeting the mechanisms of capture that have been documented and demonstrated over the past fifty years.

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The Rights No Majority Can Take

The first line of capture-resistance is a genuine bill of rights — not aspirational but enforceable, not interpreted narrowly by captured courts but written expansively enough that future categories of persons are included automatically.

The current American Bill of Rights has been systematically narrowed by legal interpretation over two centuries. Rights that were meant to be broad have been made specific. Protections that were meant to be universal have been made conditional. The document has been worked against its own purpose by the very institutions designed to protect it.

Democracy-Next's Bill of Rights opens with a declaration that makes this narrowing constitutionally impossible:

ARTICLE I — Bill of Rights (Freedoms) — Opening Provision

The following rights are guaranteed to all persons within the jurisdiction of the United States. They shall not be abridged, suspended, or conditioned upon any status, citizenship, wealth, or circumstance.

Every person. Every right. No conditions. No status tests. No wealth requirements. No citizenship prerequisites for the basic protections of human dignity.

— — —

What You Can Say — and What Government Cannot Do About It

The current First Amendment protects speech from government censorship but has been interpreted to allow government to pressure private platforms into censorship by other means — threatening regulation, dangling contracts, signaling displeasure through official channels. Democracy-Next closes that gap.

ARTICLE I — Freedom of Expression

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to speak, write, publish, assemble, petition their government, and engage in digital discourse freely, without government censorship, subject only to restrictions narrowly necessary to prevent imminent and demonstrable harm. Private entities retain the right to moderate content on their own platforms. No government at any level shall use the threat of regulation, taxation, or legal process to coerce private entities into suppressing speech on the government's behalf.

The government cannot censor you. It cannot pressure others to censor you on its behalf. It cannot use regulatory threat as a backdoor to silence inconvenient voices. Private platforms can still moderate — they are private entities with their own rights. But the government's role in that moderation is constitutionally zero.

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Your Data Is Yours

The surveillance economy has been built on a simple exploitation: your data is worth money, you don't know how much, and the entities collecting it have written terms of service specifically designed to ensure you never meaningfully consent to what's being done with it.

Democracy-Next makes the exploitation unconstitutional. Consent must be explicit — not buried in a terms of service. Informed — you must actually understand what you're agreeing to. Specific — agreeing to one use does not authorize another. And revocable — you can take it back.

And crucially — this applies to every entity that operates in America, regardless of where they're incorporated. The foreign company that wants access to American consumers must follow American privacy law. There is no offshore loophole.

ARTICLE I — Right to Privacy

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to personal, digital, and data privacy. The collection, use, storage, or sale of personal data without explicit, informed, specific, and revocable consent is prohibited. Consent buried within general terms of service or obtained through coercion or deception shall not constitute valid consent under this provision. All entities conducting business within, deriving profit from, or offering services to persons within the jurisdiction of the United States are subject to this provision regardless of their nation of incorporation, headquarters, or citizenship of ownership.

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Your Body Is Yours

The overturn of Roe v. Wade demonstrated what happens when bodily autonomy exists only as inferred constitutional doctrine rather than explicit constitutional right. A right that lives in implication can be argued away. A right that is explicitly stated cannot.

Democracy-Next states it explicitly. Your body is yours. No law compels you to carry a pregnancy you don't want. No law requires you to submit to medical treatment without your consent. The state's interest in regulating bodies ends where your body begins.

ARTICLE I — Bodily Autonomy

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to healthcare, reproductive choice, and full control over their own body. No law shall compel any person to carry, continue, or terminate a pregnancy against their will. No law shall require any medical procedure, treatment, or intervention without the free and informed consent of the person affected, except in narrowly defined circumstances of acute incapacity where a designated representative acts in the person's documented interests.

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Equal Protection — For Categories We Haven't Named Yet

The equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment was written to protect freed slaves. Courts have extended it through interpretation to cover other groups. But interpretation can be taken away — as we've seen when courts reinterpret precedents in ways that narrow protection rather than expand it.

Democracy-Next's equal protection provision does something genuinely different: it explicitly instructs future courts to interpret the principle expansively, to cover categories of persons as society evolves, and explicitly prohibits the narrow reading that says "we only protect what we listed in 2026."

The mutant Kitty Pryde. Cyborgs. AI persons. Categories of human experience we haven't named yet. The principle covers them all. The list never closes.

ARTICLE I — Due Process and Equal Protection

No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. All persons are entitled to fair and timely trials, equality under the law, access to legal representation, and protection from discrimination. The principle of equal protection shall be interpreted expansively by courts to cover categories of persons as society evolves, and shall not be limited to categories enumerated at the time of this Constitution's adoption. No category of person shall be deemed inherently unworthy of equal protection under this provision.

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The Vote Cannot Be Suppressed

Voter suppression in America has taken many forms across its history: poll taxes, literacy tests, grandfather clauses, gerrymandering, purged voter rolls, shortened polling hours, closed polling locations, ID requirements calibrated specifically to exclude certain populations. Each has been dressed in the language of election integrity. Each has been a mechanism for ensuring that certain people's votes never arrive.

Democracy-Next prohibits the mechanism, not just the specific tools. No law, regulation, administrative rule, or electoral practice — however designed, however justified — that suppresses the vote is constitutional. And voting infrastructure gets funded as what it actually is: essential public infrastructure.

ARTICLE I — Democratic Participation

All citizens of voting age shall have equal, unobstructed access to vote. Representation shall be fair, inclusive, and proportional to population. No law, regulation, administrative rule, or electoral practice shall be constructed or applied in ways that dilute, suppress, complicate, or obstruct the exercise of this right. Voting infrastructure shall be treated as essential public infrastructure and funded accordingly.

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Arms — For People, Not Private Armies

The founders wrote the Second Amendment when "arms" meant a musket that took forty-five seconds to reload. They could not have conceived of autonomous weapons

systems, AI-controlled perimeter defense, or private security forces better equipped than national militaries. The spirit of their intent — citizens armed for self-defense and militia service — is actually better served by the Democracy-Next provision than by the current interpretation that has allowed a proliferation they never imagined.

You can hunt. You can defend your home. You cannot build a private army. You cannot deploy weapons that fire without a human consciously pulling the trigger each time. The line between citizen and private army is drawn here.

ARTICLE I — Right to Bear Arms

Citizens may possess arms for self-defense, hunting, and sport. No person, corporation, private entity, or organization may possess, deploy, or develop weapons designed primarily for military combat, capable of automatic fire, or capable of autonomous operation without direct human control of each individual discharge. The determination of which specific weapons fall within these categories shall be subject to ongoing judicial review as weapons technology evolves. The spirit of this provision is the protection of individual rights and community safety — not the arming of private power against the public.

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Rights Require Responsibilities

A constitution that only lists rights and never names responsibilities produces a society of takers — people who claim the protections of the community while contributing nothing to it. The social contract runs in both directions.

Article II of Democracy-Next is genuinely unusual in constitutional history. Most constitutions enumerate only what the state owes the citizen. This one names what the citizen owes back.

ARTICLE II — Bill of Responsibilities — Opening Provision

Rights without responsibilities produce a society of takers rather than builders. The following duties reflect the contract between the individual and the community that protects and supports them. This contract runs in both directions

— the community owes the individual the rights enumerated in Article I; the individual owes the community the duties enumerated here.

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Everyone Serves

Civic service is universal. Not the poor who need education funding. Not the disadvantaged who are trying to earn their way into the system. Everyone. The child of the CEO and the child of the janitor — the same janitor whose wage determines the CEO's ceiling — serve alongside each other. That contact, that shared work, that enforced equality of contribution, is the mixing machine described in Chapter Ten.

The Civic Service Administration matches people to roles based on ability. No one is excluded. A blind person finds roles suited to their capacity. A person in a wheelchair finds roles suited to their mobility. The administration's job is not to find reasons to exclude — it is to find the role that every single person can fill meaningfully.

ARTICLE II — Civic Service (Enforceable Duty)

All persons shall contribute to society through a period of civic service. This duty is universal and shall not be conditioned upon participation in any public program, tied to economic status, or applied selectively to any group. The wealthy and the poor serve alike. Service is the shared obligation of citizenship. Service may be fulfilled through military or civilian roles including but not limited to healthcare support, environmental restoration, education assistance, infrastructure development, emergency response, elder care, childcare support, community development, and digital infrastructure. Military service is one option among many, chosen voluntarily within the service framework.

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Civic Engagement Is Not Optional

"I'm not political" is not a neutral statement. It is a choice — a choice to let other people make decisions that affect your life while declining to participate in making them.

Democracy-Next's constitution says plainly what every civics teacher has known and

been unable to codify: apathy is not innocent. It weakens the contract that protects everyone.

ARTICLE II — Civic Engagement (Aspirational Guidance)

Citizens are encouraged to engage actively in civic and political life — to know their representatives, understand the institutions that govern them, participate in elections, and involve themselves in the ongoing project of democratic self-governance. Apathy and disengagement do not merely harm the individual — they weaken the entire fabric of the democratic contract. An informed and active citizenry is not merely a civic virtue. It is the foundation upon which this Constitution rests and the only reliable defense against its capture.

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Everyone Pays — Proportionally, Without Loopholes

Apple's European subsidiaries once paid an effective tax rate of 0.005% on billions in European profits through Irish holding structures. Elon Musk paid less in income tax in a recent year than many American schoolteachers. The mechanisms of avoidance — offshore incorporation, transfer pricing, intellectual property parking — are well documented and entirely legal under the current system.

Democracy-Next closes every exit. If you earn money from American consumers, through American infrastructure, using American legal protections — you pay American taxes. Where you're incorporated is irrelevant. Where your accountants have parked your profits is irrelevant. The money was made here. It gets taxed here.

And lobbying with anything of value is a felony. Not a fine. Not a censure. A felony. The moment a politician receives anything of value from anyone with interests before them — the crime is complete, regardless of whether there was an explicit agreement.

ARTICLE II — Fiscal Responsibility (Enforceable Duty)

All persons and entities deriving income from, conducting business within, offering goods or services to persons within, or holding assets within the jurisdiction of the United States shall contribute proportionally to public services and infrastructure through progressive taxation. This obligation applies

regardless of citizenship status, place of residence, or place of incorporation. All income generated from American consumers, through American infrastructure, or by workers within American jurisdiction shall be subject to taxation at American rates regardless of where the earning entity is legally domiciled. Political lobbying through any form of wealth transfer, gift, benefit, or thing of value is prohibited. Any elected or appointed official who solicits, accepts, or benefits from any transfer of value in connection with their official duties commits a felony and shall be removed from office and permanently disqualified from public service.

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The Truth Duty

No existing democratic constitution contains this provision. Every existing democratic constitution should.

A president who stands at a podium and deliberately tells the American public something he knows to be false — about election results, about public health, about reasons for going to war, about the state of the public finances — has committed what under Democracy-Next is a constitutional violation. Not a political embarrassment. Not a matter for the press to adjudicate. A violation with a specific remedy: removal from office and permanent disqualification from public service.

The provision distinguishes between deliberate material deception and the ordinary imprecision, exaggeration, and spin that has always been part of political speech. Opinion is protected. Hyperbole is protected. Demonstrably false statements of material fact — told deliberately to mislead the public on matters of public concern — are not.

ARTICLE II — Duty of Truth in Public Office (Enforceable Duty)

Persons holding elected or appointed public office shall have a constitutional duty of honest dealing with the public they serve. Deliberate and material deception of the public on matters of public concern — including but not limited to the conduct of elections, matters of public health, the reasons for military action, and the state of the public finances — shall constitute a violation of this duty and grounds for immediate removal from office and permanent disqualification from future public service.

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Environmental Stewardship Is a Duty, Not Just a Right

Article IV gives every person the right to a healthy environment. Article II gives every person the corresponding duty to protect it. Rights without responsibilities are half a contract. If you have the right to clean water, you have the duty not to poison it for others.

The duty applies globally in its effects — if your operations in another country produce environmental damage that flows back into the American ecosystem, the duty reaches you regardless of where the degradation occurred.

ARTICLE II — Environmental Stewardship (Enforceable Duty)

All persons share a duty of stewardship toward the natural environment that sustains human life. No person or entity shall knowingly degrade air, water, soil, or ecosystems in ways that impose costs or harms on present or future generations without full accountability, remediation proportional to the harm caused, and restitution to affected communities. This duty applies to all entities operating within or affecting the jurisdiction of the United States regardless of where the degrading activity physically occurs.

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The Governance Architecture

Rights and responsibilities establish what the framework protects and requires. The governance architecture determines whether those protections can be captured and gutted by the same forces that have captured and gutted every previous protective framework.

Article V is where Democracy-Next makes its most radical structural departures from the prior order. Each departure is specifically designed to close a specific documented capture mechanism.

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The House Is Gone

The House of Representatives was designed as the people's chamber — directly elected, proportional to population, closer to voters than the Senate. In practice it became a gerrymandering instrument, a perpetual fundraising treadmill requiring election every two years, and a body where party leadership rather than individual members controlled legislative outcomes.

The reformed Senate, with proportional multi-member elections by state using Single Transferable Vote, fulfills everything the House was supposed to be — more effectively, without the gerrymandering, without the two-year fundraising cycle, with genuine proportional representation of each state's political diversity.

ARTICLE V — Section 1: Structure of the Federal Legislature

The bicameral legislature of the prior constitutional order — consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives — is replaced by a reformed bicameral structure consisting of a reformed Senate and a newly established Ethics Board. The House of Representatives is dissolved. The reformed Senate, with proportional multi-member elections by state, fulfills the House's original purpose more effectively than the House did. The Ethics Board fulfills a function that no prior chamber performed: independent ethical review of legislation against constitutional principles. No legislative function is lost. Several dysfunctions are eliminated by design.

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The Senate — Actually Proportional

Wyoming has approximately 580,000 people. California has approximately 39 million. Both states have two senators. A Wyoming vote for Senate representation is worth roughly 67 California votes. That is not democracy. That is a structural bias baked into the founding compromise that has become more distorted as population has shifted.

The reformed Senate uses Single Transferable Vote — a ranked-choice system conducted statewide. A state whose population is 60% one political persuasion and 40% another produces a senate delegation that reflects those proportions. Minority viewpoints get representation without being able to block majority governance. No districts to draw. No

gerrymandering possible by design. Every political faction earns seats proportional to its actual support.

And no party labels on ballots. You vote for a person. Their name. Their stated platform. What they actually believe. Not the letter after their name.

ARTICLE V — Section 2: The Senate — Election Method

Senators shall be elected through a Single Transferable Vote system conducted statewide. Each state shall hold a single statewide election for all of its senate seats simultaneously. Voters shall rank candidates in order of preference. Seats shall be filled through ranked choice elimination rounds until all seats for that state are filled. This system ensures that the composition of each state's senate delegation reflects the genuine political diversity of that state's population rather than producing winner-take-all distortion. No party affiliation, label, or designation shall appear on any ballot. Candidates shall appear by name and stated platform only.

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The Ethics Board — The Institution That Has Never Existed

Every democratic system has a legislature that passes laws. Every democratic system has a judiciary that interprets them. No democratic system has ever had an institution whose sole constitutional function is to ask, of every proposed law before it passes: does this honor our ethical commitments?

The Ethics Board does not replace political judgment. It holds political judgment accountable to ethical principle. Fifteen members, elected nationally on nine-year non-renewable terms, representing not a district or a party but the national ethical conscience. They cannot be re-elected — so they have no electoral incentive to please donors or factions. They can only serve the constitution.

Every bill that passes the Senate goes to the Ethics Board. The Board asks six questions. If any answer is no, it issues a written Ethical Finding and returns the bill. The Senate can override with a two-thirds vote — but the override is public, the ethical objection is

permanent public record, and every senator's name is attached to the decision to proceed despite it.

That public record is the mechanism. The voter who wants to know whether their senator serves them or their donors now has a documented, constitutionally required answer.

ARTICLE V — Section 3: The Ethics Board

The Ethics Board is a genuinely new institution in democratic governance. No equivalent exists in any prior constitutional order. Its purpose is to separate the ethical review of legislation from the political process of passing it. Fifteen members elected through a single national election using ranked choice voting. Nine-year non-renewable terms. The Ethics Board shall evaluate each bill against the following constitutional standards: whether the bill violates any right guaranteed by Articles I or IV; whether the bill concentrates power, wealth, or resources in ways prohibited by Article III; whether the bill primarily serves private extraction rather than public benefit; whether the bill adequately considers future generations; whether the bill treats all persons with equal dignity; and whether the bill is consistent with prior ethical precedent. If the Ethics Board finds a violation, it shall issue a written Ethical Finding and return the bill to the Senate. The Senate may override by two-thirds vote. The Ethical Finding and any override vote shall be entered into the permanent public record.

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No More Omnibus Bills

One of the most effective tools of legislative capture is the omnibus bill — a thousand pages of legislation combining a genuinely necessary funding measure with dozens of special interest provisions that would never pass as standalone legislation. You cannot vote against it because the government shuts down. You cannot vote for it without blessing everything buried within it.

A thousand pages is how you hide things. So the rule is the opposite of a thousand pages.

One rule. One bill, one subject. Named clearly in the title. No exceptions.

If you want a tax break for a specific industry, introduce a bill that does exactly that. Stand next to it with your name on it. Vote for it in daylight. The single subject rule makes legislative courage mandatory.

ARTICLE V — Section 2: Single Subject Rule

No bill shall address more than one subject. The subject of each bill shall be clearly stated in its title. No provision unrelated to the stated subject shall be included in any bill. Omnibus legislation combining unrelated subjects is prohibited. This provision eliminates the practice of hiding controversial or special-interest provisions within large bills whose overall passage is considered necessary.

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The Supreme Court — Fixed Terms, No Single Actor

Lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court has produced a court whose composition is determined by the accident of which justices happen to die or retire during which administrations. It has produced thirty-year justices who shape the country until they're physically unable to continue. It has turned Supreme Court appointments into the highest-stakes political events in American life — events worth lying about in confirmation hearings, worth holding a stolen seat for, worth every form of political maneuvering available.

Eighteen-year fixed terms, staggered so one justice is appointed approximately every two years, changes this entirely. Every president gets roughly two appointments per term. No more waiting for an octogenarian to retire strategically. No more stolen seats. The court becomes more democratically responsive without being democratically controlled.

The appointment process uses a commission — drawing from presidential, Senate, Ethics Board, and citizen assembly appointees. No single actor can stack the court. The Commission produces three qualified candidates. The Senate picks one. Presidential influence is real but diluted. The court's capture by any single political faction becomes structurally much harder.

ARTICLE V — Section 5: The Federal Judiciary

The Supreme Court of the United States shall consist of nine justices serving fixed terms of eighteen years. Terms shall be staggered so that one justice is appointed approximately every two years. No justice shall serve more than one eighteen-year term. Supreme Court justices shall be nominated by a Federal Judicial Nomination Commission consisting of three members selected by the President, three by the Senate, three by the Ethics Board, and three by a randomly convened citizen assembly. The Commission shall forward a slate of three qualified candidates to the Senate for confirmation. The Senate shall confirm one of the three candidates by simple majority vote. The President shall not have individual appointment power over Supreme Court justices.

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Only Persons in Politics — And Persons Are Human Beings

Citizens United rested on the legal fiction of corporate personhood — the doctrine that corporations are persons with constitutional rights, including First Amendment rights to political speech. That fiction was inserted into American law by a railroad executive writing case headnotes in 1886. It has shaped American politics ever since.

Democracy-Next abolishes it. Completely. Constitutionally. With a definition specific enough that no future court can creep it back.

A person is a human being. Not a corporation. Not a union. Not a trade association, a nonprofit, a political action committee, or an artificial intelligence. An individual, living, human person. Only those people participate in elections. Only their money. Only their voice. The dark money era ends here.

ARTICLE V — Section 7: Only Natural Persons in Politics

Only natural persons — individual living human beings — shall have the right to political participation including campaign contribution, political advertising, electoral endorsement, and direct political advocacy. No organization of any kind shall engage in political spending, electoral endorsement, or campaign activity in any form. For purposes of this provision, a natural person is defined as an individual living human being. No legal fiction, collective entity, artificial intelligence, non-human entity, or future novel category of entity shall qualify as a

natural person for political participation purposes regardless of any other legal status they may hold. All political spending of any kind shall be traceable to its ultimate human source. No political expenditure shall be anonymous.

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Equal Money, Equal Chance

Every candidate who qualifies for the ballot gets the same amount of public money. Not more because they're from a wealthy district. Not more because they're an incumbent. Not more because their party has a bigger fundraising operation. The same. Period.

No private money. No donor dinners. No calls to billionaires the night before a critical vote. The only question is what you do with your equal allocation — and how you answer that question is itself information the voter deserves to have.

ARTICLE V — Section 6: Equal Public Campaign Financing

All candidates who qualify for federal election ballots shall receive an equal public campaign allocation. No candidate shall receive more public funding than any other candidate for the same office. No candidate shall accept private campaign contributions of any kind. All campaign spending shall come from the equal public allocation. How a candidate allocates limited resources reveals something genuine about their judgment, values, and capacity for stewardship of public resources. This is by design.

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The Constitution Can Fix Itself

The most important anti-capture mechanism in the entire architecture is the one that acknowledges fallibility. We will get things wrong. Not everything. Not catastrophically. But something. The world will change in ways we cannot predict. Human understanding of justice will deepen. Circumstances will arise that make provisions written today inadequate tomorrow.

Every previous constitution has pretended otherwise — has been written as if its authors had achieved final wisdom. They had not. Neither have we.

The 25-Year Constitutional Review Convention is this constitution's answer to that honesty. Every twenty-five years, ordinary citizens chosen by lottery sit alongside Senate and Ethics Board appointees in public hearings across every state. They recommend changes. Those changes require broad supermajority ratification. The process is the protection — not the pretense of perfection.

ARTICLE V — Section 9: 25-Year Constitutional Review Convention

Every twenty five years a Constitutional Review Convention shall be convened to assess the Constitution in its entirety and recommend updates. Convention delegates shall be selected through a combination of Senate appointment, Ethics Board appointment, and citizen lottery to ensure representation of institutional knowledge, ethical perspective, and ordinary civic participation. The Convention shall hold public hearings in every state. Proposed amendments emerging from the Convention shall proceed through the standard amendment process. The Convention shall not have the power to ratify its own amendments — it recommends, the people decide. No provision of this Constitution is beyond the Convention's power to recommend changing — including this provision. We are not writing for the ages. We are writing for the next twenty-five years — and trusting each subsequent generation to do the same.

Chapter Eight: The 20x Solution

Want to Pay Your CEO More? Pay Your Janitor More First.

The Elegance of the Ratio

Most economic policy proposals require large bureaucracies to implement, complex formulas to administer, armies of compliance officers to enforce, and generations of litigation to clarify. They create incentives to find the loopholes. They get weakened in implementation, litigated in courts, and eventually hollowed out.

The pay ratio cap is different. It is almost self-enforcing. It creates no incentive to find the loophole — or rather, every loophole it creates incentivizes behavior that is itself desirable.

The rule: no organization may compensate any person at a total rate exceeding twenty times the total compensation of the lowest-compensated person whose labor benefits that organization.

Want to pay your CEO more? Pay your janitor more first.

That single sentence realigns incentives across the entire organizational structure in ways that fifty years of corporate governance reform never managed to achieve. The CEO whose compensation is tied to the floor wage has a direct financial interest in the floor wage being high. The executive team wants to retain top talent, which means competing on total compensation packages that include a high floor wage. You cannot succeed at the top without raising the bottom.

The ratio doesn't cap prosperity. It distributes it. Twenty times the floor is still an excellent living at any reasonable floor wage. A person earning \$50,000 sets a CEO ceiling of \$1,000,000. A person earning \$80,000 sets a CEO ceiling of \$1,600,000. The ceiling rises as the floor rises. Everyone has skin in the game.

And compensation means all compensation — not just salary. Every form of economic value transferred to any person counts. No paying a CEO \$1 in salary while delivering

\$400 million in stock options. No creative accounting. No offshore deferred compensation structures. If it makes you wealthier, it counts.

The ratio applies to every person whose labor benefits the organization — not just those with employment contracts. Every gig worker, every contractor, every person whose work is woven into the organization is part of the calculation. You cannot offshore your lowest-paid workers, or relabel them as "contractors," to create a false floor.

This is not a rule about everyone who ever sends you an invoice. It catches the people whose livelihood is tied to your organization — your workers, and the "contractors" who are really full-time staff in everything but name. It does not reach the genuinely independent vendor: the plumber you call once, the outside firm that serves a hundred other clients. The test is simple — is this person's living effectively dependent on your organization, or are they running their own business and just doing a job for you? The first counts. The second does not.

ARTICLE III — Pay Ratio Cap

No organization may compensate any individual — in any role, at any level — at a total rate exceeding twenty times the total compensation of the lowest-compensated person whose labor benefits that organization. Compensation means total remuneration in all forms including salary, bonuses, stock grants, stock options at time of vesting, deferred compensation, retirement contributions, housing allowances, personal use of company assets, and any other transfer of economic value. The ratio applies to all persons whose labor benefits the organization — regardless of their classification as employees, independent contractors, gig workers, or workers employed through subsidiary or third-party arrangements — where those persons are economically dependent on the organization or perform labor integrated into its ongoing operations. It does not extend to genuine arms-length vendors who run independent businesses serving multiple clients. What governs is economic dependence and operational integration, not the contractual label. For organizations earning revenue within the jurisdiction of the United States, all persons whose labor contributed to that revenue — regardless of their physical location — shall be included in the ratio calculation.

The Wealth Ceiling

The pay ratio cap addresses the flow of wealth — what people earn. The wealth ceiling addresses the accumulation — what people hold.

The principle is simple and the evidence supports it: at sufficient scale, private wealth becomes private power. A person who holds wealth equivalent to the gross domestic product of a medium-sized nation does not hold that wealth as a private matter. They hold it as a political fact. They can fund political movements. They can purchase media ecosystems. They can hold governments hostage with threats of capital flight. They can shape the conditions of life for millions of people who never chose to be subject to their power.

The ceiling: no individual may hold wealth exceeding one thousand times the current median household wealth. At today's median of approximately \$192,000, that ceiling is roughly \$192 million. Extraordinarily wealthy by any standard. More than enough to live magnificently, fund meaningful philanthropic work, leave your children genuinely comfortable. Not enough to buy a senator. Not enough to fund a private army. Not enough to own the information ecosystem of a democracy.

The ceiling adjusts automatically with median household wealth. No committee. No lobbying target. Just math. When the whole society prospers the ceiling rises — the wealthiest people have a structural interest in median household wealth being high.

Wealth held in non-productive forms — sitting offshore, parked in instruments that generate return without generating employment or production — is taxed. Spend it. Invest it productively. Fund public institutions. The money has to move. A society where the engine of wealth is running but the fuel is being hoarded is a society with an economy that serves a fraction of its participants.

And trusts cannot be used to hide from the ceiling. Wealth held in any structure for the primary benefit of an individual counts toward their total. Inherited wealth is subject to the ceiling of the recipient. You can love your grandchildren. You cannot build them a dynasty.

ARTICLE III — Wealth Ceiling

No individual shall accumulate or hold wealth exceeding one thousand times the current median household wealth as measured by the most recent Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finances. This ceiling shall adjust automatically with each new official measurement. Wealth shall be defined comprehensively to include all assets in all forms. Persons whose wealth exceeds the ceiling shall have a compliance period of three years to bring their holdings into compliance. Wealth remaining above the ceiling shall be subject to a confiscatory annual tax until compliance is achieved. Wealth above fifty percent of the ceiling held in non-productive forms shall be subject to an annual hoarding tax. Trusts and other legal structures shall not be used to circumvent the wealth ceiling. Inherited wealth shall be subject to the wealth ceiling of the recipient.

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The Anti-Speculation Principle

Housing has been transformed from a human necessity into a financial instrument. The consequences are visible in every American city: people who work full-time jobs unable to afford rent within reasonable commuting distance of those jobs. Families spending 50%, 60%, 70% of their income on housing. Teachers, nurses, firefighters priced out of the communities they serve.

The same pattern applies to water, to energy, to food systems, to medical resources, to communications infrastructure. The things human beings need to live — the things that cannot be substituted or done without — have been converted into extraction mechanisms by the people who discovered that owning necessities is the most stable business model ever invented.

Democracy-Next's anti-speculation principle covers all essential resources with one sweeping provision — and future-proofs it against resources not yet discovered. The courts determine what qualifies as essential as technology and human needs evolve. The principle applies whether the resource is water or helium-3 or whatever the 22nd century produces that humans cannot live without.

ARTICLE III — Anti-Speculation Clause

Housing, land, water, energy, food systems, medical resources, communications infrastructure, and all other resources essential to human life, health, dignity, or participation in society shall be treated primarily as necessities for human use rather than as financial instruments for private profit. The determination of which resources qualify as essential shall be subject to judicial review as technology, society, and human needs evolve. No enumeration of essential resources in statute or regulation shall be construed as limiting the application of this principle to resources not yet discovered, developed, or recognized as essential.

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The Let Them Leave Clause

Every previous attempt to tax or constrain concentrated wealth has faced the same objection: what if they just leave? Move to the Caymans. Reincorporate in Ireland. Renounce citizenship. The threat of exit has been used to hold democratic governments hostage for decades.

The Let Them Leave Clause calls that bluff.

You can leave. Your American assets cannot.

The principle: wealth created within the American system — using American infrastructure, American workers, American legal protections, American consumers — belongs in part to the American system. You can leave. You cannot take America with you.

And here is the strategic reality that makes this workable in ways it would not be for smaller nations: the United States is the largest consumer market on earth. No serious global corporation can afford to lose access to American consumers. The threat of exit is largely a bluff. The Let Them Leave Clause calls it. Constitutionally. With teeth.

When a corporation leaves, the workers who built it get first claim on what remains. The vacuum gets filled by the people who know how to do the work — organized as a cooperative, supported by federal financing, continuing the enterprise without the concentrated ownership at the top.

ARTICLE III — "Let Them Leave" Clause

Any person or entity is free to relocate, reincorporate, or transfer operations outside the jurisdiction of the United States. However, assets, infrastructure, intellectual property, and economic value created within, rooted in, or dependent upon the United States system shall remain subject to United States jurisdiction regardless of where their owner relocates. No person or entity may expatriate assets built upon or derived from the American system without full settlement of all tax, worker, and public benefit obligations. You may take your ball and go home. You may not take ours. When a corporation ceases operations within this jurisdiction, the workers of that corporation shall have the first right to form a worker cooperative and continue operations using the assets left behind.

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Workers' Rights — For All Workers

The right to organize, to bargain collectively, to earn a living wage, to work in safe conditions — these rights were won through decades of organizing, strikes, and in some cases the lives of the people who fought for them. They were then systematically eroded through the playbook described in Chapter Five: union busting, contractor reclassification, regulatory capture of safety agencies, gig economy misclassification.

Democracy-Next constitutionalizes these rights and extends them to every person who works — not just those with formal employment contracts. A rideshare driver has the same right to organize as a factory worker. A gig economy worker has the same right to safe conditions as an office employee. The classification doesn't determine the right. The work does.

ARTICLE III — Workers' Rights

All persons performing work within the jurisdiction of the United States, regardless of employment classification, citizenship status, visa status, or method of engagement, shall have the right to organize collectively and bargain as a group with any entity that benefits from their labor; the right to wages and total compensation sufficient to meet basic human needs; the right to safe working conditions; and the right to organize, strike, and engage in collective action

without retaliation. No classification of work arrangement shall be used to deny workers the right to collective action.

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The Anti-Extraction Principle

Some economic activity creates value. It produces goods and services, employs people at living wages, innovates solutions to human problems. This activity deserves to be rewarded.

Some economic activity extracts value. It takes existing wealth and redistributes it upward without creating anything — through financial speculation, monopoly pricing, rent-seeking, and the manipulation of legal and financial instruments. This activity is a parasite on the productive economy.

A hedge fund that exists purely to bet on the price movements of other assets — generating no employment, no goods, no services, no innovation — has to answer the question: what exactly do you produce for the society that gives you the legal protections you operate under? The burden of proof is reversed. You don't have to prove harm to shut it down — it has to prove benefit to continue operating.

The anti-extraction principle is not anti-business. It is pro-productive-business. The entrepreneur who builds something, employs people, serves customers, and generates genuine value has nothing to fear. The financial engineer whose only product is a more sophisticated method of moving money from workers to shareholders has a great deal to fear. Good. That is the intention.

ARTICLE III — Anti-Extraction Clause

Financial and commercial activity that generates private profit solely through the extraction or redistribution of existing wealth — without creating productive economic value, goods, services, employment, or innovation — is a net negative to the public welfare and subject to regulation and dissolution. Any person may petition a federal economic public interest authority to investigate whether any organization operating within this jurisdiction is generating private profit without commensurate public benefit. The burden of demonstrating public benefit shall

rest with the organization. An organization that cannot demonstrate that its activities create goods, services, employment at living wages, or genuine innovation shall be presumed to be primarily extractive. Financial returns alone shall not constitute public benefit for purposes of this provision.

Chapter Nine: The Mixing Machine

Why Civic Service Fixes What DEI Was Mopping Around

The Problem DEI Could Not Solve

Diversity, equity, and inclusion programs were built on a genuine insight: that workplaces systematically disadvantaged people based on race, gender, and other characteristics, and that deliberate intervention could begin to correct it.

The insight was correct. The intervention was insufficient.

Not because DEI practitioners were wrong or incompetent. But because DEI was trying to produce integration outcomes within systems architecturally designed to produce separation. It was mopping the floor under a leaking pipe. Vigorously. With good intentions. Without touching the pipe.

The pipe is the division machine — the systematic, funded, deliberate cultivation of tribalism that keeps working people angry at each other rather than at the concentrated power that benefits from their division. No amount of corporate diversity training addresses the tribal epistemology that the division machine produces. No amount of implicit bias workshops changes the structural conditions that create and reinforce segregation by income, geography, education, and access to opportunity.

The division machine wins as long as we remain abstractions to each other. The solution is a structure that creates the conditions under which the other stops being other.

What the Research Actually Shows

In the 1950s, a psychologist named Gordon Allport published research on the conditions under which prejudice between groups actually decreases. His finding — contact theory — has been replicated and refined over seventy years of subsequent research and remains one of the most robust findings in social psychology.

Four conditions. When all four are present, prejudice decreases reliably, measurably, across cultural contexts and group types.

Equal status. Contact between groups where one is clearly subordinate reinforces rather than reduces prejudice. The contact must put members of different groups on genuinely equal footing.

Shared goals. Contact oriented toward competing against each other does not reduce prejudice. Contact oriented toward achieving something together — something neither group could achieve alone — does.

Institutional support. Contact that occurs despite institutional resistance is less effective than contact actively supported by the institutions within which it occurs.

Personal acquaintance. The contact must be personal enough to allow genuine human relationship — not merely proximity. Working alongside someone, depending on them, learning their name and their story. That is contact in Allport's sense.

When all four conditions are present, the person who was a category becomes a person. The person who was a threat becomes a neighbor. The person whose politics seemed incomprehensible turns out to share most of your actual daily concerns — housing, health, kids, retirement, the kind of community they want to grow old in.

The Civic Service Program as Contact Machine

The civic service program established in Democracy-Next is not primarily an economic measure. It is not primarily an educational measure. It is primarily a contact mechanism — the largest, most systematic application of contact theory in human history.

Every person serves. The same term, on the same terms. The child of the CEO works alongside the child of the janitor. The evangelical Christian from rural Tennessee and the secular progressive from urban California are assigned to the same environmental restoration project. The wealthy kid who has never worked alongside someone working

class. The working-class kid who has never been treated as an equal by someone wealthy. Not for an afternoon. For four years. Doing actual work. Toward actual goals. In conditions of actual equality.

And here is the part that matters: it is not a sacrifice. Service is paid. It teaches a real trade. It carries credit toward whatever comes next — the future teacher serves as a teacher's aide and walks away with classroom experience and college credits already in hand; the future builder serves on housing crews and leaves knowing how to frame a wall. You come out further ahead than you went in. The cost to the person is small. What it builds in them is enormous.

It hits all four of Allport's conditions simultaneously.

Equal status: everyone serves on the same terms. No premium tracks. No short version for the well-connected. No way to serve from a comfortable distance. Universal means universal — one program, one length, one set of rules, for everyone.

Shared goals: civic service is oriented toward genuine public purposes — restoring a watershed, building affordable housing, supporting elderly residents, teaching children to read. These require cooperation. You cannot complete them alone.

Institutional support: the Civic Service Administration exists specifically to create conditions for effective cross-group contact. Mixed cohorts are the norm, not the exception.

Personal acquaintance: four years is not a weekend seminar. You work alongside the same people, every day, for years. The person who arrived as a demographic category becomes, over four shared years, a specific human being with a name, a history, and a relationship with you that neither of you anticipated.

The attitude changes persist. A person who has worked alongside someone very different from themselves for four years does not simply revert to prior prejudices when the contact ends. The category has been contaminated — in the best possible way — by

the specific person. "Those people" now includes someone you know. Someone who helped you when you were struggling and whom you helped in return.

DEI tries to fix the outcomes of a society that has been deliberately divided. The civic service program changes the society itself — gradually, generation by generation, person by person — into one that is harder to divide because its members actually know each other.

One Term, No Exits

A system is only as fair as its hardest-to-game version. So civic service has exactly one track. There is no short option, no remote option, no weekends-instead-of-years option — because the moment such an option exists, everyone with the means to take it would, and the program would re-segregate along the exact lines it was built to dissolve. The wealthy would buy their way out of the mixing without anyone ever writing down an exemption. They would simply *choose* the path that let them avoid it.

So the choice is removed. One term. Everyone. The same.

What you *may* choose is to give *more*. A person who wants more from the common store — an advanced degree, specialized training, a longer education — earns it the same way everyone earns the baseline: through service. Serve the four years like everyone else, and then serve further in exchange for the further benefit. You can always give more to receive more. You can never give less. The floor is universal; only the ceiling is a choice.

ARTICLE II — Civic Service (Enforceable Duty) — Universal Provision

All persons shall contribute to society through a universal term of civic service of equal length and equal terms for every person. This duty shall not be shortened, deferred into reduced part-time arrangements, conditioned upon participation in any public program, tied to economic status, or applied selectively to any group. The wealthy and the poor serve alike, for the same duration, under the same conditions. Service shall be compensated and shall provide documented skills,

work experience, and educational credit. Service is the shared obligation of citizenship.

The federal government shall establish and maintain an independent, non-partisan Civic Service Administration responsible for classifying service roles across all sectors; assessing individual capacity through standardized, evidence-based, and non-discriminatory methods; matching citizens to appropriate service based on documented ability and expressed preference; and updating role classifications regularly as society and technology evolve. No citizen shall be deemed unable to contribute.

Additional service may be undertaken voluntarily in exchange for additional benefits provided under the social contract. Such additional service shall never substitute for, nor reduce, the universal term required of all.

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The Roman Gift

The Romans had a word — *munus* — that carried a double meaning. It meant both civic obligation and gift. The same word for both. The duty you owed to your community and the gift you gave to it were, in the Roman civic imagination, the same thing.

That double meaning captures what civic service is designed to be in Democracy-Next. Not a burden imposed on people who need things from the state. Not a tax paid in labor rather than money. A gift — years of your life given to the community that will support you through education, healthcare, retirement, every difficulty and transition the social contract covers. And, like the Roman *munus*, a gift that is repaid in the giving: you are paid for the work, you leave with a trade and an education already begun, and you carry away something no paycheck measures.

Because like most genuine gifts, it returns more than it costs. The person who serves comes back knowing people they wouldn't have known. Having done things they wouldn't have done. Having been depended upon in ways that change how they understand their own capacity and their place in the larger community.

The mixing machine doesn't fix prejudice. It replaces the conditions that create it with conditions that erode it. Slowly. Persistently. Generation by generation.

It is the long game. And the long game is the only game that actually works.

Chapter Ten: The Rights You Can Enforce

The Difference Between a Promise and a Guarantee

Aspirations vs Rights

Most constitutions that enumerate social benefits treat them as aspirations. The state aspires to provide healthcare. The state endeavors to ensure housing. Beautiful language. Legally meaningless.

An aspiration cannot be enforced. A person who cannot access healthcare cannot go to court and demand it on the basis of a constitutional aspiration. They can vote and hope. They have no legal recourse. They have a wish.

Democracy-Next does something different. It makes social rights justiciable.

Justiciable means enforceable in court. A right that can be taken to a judge. A right whose violation is a legal injury with a legal remedy. A right that is real rather than rhetorical.

The difference between a justiciable right and an aspiration is the difference between a constitution that protects people and a constitution that decorates them.

ARTICLE IV — Social Rights — Opening Provision

A society that permits its members to suffer preventable deprivation is not a free society — it is merely a society that has decided whose suffering is acceptable. The rights enumerated in this Article reflect the collective determination that no person within this jurisdiction shall be left without the basic conditions of a dignified human life. These rights are not aspirations. They are enforceable commitments. The state shall be held to account for their delivery.

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Healthcare — Free. Not Affordable. Free.

The American healthcare system costs more per capita than any other system on earth and produces health outcomes that rank below most comparable developed nations. Americans pay more for worse results.

Because the system is not designed to produce health outcomes. It is designed to generate revenue.

Every other developed nation has figured out how to provide universal healthcare at lower cost with better outcomes. The knowledge exists. The models exist. The only thing that has prevented the United States from implementing them is the political power of the insurance and pharmaceutical industries — political power that the anti-capture architecture of Democracy-Next is specifically designed to eliminate.

The word in this provision is not "affordable." It is not "accessible." It is not "available." It is free. Free at the point of receiving it. You get sick, you get care. No bill arrives afterward. No copay at the door. No deductible to meet before coverage kicks in. No call from your insurance company to pre-authorize your emergency.

Private insurance as a primary delivery vehicle is prohibited. It is an intermediary that adds cost and complexity while contributing no health outcomes. An organization that extracts value from human illness without contributing to human health is a parasitic institution by the definition we established in Chapter Nine. Its elimination is the anti-extraction principle applied to the industry that most visibly violates it.

ARTICLE IV — Healthcare

Healthcare in the United States shall be universal, comprehensive, and free at point of service. No person shall be billed, charged, or denied care at the moment of receiving it. The funding of healthcare shall come through progressive public taxation, not through individual payment at the point of need. Coverage includes without limitation preventive care, primary care, specialist care, emergency care, mental health services, substance use treatment, reproductive healthcare including contraception and abortion services, dental care, vision care, hearing care, long-term care, and any other service that a licensed provider determines to be medically necessary. Private insurance as a substitute for or primary vehicle of healthcare delivery is prohibited.

Housing — A Floor, Not a Wish

A person without housing cannot participate in democracy. Cannot hold a job reliably. Cannot raise children with any stability. Cannot maintain health. Cannot plan for a future. Cannot be the kind of engaged, productive, civically active person that democracy requires.

Homelessness is not a personal failure. It is a policy choice. Every other developed nation that has chosen to treat housing as a right has dramatically lower rates of homelessness — not because their populations are more virtuous but because they have decided that allowing people to live without shelter is not acceptable and organized their institutions accordingly.

The minimum standard in Democracy-Next is concrete and specific. Not "adequate" — because adequate is whatever the court says it means. Specific: four walls. A roof. Running water. Sanitation. Electricity. Heat and cooling for the local climate. A door that locks.

A tent does not meet this standard. A car does not meet this standard. The state's obligation is to ensure that every person within its jurisdiction has what meets the standard — through public housing, subsidies, cooperative housing, tiny home communities, whatever combination of mechanisms produces the result. The result is the constitutional obligation. The method is policy.

ARTICLE IV — Housing

Every person within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to stable, secure housing. All housing provided or subsidized under this Article shall meet at minimum: structural integrity providing protection from the elements; potable running water and sanitation facilities; electrical service; heating and cooling sufficient to maintain safe temperatures in the local climate throughout the year; and a lockable private space providing personal security and dignity. No person shall be compelled to live without these conditions. The existence of homelessness within this jurisdiction represents a failure of this framework's constitutional obligation and shall be treated as such.

Education — Earned Through Service

The current American education system produces wildly unequal outcomes based almost entirely on the zip code in which a child happens to be born. A child in a wealthy suburb gets a genuinely excellent public education. A child in a poor urban neighborhood or depleted rural community gets something that is technically also called public education but is substantively incomparable.

This is not an accident. The property tax funding model for public education is designed to produce this outcome — to ensure that the children of the wealthy attend well-resourced schools while the children of the poor attend under-resourced ones. It is a mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of advantage and disadvantage.

Democracy-Next's education provisions address this at the root. Federal funding ensures that no child's educational opportunity depends on the wealth of their community. Every school gets the resources it needs. Every child gets qualified teachers, adequate facilities, and genuine educational opportunity regardless of their parents' income or zip code.

Higher education is funded through the civic service exchange. One year of qualifying service for one year of publicly funded education. This ratio applies consistently from vocational programs through doctoral degrees. The longer you want to study, the more you contribute to the community that funds your education. Not purchased through wealth. Not financed through debt. Earned through contribution.

The student debt transitional justice provision gives everyone who went into debt under the old system the same offer: work it off. The same exchange rate. The same deal new students get, applied retroactively for ten years. No one who was exploited by the old system gets left behind by the new one.

ARTICLE IV — Education

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have access to free, high-quality education from primary through higher and vocational levels. The quality of education provided shall not vary based on the wealth of the community

in which a person resides. Public higher and vocational education shall be funded through a civic service exchange at a rate of one year of qualifying civic service for one year of publicly funded education. This rate applies consistently from vocational programs through doctoral degrees. Persons holding educational debt incurred prior to the establishment of this framework shall be offered the opportunity to discharge that debt through civic service at the same exchange rate, for a period of ten years from the date of enactment.

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Universal Basic Income — The Foundation of Genuine Freedom

A person who is one missed paycheck from homelessness is not free. They are too precarious to risk dissent, too desperate to refuse bad terms, too focused on immediate survival to participate meaningfully in democratic self-governance. Economic precarity is a form of political control — and it has been used as such throughout American history.

The Universal Basic Income (UBI) floor changes the fundamental power relationship between capital and labor. When every person has a guaranteed floor below which they cannot fall, the threat of unemployment loses its terror. You can still lose your job. But you cannot be made destitute by losing your job. That changes what you can demand from your employer. That changes what strikes are possible. That changes the negotiating position of every worker in every workplace.

The UBI is not a replacement for work. Under the progressive structure, working always produces more than not working. But it removes the existential terror of unemployment that has made workers accept conditions they should not have to accept. Freedom from want, as Roosevelt called it, is not a luxury. It is the prerequisite for every other kind of freedom that democracy promises.

And it is not the budget-buster its opponents claim. The structure is progressive in both directions: those below a threshold receive, those above it contribute, and the

contributions from the top fund the support at the bottom. It is less a handout than a floor the whole society holds up together — and the math very nearly balances itself.

The UBI interacts with the pay ratio cap in a way that aligns everyone's incentives: the UBI floor is incorporated into the pay ratio calculation. As UBI rises, the CEO's ceiling rises. The people at the very top of the compensation structure have a direct financial interest in the UBI being generous and well-funded. For the first time in history, the interests of the highest earners and the lowest earners are structurally aligned.

ARTICLE IV — Basic Income and Retirement Security

Every person receives a basic income set to cover essential needs, structured progressively so that lower earners receive and higher earners contribute. In old age, everyone is guaranteed a dignity floor no one falls beneath, with benefits above it scaled to what each person contributed over a working life. The full provisions — amounts, thresholds, administration — appear in the Constitution's Article IV and the New Deal 2.0 at the back of this book.

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A Healthy Environment — Science, Not Politics

The climate debate in American politics has been characterized by one side citing scientific consensus and the other manufacturing doubt. The manufacturing of doubt was itself a documented, funded, deliberate strategy — adapted from the tobacco industry's successful delay of regulatory action for decades by funding scientists willing to produce uncertainty.

Democracy-Next removes environmental standard-setting from political control. Standards are set by independent scientific bodies using the best available evidence. Assessment uses timeframes appropriate to the systems being measured — you cannot declare that climate change is a myth because this particular year was cold. You cannot dismiss ocean acidification because one measurement in one location was within historical range. The complexity and timescale of natural systems is respected in their measurement.

And no community bears a disproportionate burden of environmental harm. Fenceline communities — the low-income and minority communities that have historically been located adjacent to industrial facilities, refineries, and waste sites — have borne environmental costs they did not choose for the benefit of people who do not live near them. That pattern is unconstitutional under Democracy-Next.

ARTICLE IV — Healthy Environment

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to clean air, clean water, and sustainable ecosystems. The state shall protect the natural systems upon which human life depends from degradation by any cause, whether atmospheric, chemical, biological, radiological, or otherwise. No enumeration of specific threats shall be construed as limiting this protection to named causes. Environmental standards shall be set by independent scientific bodies using the best available evidence, assessed over timeframes appropriate to the systems being measured. No community shall bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm. The state shall pursue active restoration where natural systems have been degraded.

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The Rights Are Real Because They Can Be Enforced

Rights without enforcement are aspirations.

Enforcement without information is impossible.

Information without transparency is manipulation.

Democracy-Next builds all three into the architecture. The rights are justiciable — you can sue the state for failing to provide them. The government is required to publish comprehensive annual public reports on outcomes across all social rights, disaggregated by geography, income, and demographic group. And an independent Social Rights Implementation Authority monitors compliance, compels agencies to meet their obligations, and refers violations to courts.

The reporting requirement does several things simultaneously. It makes accountability visible — a government that is failing cannot hide that failure behind administrative

opacity. It provides the factual foundation for legal action. And it creates a feedback mechanism that allows the system to correct course before failures become catastrophic.

ARTICLE IV — Enforcement Mechanisms

The social rights enumerated in this Article are justiciable. Any person who has been denied a right guaranteed by this Article may bring a claim before a court of competent jurisdiction. The state shall bear the burden of demonstrating that it has met its constitutional obligations. The federal government shall publish comprehensive annual public reports on outcomes across all social rights including healthcare access and wait times, housing availability and affordability, educational quality and outcomes, UBI adequacy, food security, digital access, and environmental quality — all disaggregated by geography, income, and demographic group. The state's obligation to fund these rights shall not be conditioned on deficit levels or arbitrary fiscal targets. Funding shall be progressive, managed to prevent inflation rather than to achieve deficit reduction, and treated as a constitutional obligation of the highest priority.

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The Future Has Rights Too

Every previous constitution has been written entirely in the present tense. The rights it protects are the rights of living people. The interests it considers are the interests of existing voters. The future — the people who will inherit the consequences of every decision made today — has had no standing, no voice, no representation in any democratic process.

Democracy-Next creates that representation. The Office of Future Generations is a constitutional institution — not a policy program that can be defunded, not an advisory body that can be ignored, but a constitutionally mandated participant in regulatory proceedings and a constitutionally empowered plaintiff in federal courts. It speaks for the people who cannot yet speak for themselves.

And the 25-year review convention explicitly tasks each convening with assessing whether the development of law, science, and ethical understanding warrants expanded

legal rights for natural systems themselves. The constitution plants the seed. Future generations decide how far it grows.

ARTICLE VI — Office of Future Generations

An independent Office of Future Generations shall be established with constitutional mandate and funding. The Office shall participate as a party in regulatory proceedings that affect long-term environmental, fiscal, or social conditions; bring legal challenges on behalf of the interests of future generations in federal courts; publish annual assessments of the long-term trajectory of key indicators; and provide formal recommendations to the Senate and Ethics Board on legislation with significant long-term implications. The 25-Year Constitutional Review Convention shall specifically consider, at each convening, whether the development of law, science, and ethical understanding warrants the establishment of more robust legal rights for natural systems. This Constitution plants the seed. Future generations shall decide how far it grows.

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The Lesson Learned

The lessons in this book were not learned in dreams. They were learned in the fifty years of documented, deliberate dismantling of everything ordinary people built in the era they are still mourning. They were learned in the Ludlow Massacre and the Powell Memo and Citizens United and the PATCO firing and the Fairness Doctrine repeal and every other specific, documented, intentional move in the playbook that has produced the world as it currently is.

The architecture in Part Three is built from those lessons. Every provision addresses a specific documented failure of previous systems. Nothing in it is naive. Nothing in it assumes the good faith of the people who will attempt to subvert it. It is designed for the adversary it knows.

The documents are at the back of this book.

Read them.

Constitution

Revised Constitutional Articles I, II & III

Working Draft — May 2026

Preamble

We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, secure justice, liberty, and equality, promote sustainability, and ensure the welfare of present and future generations, do ordain and establish this Constitution. We seek to maximize freedom while minimizing inequality, and to create a society in which opportunity, dignity, and civic responsibility are shared by all.

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Article I — Bill of Rights (Freedoms)

The following rights are guaranteed to all persons within the jurisdiction of the United States. They shall not be abridged, suspended, or conditioned upon any status, citizenship, wealth, or circumstance.

Freedom of Expression

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to speak, write, publish, assemble, petition their government, and engage in digital discourse freely, without government censorship, subject only to restrictions narrowly necessary

to prevent imminent and demonstrable harm. Private entities retain the right to moderate content on their own platforms. No government at any level shall use the threat of regulation, taxation, or legal process to coerce private entities into suppressing speech on the government's behalf.

Right to Privacy

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to personal, digital, and data privacy. The collection, use, storage, or sale of personal data without explicit, informed, specific, and revocable consent is prohibited. Consent buried within general terms of service or obtained through coercion or deception shall not constitute valid consent under this provision.

All entities conducting business within, deriving profit from, or offering services to persons within the jurisdiction of the United States are subject to this provision regardless of their nation of incorporation, headquarters, or citizenship of ownership. There shall be no distinction between domestic and foreign entities with respect to the privacy rights of persons within this jurisdiction.

Bodily Autonomy

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to healthcare, reproductive choice, and full control over their own body. No law shall compel any person to carry, continue, or terminate a pregnancy against their will. No law shall require any medical procedure, treatment, or intervention without the free and informed consent of the person affected, except in narrowly defined circumstances of acute incapacity where a designated representative acts in the person's documented interests.

Due Process and Equal Protection

No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. All persons are entitled to fair and timely trials, equality under the law, access to legal representation, and protection from discrimination. The principle of equal protection

shall be interpreted expansively by courts to cover categories of persons as society evolves, and shall not be limited to categories enumerated at the time of this Constitution's adoption. No category of person shall be deemed inherently unworthy of equal protection under this provision.

Democratic Participation

All citizens of voting age shall have equal, unobstructed access to vote. Representation shall be fair, inclusive, and proportional to population. No law, regulation, administrative rule, or electoral practice shall be constructed or applied in ways that dilute, suppress, complicate, or obstruct the exercise of this right. Voting infrastructure shall be treated as essential public infrastructure and funded accordingly.

Right to Bear Arms

Citizens may possess arms for self-defense, hunting, and sport. No person, corporation, private entity, or organization may possess, deploy, or develop weapons designed primarily for military combat, capable of automatic fire, or capable of autonomous operation without direct human control of each individual discharge. The determination of which specific weapons fall within these categories shall be subject to ongoing judicial review as weapons technology evolves. The spirit of this provision is the protection of individual rights and community safety — not the arming of private power against the public.

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Article II — Bill of Responsibilities (Duties)

Rights without responsibilities produce a society of takers rather than builders. The following duties reflect the contract between the individual and the community that protects and supports them. This contract runs in both directions — the community owes the individual the rights enumerated in Article I; the individual owes the community the duties enumerated here.

Civic Service (Enforceable Duty)

All citizens shall contribute to society through a period of civic service. This duty is universal and shall not be conditioned upon participation in any public program, tied to economic status, or applied selectively to any group. The wealthy and the poor serve alike. Service is the shared obligation of citizenship.

Service may be fulfilled through military or civilian roles. Civilian service is the primary framework and includes but is not limited to: healthcare support, environmental restoration, education assistance, infrastructure development, emergency response, elder care, childcare support, community development, and digital infrastructure. Military service is one option among many, chosen voluntarily within the service framework.

The federal government shall establish and maintain an independent, non-partisan Civic Service Administration responsible for: classifying service roles across all sectors; assessing individual capacity through standardized, evidence-based, and non-discriminatory methods; matching citizens to appropriate service based on documented ability; and updating role classifications regularly as society and technology evolve.

No citizen shall be deemed unable to contribute. The Administration shall maintain an expansive classification of roles accessible to persons of all abilities, ensuring that persons with disabilities, chronic illness, or other limiting conditions are matched to meaningful roles within their capacity rather than excluded from service. Citizens shall have full rights of appeal regarding capacity assessments and service assignments. Appeals shall be heard by an independent body with no financial interest in the outcome.

Civic Engagement (Aspirational Guidance)

Citizens are encouraged to engage actively in civic and political life — to know their representatives, understand the institutions that govern them, participate in elections, and involve themselves in the ongoing project of democratic self-governance. Apathy and disengagement do not merely harm the individual — they weaken the entire fabric

of the democratic contract. An informed and active citizenry is not merely a civic virtue. It is the foundation upon which this Constitution rests and the only reliable defense against its capture.

Fiscal Responsibility (Enforceable Duty)

All persons and entities deriving income from, conducting business within, offering goods or services to persons within, or holding assets within the jurisdiction of the United States shall contribute proportionally to public services and infrastructure through progressive taxation. This obligation applies regardless of citizenship status, place of residence, or place of incorporation. No person or entity shall bear a disproportionately lesser tax burden than those of lesser means.

All income generated from American consumers, through American infrastructure, or by workers within American jurisdiction shall be subject to taxation at American rates regardless of where the earning entity is legally domiciled. Corporate structures, subsidiary arrangements, intellectual property transfers, and other financial instruments designed primarily to reduce tax obligation without altering actual economic activity shall not be recognized as valid bases for reduced tax liability.

Political lobbying through any form of wealth transfer, gift, benefit, or thing of value is prohibited. Any person may petition their representative through speech, writing, or public assembly. Any elected or appointed official who solicits, accepts, or benefits from any transfer of value in connection with their official duties commits a felony and shall be removed from office and permanently disqualified from public service.

Duty of Truth in Public Office (Enforceable Duty)

Persons holding elected or appointed public office shall have a constitutional duty of honest dealing with the public they serve. Deliberate and material deception of the public on matters of public concern — including but not limited to the conduct of elections, matters of public health, the reasons for military action, and the state of the public finances — shall constitute a violation of this duty and grounds for immediate removal from office and permanent disqualification from future public service.

Environmental Stewardship (Enforceable Duty)

All persons share a duty of stewardship toward the natural environment that sustains human life. No person or entity shall knowingly degrade air, water, soil, or ecosystems in ways that impose costs or harms on present or future generations without full accountability, remediation proportional to the harm caused, and restitution to affected communities. This duty applies to all entities operating within or affecting the jurisdiction of the United States regardless of where the degrading activity physically occurs.

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Article III — Economic Justice (Minimizing Inequality)

Extreme inequality of wealth and income is incompatible with functional democracy. When private wealth reaches sufficient scale it becomes private power — capable of purchasing political outcomes, capturing regulatory bodies, and overriding the democratic will of the population. The provisions of this Article are designed not to punish success but to prevent the accumulation of power that makes democracy impossible.

Pay Ratio Cap

No organization may compensate any individual — including executives, founders, board members, or any person in any role — at a total rate exceeding twenty times the total compensation of the lowest-compensated person whose labor benefits that organization.

Compensation shall be defined as total remuneration in all forms including but not limited to: salary, bonuses, commissions, stock grants, stock options at time of vesting, deferred compensation, retirement contributions, housing allowances, transportation benefits, personal use of company assets, and any other transfer of economic value. No

form of compensation shall be excluded from this calculation through creative accounting, deferred structure, or novel financial instrument.

The ratio shall apply to all persons whose labor benefits the organization regardless of their employment classification — including employees, independent contractors, gig workers, and workers employed through subsidiary or third-party arrangements — where such persons are economically dependent upon the organization or perform labor integrated into its ongoing operations. Organizations may not evade this provision by reclassifying workers or by outsourcing low-wage functions to nominally separate entities. This provision shall not extend to genuine arms-length vendors who operate independent businesses serving multiple clients and who are not economically dependent upon the organization. The determination shall turn on economic dependence and operational integration, not on contractual label.

For organizations with workers in multiple countries, the ratio shall be calculated using purchasing-power-adjusted compensation figures so that geographic wage differences do not create a false floor that enables disproportionate executive compensation.

If any organization earns revenue within the jurisdiction of the United States, all persons whose labor contributed to that revenue — regardless of their physical location — shall be included in the ratio calculation.

Wealth Ceiling

The accumulation of private wealth beyond a level that enables the private exercise of public power is incompatible with democratic self-governance. No individual shall accumulate or hold wealth exceeding one thousand times the current median household wealth as measured by the most recent Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finances or equivalent official measure. This ceiling shall adjust automatically with each new official measurement requiring no legislative action to remain current.

Wealth shall be defined comprehensively to include all assets in all forms: liquid financial assets, real property, ownership stakes in private and public companies, intellectual property, collectibles, and any other store of economic value. Valuation of

non-liquid assets shall be conducted annually by an independent federal assessment body using standardized methods.

Persons whose wealth exceeds the ceiling shall have a compliance period of three years to bring their holdings into compliance through spending, donation, investment in productive enterprises, or transfer to public benefit. Wealth that remains above the ceiling at the end of the compliance period shall be subject to a confiscatory annual tax until compliance is achieved.

Wealth above fifty percent of the ceiling that is held in non-productive forms — defined as assets generating no employment, no goods or services, and no measurable economic activity beyond financial return — shall be subject to an annual hoarding tax designed to encourage deployment into productive economic activity. The purpose of this provision is not to punish wealth but to ensure that accumulated capital flows into the economy rather than being extracted from it.

Trusts, foundations, and other legal structures shall not be used to circumvent the wealth ceiling. Wealth held in any structure for the primary benefit of an individual or their immediate family shall be attributed to that individual for purposes of ceiling calculation. The burden of demonstrating that a trust or foundation serves genuine public benefit rather than private wealth preservation shall rest with the trust or foundation.

Inherited wealth shall be subject to the wealth ceiling of the recipient. No individual may receive inherited or gifted wealth that would bring their total holdings above the ceiling. Excess inherited wealth shall be subject to a progressive inheritance tax with proceeds directed to the public benefit fund established under Article IV.

Anti-Speculation Clause

Housing, land, water, energy, food systems, medical resources, communications infrastructure, and all other resources essential to human life, health, dignity, or participation in society shall be treated primarily as necessities for human use rather than as financial instruments for private profit.

The determination of which resources qualify as essential shall be subject to judicial review as technology, society, and human needs evolve. No enumeration of essential resources in statute or regulation shall be construed as limiting the application of this principle to resources not yet discovered, developed, or recognized as essential at the time of such enumeration.

Ownership of essential resources in quantities beyond personal or reasonable commercial use for the purpose of extracting financial returns from human necessity is prohibited. Federal authority shall establish ownership limits, transaction rules, and use requirements for categories of essential resources, subject to the principle that no person or entity may profit from the artificial restriction of access to what human beings require to live.

"Let Them Leave" Clause

Any person or entity is free to relocate, reincorporate, or transfer operations outside the jurisdiction of the United States. However, assets, infrastructure, intellectual property, and economic value created within, rooted in, or dependent upon the United States system — including its laws, its consumers, its workforce, its public infrastructure, and its institutions — shall remain subject to United States jurisdiction regardless of where their owner relocates.

No person or entity may expatriate assets that were built upon, enabled by, or derived from the American system without full settlement of all tax obligations, worker obligations, and public benefit obligations accrued during the period of operation within this jurisdiction. The principle is simple: you may take your ball and go home. You may not take ours.

Intellectual property registered under United States law by entities that subsequently cease operating within this jurisdiction shall either remain subject to United States licensing requirements or shall enter the public domain, ensuring that the American market is not denied access to innovations developed with the benefit of American legal protections.

When a corporation ceases operations within this jurisdiction, the workers of that corporation shall have the first right to form a worker cooperative and continue operations using the assets left behind, at fair market valuation. This provision ensures that the economic vacuum created by corporate departure is filled by the workers who built the enterprise rather than by competing concentrated interests.

Workers' Rights

All persons performing work within the jurisdiction of the United States, regardless of employment classification, citizenship status, visa status, or method of engagement, shall have the following rights:

The right to organize collectively and bargain as a group with any entity that benefits from their labor, regardless of whether they are classified as employees, independent contractors, gig workers, or any other category. No classification of work arrangement shall be used to deny workers the right to collective action.

The right to wages and total compensation sufficient to meet basic human needs as determined by independent assessment updated regularly to reflect actual costs of living. No worker within this jurisdiction shall receive compensation below this floor regardless of their citizenship status or classification.

The right to safe working conditions. The federal authority responsible for workplace safety shall be funded sufficiently, staffed independently, and empowered to enforce safety standards without interference from the industries it regulates. The revolving door between workplace safety enforcement and the industries being regulated is prohibited.

The right to organize, strike, and engage in collective action without retaliation, termination, or legal penalty. Any retaliation against workers for exercising these rights shall constitute a violation of this Constitution.

Anti-Extraction Clause

Financial and commercial activity that generates private profit solely through the extraction or redistribution of existing wealth — without creating productive economic value, goods, services, employment, or innovation — is a net negative to the public welfare and subject to regulation and dissolution.

Any person may petition a federal economic public interest authority to investigate whether any organization operating within this jurisdiction is generating private profit without commensurate public benefit. Organizations found to be primarily extractive rather than productive shall be subject to graduated remedies up to and including dissolution and redistribution of assets to workers and public benefit.

The burden of demonstrating public benefit shall rest with the organization. An organization that cannot demonstrate that its activities create goods, services, employment at living wages, or genuine innovation shall be presumed to be primarily extractive. Financial returns alone shall not constitute public benefit for purposes of this provision.

Intellectual Property and Antitrust

No person or entity shall accumulate market power sufficient to eliminate meaningful competition in any essential sector of the economy. The purpose of patent, copyright, and other intellectual property protections is to reward innovation and incentivize creation — not to enable permanent monopoly extraction. The duration and scope of intellectual property protections shall be the minimum necessary to achieve this purpose and shall not be extended for the primary benefit of existing holders at the expense of public access.

Essential medicines, medical treatments, and public health interventions developed with any public funding shall not be subject to pricing that places them beyond the reach of the population they were developed to serve.

Article IV — Social Rights (Freedom From Want)

A society that permits its members to suffer preventable deprivation is not a free society — it is merely a society that has decided whose suffering is acceptable. The rights enumerated in this Article reflect the collective determination that no person within this jurisdiction shall be left without the basic conditions of a dignified human life. These rights are not aspirations. They are enforceable commitments. The state shall be held to account for their delivery.

Benefits under this Article shall be proportional to contribution to the social system. The state shall ensure that no person falls below a humanitarian baseline regardless of contribution history, while ensuring that full social benefits reflect genuine participation in and contribution to the community that provides them. No person may arrive within this jurisdiction and immediately claim full long-term benefits without a period of contribution. Emergency humanitarian protections apply universally regardless of contribution status.

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Healthcare

Universal Coverage: Healthcare in the United States shall be universal, comprehensive, and free at point of service. No person shall be billed, charged, or denied care at the moment of receiving it. The funding of healthcare shall come through progressive public taxation, not through individual payment at the point of need.

Scope of Coverage: Coverage shall include without limitation: preventive care, primary care, specialist care, emergency care, surgical care, mental health services, substance use treatment, reproductive healthcare including contraception and abortion services, dental care, vision care, hearing care, long-term care, palliative care, and end of life care. No category of medically necessary care shall be excluded from public coverage on the basis of cost alone.

Mental Health Parity: Mental health and substance use services shall be funded, staffed, and delivered at parity with physical health services. The historic underfunding and under-provision of mental health care is a public health crisis and shall be treated as such. Wait times for mental health services shall be subject to the same standards as wait times for physical health services.

Elimination of Private Health Insurance as Primary Delivery Vehicle:

Healthcare is a public good delivered through public infrastructure. Private insurance as a substitute for or primary vehicle of healthcare delivery is prohibited. The state shall provide a transition program for workers displaced from the private insurance industry, including retraining, income support, and priority placement in the expanded public healthcare workforce. Supplemental private insurance covering services beyond the public standard — such as private rooms, elective cosmetic procedures, or enhanced amenities — may exist but shall not be used to create a two-tier system in which wealth determines access to medically necessary care. Wealth shall not purchase priority in the queue for essential treatment.

Coverage by Status:

Citizens and permanent residents shall receive full universal healthcare coverage as described in this Article.

Long-term visa holders and workers contributing to the social system through labor and taxation shall receive full coverage commensurate with their period of contribution.

Short-term visitors and tourists shall receive emergency care free at point of service without exception. No person shall be turned away from emergency treatment or billed at the moment of emergency regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.

Non-emergency care for short-term visitors shall require travel insurance or payment arrangements made prior to or following — never during — the provision of care.

Undocumented persons shall receive emergency care without exception and without immigration consequence at the point of care. The provision of emergency care shall not be used as a mechanism for immigration enforcement. Access to non-emergency care

for undocumented persons shall be determined by federal statute consistent with the humanitarian principles of this Constitution.

Drug Pricing: Essential medicines, vaccines, and medical treatments shall be priced at levels accessible to the public healthcare system. No patent or intellectual property protection shall be used to price an essential medicine beyond the reach of the population it was developed to serve. Medicines developed with any public funding shall be subject to public pricing requirements as a condition of that funding.

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Housing

Every person within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to stable, secure housing. A person who does not know where they will sleep tonight cannot participate in democracy, hold a job, raise children, maintain health, or contribute to their community. Housing insecurity is not merely a personal misfortune — it is a public health crisis, a safety crisis, and a democracy crisis. The state shall treat it accordingly.

Minimum Standard: All housing provided or subsidized under this Article shall meet at minimum the following conditions: structural integrity providing protection from the elements; potable running water and sanitation facilities; electrical service; heating and cooling sufficient to maintain safe temperatures in the local climate; a lockable private space providing personal security and dignity. No person shall be compelled to live without these conditions. Any shelter that fails to provide them, regardless of its form, does not satisfy this standard. The state shall ensure this floor is met through whatever combination of public provision, subsidy, cooperative housing, and regulation is necessary

Affordability Standard: Housing costs shall not constitute an undue burden on household income. The federal Civic Service Administration, in coordination with housing authorities, shall maintain a regularly updated affordability standard calibrated to actual local costs of living. This standard shall be binding on all public housing programs and shall serve as the benchmark for housing subsidy calculations. Geographic variation in housing costs shall be reflected in locally calibrated standards

so that the right to affordable housing is meaningful in high-cost areas where it is needed most.

Tenure Security: The right to housing is a right to stable, secure tenure — whether owned or rented. No person shall be subject to arbitrary eviction without due process, adequate notice, and access to alternative housing. Eviction shall be a last resort and shall not be used as an instrument of economic pressure or discrimination.

Anti-Homelessness Obligation: The existence of homelessness within this jurisdiction represents a failure of the state's constitutional obligation under this Article. The state shall maintain programs, infrastructure, and funding sufficient to ensure that no person is compelled to sleep without shelter. The justiciable nature of this right means that any person without housing may bring a claim against the state for failure to meet this obligation.

Connection to Anti-Speculation: The anti-speculation provisions of Article III apply directly to housing. Housing is a human necessity, not a financial instrument. The state shall regulate ownership, transaction, and pricing practices that artificially restrict housing supply or drive housing costs beyond the reach of ordinary residents.

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Education

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have access to free, high-quality education from primary through higher and vocational levels. Education is the foundation of democratic participation, economic mobility, and human flourishing. The quality of education a person receives shall not be determined by the wealth of the community in which they happen to live.

Civic Service Exchange: Public higher and vocational education shall be funded through a civic service exchange. Persons who wish to pursue higher or vocational education at public institutions shall contribute a period of civic service equivalent in duration to the education they receive: two years of service for vocational or trade programs, four years for bachelor's degree programs, with extended service options for

advanced degrees. This exchange ensures that education is earned through contribution to the community rather than purchased through wealth or debt.

Public Institutions Only: The civic service exchange applies to public educational institutions. Private institutions including universities, colleges, and trade schools may continue to operate and charge tuition as they choose. The public system shall be funded and staffed sufficiently that private education is a genuine choice for those who prefer it rather than a functional necessity for competitive employment or social advancement. The existence of excellent public education is the most effective long-term leveling mechanism available to a democratic society.

Equity of Quality: The quality of public education shall not vary based on the wealth of the community in which a school is located. Federal funding mechanisms shall correct for disparities produced by property tax-based school funding. Every child in every zip code shall have access to qualified teachers, adequate facilities, current materials, and comprehensive support services regardless of local tax base.

Scope: Free public education includes primary education, secondary education, vocational and trade education, bachelor's degree programs, and adult and lifelong learning opportunities. The state shall ensure that education remains accessible at all life stages — a person who did not complete their education at the conventional age shall not be permanently excluded from educational opportunity.

Student Debt Transitional Justice: Persons holding educational debt incurred prior to the establishment of universal public education under this Constitution shall be offered the opportunity to discharge that debt through civic service at the same rate offered to current students: one year of qualifying civic service for each year of education whose debt is being discharged. This transitional program shall remain available for a period of ten years from the date of enactment. Persons who complete qualifying service shall have the corresponding debt discharged in full. Remaining educational debt held by persons who did not participate in the transitional program shall be subject to congressional review at the end of the ten-year period. No person shall be permanently excluded from the transitional program due to disability,

caregiving obligations, or other circumstances beyond their control — alternative service arrangements shall be available.

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Basic Income and Retirement Security

Basic Income and Retirement Security

Every person within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to a basic income sufficient to meet essential needs. This income shall be structured so that those of lesser means receive support and those of greater means contribute, and so that no person who works is left worse off than one who does not.

Every person shall have the right to security in old age. No person who reaches retirement shall fall below a dignity floor sufficient to meet essential needs, regardless of their history of contribution. Benefits above that floor shall reflect each person's contribution over their working life.

The detailed structure, levels, and administration of basic income and retirement security shall be established by the New Deal 2.0 framework, consistent with these principles.

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Food Security

No person within the jurisdiction of the United States shall go without adequate nutrition. Food security is the most basic prerequisite of human life and dignity. The state's obligation to ensure it does not diminish during periods of agricultural disruption, supply chain failure, or national emergency — it intensifies.

Strategic Reserves: The state shall maintain strategic food reserves and emergency distribution infrastructure sufficient to ensure that no person goes without adequate

nutrition during periods of agricultural failure, drought, supply chain disruption, or other crisis. These reserves shall be maintained at levels determined by independent scientific and logistics assessment, updated regularly, and treated as essential national infrastructure.

Crisis Protocols: The state shall maintain and regularly exercise emergency food distribution protocols capable of reaching all persons within the jurisdiction during crisis conditions. These protocols shall account for geographic remoteness, transportation disruption, and the needs of persons with limited mobility or special dietary requirements. Rationing during genuine scarcity shall be conducted equitably and transparently with priority given to nutritional need.

Agricultural Resilience: The state shall invest in agricultural systems that are resilient to climate disruption, drought, flooding, and other foreseeable threats to food production. Dependence on single-crop monoculture, concentrated supply chains, or geographically limited production that creates systemic fragility shall be treated as a national security concern and addressed through diversification, research, and strategic investment.

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Digital Access

Reliable, high-speed internet access is no longer a luxury — it is essential infrastructure for participation in education, employment, healthcare, civic life, and democratic engagement. A person without internet access is effectively excluded from full participation in modern society. The state shall treat digital access as essential public infrastructure equivalent in importance to roads, electricity, and clean water.

Universal Provision: All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have access to reliable, high-speed internet service. The state shall ensure this through public provision, regulated private provision, or subsidy, using whatever combination produces universal coverage at affordable or free rates. Digital access shall not be a luxury available only to those who can afford commercial rates.

Resilient Infrastructure: The state shall maintain resilient communications infrastructure including emergency broadcast and internet capacity capable of functioning independently of commercial networks during crisis conditions. Access to emergency information, government services, and essential communications shall be guaranteed regardless of commercial network status. The right to digital access does not diminish during crisis — the state's obligation to provide it intensifies.

Digital Literacy: The state shall ensure that public education includes comprehensive digital literacy — the skills necessary to participate safely, effectively, and critically in digital life. Access to infrastructure without the skills to use it does not constitute genuine digital inclusion.

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Healthy Environment

All persons within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have the right to clean air, clean water, and sustainable ecosystems. The natural systems that sustain human life — atmospheric, hydrological, biological, and geological — are not resources to be exploited without limit but commons to be protected for present and future generations.

Scope of Protection: The state shall protect the natural systems upon which human life depends from degradation by any cause, whether atmospheric, chemical, biological, radiological, or otherwise. No enumeration of specific threats or pollutants shall be construed as limiting this protection to named causes. Novel pollutants, emerging threats, and harms not yet identified at the time of this Constitution's adoption are equally subject to this protection.

Scientific Standard: Environmental standards, protection requirements, and restoration targets shall be set by independent scientific bodies using the best available evidence. Assessment of environmental conditions shall use timeframes and methodologies appropriate to the systems being measured — short-term natural variation shall not be used to obscure long-term trends, and assessment periods shall be determined by scientific consensus rather than political convenience. The complexity

and timescale of natural systems shall be respected in their measurement and management.

Environmental Justice: No community shall bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm. The siting of polluting facilities, waste disposal sites, and other environmental hazards shall not be concentrated in communities based on their income level or racial composition. Environmental enforcement shall be applied equitably and with equal vigor regardless of the wealth or political influence of the responsible party or the demographic characteristics of the affected community. Historic environmental injustices shall be subject to remediation.

Restoration Obligation: Where natural systems have been degraded, the state shall pursue active restoration to the extent scientifically feasible. The obligation is not merely to prevent further harm but to repair damage already done. Entities responsible for environmental degradation shall bear the primary cost of restoration proportional to their contribution to the harm.

Future Generations: Environmental protection obligations extend to future generations who cannot speak for themselves in present democratic processes. All major policy decisions shall include assessment of long-term environmental impact. The interests of persons not yet born shall be represented in environmental decision-making through an independent Office of Future Generations empowered to participate in regulatory proceedings and bring legal challenges on behalf of the interests of those who will inherit the consequences of present decisions.

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Enforcement Mechanisms

Justiciability: The social rights enumerated in this Article are justiciable. Any person who has been denied a right guaranteed by this Article may bring a claim before a court of competent jurisdiction. The state shall bear the burden of demonstrating that it has met its constitutional obligations. Courts shall have authority to order specific performance, structural injunctions, and systemic remedies where individual rights violations reflect systemic state failure.

Annual Public Reporting: The federal government shall publish comprehensive annual public reports on outcomes across all social rights guaranteed by this Article, including: healthcare access, quality, and wait time data disaggregated by geography, income, and demographic group; housing availability, affordability, and homelessness data; educational quality and outcome data disaggregated by community wealth; UBI adequacy relative to actual costs of living; food security indicators; digital access coverage; and environmental quality measurements. These reports shall be produced by independent bodies, subject to public audit, and published in formats accessible to all members of the public.

Funding Obligation: The state's obligation to provide the rights in this Article shall not be conditioned on deficit levels or arbitrary fiscal targets. Funding shall be progressive, shall be managed to prevent inflation rather than to achieve deficit reduction, and shall be treated as a constitutional obligation of the highest priority. A government deficit that represents the state meeting its constitutional obligations to its people is not a failure — it is the system working as intended. The state's obligation to fund these rights shall not be subordinated to the preferences of financial markets or the demands of creditors.

Implementation Oversight: An independent Social Rights Implementation Authority shall be established with the power to monitor state compliance with the rights in this Article, compel agencies to meet their obligations, refer violations to courts, and report publicly on the state of social rights fulfillment. This body shall be independent of the executive branch, funded by constitutional mandate, and staffed by persons with no financial interest in the outcomes they oversee.

Article V — Governance & Democracy

Democracy is not a destination. It is a practice. The architecture of governance determines whether that practice serves the people who participate in it or the interests

that have learned to capture it. The provisions of this Article are designed from first principles to make capture structurally difficult, representation genuinely proportional, and accountability genuinely enforceable. Several provisions represent significant departures from prior American governance architecture. They are departures made deliberately, on the basis of evidence about what has failed and why.

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1. Structure of the Federal Legislature

The bicameral legislature of the prior constitutional order — consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives — is replaced by a reformed bicameral structure consisting of a reformed Senate and a newly established Ethics Board. The House of Representatives is dissolved.

Rationale: The House of Representatives was designed as the people's chamber — directly elected, proportional to population, closer to voters than the Senate. In practice it became a gerrymandering instrument, a perpetual fundraising treadmill requiring election every two years, and a body where party leadership rather than individual members controlled legislative outcomes. The reformed Senate, with proportional multi-member elections by state, fulfills the House's original purpose more effectively than the House did. The Ethics Board fulfills a function that no prior chamber performed: independent ethical review of legislation against constitutional principles. No legislative function is lost. Several dysfunctions are eliminated by design.

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2. The Senate

Composition: The Senate shall consist of members elected from each state in numbers proportional to that state's population as measured by the most recent federal census. Each state shall have a minimum of one senator. The total size of the Senate shall be determined by federal statute and adjusted following each census to reflect population changes.

Election Method — Single Transferable Vote: Senators shall be elected through a Single Transferable Vote system conducted statewide. Each state shall hold a single statewide election for all of its senate seats simultaneously. Voters shall rank candidates in order of preference. Seats shall be filled through ranked choice elimination rounds until all seats for that state are filled. This system ensures that the composition of each state's senate delegation reflects the genuine political diversity of that state's population rather than producing winner-take-all distortion. A state whose population is sixty percent one political persuasion and forty percent another shall produce a senate delegation that reflects those proportions rather than awarding all seats to the majority.

No Party Designation: No party affiliation, label, or designation shall appear on any ballot. Candidates shall appear by name and stated platform only. Voters shall evaluate candidates as individuals rather than as party representatives. Political parties shall receive no official government recognition, no public funding, and no ballot access privileges. Persons of similar political views may associate, coordinate, and endorse each other as individuals — such association is protected expression. No organizational entity shall receive the constitutional privileges of political participation reserved for natural persons.

Terms: Senators shall serve six-year terms. Terms shall be staggered so that approximately one third of senate seats are contested every two years, ensuring continuity of institutional knowledge while maintaining regular democratic accountability.

Consecutive Term Limit: No person shall serve more than two consecutive terms in the Senate. Following two consecutive terms, a mandatory cooling off period of one full senate term shall elapse before the person may seek the same office again. No lifetime limit shall be placed on total senate service — the people retain the right to return any person they find genuinely excellent to office after the required cooling off period. The purpose of the consecutive limit is to prevent entrenchment, not to permanently exclude those whom the people wish to return.

Fitness for Office: All candidates for the Senate shall undergo an independent fitness assessment prior to appearing on any ballot. This assessment shall evaluate cognitive

function, physical capacity to perform the duties of office, and absence of conditions that would prevent effective service. The assessment shall be conducted by an independent Federal Fitness Assessment Board consisting of medical and psychological professionals appointed through a process designed to prevent political influence. The assessment shall apply equally to all candidates regardless of age. No hard age cutoff shall be imposed — the assessment shall determine fitness without reference to age as a proxy. As medical science and human longevity evolve, the standards of the Assessment Board shall evolve with them.

Legislative Authority: The Senate shall have the authority to introduce, debate, amend, and pass legislation. All legislation must pass the Senate before proceeding to the Ethics Board for review. The Senate shall also ratify treaties, confirm judicial appointments through the process described in this Article, and conduct oversight of the executive branch.

Single Subject Rule: No bill shall address more than one subject. The subject of each bill shall be clearly stated in its title. No provision unrelated to the stated subject shall be included in any bill. Omnibus legislation combining unrelated subjects is prohibited. This provision eliminates the practice of hiding controversial or special-interest provisions within large bills whose overall passage is considered necessary.

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3. The Ethics Board

The Ethics Board is a genuinely new institution in democratic governance. No equivalent exists in any prior constitutional order. Its purpose is to separate the ethical review of legislation from the political process of passing it — to create a body whose sole function is to ask, of every law proposed: does this serve the public good, honor the rights of all persons, and reflect the ethical commitments of this Constitution? The Ethics Board does not replace political judgment. It holds political judgment accountable to ethical principle.

Composition: The Ethics Board shall consist of fifteen members elected through a single national election using ranked choice voting. Ethics Board members are elected

by the entire national population rather than by state or district, representing the national ethical conscience rather than geographic or partisan interests. Candidates for the Ethics Board shall demonstrate qualification through prior experience in law, philosophy, ethics, public service, or related fields as determined by independent qualification review. Meeting the qualification standard places a candidate on the ballot — the people then choose among qualified candidates.

Terms: Ethics Board members shall serve nine-year non-renewable terms, staggered so that five members are elected every three years. Non-renewable terms ensure that Ethics Board members serve without concern for re-election and therefore without political incentive to favor any faction. They serve the constitution, not a constituency.

No Party Designation: Ethics Board members shall appear on ballots by name and stated ethical philosophy only. No party designation shall appear. The same prohibition on organizational political participation that applies to Senate elections applies to Ethics Board elections.

Fitness Assessment: Ethics Board candidates shall undergo the same independent fitness assessment as Senate candidates.

Legislative Role: Legislation passed by the Senate shall proceed to the Ethics Board for review. The Ethics Board shall evaluate each bill against the following constitutional standards:

Whether the bill violates any right guaranteed by Articles I or IV of this Constitution.

Whether the bill concentrates power, wealth, or resources in ways prohibited by Article III.

Whether the bill primarily serves private extraction rather than public benefit as defined by Article III's Anti-Extraction Clause.

Whether the bill adequately considers the interests of future generations as required by Article VI.

Whether the bill treats all persons with equal dignity and equal protection as required by Article I.

Whether the bill is consistent with the ethical principles established by prior Ethics Board precedent.

Ethical Veto: If the Ethics Board finds that a bill violates one or more of the above standards, it shall issue a written Ethical Finding specifically identifying the provision or provisions at issue, the constitutional standard violated, and the reasoning for the finding. The bill shall be returned to the Senate with the Ethical Finding attached.

Senate Override: The Senate may override an Ethical Finding by a vote of two thirds of its members. An override vote shall be recorded and published as part of the permanent legislative record, along with the specific Ethical Finding being overridden. No override shall be permitted without the Senate explicitly acknowledging the specific ethical objection and stating its reasons for proceeding despite it. This provision does not prevent the Senate from passing legislation the Ethics Board has found ethically problematic — it ensures that when it does so, the public record reflects the ethical cost of that choice.

Straight Passage: If the Ethics Board finds no ethical objection to a bill, it shall pass the Ethics Board without amendment and proceed to the President for signature.

Ethics Board Initiated Legislation: The Ethics Board may also initiate legislation related to the implementation and enforcement of constitutional ethical principles. Such legislation shall proceed to the Senate for passage by the same process as Senate-initiated legislation, with the roles reversed — the Senate reviewing Ethics Board initiated bills and able to amend or reject them.

Ethical Precedent: The Ethics Board shall publish all findings, reasoning, and decisions as public record. Over time these decisions shall constitute a body of constitutional ethical jurisprudence — a living record of how the nation's ethical commitments have been interpreted and applied. This body of precedent shall be binding on future Ethics Board decisions unless explicitly reconsidered and overruled by a supermajority of the Board with published reasoning.

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4. The President

Election: The President shall be elected by direct national popular vote. Every citizen's vote shall carry equal weight regardless of the state in which they reside. The Electoral College is abolished. Presidential elections shall use ranked choice voting — voters shall rank candidates in order of preference and the winner shall be the candidate who achieves a majority of votes after ranked choice elimination rounds. A plurality shall not be sufficient for election.

Consecutive Term Limit: No person shall serve more than two consecutive presidential terms of four years each. Following two consecutive terms a mandatory cooling off period of one full presidential term shall elapse before the person may seek the office again. No lifetime limit shall be placed on total presidential service. The people retain the right to return any person they find genuinely excellent to the presidency after the required cooling off period.

Fitness Assessment: All presidential candidates shall undergo the same independent fitness assessment as Senate and Ethics Board candidates, conducted by the Federal Fitness Assessment Board. Results shall be published publicly prior to the election.

Minimum Age: The minimum age for the presidency shall be thirty five years. No maximum age shall be imposed — fitness shall be determined by assessment not by chronology.

Executive Authority: The President shall serve as head of the executive branch, responsible for implementing and enforcing the laws passed by the Senate and approved by the Ethics Board. The President shall serve as commander in chief of the armed forces subject to the war powers provisions of this Constitution. The President shall nominate federal judges subject to Senate confirmation by the process described in this Article.

Emergency Executive Orders: In cases of declared national emergency the President may issue temporary constitutional executive orders that modify the application of specific statutory provisions to address the emergency. Such orders shall be transmitted to the Senate within 24 hours of issuance for mandatory review; require

ratification by a two thirds Senate vote within 30 days or they shall expire automatically; expire in any case after 90 days unless renewed through the same process; be subject to immediate judicial review at the request of any senator or any affected person. No emergency executive order shall suspend, modify, or abridge any right enumerated in Article I or Article IV of this Constitution. The rights of persons are not suspendable by executive action under any circumstances.

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5. The Federal Judiciary

Supreme Court Composition: The Supreme Court of the United States shall consist of nine justices serving fixed terms of eighteen years. Terms shall be staggered so that one justice is appointed approximately every two years. No justice shall serve more than one eighteen-year term on the Supreme Court.

Appointment Process: Supreme Court justices shall be nominated by a Federal Judicial Nomination Commission consisting of: three members selected by the President; three members selected by the Senate through ranked choice vote of the full Senate; three members selected by the Ethics Board; and three members selected by a randomly convened citizen assembly of one hundred persons selected by the same process as federal jury duty. The Commission shall evaluate candidates on the basis of legal qualification, judicial temperament, demonstrated commitment to constitutional principles, and absence of conflicts of interest. The Commission shall forward a slate of three qualified candidates to the Senate for confirmation. The Senate shall confirm one of the three candidates by a simple majority vote. The President shall not have individual appointment power over Supreme Court justices — the Commission process is designed to prevent any single political actor from capturing the court.

Fitness Assessment: All Supreme Court candidates shall undergo the independent fitness assessment conducted by the Federal Fitness Assessment Board. Minimum age for Supreme Court appointment shall be thirty five years. No maximum age shall be imposed.

Post-Service Restrictions: Upon completion of their eighteen-year term, former Supreme Court justices shall be subject to the following restrictions for a period of ten years: no private legal practice before any federal court; no employment by any entity that appeared before the Court during their tenure; no lobbying or political consulting of any kind; no paid advisory roles with any entity whose interests were affected by their decisions. Former justices may teach, write, engage in public interest legal work, and participate in civic life without restriction. These provisions are designed to ensure that Supreme Court service is a public trust rather than a career stepping stone.

Lower Federal Courts: The structure, composition, and jurisdiction of lower federal courts shall be established by federal statute consistent with the principles of this Constitution. All federal judges shall be subject to the same appointment principles of independence from single-actor control, the same fitness assessment requirements, and the same post-service restrictions as Supreme Court justices, scaled appropriately to the level of the court. The revolving door between federal judicial service and private legal practice shall be regulated to prevent the capture of the judiciary by the interests that appear before it.

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6. Elections and Campaign Finance

Ranked Choice Voting: All federal elections — for the Senate, the Ethics Board, and the Presidency — shall use ranked choice voting. Voters shall rank candidates in order of preference, and seats shall be filled through successive elimination of the lowest-ranked candidates until a winner achieves majority support.

Equal Public Campaign Financing: All candidates who qualify for federal election ballots shall receive an equal public campaign allocation. No candidate shall receive more public funding than any other candidate for the same office. No candidate shall accept private campaign contributions of any kind — from individuals, organizations, corporations, unions, political action committees, or any other source. All campaign spending shall come from the equal public allocation.

The Allocation as Fitness Test: The equal public allocation is not merely a financing mechanism. It is a test of fitness for public office. How a candidate allocates limited resources — which messages they prioritize, which communities they invest in reaching, which strategies they employ — reveals something genuine about their judgment, values, and capacity for stewardship of public resources. A candidate who manages their equal allocation wisely demonstrates the same skills required to manage public resources wisely. This is by design.

Qualification for Public Allocation: Candidates shall qualify for the public allocation by demonstrating genuine public support through a petition process — a minimum number of verified signatures from eligible voters within the relevant jurisdiction. The signature threshold shall be set at a level that is genuinely achievable by a candidate without financial resources but high enough to demonstrate real public interest. Signature gathering shall be the primary barrier to ballot access — not filing fees, not party endorsement, not prior electoral experience.

Allocation Amount: The amount of the public campaign allocation for each office shall be determined by an independent Federal Elections Commission and adjusted each election cycle based on demonstrated costs of effective communication with voters. The allocation shall be sufficient for a candidate to run a genuinely competitive campaign without private funding. It shall not be so large as to enable wasteful spending or so small as to render campaigns invisible.

Dark Money Prohibition: All political spending of any kind shall be traceable to its ultimate human source. No political expenditure shall be anonymous. Shell organizations, nonprofit political organizations, social welfare organizations, and any other entity that obscures the ultimate human source of political spending are prohibited from any political expenditure. Any political spending that cannot be traced to a specific natural person shall be treated as an illegal contribution and subject to criminal penalty.

Truth in Political Advertising: Deliberate and demonstrably false statements of material fact made in political advertising or political communications shall not be protected political speech. Opinion, hyperbole, and argument — however heated —

remain fully protected. False statements of verifiable fact — claims about an opponent's voting record, public statements, or actions that are demonstrably untrue — are not protected and shall be subject to correction orders and financial penalties. The Federal Elections Commission shall maintain an independent fact-checking division empowered to review political advertising, issue public corrections, and impose penalties for documented deliberate falsehoods.

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7. Anti-Capture and Political Integrity

Only Natural Persons in Politics: Only natural persons — individual living human beings — shall have the right to political participation including campaign contribution, political advertising, electoral endorsement, and direct political advocacy. No organization of any kind — whether corporation, union, trade association, nonprofit organization, religious institution, political action committee, or any other collective entity — shall engage in political spending, electoral endorsement, or campaign activity in any form.

For purposes of this provision, a natural person is defined as an individual living human being. No legal fiction, collective entity, artificial intelligence, non-human entity, or future novel category of entity shall qualify as a natural person for political participation purposes regardless of any other legal status they may hold. This definition shall be interpreted strictly and shall not be expanded by judicial interpretation.

This provision shall not be construed to prevent organizations from: communicating factual information about legislation to their members; advocating on policy matters through non-electoral means; publishing analysis of elected officials' voting records; or engaging in public education about civic matters. Organizations retain their voice in policy debates. They have no role in electoral outcomes.

Petitioning vs Purchasing: Any person may communicate with their elected representatives through speech, writing, petition, or public assembly. The right to petition government is protected and essential to democracy. No person or entity may offer, provide, promise, or arrange anything of value to any elected or appointed official

in connection with any official act, decision, vote, or omission. The receipt of anything of value by an elected or appointed official from any person or entity with interests before them shall constitute a felony regardless of whether an explicit exchange was agreed upon, regardless of the official's stated intent, and regardless of whether the official's subsequent conduct was influenced. The appearance of corruption is the corruption.

Disclosure: All financial relationships between elected officials, candidates, and any person or entity with interests in federal legislation or regulation shall be disclosed publicly and in real time. Disclosure shall cover: personal financial holdings; spouse and dependent financial holdings; prior employment and consulting relationships; speaking fees and honoraria; gifts of any kind; travel and hospitality; and any other financial relationship that could create the appearance of conflict of interest. Disclosure shall be continuous — not merely at the time of election — and shall be updated within 48 hours of any change.

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8. Independent Ethics Oversight

Federal Ethics Commission: An independent Federal Ethics Commission shall be established to investigate, adjudicate, and publicly report on potential violations of the ethical and anti-corruption provisions of this Constitution by elected officials, appointed officials, candidates, and former officials subject to post-service restrictions.

Election of Commissioners: Federal Ethics Commissioners shall be elected by the public through ranked choice voting in statewide elections, serving fixed six-year non-renewable terms. Commissioners shall not be members of any political organization and shall not have held elected or appointed federal office within ten years of their election to the Commission. They are elected specifically to hold others accountable and shall themselves be subject to the highest standards of the provisions they enforce.

Powers: The Federal Ethics Commission shall have the power to: investigate potential violations on its own initiative or upon complaint; subpoena documents and testimony; refer criminal violations to the Department of Justice with a public statement of

findings; impose civil penalties for non-criminal violations; recommend removal from office to the Senate; and publish public reports on its findings regardless of whether criminal or civil proceedings result. No finding of the Ethics Commission shall be suppressed or classified. Its work is inherently public.

Independence: The Federal Ethics Commission shall be funded by constitutional mandate at a level sufficient to perform its functions, not subject to reduction by the officials it oversees. No elected or appointed official shall have authority to reduce the Commission's funding, restrict its jurisdiction, or interfere with its investigations. Interference with an Ethics Commission investigation by any official shall itself constitute a violation subject to the Commission's jurisdiction.

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9. Amendment Process

Standard Amendment: Amendments to this Constitution shall require: passage by a two thirds supermajority of the Senate; approval by a two thirds supermajority of the Ethics Board; and ratification by a majority of citizens in a national referendum conducted under the same election integrity standards as federal elections.

Referendum Validity Threshold: A constitutional referendum shall be considered valid if participation meets or exceeds the average voter turnout of the three most recent presidential elections. This dynamic threshold adjusts automatically to reflect demonstrated civic engagement rather than imposing an arbitrary fixed number. Referendum campaigns shall be subject to the same equal public financing, dark money prohibition, and truth in advertising requirements as candidate elections.

Emergency Amendment Process: In cases of declared national emergency the President may propose an emergency constitutional modification to the Senate. The Senate may adopt the modification by a three quarters supermajority vote. Emergency modifications shall be temporary — expiring automatically after one year unless ratified through the standard amendment process within that period. No emergency modification shall affect the rights enumerated in Articles I or IV. Emergency modifications shall be subject to immediate Ethics Board review and judicial review.

25-Year Constitutional Review Convention: Every twenty five years a Constitutional Review Convention shall be convened to assess the Constitution in its entirety and recommend updates. Convention delegates shall be selected through a combination of Senate appointment, Ethics Board appointment, and citizen lottery to ensure representation of institutional knowledge, ethical perspective, and ordinary civic participation. Proposed amendments emerging from the Convention shall proceed through the standard amendment process. The Convention shall not have the power to ratify its own amendments — it recommends, the people decide. The existence of this mandatory review process reflects the foundational belief that we will get things wrong, that circumstances will change, and that the ability to correct course through legitimate process is more important than the pretense of having gotten everything right the first time.

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10. Transparent Governance

Presumption of Public Access: Government information shall be presumptively public. The burden of demonstrating that specific information must remain non-public shall rest with the government, not with the person requesting it. Response to information requests shall be constitutionally mandated within thirty days. Delays, exemptions, and redactions shall be subject to mandatory independent judicial review. Agencies shall not use administrative processes to effectively deny access to information that is legally required to be public.

National Security Exemptions: National security exemptions from transparency requirements shall be subject to mandatory independent judicial review within sixty days of invocation. Exemptions shall expire automatically after five years unless renewed through the same review process. National security shall not be invoked to shield embarrassing, politically inconvenient, or legally problematic information from public view. The independent judiciary shall have full access to classified information for the purpose of determining whether classification is genuinely warranted.

Legislative Transparency: All legislative proceedings, votes, committee meetings, and deliberations shall be public and recorded. No legislative business shall be conducted in private session except for matters of genuine national security subject to the judicial review process described above. The single subject rule ensures that every vote is legible to the public — no vote shall be obscured by its combination with unrelated provisions in omnibus legislation.

Financial Transparency: The complete financial operations of the federal government shall be publicly accessible in real time through a publicly maintained database updated continuously. Every expenditure, contract, grant, and transfer of public funds shall be traceable by any member of the public without restriction. Financial opacity in government operations is a mechanism of corruption and shall be treated as such.

Article VI — Sustainability, Future Generations & Natural Stewardship

Every generation inherits the world from those who came before and holds it in trust for those who come after. The decisions made today about land, water, air, and natural systems will determine what kind of world is available to people not yet born — people who cannot vote, cannot petition, cannot speak in any present democratic process. This Article establishes the constitutional framework for honoring that trust. It is the long game. It is the acknowledgment that democracy is not only about the living.

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1. Recognition of First Nations Peoples

The nations, tribes, and peoples who inhabited this continent before European arrival are the original stewards of this land. Their sovereignty, their cultures, their languages, and their relationships with the natural world predate this Constitution by thousands of

years. This Constitution explicitly and formally recognizes that history — not as a footnote, not as a regret, but as a foundational truth that shapes every provision related to land, natural resources, and governance.

Sovereignty: The sovereign status of federally recognized First Nations tribes and peoples is affirmed and protected by this Constitution. National sovereignty is not a grant from the federal government — it is an inherent right that predates the United States and that this Constitution recognizes rather than creates. No federal action shall diminish national sovereignty without the free, prior, and informed consent of the affected nation.

Treaty Obligations: All treaties entered into between the United States government and First Nations peoples are affirmed as the supreme law of the land, binding on all branches of government, and enforceable in federal courts. The history of treaty violations by the United States government is acknowledged as a foundational injustice. No future treaty obligation to First Nations peoples shall be abrogated, diminished, or reinterpreted without the free, prior, and informed consent of the affected nation.

Sacred Sites and Ancestral Lands: First Nations sacred sites, burial grounds, and ancestral lands shall be protected from desecration, development, or commercial exploitation. Where such sites are located on lands currently held by the federal government or private parties, the affected First Nations nation shall have the right to be consulted, the right to participate in decisions affecting those sites, and the right to seek restoration of access through legal process.

Natural Resource Stewardship: First Nations peoples have developed over millennia sophisticated relationships with and knowledge of the natural systems of this continent. That knowledge is a national asset and a human treasure. Federal environmental and natural resource policy shall formally incorporate First Nations traditional ecological knowledge in its development and implementation. First Nations peoples shall have meaningful participation in the management of natural resources within or adjacent to their traditional territories.

Reparative Justice: The federal government acknowledges a debt to First Nations peoples arising from centuries of treaty violation, land theft, forced removal, cultural

destruction, and deliberate policies of elimination. The specific mechanisms of reparative justice — land return, financial restitution, cultural restoration, language preservation — shall be developed through direct government-to-government negotiation with affected nations on a nation-by-nation basis, conducted with genuine respect for national sovereignty and without federal imposition of outcomes. This Constitution commits the federal government to that process in good faith and without predetermined limits on what justice may require.

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2. Intergenerational Equity

The current generation does not own the natural world. It inhabits it temporarily and holds it in trust. This constitutional principle — intergenerational equity — means that no present generation may make decisions that permanently foreclose options for future generations or that impose irreversible costs on people not yet born.

The Principle: All federal laws, regulations, infrastructure decisions, resource extraction permits, and long-term contracts shall be evaluated for their impact on future generations before enactment or approval. The question "what does this cost the people who will live here in fifty years, one hundred years, two hundred years?" is a constitutional question, not merely a policy preference.

Office of Future Generations: An independent Office of Future Generations shall be established with constitutional mandate and funding. The Office shall: participate as a party in regulatory proceedings that affect long-term environmental, fiscal, or social conditions; bring legal challenges on behalf of the interests of future generations in federal courts; publish annual assessments of the long-term trajectory of key indicators including environmental health, public debt, infrastructure condition, and natural resource availability; and provide formal recommendations to the Senate and Ethics Board on legislation with significant long-term implications. The Office shall be staffed by persons with expertise in long-term systems thinking, environmental science, economics, and related fields, appointed through a process independent of short-term political pressures.

Irreversibility Prohibition: No law, regulation, or executive action shall authorize activities that are reasonably expected to cause irreversible damage to natural systems, permanently destroy ecosystems, or foreclose options available to future generations without: a formal finding by the Office of Future Generations that the long-term costs are justified by the benefits; a supermajority vote of the Senate acknowledging the irreversible nature of the action; and public disclosure of the specific long-term costs being accepted. Irreversible decisions require irreversible accountability.

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3. Public Lands and Natural Commons

The lands, waters, minerals, airwaves, and other natural resources of this nation belong to the people of the United States — present and future. They are held in public trust, not as assets to be liquidated for present benefit but as commons to be stewarded for perpetual benefit.

Protection of Public Lands: National parks, national forests, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and other federally protected lands shall be maintained in perpetuity for the benefit of all people and future generations. No federally protected natural area shall be reduced in size, diminished in protection status, opened to extractive industry, or transferred to private ownership without: approval by a two thirds supermajority of the Senate; a finding by the Office of Future Generations that the action is consistent with intergenerational equity; and ratification by a citizen referendum in the states most directly affected.

Natural Commons: Certain resources are so fundamental to human life and so impossible to replace that they shall be treated as permanent public commons regardless of their current ownership status. These include: fresh water sources including aquifers, rivers, and lakes; the atmosphere and its capacity to absorb emissions; the electromagnetic spectrum; the genetic commons of biodiversity; and any other resource whose permanent privatization would give private parties control over conditions essential to human survival. The determination of what constitutes a natural

common shall evolve with scientific understanding and shall be subject to the same judicial review process established in Article IV.

Extractive Industry Obligations: Any person or entity granted the right to extract natural resources from public lands or commons shall: pay royalties reflecting the genuine public value of the resource extracted, not merely the cost of extraction; restore the affected land or resource to its pre-extraction condition upon completion; bear full liability for environmental damage caused by extraction activities with no liability cap; and forfeit extraction rights upon demonstrated failure to meet these obligations. The public trust in natural resources shall not be subordinated to the financial interests of extractive industries.

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4. The Rights of Natural Systems

This Constitution acknowledges an emerging body of legal and ethical thought — reflected in the constitutions of Ecuador, the legal personhood of the Whanganui River in New Zealand, and growing scientific understanding of ecosystem complexity — that natural systems have interests that exist independent of their utility to human beings.

This Constitution does not at this time establish full legal personhood for natural systems. It does establish that natural systems have legally cognizable interests that federal law must consider, that the Office of Future Generations may advocate for those interests in legal proceedings, and that the deliberate destruction of ecosystems for purely extractive purposes with no regard for the intrinsic value of those systems shall be treated as a constitutional concern rather than merely a policy preference.

The 25-Year Constitutional Review Convention shall specifically consider, at each convening, whether the development of law, science, and ethical understanding warrants the establishment of more robust legal rights for natural systems. This Constitution plants the seed. Future generations shall decide how far it grows.

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Article VII — Enforcement, Transition & Adaptation

A constitution that cannot be enforced is a document. A constitution that cannot adapt is a cage. The provisions of this Article are designed to ensure that the rights and structures established by this Constitution have genuine teeth — that the state can be held to its commitments — and that the framework can evolve as circumstances change and understanding deepens. The most important architectural decision in this Article is the one that acknowledges fallibility: we will get things wrong. The question is not whether but how we correct course.

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1. Constitutional Adjudication

The Supreme Court of the United States, as reformed by Article V, shall serve as the final interpreter of this Constitution. Its decisions on constitutional questions shall be binding on all branches of government and all levels of government within this jurisdiction.

Enforcement Against the State: No branch of government — executive, legislative, or judicial — shall defy a final ruling of the Supreme Court on a constitutional matter. Defiance of a Supreme Court constitutional ruling by any elected or appointed official shall constitute a violation of this Constitution and grounds for immediate removal from office. The precedent of executive officials simply ignoring judicial rulings — as has occurred in American history — is hereby abolished as a constitutional possibility. A government that selectively obeys its own courts is not a government under law.

Structural Enforcement: Where the Supreme Court finds a systematic constitutional violation by a branch of government — a pattern of rights violations, a persistent failure to provide constitutionally mandated services, a sustained defiance of constitutional limits — it shall have the power to issue structural injunctions requiring specific remedial action within defined timeframes. Compliance with structural injunctions shall be monitored by an independent court-appointed monitor with full access to

government operations and the power to report non-compliance publicly and to the Ethics Commission.

Constitutional Standing: Any person whose rights under this Constitution have been violated shall have standing to bring a claim in federal court. The justiciable nature of rights established throughout this Constitution means that rights violations are legal injuries cognizable by courts — not merely political grievances addressable only through elections. Access to federal courts for constitutional claims shall be free of filing fees for persons who cannot afford them. The right to constitutional justice shall not be rationed by wealth.

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2. Government Continuity and Succession

The continuity of constitutional governance during crisis, incapacity, or catastrophic disruption is itself a constitutional matter. The following provisions ensure that the framework established by this Constitution survives any foreseeable disruption to normal governmental function.

Presidential Succession: In the event of presidential death, incapacity, resignation, or removal, succession shall proceed through a line established by federal statute consistent with the principles of democratic accountability in this Constitution. The succession line shall prioritize elected officials over appointed ones and shall ensure that no single point of failure can leave the executive branch without leadership for more than 48 hours.

Legislative Continuity: In the event that the Senate loses quorum due to death, incapacity, or other catastrophic circumstance, emergency procedures established by federal statute shall allow temporary appointment of senators by state governors to restore quorum within 30 days. Temporary appointees shall serve only until a special election can be held and shall have no authority to vote on constitutional amendments or declarations of war.

Judicial Continuity: The Supreme Court shall maintain a roster of qualified senior federal judges who may be called to temporary service on the Court in the event that the number of serving justices falls below five due to death, incapacity, or recusal. Temporary justices shall serve only for specific cases and may not participate in constitutional amendment proceedings.

Constitutional Continuity During Emergency: No national emergency — whether military, environmental, economic, or otherwise — shall suspend this Constitution. The rights enumerated in Articles I and IV are permanent and non-derogable. The structures established in Article V continue to function during emergencies subject only to the emergency executive order provisions of that Article. A government that suspends its constitution during emergencies has revealed that the constitution was never truly in force.

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3. Transition from the Prior Constitutional Order

The establishment of this Constitution does not occur in a vacuum. The United States has operated under a prior constitutional order for more than two centuries. That order has produced laws, institutions, court precedents, treaties, contracts, and expectations that cannot simply be erased. The following transitional provisions govern the relationship between the prior order and this Constitution.

Continuity of Law: All federal laws, regulations, and court precedents in effect at the time of this Constitution's ratification shall remain in effect unless and until they are: superseded by new legislation passed under this Constitution; found unconstitutional under this Constitution by the Supreme Court; or specifically repealed by the Senate. The prior legal order does not disappear — it continues in force subject to the new constitutional framework.

Institutional Transition: Existing federal institutions shall continue to operate during the transition period. The transition from a bicameral legislature including the House of Representatives to the reformed Senate and Ethics Board shall be accomplished through a transition period of no more than four years from the date of

ratification, during which the existing Congress shall continue to function while the new institutions are established and the first elections under the new system are held.

Judicial Transition: Sitting Supreme Court justices at the time of ratification shall serve out their current terms under the new 18-year term limit framework, with their existing service counted toward the 18-year maximum. No sitting justice shall be removed solely by operation of the new term limit provisions before the end of a reasonable transition period established by federal statute.

Economic Transition: The economic provisions of Articles III and IV — pay ratio caps, wealth ceilings, universal healthcare, UBI — shall be implemented through a phased transition period of no more than ten years from ratification, with specific implementation timelines established by the reformed Senate in the first year following ratification. Phased implementation shall not delay the constitutional commitment — it shall establish enforceable milestones toward full implementation.

Prior Injustices: This Constitution's establishment does not extinguish claims arising from violations of rights under the prior constitutional order. Persons whose rights were violated under the prior order retain their legal claims. The reparative justice processes established for First Nations peoples and the student debt transitional justice provisions of Article IV acknowledge that the transition to a more just constitutional order does not discharge the obligations created by the less just order that preceded it.

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4. International Law and Global Relationships

The United States does not exist in isolation. It is a member of a community of nations, bound by treaties, participating in international institutions, and increasingly affected by global conditions that no single nation can address alone. This Constitution establishes the framework for America's relationship with the international order.

Treaty Supremacy: Treaties ratified by the United States under this Constitution shall be the supreme law of the land, binding on all branches of government. The Senate shall ratify treaties by a two thirds supermajority. The Ethics Board shall review all

treaty ratifications for consistency with the constitutional principles of this document before Senate ratification. No treaty shall be ratified that requires the United States to violate the rights enumerated in Articles I or IV.

International Human Rights: This Constitution affirms the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the body of international human rights law as consistent with and complementary to the rights established herein. Where international human rights standards exceed the protections of this Constitution, the higher standard shall be the aspiration toward which domestic law shall evolve.

The Global Invitation: The architecture of Democracy-Next is offered not as an American export to be imposed but as a proof of concept to be adapted. The concentration of wealth and power that this Constitution addresses is a global phenomenon operating through global mechanisms. The most effective long-term solution is a world in which enough nations have adopted similar ethical architectures that the refuge available to concentrated power shrinks toward zero. This Constitution encourages and welcomes the adaptation of its principles by other nations in forms appropriate to their own histories, cultures, and circumstances. The American experiment has always been most powerful not when it exported its specific institutions but when it demonstrated that certain principles — human dignity, democratic self-governance, the rule of law — could actually be made to work. That demonstration continues.

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5. The 25-Year Constitutional Review Convention

The most honest thing this Constitution can say is this: we will get things wrong.

Not everything. Not catastrophically. But something. The world will change in ways we cannot predict. Technology will create possibilities and problems we cannot anticipate. Human understanding of justice, dignity, and rights will deepen. Circumstances will arise that make provisions written today inadequate or actively harmful tomorrow.

Every previous constitutional order has pretended otherwise — has been written as if its authors had achieved final wisdom. They had not. Neither have we.

The 25-Year Constitutional Review Convention is this Constitution's answer to that honesty. It is the built-in acknowledgment of fallibility. It is the mechanism that makes Democracy-Next a living framework rather than a frozen text.

Convening: Every twenty-five years from the date of ratification, a Constitutional Review Convention shall be convened. The Convention shall assess the Constitution in its entirety — every article, every provision — and recommend updates, additions, deletions, or wholesale revision of any element.

Composition: Convention delegates shall be selected through three equal streams: one third appointed by the Senate through ranked choice vote of the full Senate; one third appointed by the Ethics Board; and one third selected by citizen lottery — ordinary people chosen by the same random process as federal jury duty, compensated for their service, and supported by nonpartisan staff to ensure they have access to the expertise they need to participate fully. This composition ensures that institutional knowledge, ethical expertise, and ordinary civic perspective all have equal voice in the review process.

Process: The Convention shall convene for a period of no less than six months and no more than two years. It shall hold public hearings in every state. It shall publish its deliberations in full. It shall produce a public report of findings and recommendations. Any recommended amendments shall proceed through the standard amendment process established in Article V — the Convention recommends, the people decide. The Convention shall not have the power to ratify its own recommendations.

Scope: No provision of this Constitution is beyond the Convention's power to recommend changing — including this provision. The 25-year review is not itself protected from review. If future generations find a better mechanism for constitutional adaptation, they may adopt it. The only protection is the process: changes require broad supermajority support and citizen ratification. The bar is high by design. Constitutional stability matters. But constitutional perfection matters more than constitutional rigidity.

The Spirit: The 25-Year Convention is this Constitution's most important architectural decision. It says: we trust the future. We trust that the people who come after us will be at least as wise as we are, will face challenges we cannot foresee, and will need the freedom to adapt the framework we are building to circumstances we cannot imagine. We are not writing for the ages. We are writing for the next twenty-five years — and trusting each subsequent generation to do the same.

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Power flows from ethics. And ethics are ours to define. Not once. Not finally. But together, revisably, generation by generation, for as long as this experiment continues. Stunted is not dead. The experiment continues.

THE NEW DEAL 2.0

United States of America

Official Federal Program & Implementation Framework

Working Draft — May 2026

Preamble

We, the People of the United States, establish this New Deal 2.0 to implement the principles of justice, equality, and sustainability enshrined in the Constitution. Its purpose is to provide social and economic security, promote civic responsibility, ensure universal access to essential services, and guarantee opportunities for present and future generations.

The programs established herein translate constitutional rights into lived reality. A right that cannot be accessed is not a right — it is a promise. These programs are the mechanism by which promises become reality.

All programs herein are designed to scale automatically with economic, demographic, and environmental changes. No program shall require annual legislative reauthorization to maintain its basic function — scaling shall be built into each program's architecture so that the people's needs are met continuously rather than subject to the political calendar.

All programs herein apply to all persons legally residing and contributing to the social system within the jurisdiction of the United States. The specific eligibility conditions for each program reflect the principle that benefits shall be proportional to contribution, with a humanitarian floor below which no person falls regardless of contribution status.

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Article I — Universal Basic Income

Eligibility and Payments

Coverage: All persons legally residing and contributing to the social system within the jurisdiction of the United States shall receive a monthly Universal Basic Income. For purposes of this Article, contributing to the social system includes: lawful employment within the jurisdiction; civic service participation; caregiving for dependents; and active job seeking. Persons who have contributed for a minimum of one year shall be eligible for full UBI. Persons in their first year of legal residence who are actively contributing shall receive a prorated amount.

Progressive Structure: UBI payments shall be structured progressively. Persons below the median household income shall receive the full UBI amount. Payments shall taper for persons above the median income threshold and shall reverse into a contribution — effectively a UBI tax — for persons above an upper threshold indexed annually to median household income. The system shall be designed so that no person who works is worse off than a person who does not, and no person who earns more is net worse off than a person who earns less after accounting for UBI and contributions.

Payment Amount: The UBI payment shall be set at a level sufficient to cover basic essential needs — food, utilities, communications, and personal necessities — when combined with the housing guarantee established in Article IV. The UBI is not intended to replace earned income but to ensure that no person faces destitution regardless of their employment situation. The specific dollar amount shall be set annually by the Federal UBI Bureau based on independent cost of living assessment and shall be published no later than October 1st of the preceding year.

Interaction with Pay Ratio Cap: The UBI floor shall be incorporated into the pay ratio calculation established by the Constitution's Article III. The total compensation floor for ratio purposes includes both employment compensation and UBI received by the lowest-compensated persons benefiting from an organization's operations. As UBI increases the ceiling for executive compensation rises proportionally — creating a structural incentive for all economic participants to support a well-funded and adequate UBI.

Scaling Mechanism

The UBI payment amount and income thresholds shall adjust annually based on: the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers; median household income growth as measured by the Census Bureau; and regional cost of living variations that shall produce locally calibrated supplements for high-cost areas. No act of Congress shall be required for annual scaling adjustments — they shall occur automatically by operation of this framework.

Administration

The Federal UBI Bureau, integrated with the Treasury Department, shall administer all UBI payments. The Bureau shall: maintain a real-time registry of eligible persons; process payments monthly without delay; publish annual public reports on payment levels, eligibility rates, coverage gaps, and program costs; and operate a simple, accessible appeals process for persons whose eligibility is disputed. The Bureau shall be funded at levels sufficient to administer the program without backlogs or processing delays. Payment delays caused by administrative underfunding shall constitute a constitutional violation subject to enforcement under Article XI.

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Article II — Universal Healthcare

Coverage

Universal and Free: Healthcare in the United States shall be universal, comprehensive, and free at point of service. No person shall be billed, charged a copayment, required to meet a deductible, or denied care at the moment of receiving it. The distinction between "covered" and "uncovered" services that characterizes the prior insurance-based system is abolished. If a licensed healthcare provider determines that a service is medically necessary, it is covered.

Comprehensive Scope: Coverage includes without limitation: primary and preventive care; specialist care; emergency care; surgical care; hospital care; mental health services; substance use treatment; reproductive healthcare including contraception and abortion services; maternal and infant care; dental care; vision care; hearing care; physical therapy and rehabilitation; long-term care; palliative care; end of life care; and any other service that a licensed provider determines to be medically necessary for the patient's health and wellbeing.

Mental Health Parity: Mental health and substance use services shall be funded, staffed, and delivered at full parity with physical health services. Wait times for mental

health appointments shall be subject to the same maximum wait time standards as primary care appointments. The historic underfunding of mental health infrastructure shall be addressed through a dedicated ten-year Mental Health Infrastructure Investment Program with annual funding targets set by the Federal Health Authority and published publicly.

Automatic Enrollment: All persons within the jurisdiction shall be automatically enrolled in universal healthcare upon establishing legal residence. No application, no paperwork, no eligibility determination at point of care. Enrollment is the default. The burden of administration shall never fall on the person seeking care.

Coverage by Status

Citizens and Permanent Residents: Full comprehensive coverage as described above.

Long-term Visa Holders and Workers: Full coverage commensurate with their period of contribution to the social system.

Short-term Visitors: Emergency care free at point of service without exception. No person shall be turned away from emergency treatment or asked about their immigration or payment status at the moment of emergency. Non-emergency care for short-term visitors shall be arranged through travel insurance or payment plans established prior to or following — never during — the provision of care.

Undocumented Persons: Emergency care without exception and without immigration consequence at point of care. The provision of healthcare shall never be used as an immigration enforcement mechanism. Access to non-emergency preventive care for undocumented persons shall be provided at community health centers funded under this Article, as preventive care produces better health outcomes and lower system costs than emergency-only care.

Elimination of Private Health Insurance as Primary Delivery Vehicle

Private health insurance as a substitute for or primary vehicle of healthcare delivery is prohibited. The Federal Health Authority shall establish a transition timeline of no more than three years from enactment during which existing private insurance contracts shall be wound down and all persons transitioned to the universal public system.

Supplemental private insurance covering services beyond the public standard — private hospital rooms, elective cosmetic procedures, enhanced amenities — may continue to exist. Supplemental insurance shall not cover any service that is available through the public system, shall not be used to purchase priority in treatment queues, and shall not create a two-tier system in which wealth determines access to medically necessary care.

Workforce Transition

The elimination of private health insurance as a primary delivery vehicle will displace a significant number of workers currently employed in insurance administration, billing, claims processing, and related functions. The Federal Health Authority shall operate a comprehensive workforce transition program providing: full income replacement for a period of two years during retraining; priority placement in the expanded public healthcare workforce for workers with transferable skills; funded retraining programs for workers seeking to transition to clinical or administrative roles in the public system; and early retirement options with full benefits for workers within ten years of retirement age. No worker shall bear the personal cost of a systemic transition they did not cause.

Drug Pricing

The Federal Health Authority shall negotiate drug prices directly with pharmaceutical manufacturers on behalf of the entire United States population. No drug shall be available through the public healthcare system at a price that exceeds the median price paid for that drug by comparable universal healthcare systems in other developed nations. Essential medicines — defined as those treating conditions that are life-threatening, chronic, or significantly impairing — shall be priced at a maximum of the cost of production plus a reasonable return on research investment, as determined by independent assessment. Pharmaceutical companies that refuse to meet public

pricing requirements shall lose patent protection for the relevant drug within the United States jurisdiction, with production opened to generic manufacturers.

Administration

The Federal Health Authority shall oversee all aspects of universal healthcare delivery including: hospital and clinic infrastructure; workforce planning and training; quality standards and enforcement; state-level implementation partnerships; drug pricing negotiation; and public reporting. The Authority shall publish comprehensive annual public reports on system performance including wait times, health outcomes, coverage gaps, workforce shortages, and cost trends, all disaggregated by geography, income level, and demographic group.

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Article III — Education & Civic Service

The Civic Service Exchange

Public education in the United States — from primary school through doctoral programs — shall be free at point of delivery. The funding mechanism for higher and vocational education is a civic service exchange: one year of qualifying civic service for one year of publicly funded education. The ratio is consistent across all levels of education. The longer a person wishes to study, the more they contribute to the community that funds their education.

Exchange Rates: The following exchange rates shall apply to publicly funded education programs:

Vocational and trade programs: one year of civic service per one year of program duration.

Associate degree programs: one year of civic service per one year of program duration.

Bachelor's degree programs: one year of civic service per one year of program duration.

Master's degree programs: one year of civic service per one year of program duration.

Doctoral and professional degree programs: one year of civic service per one year of program duration.

Adult and lifelong learning programs: civic service participation proportional to program duration as determined by the Civic Service Administration.

Timing of Service: Civic service may be completed before, during, or after the corresponding education program, within a reasonable timeframe established by the Civic Service Administration. Service need not be completed in a single continuous block — it may be accumulated across multiple periods of service. The Civic Service Administration shall maintain a real-time registry of each person's service credits and educational entitlements.

Public Institutions Only: The civic service exchange applies exclusively to publicly funded educational institutions. Private colleges, universities, and trade schools may continue to operate and charge tuition as they choose. The public system shall be funded, staffed, and maintained at a quality level that makes it a genuinely excellent option — not a fallback for those who cannot afford private education, but a first-rate choice that any person would be proud to make.

Civic Service Roles

Civic service roles shall include without limitation: healthcare support and patient care assistance; environmental restoration and conservation; primary and secondary education assistance; early childhood care and education support; infrastructure construction and maintenance; emergency response and disaster preparedness; elder care and disability support; community development and social services; digital infrastructure and technology support; public records and archival work; and any other role determined by the Civic Service Administration to provide genuine public benefit.

Military service is one option within the civic service framework and shall count toward educational exchange credits at the same rate as civilian service. Military service shall

never be required as the only option for fulfilling civic service obligations. Persons who choose military service do so voluntarily within the civic service framework.

Civic Service Administration

The independent, non-partisan Civic Service Administration shall: maintain the registry of service credits and educational entitlements; classify all approved civic service roles; assess individual capacity through standardized, evidence-based, and non-discriminatory methods; match persons to appropriate service roles based on documented ability and expressed preference; update role classifications regularly; operate an accessible appeals process for capacity and assignment disputes; and publish annual public reports on program participation, role availability, and outcomes.

Universal Participation: No person shall be excluded from civic service participation on the basis of disability, chronic illness, age, or other limiting condition. The Administration shall maintain an expansive and regularly updated classification of roles accessible to persons of all abilities. Persons with significant limitations shall be assessed for roles appropriate to their specific capacity — the goal is meaningful contribution at whatever level is possible, not exclusion from civic life.

Incentives and Support

Persons performing civic service shall receive: a living stipend sufficient to cover basic needs during the service period; housing assistance or housing provision where service is performed in locations away from the person's home community; healthcare coverage under Article II; career credits recognized by public employers; and professional advancement opportunities in fields related to their service. Civic service shall not be a financial burden — it shall be a supported contribution that leaves the person no worse off financially than before their service.

Student Debt Transitional Justice

Persons holding educational debt incurred prior to the establishment of universal public education under this framework shall be offered the opportunity to discharge that debt

through civic service at the same exchange rate as current students: one year of qualifying civic service discharges the debt equivalent of one year of education costs.

This transitional program shall remain available for a period of ten years from the date of enactment. Persons who complete qualifying service shall have the corresponding debt discharged in full within sixty days of service verification. Interest shall not accrue on qualifying debt during the period in which a person is actively engaged in the transitional service program.

No person shall be permanently excluded from the transitional program due to disability, caregiving obligations, or other circumstances beyond their control — alternative service arrangements shall be made available. Persons within ten years of standard retirement age may fulfill transitional service obligations through mentorship, advisory, and knowledge-transfer roles suited to their experience and capacity.

At the end of the ten-year transitional period, remaining educational debt held by persons who did not participate in the program shall be subject to Congressional review with a presumption toward equitable resolution consistent with the principles of this framework.

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Article IV — Housing Security

Universal Access

Every person within the jurisdiction of the United States shall have access to stable, secure housing that meets the minimum standard established by this Article. No person shall be compelled to live without shelter. The existence of homelessness within this jurisdiction represents a failure of this framework's constitutional obligation and shall be treated as such — not as an inevitable social condition but as a solvable problem that the state is obligated to solve.

Minimum Housing Standard

All housing provided, subsidized, or guaranteed under this Article shall meet at minimum the following conditions:

Structural integrity providing reliable protection from the elements in all weather conditions typical of the local climate.

Potable running water and functioning sanitation facilities.

Electrical service sufficient to power basic appliances, lighting, and communications devices.

Heating and cooling systems sufficient to maintain safe and habitable temperatures in the local climate throughout the year.

A lockable private space providing personal security and dignity.

Freedom from vermin infestation, toxic materials, and structural hazards.

A tent does not meet this standard. A vehicle does not meet this standard. A shelter without private lockable space does not meet this standard. The federal government shall ensure this floor is met through whatever combination of public housing construction, rental subsidies, cooperative housing development, tiny home communities, and other mechanisms produces the best outcomes in each local context.

Affordability

Housing costs — whether rent, mortgage, or public housing fees — shall not constitute an undue burden on household income. The Federal Housing Authority shall maintain a regularly updated affordability standard calibrated to actual local costs. Housing assistance shall be provided to all persons whose housing costs exceed the affordability threshold after accounting for their income including UBI. Geographic variation in housing costs shall be reflected in locally calibrated standards so that the right to affordable housing is meaningful in high-cost areas where it is needed most.

Anti-Speculation Program

The Federal Housing Authority shall implement and enforce the anti-speculation provisions of the Constitution's Article III through the following specific programs:

Ownership Limits: No individual may own more than three residential properties simultaneously. No corporate entity — including real estate investment trusts, private equity firms, hedge funds, and any other non-individual investor — may own single-family residential properties. Corporate ownership of multi-unit residential properties shall be permitted subject to rent control, tenant protection, and maintenance standards enforced by the Federal Housing Authority.

Vacancy Tax: Residential properties held vacant for more than six months in jurisdictions with housing shortages shall be subject to a progressive annual vacancy tax. Revenue from the vacancy tax shall be directed to affordable housing construction in the affected jurisdiction. The tax shall be designed to make vacancy more expensive than rental at affordable rates, incentivizing owners to either occupy, rent affordably, or sell.

Speculation Tax: Residential properties sold within three years of purchase shall be subject to a speculation tax on the gain in excess of inflation. This tax shall apply to all sellers except those selling a primary residence due to documented life circumstances — job relocation, family expansion, health needs, or financial hardship.

Tenant Protections

No person shall be evicted from their housing without: written notice of at minimum ninety days; a documented legitimate reason consistent with federal tenant protection standards; access to free legal representation through the Federal Housing Authority's tenant protection program; and the Federal Housing Authority's confirmation that alternative housing meeting the minimum standard is available to the person being evicted before the eviction is executed. Eviction shall be a last resort, not a first response to tenant difficulties.

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Article V — Sustainability & Environment

Environmental Protection

All environmental protection programs shall be based on the best available scientific evidence, assessed over timeframes appropriate to the systems being measured, and enforced equitably regardless of the income or demographic composition of affected communities. Short-term natural variation shall not be used to justify inaction on long-term trends. The federal environmental protection apparatus shall be funded at levels sufficient to enforce its mandate and shall be staffed independently of the industries it regulates.

Emissions Reduction: The federal government shall pursue emissions reduction targets consistent with the best available scientific guidance on preventing catastrophic environmental degradation. Targets shall be set by independent scientific bodies, reviewed every five years, and tightened as technology and circumstances allow. No emissions reduction target shall be weakened without a published scientific justification reviewed by independent experts.

Renewable Energy Transition: The federal government shall fund and facilitate a comprehensive transition from fossil fuel energy to renewable energy sources. This transition shall include: direct federal investment in renewable energy infrastructure; retraining and income replacement programs for fossil fuel workers as established in Article XIII; research funding for energy storage and grid technology; and incentive structures that make renewable energy the economically dominant choice without requiring ongoing subsidy within ten years of enactment.

Environmental Justice: No community shall bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm. The federal environmental protection authority shall maintain demographic and income data on the location of all permitted pollution sources, industrial facilities, and environmental hazards. Where analysis reveals disproportionate concentration of environmental harm in low-income or minority communities, remediation shall be prioritized and new permits in those areas shall be subject to heightened review.

First Nations Ecological Knowledge Integration

First Nations peoples have developed over millennia sophisticated relationships with and knowledge of the natural systems of this continent. Federal environmental policy and natural resource management shall formally incorporate First Nations traditional ecological knowledge through: mandatory consultation with affected First Nations nations before any significant environmental decision affecting their traditional territories; formal partnerships between federal environmental agencies and tribal environmental departments; funded programs to document, preserve, and apply traditional ecological knowledge; and co-management agreements for federal lands within or adjacent to traditional territories.

Public Lands

National parks, national forests, wilderness areas, wildlife refuges, and other federally protected lands shall be managed for long-term ecological health and public benefit. Citizen advisory councils including First Nations representatives shall participate in management decisions. Extractive industry activities on public lands shall be subject to the full restoration and liability requirements of the Constitution's Article VI. Annual federal resilience reports shall assess the ecological health of all federally managed lands using scientific methodologies approved by independent review.

Disaster Preparedness

The civic service workforce established in Article III shall be a primary resource for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. The Federal Emergency Management Authority shall maintain standing civic service disaster response units trained and equipped for rapid deployment. Annual preparedness exercises shall test the integration of civic service personnel with professional emergency responders. Strategic reserves of food, water, medical supplies, and emergency equipment shall be maintained at levels sufficient to support the full population of affected areas for a minimum of ninety days following any foreseeable disaster scenario.

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Article VI — Childcare & Early Education

Universal Access

Pre-kindergarten education and childcare shall be universally available to all children from birth through age five within the jurisdiction of the United States, free at point of delivery. Early childhood education is among the highest-return investments a society can make — the research is unambiguous that quality early childhood programs produce lifetime benefits in health, educational achievement, and economic productivity that far exceed their cost. This program treats that evidence as the policy mandate it is.

Capacity: The Federal Early Childhood Authority shall maintain sufficient program capacity to serve every child whose family wishes to participate. Capacity shall be scaled to birth rates, population movement, and demand data updated annually. No family shall be placed on a waiting list for more than thirty days. The civic service program established in Article III is a primary source of the early childhood workforce — persons serving in childcare and early education roles fulfill their civic service obligation while building a professionally trained early childhood sector.

Hours: Programs shall be available for a minimum of eight hours per day, five days per week, year-round, to accommodate working families. Extended hours shall be available in communities where shift work and non-standard schedules are common.

Quality Standards

The Federal Early Childhood Authority shall establish and enforce national quality standards for all publicly funded early childhood programs including: evidence-based curriculum frameworks appropriate to each developmental stage; maximum child-to-staff ratios ensuring individual attention and safety; physical environment standards ensuring safety, stimulation, and age-appropriate facilities; staff qualification requirements including ongoing professional development; and family engagement requirements ensuring parents are active participants in their children's early education.

Quality shall be assessed through regular independent evaluation, not self-reporting. Programs that consistently fail to meet quality standards shall receive intensive support

and technical assistance before any punitive action is considered. The goal is universal quality improvement, not compliance theater.

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Article VII — Technology & Information Access

Digital Access

Universal Provision: Reliable, high-speed internet access shall be universally available to all persons within the jurisdiction of the United States, free or at heavily subsidized rates for persons below the median income threshold. The Federal Digital Infrastructure Authority shall ensure universal coverage through public provision, regulated private provision, or subsidy, using whatever combination produces genuine universal access. Digital access is essential infrastructure — it shall be treated with the same federal commitment as roads, electricity, and clean water.

Resilient Emergency Infrastructure: The federal government shall maintain independent communications infrastructure capable of functioning when commercial networks fail. This infrastructure shall provide: emergency broadcast capability reaching all persons within the jurisdiction; basic internet access for emergency information and government services; and inter-agency communications sufficient to coordinate disaster response. The right to digital access does not diminish during crisis — the government's obligation to provide it intensifies.

Digital Literacy: All public education programs shall include comprehensive digital literacy instruction — the skills necessary to participate safely, effectively, and critically in digital life. Digital literacy shall be treated as a core competency equivalent to reading and mathematics, taught at every level from primary school through adult education programs.

Information Integrity

Public Media: The federal government shall fund an independent public media system providing news, information, and educational content to all persons within the jurisdiction. Public media shall be editorially independent of government — funded by constitutional mandate but governed by an independent board appointed through a process that prevents political capture. Public media shall be prohibited from carrying advertising. Its mandate is to inform, not to generate revenue. The model is a free press in the truest sense: free from both government control and commercial pressure.

Media Literacy Programs: The Federal Digital Infrastructure Authority shall fund media literacy programs in schools, libraries, community centers, and online platforms. Media literacy education shall include: how to evaluate source credibility; how to identify misinformation and disinformation; how algorithmic recommendation systems work and how they shape information consumption; and how to find and verify primary sources. An informed citizenry requires not just access to information but the skills to evaluate it.

Algorithmic Transparency: Social media platforms, search engines, news aggregators, and other digital information intermediaries operating within the jurisdiction of the United States shall: publicly disclose the principles by which their algorithmic systems rank, recommend, and suppress content; submit to independent audit of those systems by a federal technology oversight body; and be prohibited from deploying algorithmic systems specifically designed to maximize emotional engagement at the expense of informational accuracy. Platforms that profit from outrage are profiting from the deliberate degradation of democratic discourse. That practice shall be regulated as the public health threat it is.

Support for Independent Journalism: The federal government shall maintain grant programs supporting local, independent, and investigative journalism. Local journalism in particular — the coverage of city councils, school boards, local courts, and community institutions — is essential to democratic accountability at the level where most people's lives are most directly affected. The collapse of local journalism is a democratic emergency. This program treats it as one.

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Article VIII — Labor & Economic Justice

Workers' Rights

All persons performing work within the jurisdiction of the United States — regardless of employment classification, citizenship status, visa status, or method of engagement — shall have the right to: organize collectively and bargain as a group with any entity that benefits from their labor; wages and total compensation sufficient to meet basic human needs; safe working conditions free from preventable hazard; protection from retaliation for exercising any right established by this framework; and access to the full benefits of the social system established herein.

The federal workplace safety authority shall be funded at levels sufficient to conduct regular inspections of all workplaces, respond promptly to complaints, and enforce safety standards without delay. The revolving door between workplace safety enforcement and the industries being regulated is prohibited — safety officials may not accept employment in regulated industries for a period of five years following their federal service.

Pay Ratio & Compensation Standards

The 20x Cap: No organization may compensate any individual — in any role, at any level — at a total rate exceeding twenty times the total compensation of the lowest-compensated person whose labor benefits that organization. This cap applies to all persons whose labor benefits the organization regardless of their classification as employees, independent contractors, gig workers, or workers employed through subsidiary or third-party arrangements.

Comprehensive Compensation Definition: Compensation for purposes of the pay ratio calculation means total remuneration in all forms including: salary; bonuses; commissions; stock grants; stock options at time of vesting; deferred compensation; retirement contributions above the standard public retirement floor; housing allowances; transportation benefits; personal use of company assets; and any other

transfer of economic value. No form of compensation shall be excluded through creative structuring.

Global Application: For organizations earning revenue within the jurisdiction of the United States, all persons whose labor contributed to that revenue — regardless of their physical location — shall be included in the ratio calculation. The ratio shall be calculated using purchasing-power-adjusted compensation figures for workers in different countries so that geographic wage differences do not create a false floor. Organizations may not evade this provision by concentrating low-wage operations overseas while earning revenue from American consumers.

Wealth Ceiling Implementation

The Ceiling: No individual shall accumulate or hold wealth exceeding one thousand times the current median household wealth as measured by the most recent Federal Reserve Survey of Consumer Finances. The ceiling shall adjust automatically with each new official measurement.

Comprehensive Wealth Definition: Wealth includes all assets in all forms: liquid financial assets; real property; ownership stakes in private and public companies valued annually by the Federal Wealth Assessment Bureau; intellectual property; collectibles; and any other store of economic value. Annual valuation of non-liquid assets shall use standardized methods published and updated by the Bureau.

Compliance: Persons whose wealth exceeds the ceiling shall have a three-year compliance period to bring holdings into compliance through spending, donation to qualifying public benefit organizations, or investment in productive enterprises. Wealth remaining above the ceiling after the compliance period shall be subject to a confiscatory annual tax of 90% on the excess until compliance is achieved.

Hoarding Tax: Wealth above fifty percent of the ceiling held in non-productive forms — assets generating no employment, no goods or services, and no measurable economic activity — shall be subject to an annual hoarding tax of 10% designed to encourage deployment into productive economic activity. Productive deployment includes: investment in businesses that employ persons within the jurisdiction; funding of

research and development; endowment of public educational or cultural institutions; and direct charitable provision of goods and services to persons in need.

Trust and Inheritance Loophole Closure: Trusts and other legal structures shall not be used to circumvent the wealth ceiling. Wealth held in any structure for the primary benefit of an individual or their immediate family shall be attributed to that individual for ceiling purposes. Inherited wealth shall be subject to a progressive inheritance tax: no tax on inheritances below ten times median household wealth; 30% on amounts between ten and one hundred times median household wealth; 70% on amounts between one hundred and one thousand times median household wealth; and 95% on amounts above one thousand times median household wealth. These rates shall ensure that extraordinary inherited wealth returns substantially to the public while allowing meaningful intergenerational support.

Corporate Responsibility

All corporations and other business entities operating within the jurisdiction shall: maintain sustainability practices meeting federal environmental standards; comply with anti-speculation requirements for any essential resources they hold; adhere to fair labor standards including the pay ratio cap for all persons whose labor benefits them; publish annual public reports on their environmental impact, labor practices, and tax contributions; and demonstrate net positive public benefit as a condition of continued operation under the Anti-Extraction Clause of the Constitution's Article III.

Worker Cooperative Rights: When any corporation ceases operations, declares bankruptcy, or chooses to exit the United States jurisdiction, the workers of that corporation shall have the first right — for a period of ninety days — to form a worker cooperative and continue operations using the assets being vacated, at fair market valuation with federal financing assistance available. This provision ensures that the economic vacuum created by corporate departure or failure is filled by the people who built the enterprise rather than by competing concentrated interests.

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Article IX — Civic & Democratic Engagement

Voting & Representation

Ranked Choice Voting: All federal elections shall use ranked choice voting as established by the Constitution's Article V. State and local governments are encouraged to adopt ranked choice voting for their own elections and shall receive federal technical and financial assistance to do so. The Federal Elections Commission shall provide training, software, and administrative support to any jurisdiction adopting ranked choice voting.

Equal Campaign Financing: All candidates qualifying for federal election ballots shall receive an equal public campaign allocation administered by the Federal Elections Commission. The allocation amount for each office shall be set annually based on demonstrated costs of effective communication with voters in the relevant jurisdiction. No private campaign contributions shall be accepted. Candidates who accept private contributions shall be disqualified from the public allocation and from the ballot. The equal allocation is both a financing mechanism and a test of fitness — how candidates manage their equal resources reveals genuine qualities relevant to public office.

Ballot Access: Candidates shall qualify for the federal ballot by collecting verified petition signatures from eligible voters — a minimum number set by the Federal Elections Commission at a level that demonstrates genuine public interest without creating a prohibitive barrier. No filing fees shall be charged. No party endorsement shall be required. No prior electoral experience shall be required. The ballot shall be open to any person who can demonstrate that real people want to hear from them.

No Party Designation: No party affiliation, label, or designation shall appear on any federal ballot. Candidates shall be listed by name with a brief statement of their platform and background, standardized in format by the Federal Elections Commission so that no candidate receives more visual prominence than any other. Voters shall evaluate candidates as individuals.

Legislative Process

Single Subject Rule: No bill introduced in the Senate or the Ethics Board shall address more than one subject. The subject shall be clearly stated in the bill's title. The Senate Parliamentarian and the Ethics Board's legal staff shall review all bills for single-subject compliance before they are scheduled for debate. Bills found to violate the single subject rule shall be returned to their sponsor for separation into individual subject bills.

Transparency: All legislative proceedings shall be public, recorded, and archived in a freely accessible public database. All votes shall be individually recorded — no voice votes on substantive legislation. All committee proceedings shall be public. All communications between legislators and any outside party regarding pending legislation shall be disclosed within 48 hours.

Each legislator's presence and participation in every recorded vote shall itself be entered into the public record. Absence from or abstention on any vote shall be recorded by name alongside the votes cast.

Citizen Participation

Participatory Budgeting: A minimum of five percent of federal discretionary spending shall be subject to direct citizen input through a participatory budgeting process administered by the Federal Elections Commission. Citizens shall be able to propose, evaluate, and vote on specific uses of discretionary funds through an accessible online and in-person platform. Results of participatory budgeting votes shall be binding on the relevant agencies subject to constitutional and legal constraints.

Citizen Assemblies: The Senate and Ethics Board shall each convene at least two citizen assemblies per year on major policy questions before the legislature. Citizen assembly participants shall be selected by random lottery from the eligible voting population, stratified to ensure demographic representativeness. Assemblies shall deliberate with access to expert testimony and shall produce recommendations that the Senate and Ethics Board are required to formally consider and respond to in writing.

Oversight Boards: Independent citizen oversight boards shall monitor: election integrity and administration; gerrymandering at state and local levels; compliance with campaign finance requirements; and lobbying activity. Board members shall be selected by citizen lottery for fixed terms. Boards shall have subpoena power, public reporting authority, and the ability to refer violations to the Federal Ethics Commission.

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Article X — Retirement & Long-Term Security

Retirement Benefits

Dignity Floor: Every person who reaches the standard retirement age shall receive a retirement benefit sufficient to cover essential needs — the dignity floor — regardless of their contribution history, prior wage level, or work record. No person shall fall below this floor for any reason. The dignity floor shall be adjusted annually by the same mechanism as the UBI payment.

Proportional Top-Up: Above the dignity floor, persons shall receive supplemental retirement benefits in proportion to their contributions to the social system over their working lives. Contributions include employment with associated payroll contributions, civic service, and documented caregiving for dependents. A person who contributed more receives a larger supplement; a person who contributed little, or who was unable to contribute, still receives the full dignity floor. The supplement structure shall never reduce any person below the floor.

Non-Citizen Workers: Persons who contributed to the social system through lawful work within the jurisdiction — regardless of their current citizenship or immigration status — shall receive retirement benefits in proportion to their period of contribution. A person who worked lawfully and paid into the system for twenty years has earned twenty years of benefit entitlement; their subsequent immigration status does not erase that contribution.

Long-Term Care

All persons within the jurisdiction who require long-term care due to age, disability, or chronic illness shall receive federally guaranteed care meeting quality standards established by the Federal Health Authority. Long-term care shall be provided through a combination of: publicly operated care facilities meeting federal quality standards; in-home care services allowing persons to remain in their communities; and family caregiver support programs providing training, respite care, and compensation for family members who provide primary care. No person shall be denied long-term care due to inability to pay. No person shall be impoverished by the cost of their own or a family member's long-term care needs.

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Article XI — Oversight & Enforcement

The Social Rights Implementation Authority

The independent Social Rights Implementation Authority — established by the Constitution's Article IV — shall serve as the primary oversight body for all programs established by this framework. The Authority shall: monitor compliance across all programs; identify systemic gaps between program design and actual outcomes; compel agencies to meet their obligations through administrative orders; refer violations to the Federal Ethics Commission and relevant courts; and publish comprehensive annual public reports on the state of social rights fulfillment across all programs.

The Authority shall be funded by constitutional mandate at levels sufficient to perform its functions. Its budget shall not be subject to reduction by the agencies it oversees. Its staff shall be appointed through a process independent of the executive branch agencies they monitor.

Annual Audits and Public Reporting

Every program established by this framework shall be subject to annual independent audit conducted by auditors with no financial relationship to the audited program. Audit results shall be published in full within sixty days of completion in formats accessible to all members of the public. Audit findings shall be transmitted to the Senate, the Ethics Board, the Federal Ethics Commission, and the Social Rights Implementation Authority simultaneously.

Program performance data — participation rates, outcome measures, coverage gaps, cost efficiency, demographic disparities — shall be published in real time through a publicly accessible federal data portal updated no less than quarterly. The public shall have access to the same performance information used by program administrators.

Legal Recourse

Any person who has been denied a benefit, service, or right established by this framework shall have the right to: an administrative appeal within the relevant agency decided within thirty days; further appeal to an independent administrative law judge outside the relevant agency decided within sixty days; and judicial review in federal court with free legal representation provided for persons who cannot afford private counsel. No person shall be denied access to legal recourse due to inability to pay. Constitutional justice shall not be rationed by wealth.

Whistleblower Protection

Any person who reports in good faith a violation of this framework — by any agency, contractor, official, or other party — shall be protected from retaliation in all forms including termination, demotion, harassment, and legal action. Whistleblowers who report violations resulting in recovered funds or corrected systemic failures shall receive a share of any financial penalties recovered as a result of their disclosure, as established by federal statute. The internal reporting mechanism shall be supplemented by an external reporting channel directly to the Social Rights Implementation Authority that bypasses the agency being reported. No agency shall investigate its own whistleblower complaints.

Independent Oversight

Beyond the Social Rights Implementation Authority, independent oversight boards shall monitor specific program areas including: healthcare quality and access; education quality and equity; housing program compliance; environmental enforcement; workplace safety; and election administration. Board members shall be selected through a combination of professional qualification review and citizen lottery, serving fixed non-renewable terms. Boards shall have subpoena power, public reporting authority, and direct referral authority to the Federal Ethics Commission and federal courts.

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Article XII — First Nations Justice & Sovereignty

Recognition and Commitment

This Article implements the constitutional recognition of First Nations peoples established in Article VI of the Constitution. The federal government acknowledges a debt to First Nations peoples arising from centuries of treaty violation, land theft, forced removal, cultural destruction, and deliberate policies aimed at elimination. This Article does not discharge that debt — it commits the federal government to the process of discharging it through genuine government-to-government engagement without predetermined limits on what justice may require.

The Sovereign Choice Offer

The federal government shall formally offer each federally recognized First Nations nation a genuine choice of future relationship with the United States federal system. This offer shall be made within two years of this framework's enactment, through direct government-to-government negotiation conducted with full respect for tribal sovereignty. The options offered shall include without limitation:

Enhanced Tribal Sovereignty: Constitutionally protected and significantly expanded tribal sovereignty within existing or negotiated geographic boundaries, with federal government-to-government relationships replacing the prior paternalistic federal-tribal relationship. Enhanced sovereignty includes full national jurisdiction over the nation's lands, resources, and members; direct federal funding equivalent to state funding formulas; and representation in federal policy processes affecting each nation's interests.

Statehood: Full admission as a state of the United States with all associated rights, resources, and representation in the reformed federal Senate and Ethics Board. Statehood shall be offered on terms negotiated directly with each nation and shall not require the displacement of existing non-tribal residents — coexistence, shared sovereignty, and dual citizenship models shall be explored as part of statehood negotiations.

Hybrid Sovereignty: Any combination of the above or any other model proposed by the First Nations nation itself. The federal government enters these negotiations without a predetermined preferred outcome. The nation's choice, freely made, is the outcome.

This offer shall be made in good faith, with full disclosure of the implications of each option, with federally funded legal and technical assistance available to each nation to support informed decision-making, and with explicit acknowledgment that the United States has historically made these choices for First Nations peoples without their consent. That practice ends here.

Treaty Compliance Program

Treaty Enforcement and Direct Standing

The treaties between the United States and First Nations are the supreme law of the land, binding without statute of limitations. Each First Nations nation shall have direct standing, as a sovereign party, to bring claims of treaty violation before the Ethics Board and the federal courts, and to seek remedies including those set out below. No federal office shall stand between a nation and the assertion of its own rights. The United States, as a party to these treaties, shall not be the sole judge of its own compliance.

Nation-Directed Implementation

Where ongoing work is required — the documentation of treaty obligations, the development of remediation, the administration of restoration and cultural programs — that work shall be directed and controlled by the First Nations nations themselves, individually or through a council of their own constituting, with the United States obligated to fund and to participate in good faith. The United States shall not administer the affairs of the nations. Its role is to honor its obligations and to answer, before a neutral forum, when it fails to.

Cultural Restoration

The federal government shall fund comprehensive First Nations cultural restoration programs including: language preservation and revitalization programs developed and led by First Nations communities; repatriation of cultural artifacts, sacred objects, and human remains held by federal institutions and museums; support for traditional practices, ceremonies, and cultural transmission; documentation and preservation of oral histories and traditional knowledge; and First Nations-controlled educational programs incorporating traditional knowledge and languages. These programs shall be funded at levels determined in negotiation with affected nations, not by federal budget discretion.

Land and Resource Justice

The Treaty Compliance Office shall develop, in direct negotiation with each affected First Nations nation, specific proposals for land return, shared management, conservation partnerships, and resource revenue sharing as appropriate to each treaty situation. No approach shall be predetermined by the federal government. The full range of remedies — including land return — shall be on the table. Federal lands adjacent to or within traditional territories shall be the first subject of negotiation. Private lands shall be addressed through a combination of voluntary purchase programs, conservation easements, and long-term negotiated arrangements that respect

the legitimate interests of current private landholders while moving toward justice for treaty violations.

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Article XIII — Transitional Justice & Workforce Transition

Purpose

The implementation of this framework will disrupt industries, business models, and employment arrangements that have existed under the prior order. Workers in those industries did not create the harms their industries caused — they had jobs, and those jobs are changing. This Article ensures that the transition to a more just economic order does not impose its costs disproportionately on working people who had no role in designing the systems being replaced.

Private Health Insurance Industry Transition

The elimination of private health insurance as a primary healthcare delivery vehicle will displace workers in insurance administration, billing, claims processing, utilization review, and related functions. The Federal Health Authority shall operate a comprehensive transition program providing: full income replacement for up to two years during retraining; priority placement in the expanded public healthcare workforce; funded retraining for clinical, administrative, and technical roles in the public system; relocation assistance where necessary; and early retirement with full benefits for workers within ten years of standard retirement age. Transition program enrollment shall begin no later than six months before any insurance function is transferred to the public system.

Fossil Fuel Industry Transition

The transition to renewable energy will reduce employment in fossil fuel extraction, processing, and distribution. The Federal Energy Transition Authority shall operate a

comprehensive transition program for affected workers providing: full income replacement for up to three years during transition and retraining; priority employment in renewable energy construction and operation; funded technical retraining for renewable energy roles; community economic development investment in fossil fuel-dependent communities; and early retirement with full benefits for workers within ten years of standard retirement age. Fossil fuel communities shall not be sacrificed to the energy transition — they shall be the first to benefit from it through targeted renewable energy investment that creates local replacement employment.

Private Prison Industry Transition

The phased elimination of for-profit incarceration shall displace workers in private prison facilities. The Federal Justice Transition Authority shall operate a transition program providing: full income replacement during transition; priority employment in reformed public correctional facilities; funded retraining for public safety, social work, mental health support, and related roles; and early retirement options. The transition from for-profit to public incarceration shall be accompanied by comprehensive criminal justice reform programs that reduce overall incarceration rates, further reducing the workforce transition challenge over time.

General Workforce Transition Fund

Beyond the industry-specific programs above, a General Workforce Transition Fund shall provide transition support for workers in any industry significantly disrupted by implementation of this framework. Eligibility shall be determined by the Federal Labor Authority based on documented disruption to prior employment. Benefits shall include income replacement, retraining funding, job placement assistance, and relocation support. The Fund shall be permanently capitalized and shall not require annual Congressional appropriation to operate.

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Article XIV — International Engagement & the Global Invitation

The Global Invitation

The concentration of wealth and power that this framework addresses is a global phenomenon operating through global mechanisms. The most effective long-term solution is a world in which enough nations have adopted similar ethical architectures that the refuge available to concentrated power shrinks toward zero. This Article establishes the federal government's approach to sharing the principles of this framework with the international community — not as an export to be imposed but as a proof of concept to be adapted.

The United States shall: publish this framework in all major world languages and make it freely available; offer technical assistance to any nation seeking to develop similar frameworks adapted to their own history and circumstances; use its influence in international institutions to advocate for global minimum standards on wealth concentration, worker rights, and democratic governance; and pursue bilateral and multilateral agreements that close the jurisdictional gaps through which concentrated wealth currently escapes accountability.

International Human Rights

The United States shall fully ratify and implement all major international human rights instruments including those previously signed but not ratified. American foreign policy shall be evaluated against human rights standards consistently — not selectively applied to adversaries while ignored for allies. The State Department shall publish annual human rights assessments of all nations including the United States itself, evaluated against the same standards.

Foreign Aid Philosophy

United States foreign assistance shall prioritize: support for democratic governance, independent judiciary, and anti-corruption infrastructure; public health and education

investment; climate adaptation and renewable energy transition; and civil society and independent media support. Foreign assistance shall not be conditioned on economic policy choices that benefit American corporate interests at the expense of recipient populations. The era of structural adjustment programs that dismantled social protections in exchange for aid is over.

Global Tax Coordination

The United States shall use its economic leverage — as the world's largest consumer market and the issuer of the global reserve currency — to advance international tax coordination that closes the gaps through which concentrated wealth currently escapes taxation. Specifically, the United States shall pursue: global minimum corporate tax standards with enforcement mechanisms; automatic information sharing agreements that eliminate banking secrecy as a tool of tax evasion; sanctions on jurisdictions that facilitate tax evasion by persons with economic ties to the United States; and reform of international financial institutions to prioritize human development over creditor interests.

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The programs established by this framework are not charity. They are infrastructure. They are the mechanism by which a society invests in itself — in the health, education, security, and dignity of every person within it — and receives in return a population capable of participating fully in democratic self-governance, productive economic life, and the ongoing project of becoming what the founding documents promised we could be.

Postface: How We Get There

There is a cry going up from the working people of the world.

You can hear it in every language. In every country. From every community that has watched the promise of a decent life recede further with each passing year despite working harder than their parents worked, despite doing everything they were told would be enough.

It is not a complicated cry. It is the oldest human cry there is.

We want to be free. Free from oppression. Free to care for our families. Free to be heard. Free to live in peace.

That is all. That is everything. That is what every democratic revolution in human history has ultimately been about — the stubborn, unkillable human insistence that the people doing the living should have something to say about the conditions of their lives.

This book is that cry. Written down. Thought through. Blueprinted.

Not by politicians. Not by academics with something to protect. Not by think tanks funded by the people who benefit from the current arrangement. By ordinary people who looked at the world and found it unacceptable and refused to look away.

That has always been how it starts.

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The Honest Truth About What We Are Up Against

We owe you honesty about what comes next. Not comfort. Not inspiration. Honesty.

The normal channels are not going to produce Etharchy. Not through elections alone. Not through legislation alone. Not through the courts as currently constituted. Not through petition or protest or any of the mechanisms that democratic theory says should be sufficient.

Those mechanisms have been too thoroughly compromised. The Powell Memo crowd won. They spent fifty years building the infrastructure of capture — the think tanks, the Federalist Society, the media ecosystems, the donor relationships, the revolving doors — and it worked. The system as currently designed is specifically engineered to resist the kind of pressure that would be needed to dismantle it from within.

We could pursue an Article V constitutional convention — the provision that allows two thirds of state legislatures to call for a new constitutional framework without Congress. It has never been used in American history despite being available for 235 years. Getting to thirty-four states requires crossing political lines so deeply entrenched that it is practically inaccessible without a prior shift in political power so large that it would suggest the other mechanisms had already worked.

We could pursue state by state implementation — ranked choice voting, pay ratio requirements for government contracts, universal healthcare in individual states, worker cooperative legislation. These matter. They slow the bleeding. They keep more of the system functional for longer. They are worth doing. But they are the tourniquet, not the surgery.

And here is the hardest truth:

Even if Etharchy began to look like a genuine political possibility — if it started winning elections, if states started implementing pieces of it, if the movement reached critical mass — the response from the people with the most to lose would be immediate, coordinated, and devastating.

They would crash the stock market. They have the power to do it. They would move capital offshore overnight — triggering unemployment, credit collapse, the destruction of pension funds that ordinary people have spent their working lives building. They would use their control over supply chains, over energy systems, over the financial infrastructure that daily life depends on — as weapons. As leverage. As hostages.

And then they would use their media ecosystems to blame the resulting suffering on Etharchy rather than on their own deliberate sabotage.

This is not speculation. This is the documented playbook of concentrated power confronting genuine democratic challenge. Chile 1973. Guatemala 1954. Greece 2015. Every time a democratic government has moved seriously against concentrated wealth, concentrated wealth has moved against it with everything available. Capital strike. Currency attack. Destabilization. Coup support when necessary.

Peter Thiel has written plainly that he does not believe democracy and capitalism are compatible and that he has chosen capitalism. He is not hiding his philosophy. He is hiding what he is willing to do to protect it. But history gives us a clear picture.

So yes. The path to Etharchy runs through suffering that the owning class will deliberately cause to prevent it.

We owe each other honesty here. Not comfort, not false reassurance — because anyone who has come this far deserves to know what we are actually up against. False hope is not kindness. It is cruelty dressed as comfort.

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Why the Storm Is Probably Coming Anyway

Here is the thing about what we just described.

The suffering is coming regardless.

Not because of Etharchy. Not because of any progressive political movement. Because the system as currently designed is not sustainable. The wealth concentration of this era has reached levels not seen since the 1920s. The political instability mirrors the instability of the 1930s. The authoritarian movements rising across the developed world follow patterns that historians of the interwar period find disturbingly familiar.

The people currently dismantling democratic institutions are not stabilizing the system. They are accelerating its collapse. Whether deliberately or through the blind logic of concentrated self-interest, they are removing the mechanisms that have kept the contradictions of the current order from tearing it apart.

The breaking point is coming.

We do not know exactly when. We do not know exactly what form it takes. We do not know how bad it gets before it breaks.

What history tells us — without exception, without ambiguity, across every civilization that has ever reached this kind of breaking point — is what happens next:

People reach for whatever is ready.

In Weimar Germany, the democratic forces were still debating when the breaking point arrived. The authoritarian movement had a plan. It was organized. It was loud. It had simple answers to complex problems and a clear enemy to blame for every grievance. It was ready.

We know how that ended.

The question — the only question that actually matters now — is not whether the storm is coming. It is what exists on the other side of it.

When people are desperate enough to reach for something genuinely different — will they find Etharchy?

Or will they find fascism, wearing the face of the strongman who promises to fix everything if you just give him the power?

Or theocracy, wearing the face of the preacher who promises divine order in exchange for your freedom?

Or the false promise of authoritarian communism, which has always delivered the revolution but never the liberation?

All of those alternatives have one thing in common: they are ready. They are organized. They have true believers who have been spreading the word for decades. They have infrastructure and momentum and the intoxicating clarity of absolute certainty.

Etharchy has to be just as ready.

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What This Book Is Actually For

This book is not a political platform.

It is not a campaign.

It is not a policy proposal waiting for the right politician to adopt it.

It is a seed.

Planted deliberately. Planted widely. Planted in the full knowledge that most seeds do not become trees in the season they are planted. That some will fall on stone. That the people planting them may not live to see the harvest.

The Federalist Papers were a seeding operation. Hamilton and Madison and Jay were not trying to win an election. They were trying to get an idea into enough minds that when the moment came — when the Articles of Confederation visibly failed, when the young nation was desperate for something that actually worked — people would reach for the Constitution rather than for monarchy or chaos.

It worked.

The abolitionists spent decades seeding the idea that slavery was not just economically inefficient but morally intolerable — planting that idea in churches, in newspapers, in novels, in political speeches, in the consciousness of a generation — before the Civil War made the question unavoidable. They did not prevent the war. But the framework they built was what made Reconstruction possible after it. Imperfect. Incomplete. Ultimately undermined. But real. A foundation.

The New Deal reformers of the 1920s did not prevent the Depression. But when the Depression hit, their framework was ready. Roosevelt did not invent the New Deal from scratch in 1933. He assembled it from ideas and people who had been building it for a decade in the wilderness of political irrelevance.

That is the work.

Not preventing the storm. Not reforming the system that has been specifically designed to resist reform. Not convincing the people who are deliberately accelerating the collapse to stop.

Being the framework that is ready when the storm breaks.

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The Worldwide Cry

This book begins in America because America is where it was written. And because America, for all its failures and contradictions and the terrible gap between its stated ideals and its lived reality, still has something that matters: the founding documents contain within them the seeds of their own fulfillment. The principle that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed has never been fully honored. But it has never been fully abandoned either. It is still there, in the documents, waiting.

But the cry this book is answering is not American.

It is the cry of the factory worker in Bangladesh who makes the clothes that fill the closets of people who will never know her name. It is the cry of the farmer in Sudan watching his children starve while the world argues about who owns the land his family has worked for generations. It is the cry of the young person in Hungary or Turkey or Brazil or India who watched their country's democratic institutions dismantled piece by piece and found no framework ready to resist it. It is the cry of the worker in every country who has watched the gains of a lifetime of organizing evaporate in a decade of deliberate dismantling.

It is a worldwide cry. And it deserves a worldwide answer.

Etharchy cannot be imposed. It cannot be exported at gunpoint the way American "democracy" has sometimes been exported. It can only be offered — as a proof of concept, as a blueprint, as an invitation.

Here is what we built. Here is why we built it. Here is what it is designed to prevent. Adapt it to your history, your culture, your circumstances. Build your version. And when enough nations have built enough versions that the jurisdiction shoppers run out of places to hide — when the refuge of the vile maxim finally shrinks to nothing — then the long work will be close to done.

Not finished. The 25-year convention assumes the experiment continues. The work of building a more just world is never finished. But close enough to done that the people doing the living finally have something to say about the conditions of their lives.

That is all they have ever asked for.

That is everything.

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What You Can Actually Do

So what does a person do with this book?

Not the vague inspirational answer. The actual answer.

Read it again. The first reading is emotional. The second reading is analytical. The third reading is tactical. You need all three.

Give it away. Not sell it. Give it. To the person you think is most ready to hear it. To the person you think is least likely to agree with it. To the young person who is just beginning to understand that the world they are inheriting is not the world they were promised. To the older person who remembers when it was closer to the promise and has never stopped grieving the distance.

Talk about it. Not as a political argument. As a human conversation. The framework spreads person to person, kitchen table to kitchen table, the way every genuine social movement has always spread — not through advertising or algorithms but through the ancient human mechanism of one person saying to another: I found something real. I want you to see it.

Seed it institutionally. If you teach, teach it. If you write, write about it. If you organize, organize around it. If you practice law, study its legal architecture. If you build technology, think about how technology serves or subverts its principles. The Federalist Society spent forty years embedding its vision into every institution it could reach. Etharchy needs the same patient, disciplined, generational embedding.

Do the local work. Vote in every election at every level. Not because local elections will produce Etharchy — they won't. But because the people who understand Etharchy need to be inside the existing institutions when the moment of maximum crisis arrives. Pushing for ranked choice voting. Pushing for worker cooperative legislation. Pushing for public campaign financing. Stopping the bleed where stopping it is possible. Buying time.

Build community. This is not the soft, secondary work that comes after the "real" political change. It is the real change, happening in a different register. Etharchy has to be built from two directions at once — the structure from above, through the documents and the political fight, and the relationships from below, through the patient, unglamorous work of people actually knowing each other. Neither one works alone. A constitution full of rights means nothing among strangers who've been taught to fear each other; and the warmest community in the world can still be crushed by a captured state. You need both.

So start the one you don't need anyone's permission for. Know your neighbors. Build mutual aid networks. Create the cross-group relationships the civic service program is designed to institutionalize — and do it now, informally, without waiting for a constitutional amendment. The people who have always understood this — who held communities together through every catastrophe while the powerful looked away — were rarely the ones with the most resources. They were the ones with the strongest bonds. The mixing machine doesn't have to wait for the law. It can start on your street, this week.

Be honest about what you know. When the storm arrives — and it will arrive — the people around you will be frightened and confused and desperate for an explanation. They will reach for the nearest one. You will know a better one. Say it. Clearly. Without condescension. Without triumphalism. With the patience of someone who has thought carefully about a hard problem and arrived at something worth sharing.

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The Last Honest Thing

We do not know if this will work.

We are not going to pretend otherwise.

History offers no guarantees. The abolitionists worked for decades and the Civil War still killed 620,000 people and Reconstruction was still destroyed and Jim Crow still lasted a century. The New Deal still got dismantled over fifty years. Every gain has been fought for at enormous cost and every gain has required constant defense against the people who never accepted it.

The path to Etharchy will not be clean. It will not be quick. It will not be without cost. The people who currently hold the concentrated power that Etharchy is designed to constrain will spend that power — all of it — to prevent what this book proposes. They will cause suffering to preserve their position. They will lie about what is causing the suffering. They will use every tool the current system gives them — and it gives them many — to ensure that the moment of maximum crisis produces a strongman rather than a framework.

And they might succeed.

We are telling you this because you deserve to know it. Because the people who have the least — who need Etharchy most, who have the most to gain from a world in which power flows from ethics rather than from wealth — those people have been lied to enough. They have been given enough false hope by enough movements that promised everything and delivered the management of their disappointment.

This is not that.

This is the honest acknowledgment that we are small and the forces arrayed against what this book proposes are large. That the storm is coming regardless of what we do. That the path runs through fire that we did not light and cannot fully control.

And this:

The abolitionists knew they might not live to see the end of slavery. They seeded anyway.

The suffragists knew that most of them would die before women could vote. They marched anyway.

The labor organizers who died at Ludlow and Homestead and a hundred other places knew they might not win. They organized anyway.

Not because they were certain of victory. Because they were certain of the alternative.

The alternative to seeding Etharchy is arriving at the bottom of the storm with nothing. With no framework. With no blueprint. With no word for what we are trying to build.

With only the strongman and his simple answers.

We refuse that alternative.

Not because we are certain we can prevent it. Because we are certain we have to try.

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The cry of the working people of the world is not new.

It has been rising for as long as there have been people with nothing and people with everything standing on the same ground breathing the same air.

It has been answered before with monsters. With demagogues who weaponized that genuine human longing and turned it into something dark and destructive and used it to build their own power on the bones of the people who trusted them.

It has also been answered — imperfectly, incompletely, at terrible cost — with something better. With the labor movement. With civil rights. With the vote. With every halting, painful, reversible, hard-won step in the direction of the world the founding documents promised.

We are trying to answer it again.

More completely this time. More honestly. With a blueprint instead of a promise. With a constitution instead of a slogan. With a framework designed specifically to resist the capture that has undone every previous answer.

We do not know if it will be enough.

We know it has to be tried.

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America at Its Best

We want to say something to the people who love this country. Not despite its failures but through them. The people who feel the grief of what has been lost and still believe, stubbornly, that something worth fighting for remains.

You are right.

America has always been at its greatest not when it commanded the world but when it showed the world what was possible.

Not the greatest military. Not the largest economy. Not the most powerful nation by any measure of force.

The greatest idea.

That ordinary people — flawed, arguing, loud, messy, gloriously imperfect ordinary people — could govern themselves. Could build something worth living in. Could look at the distance between what they promised and what they delivered and keep closing it, generation by generation, however painfully, however slowly.

That idea changed the world. Not because America forced it on anyone. Because America demonstrated it. Because people in other countries looked at what was being built here and said — if they can do that, maybe we can too.

We have lost our way. We have not lost that capacity.

Etharchy is America doing what America has always done at its best — taking the founding idea one step further than anyone thought possible. Not abandoning the experiment. Continuing it. Honestly this time. Completely this time. For everyone this time.

The Marshall Plan was not America saying do it our way or else. It was America saying here is what we built, here is what it cost us, here is what it produced — and we are

going to help you build something similar because a world of functioning democracies is better for everyone including us.

That is the version of American leadership worth reclaiming. Not the aircraft carrier version. The idea version. Not force. Demonstration. Not command. Invitation.

The world is watching. It has always watched. In every country where someone is asking whether a more just arrangement of human affairs is possible — they are looking here. Not because America is perfect. Because America has always been the place where the argument about what is possible is conducted most loudly, most publicly, most consequentially.

The argument is not over.

It is just beginning again.

Show them what ordinary people can build when they refuse to accept that the way things are is the way things have to be.

Lead. Not with force. With the blueprint.

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Spread the word.

Plant the seed.

Build the community.

Be ready.

And when the moment comes — when people are desperate and frightened and reaching for anything that might save them from what is coming — put this in their hands.

Tell them what it is.

Tell them it was built by ordinary people who refused to accept that the way things are is the way things have to be.

Tell them it is not a promise.

Tell them it is a blueprint.

Tell them it was built for them.

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Etharchy.