



A People-Centered and Accountable Government

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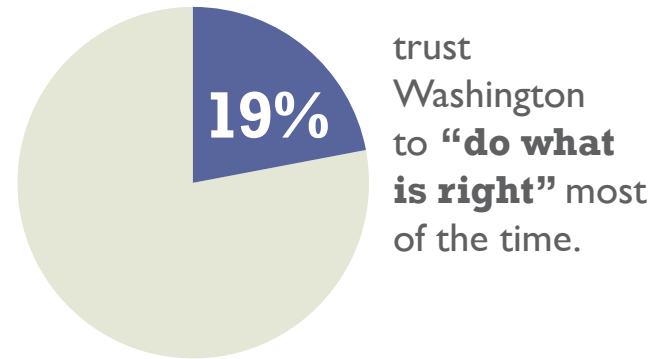
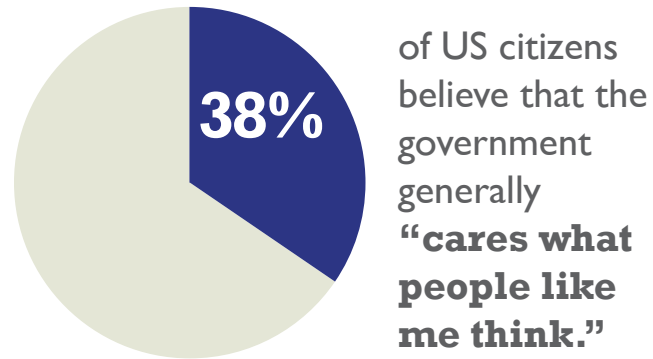
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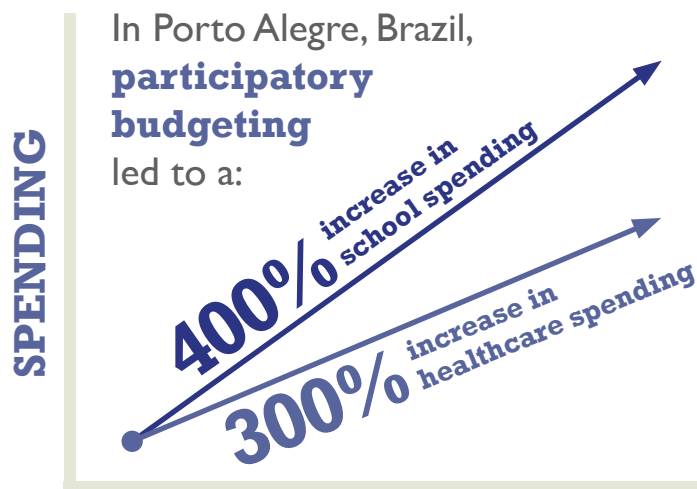
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A look at the numbers...

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Participatory budgeting: One study found there is **greater transparency and more equitable spending** when citizens have a direct voice.



4,000

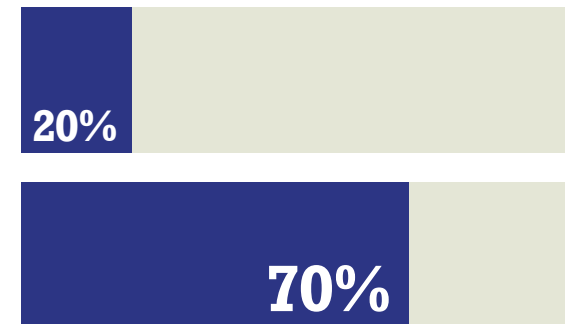
Number of New Orleans citizens who participated in a council to prepare a \$200 million rebuilding plan after Hurricane Katrina. 92% of the group supported the plan.

Training citizenship: **Citizens should do more than just vote** and can be empowered to take a more active role.

2x

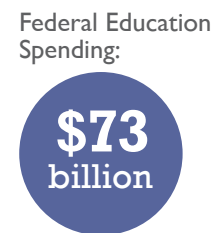
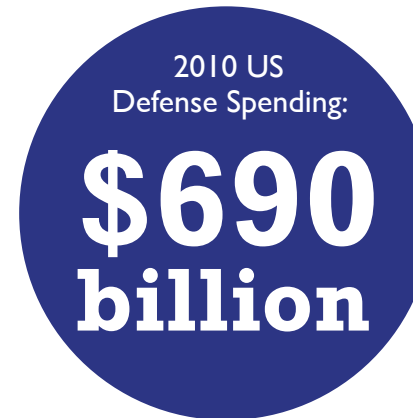
Likelihood that New Leaders principals in Chicago would oversee 20+ point gains in student proficiency scores after developing the New Leaders for New Schools program (to train highly effective principals) in 2000.

Graduates to College



In Hocking, OH, Principal George Wood gives his students more say in their education. Within a decade, the percentage of graduates going on to college climbed from 20% to 70%.

While health, education and other budgets fall short, defense **spending totaled \$690 billion** in 2010.

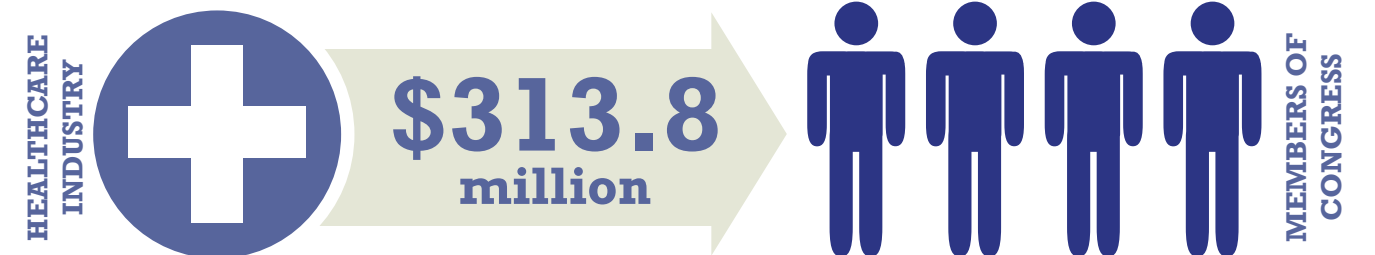


During the last presidential election cycle, elected officials solicited **\$5 billion in total campaign contributions**, an average of \$600,000 per hour.



\$300 million
Amount Canada spent during the last presidential election cycle with spending limits and donation caps.

Between 1989 and 2009, the healthcare industry gave a total of **\$313.8 million in campaign contributions** to members of Congress.



\$100 maximum

Using Fair Elections public financing, candidates receive a 4:1 match from the state on donations of \$100 or less, but cannot accept any larger donations.

81%

Percentage of Connecticut state legislators who use the Fair Elections system voluntarily.

What is the measure of good government?

We can recognize whether government is operating in its highest form by looking at the results produced. We know we're on the right track when democracy is strengthened, and equality and opportunity touch every person. When common sense and long-term thinking are the norm, government is at its best. Propelled by shared values, good government lives in the hearts of open-minded citizens and leaders who build unity and serve the common good. A strong and effective government breathes when we get money and corrupting interests out of politics and when the spirit of collaboration is its guiding force.

Our government is moving forward. It's alive and unfolding across this land, growing stronger with each engaged citizen and sound decision. But there is still a need for new energy and creative ideas, a revived commitment to core principles and a return to the fundamentals.

“Government is competent **when all who compose it work as trustees for the whole people...in our seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people.**”

↳ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Second Inaugural Address – 1937



**Committed
to the Right
Priorities**

**Post-
Partisan**

**Open
and
Transparent**

**Grounded
in Common
Purpose**

**Of the
People &
for the
People**

**Solutions-
Oriented**

**Bold and
Innovative**

Toward a Living Democracy

• Frances Moore Lappé
• Small Planet Institute
• and Small Planet Fund

Most Americans grow up absorbing the notion that democracy boils down to just two things—elected government and a market economy. So, all that seems expected of us is to vote and to shop.

This stripped-down duo I call “thin democracy.”

While thin democracy proves itself unable to meet today’s challenges, another understanding of democracy is emerging: Democracy that is practiced as a way of life, no longer something done to us or for us but what we ourselves create. I call it “Living Democracy.” In it, democracy is no longer merely a formal government construct, but something embedded in a wide range of human relationships. So its values apply just as much in economic life or in cultural life as in political life. Put very practically, Living Democracy means infusing the power of citizens’ voices and values throughout our public relationships.

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A Citizens’ Democracy

Rest assured, Living Democracy isn’t a new fixedism, blueprint or utopian end-state. Rather, democracy “becomes us” in both meanings of the phrase. It requires a shift in our focus from democracy as a thing we “have”—elections, parties and a market—to democracy as intricate relationships of mutuality that we create daily.

This shift in goals and expectations of both our government’s role and of our role as citizens is already perceptible, if we look beyond our existing thin democracy to see the many facets of Living Democracy that are living, growing and changing lives. Examples are diverse and far-reaching; grassroots groups, individuals, conscious corporations, schools and local governments are creating Living Democracy in their communities.

Grassroots-led reforms for voluntary public financing, called Clean Elections,¹ have significantly purged private wealth from elections in Maine, Arizona and Connecticut. Removing money from politics suddenly feels a lot more urgent to many Americans as they work through the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, and they realize the root of crisis: the financial industry’s political clout, via political contributions and lobbying, which got the rules changed to allow the dangerous risk-taking. Now, a national effort, with bipartisan-supported “Fair Elections” legislation pending in both houses of Congress, would take us a long way to truly publicly held government.



Photo courtesy David Ploenzke.

“All that seems expected of us is to vote and to shop”

Americans realize the root of the crisis: the financial industry’s political clout, via political contributions and lobbying, which got the rules changed to allow the dangerous risk taking.



Photo © 2010 David Szeis

The challenge is to leave behind the knee-jerk contempt for government and learn how to make the government our essential and powerful tool for creating the world we want.

Proactive Government

Living Democracy depends on citizens shaping and trusting government as their tool. And that starts with exposing the misleading big-versus-small government frame and recognizing that what really matters is whether government is accountable to citizens. Accountable government, setting fair standards and rules, actually reduces the need for “big” government to clean up after human and environmental damage. From this frame, we can see with new eyes the cost of government action to end poverty or to clean up our environment. We can see that the real cost is government, not acting.

For example, look to the 1960s War on Poverty. With it launched hugely successful programs like Head Start, food stamps, work study, Medicare and Medicaid, which still exist today, as well as numerous other efforts. And during that decade, Americans cut the poverty rate almost in half.²

Now, as the threats of global climate change and world poverty become increasingly acute, more and more people realize that restoring our planet and its people depends on citizens reclaiming government from private interests. The challenge is to leave behind knee-jerk contempt for government and learn how to make government our essential and powerful tool for creating the world we want.

Engaging Citizens in Strengthening Democracy

The public’s engagement in democracy is more than voting and shopping. A Living Democracy encourages ordinary citizens to be involved in identifying, discussing and deciding upon public policy and budgets. One way to engage citizens is through participatory budgeting where citizens have a direct say in the local budget. This process of democratic decision-making has been in place in many Brazilian cities since 1989. Ten years later, Chicago’s 49th Ward launched the first participatory budgeting project in the US. In a series of public

meetings over a six-month period, community members decided which community projects would be funded with the ward’s \$1.3 million capital infrastructure discretionary budget.³ A study of Brazil found that, with more citizens’ eyes on the budgeting process, there is less graft, greater government transparency and more equitable public spending, along with increased public participation.



The non-profit AmericaSpeaks has been working to increase citizen participation in democracy.

The organization aims to develop a national infrastructure for democratic deliberation that links decision-makers and citizens in determining public policy.

Citizens participate in an AmericaSpeaks meeting in Philadelphia.



Photos courtesy Erin & Joe Becker

The non-profit AmericaSpeaks has been working to increase citizen participation in democracy. The organization aims to develop a national infrastructure for democratic deliberation that links decision-makers and citizens in determining public policy. Its work has engaged more than 147,000 people in all 50 states in large-scale citizen participation on issues such as the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site, the rebuilding of post-Katrina New Orleans, statewide health-care reform in California and the national childhood obesity epidemic.

Another example is the Citizens’ Jury, pioneered by the Jefferson Center in Minnesota. This approach to collaborative problem-solving brings one to two dozen randomly selected citizens together over several days to weigh a critical issue and come to agreement on a direction. Hundreds of Citizens’ Juries have been convened around the world to work toward solutions to challenges from sewage treatment to climate change.

Democracy Where Many Benefit As Opposed to Just a Few

Democracy is grounded in the notion of a “common good”—an understanding that our individual well being depends on the well being of the whole society. Businesses that close the gap between owners and workers for the common good are growing fast. Cooperatives are one example of a democratic business organization, where owners are also the business’ workers or users of its services. In all their varieties—from finance to housing, farming, manufacturing and more—equitable sharing of responsibilities and benefits is a key value. Co-op membership jumped ten-fold in the last half century, now providing 100 million jobs worldwide. That’s one-fifth more jobs than multinational corporations offer, according to the International Co-operative Alliance.



Photo courtesy Robert Eddy

Organic Valley was started in Wisconsin in the 1980s and is now owned by over a thousand farmers in 32 states.

CO-OPS

100
MILLION

MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS

80
MILLION

Number of Jobs Worldwide

Cooperatives provide more than 100 million jobs worldwide. That’s about 1/5 more jobs than multinational corporations offer.

In southern Ohio, Principal George Wood at Federal Hocking High School believes that young people learn democracy by doing it, so since the 1990s, he has gradually shared more and more authority with his students.

As students experience power in guiding their school, they do better academically.

Within about a decade, the percentage of graduates going on to college climbed from 20 to 70 percent.

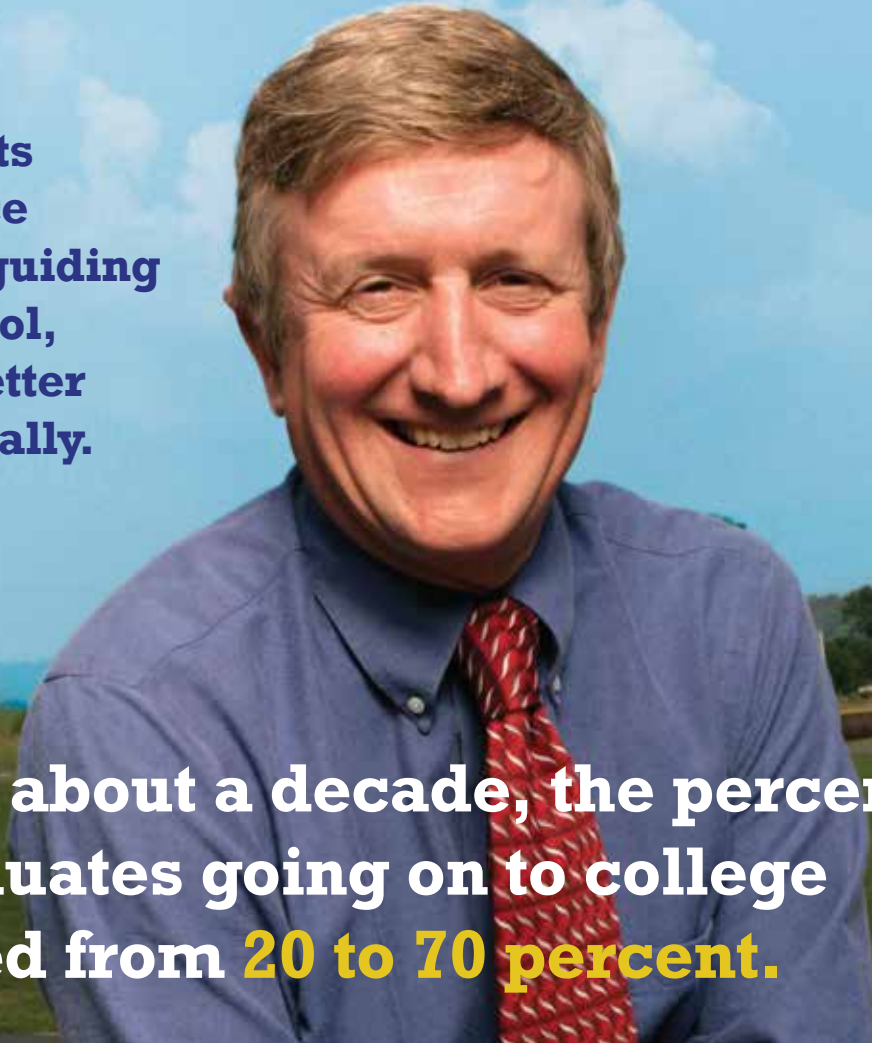


Photo credit: Chris Cone Photography

One example is Organic Valley, a dairy cooperative formed in the late 1980s by a handful of Wisconsin dairy farmers distressed that their neighbors' farms were folding while profits were going everywhere but to farmers. I would never have predicted that in two decades their determination would birth a half-billion-dollar company owned by over a thousand family farmers in 32 states. Organic Valley still lives by its democratic values, with profits returning to farmers and rural communities.

And some companies are proving that sky-high CEO pay isn't necessary for business success. While the average

US CEO-to-worker pay ratio has been greater than 200-to-1 since the mid-90s,⁴ the green home-supplies company Seventh Generation caps its CEO total compensation at 14 times that of its average worker.⁵

Policies that benefit many are increasing as well, such as living wage ordinances that require businesses with public contracts to pay employees enough to live in dignity. Not only do such policies benefit the employees and their families; they also benefit the entire community since individuals have more disposable income to invest in their community. More than 120 cities and counties have adopted living wage ordinances, and the Obama

From political life to economic life to education, Living Democracy is taking shape as a set of system values that evolve with us.

administration may soon be giving companies with living wage policies an advantage when seeking government contracts.⁶

Empowering the Next Generation

Students are moving from "community service," in which adults are in charge, to "apprentice citizenship," in which young people take ownership in hands-on learning. Most importantly, they experience their own power to make real, lasting improvements in their communities. From environmental restoration to improving their school food service, grade schoolers in 40 school districts in New England are learning by becoming community problem solvers as part of a movement led by Maine's KIDS Consortium.

In southern Ohio, Principal George Wood at Federal Hocking High School believes that young people learn democracy by doing it, so since the 1990s, he has gradually shared more and more authority with his students, ultimately including equal voice with teachers in hiring faculty. Students also serve on what is called the site-based committee, governing most aspects of school life. As students experience power in guiding their school, they do better academically. Within about a decade, the percentage of graduates going on to college climbed from 20 to 70 percent.⁷

From political life to economic life to education, Living Democracy is taking shape, not as a set system, finished once and for all, but as a set of system values that evolve with us: values of inclusion, mutual accountability

Frances Moore Lappé is the author of 18 books, from Diet for a Small Planet in 1971 to EcoMind: Changing the Way We Think, to Create the World We Want (Nation Books, 2011). With Anna Lappé, she leads the Small Planet Institute and Small Planet Fund (www.smallplanet.org). She is the recipient of 18 honorary degrees and is cofounder of Food First, the Institute for Food and Development Policy.



Citizens' Councils: An Idea to Strengthen Democracy

Participating in democracy could become akin to jury duty and voting. The notion of a "national citizens' council" would be the pinnacle of citizen engagement in democracy. Similar to jury duty, members of the public would be randomly selected and financially compensated for their time to evaluate current issues and legislation. The general public could then be invited to review the votes and analysis of the citizen's council. Free from influence by special interests, the need to stay in office or pressure from legislators, citizens' councils would represent the public's best interest.

from the editor

and fairness, among others. On this journey, our expectations of the capacities and essential roles of regular citizens change. In contrast to thin democracy's reductive view of human beings, Living Democracy reflects and builds on what philosopher Erich Fromm described as the deep human drive to make an "imprint on the world, to transform and to change, and not only to be transformed and changed."⁸

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Redefining Security

for Strong Communities and a Safer World

Former Republican President and Five-Star General Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed.”

He understood fully the challenges of balancing priorities and the need for our country to focus on taking care of people instead of building a bigger war chest or achieving unending global military superiority. Yet despite his call for change, military spending has only continued to rise.

The US spends 42 percent of all world military expenditures—more than \$690 billion in 2010¹—including the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Surprisingly, military spending is expected to increase,² even as our nation faces a five-year freeze or cap on what has been called non-security discretionary spending.³ Where will military spending funds come

“Every **gun** that is made, every **warship** launched, every **rocket** fired signifies in the final sense a **theft** from those who **hunger** and are not fed, those who are **cold** and not clothed.”

➤ Former Republican President and Five-Star General **Dwight D. Eisenhower**

⋮ Greg Speeter
⋮ National Priorities Project

National Archives Photo No. p013329

from and how will we adequately fund our schools, infrastructure and communities, especially in the face of a freeze? Even in a weak economy, in 2011 we will spend twice as much on the military as we will spend on education, science, the environment, housing and transportation combined.⁴

A national mandate for a broadened definition of security calls for decent jobs, strong communities and a strong economy, and an end to war.

A national mandate for a broadened definition of security calls for decent jobs, strong communities, a strong economy and an end to war. To achieve that security will mean a paradigm shift in spending priorities, away from the military and toward our communities.

and 5 percent to such preventive measures as peace-keeping, diplomacy, non-proliferation, development assistance, alternative energy and methods to address global climate change.⁶

Funding the Right Priorities

In fact, President Obama, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and others have noted that the nature of the security threats to the US and the world have changed significantly in recent years, requiring non-military approaches and international cooperation.⁵ Yet 87 percent of what we spend on “national security” goes to the military, with just 8 percent going to homeland security

The federal government used to prioritize ongoing public investments, and the results paid off. The Federal Housing Act and the GI bill after World War II increased home ownership and made college available to millions of people. The War on Poverty in the 1960s helped reduce poverty by 40 percent.⁷ Federal environmental policies have substantially cleaned up the water, the air and toxic wastes. Despite some of these past successes, the threats to our communities and our international competitiveness are still overwhelming. For example:

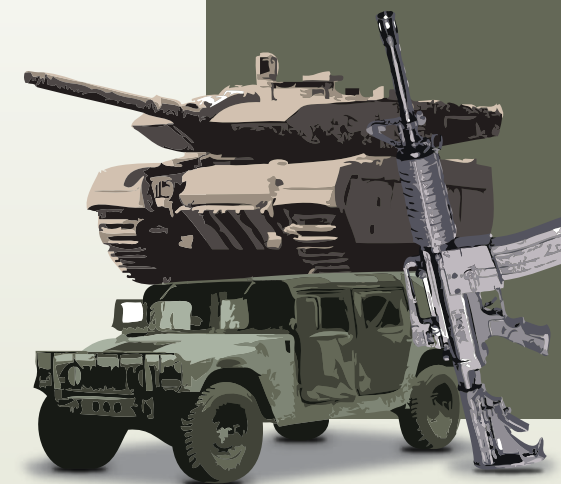
ACCORDING TO THE
2011
U.S. BUDGET:

we will spend twice as much on the
MILITARY

as we will spend on:

+ EDUCATION
+ SCIENCE
+ ENVIRONMENT
+ HOUSING
+ TRANSPORTATION

COMBINED



In the last decade military spending has soared from \$300 billion to nearly \$700 billion, according to the White House’s Office of Management and Budget.

The US ranks poorly in many critical categories of human security:

20th in percent of students graduating from college



29th in infant mortality



31st in life expectancy



72nd in the gap between the rich and the poor



73rd in use of alternative energy



Child poverty:

We have the highest child poverty rates in the industrialized world. More than 15.4 million children—20.7 percent—live in poverty.⁸ Nearly 60 of our major and mid-sized cities have child poverty rates of one-third or more.⁹ Economists calculate child poverty costs the economy \$500 billion a year in added healthcare costs, loss of productivity, earnings and taxation.¹⁰

Education:

Today children in the US are less likely to graduate from high school than their parents.¹¹ A major reason for this is that schools in low-income areas, especially in our largest cities, have fewer teachers, larger class size and are more overcrowded and in need of repair.¹²

Infrastructure:

The American Society of Civil Engineers ranked most of our infrastructure a D, noting one-third of our roads, one-quarter of our bridges and water systems affecting 10 percent of the population are in serious need of

repair.¹³ The American Federation of Teachers estimates it will cost \$234 billion to repair our deteriorating public schools.¹⁴

The environment:

With less than 5 percent of the world's population, the US consumes 25 percent of the world's oil and produces 20 percent of the world's CO2 emissions.¹⁵ Eighty-seven percent of our energy comes from fossil fuels; only 7 percent from alternatives.¹⁶

A global context:

While we are by leaps and bounds number one in military spending, we rank poorly in many critical categories of human security. For example, the US ranks:¹⁷

- 29th in infant mortality
- 31st in life expectancy
- 20th in percent of students graduating from college
- 72nd in the gap between the rich and the poor
- 73rd in use of alternative energy

Other countries with modern militaries, such as Japan, Australia, France and Canada, spend far less on their militaries (both in dollars and as a percentage of GNP)¹⁸ and rank higher in categories of human development.¹⁹

With adequate funding, many people believe that the nation's social, environmental, and economic problems can be solved.

TWO WAYS

to cut billions of dollars a year in Pentagon spending:

Saving Billions to Invest in Our Communities

With adequate funding, many believe that the nation's social, environmental and economic problems can be solved. But doing so will require new money and different spending priorities. Much of that money could come from responsible cuts in unneeded military spending. Here are just two ways to cut trillions of dollars a year in unnecessary Pentagon spending that could be invested in our communities:

Safely cut unneeded Cold War weapons and reduce waste and inefficiency.
Savings: \$75 billion this year.

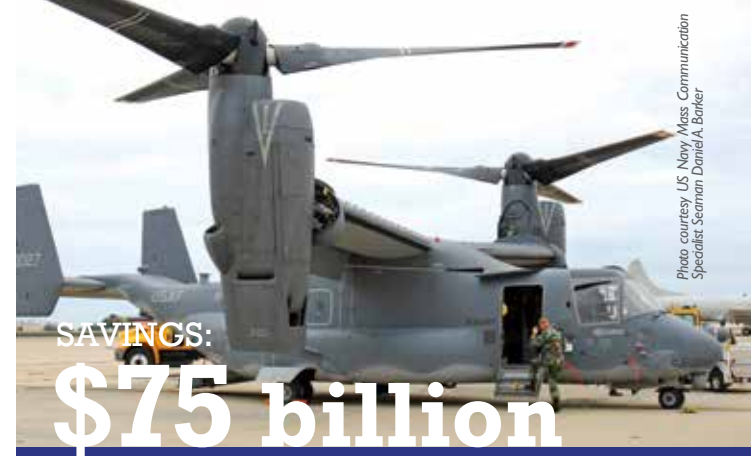
The Unified Security Budget Task Force, a group of national security experts, has identified \$75 billion that could be saved in the current federal budget through cuts in nuclear forces, cuts in Cold War-era conventional or poorly performing weapons systems, reductions in non-essential force structure and reducing waste and inefficiency in the Pentagon.²⁰

That \$75 billion saved could be used to rebuild one-third of our deteriorated schools;²¹ or more than double our federal commitment to elementary, secondary and higher education;²² or provide 85 percent of college students in the US with Pell grants for one year.²³

Make military operations a last resort.
Savings: trillions.

While our military slowly withdraws some troops from Iraq and plans to do the same in Afghanistan, it is now increasingly leading military interventions on a global scale. What we need to do is end the existing operations and in the future turn to military force only as a last resort after all peaceful alternatives have been exhausted. Between 2001 and 2010, the US spent more than \$1 trillion on military operations for the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.²⁴ The \$169.4 billion we spent in 2010 in Iraq and Afghanistan is 2.6 times what

1 Safely cut unneeded Cold War weapons; reduce waste & inefficiency



SAVINGS:
\$75 billion

WHAT COULD THIS MONEY DO?

- Rebuild one-third of our deteriorated schools
- More than double our commitment to all levels of education
- Provide 85% of college students in the US with Pell grants for one year

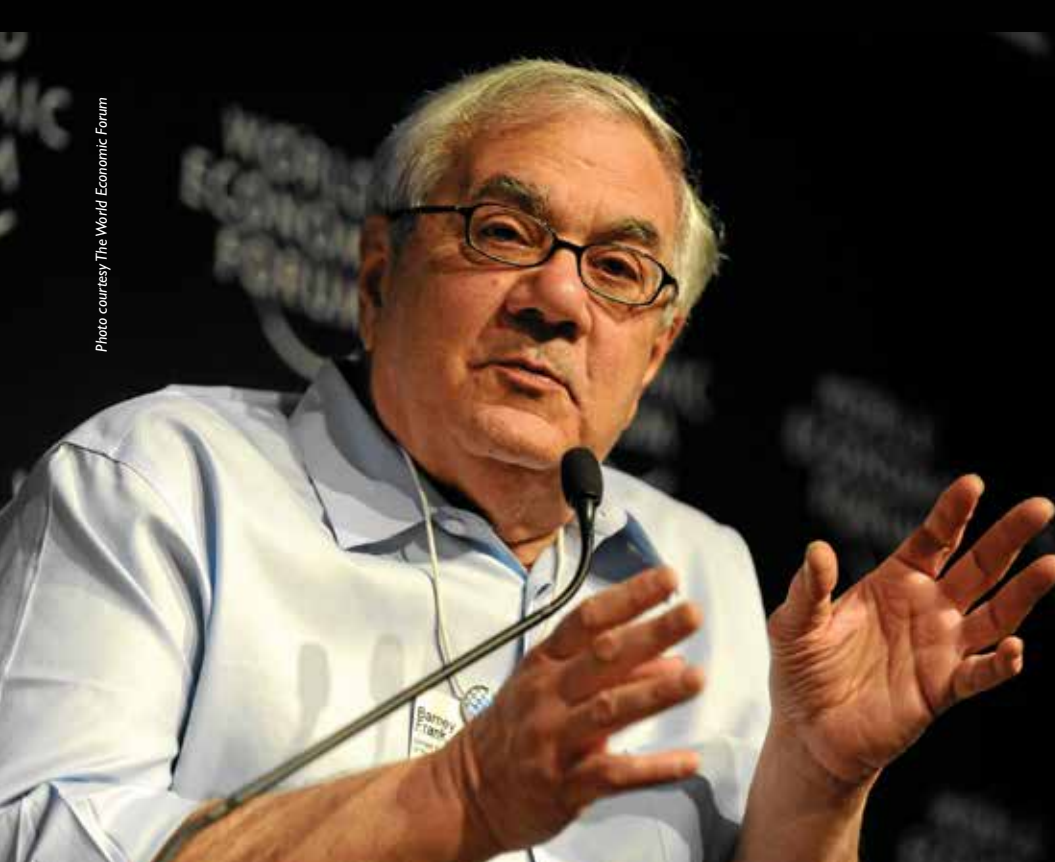
2 Make military operations a last resort.



SAVINGS:
Trillions

Photo courtesy US Navy. Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Daniel A. Barber

Photo courtesy Cpl. Brian M. Henner, US Marine Corps



Representative Barney Frank and his 16-member task force are working to garner the support of other members of Congress to include military spending cuts in any national deficit reduction plan.

Representative **Barney Frank** along with others who are working on financial regulation reforms assembled **a bipartisan task force** that identified nearly **\$1 trillion in savings** that could be **extracted** from the Pentagon budget through 2020.

we spent on all preventive measures—peacekeeping, international aid, alternative energy and non-proliferation combined!²⁵

We have to remember too that the cost of war is greater than dollars and cents. More than 7,000 soldiers lost their lives in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars²⁶ and the number of civilian casualties is estimated to be over 150,000.²⁷

Signs of Promise

Representative Barney Frank, along with others who are working on financial regulation reforms, assembled a bipartisan task force that identified nearly \$1 trillion in savings that could be extracted from the Pentagon budget through 2020. The 16-member task force produced a detailed report that outlines explicit cuts to military spending including reductions to the US

nuclear arsenal, shrinking the number of naval ships, spending less on research and cutbacks to big weapons programs.²⁸

Building a Movement for New Priorities

We can substantially change our national priorities by cutting unnecessary military spending and investing in our communities. Here's how a movement might begin:

Bring social spending and peace advocates together around a long-term campaign to cut specific weapons and policies and invest in our communities.

For years social spending advocates have struggled with each other for smaller and smaller slices of the federal budget pie. A collaboration with the peace community and national security experts around efforts

We can substantially change our national priorities by cutting unnecessary military spending and investing in our communities.

to cut military spending would lead to a downward military spending trend and more funds available to “grow” the domestic spending pieces of the pie.

Challenge Congress with an alternative, common-sense budget.

During the late 1970s, Congressman Ron Dellums of California offered a transfer amendment in Congress that called for cutting funds for specific weapons and putting that money into social programs. While the amendment didn't pass, it did generate substantial discussion about what was wrong with our military policies and how to rationally address critical social needs. It's time to revisit that discussion in Congress.

Show the local impacts of current priorities and create accountability campaigns around the country.

Organizers know the importance of making issues local and real to people. For 28 years, National Priorities Project (NPP) has made complex federal spending information more accessible by helping people understand the local impact of national priorities. In fact, in

late 2010 the New Priorities Network, along with over 30 of the nation's major peace and justice organizations and local organizations throughout the country, began a multi-year campaign to produce state and local resolutions to cut military spending to fund local jobs and services.

In his farewell address to the nation, President Eisenhower called for an “alert and knowledgeable citizenry” to determine the proper combination of “military machinery...with our peaceful methods and goals.”²⁹ The current combination of these priorities—embodied in our annual federal budget—has the US continuing to police the world while our communities suffer and we lose our competitive edge. This is not the dream of this nation. A budget priorities movement led by economic justice, environmental, peace and progressive national security experts could change that combination, so instead our nation would work with the rest of the world to address terrorism and its causes, rid the Pentagon of unneeded weapons and policies and invest the savings in our communities and our environment.

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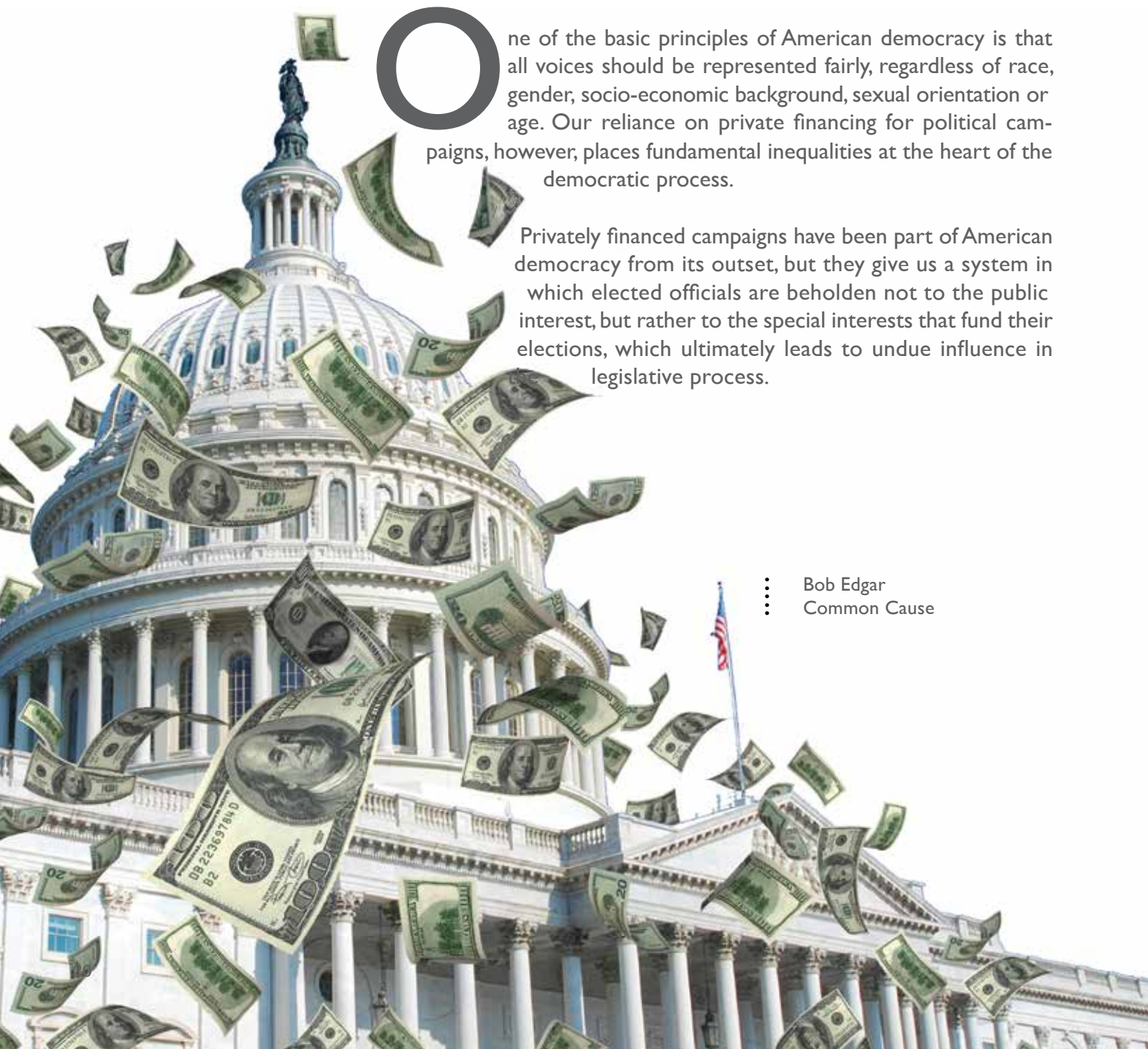
Building a Movement for **New Priorities**

- ① **Bring social spending and peace advocates together around a long-term campaign to cut specific weapons and policies and invest in our communities.**
- ② **Challenge Congress with an alternative, common-sense budget.**
- ③ **Show the local impacts of current priorities and create accountability campaigns across the country.**

Greg Speeter founded the National Priorities Project (www.nationalpriorities.org) in 1983 as a way for the general public to better understand and participate in the federal budget process, especially by realizing how it impacts one's local community. He has written and spoken extensively on federal, social, military and tax policies. In 2008, he stepped down as executive director to focus on training and networking NPP information. Speeter began his professional life in 1966 as a community organizer and has also written books on community organizing and public access to the political process.



Getting Money Out of Politics: Putting the Public First



One of the basic principles of American democracy is that all voices should be represented fairly, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic background, sexual orientation or age. Our reliance on private financing for political campaigns, however, places fundamental inequalities at the heart of the democratic process.

Privately financed campaigns have been part of American democracy from its outset, but they give us a system in which elected officials are beholden not to the public interest, but rather to the special interests that fund their elections, which ultimately leads to undue influence in legislative process.

⋮ Bob Edgar
⋮ Common Cause



In the US, the ratio of **lobbyists** to legislators is 23:1.

A Core Problem: Elections Dominated by Money

First, private financing of political campaigns magnifies the power of large donors in the political process. When members of Congress rely on big checks from corporations, industry lobbyists, special interests or wealthy individuals to get elected, those donors expect—and often get—something in return. Under one-half of one percent (0.36 percent) of the American population currently donates over \$200 to political campaigns. This small, wealthy minority provides around 90 percent of the money that funds political campaigns and, in exchange, receives more access to candidates and more influence in shaping policies and legislation.¹ This dynamic can be seen in a number of issues; healthcare and climate change are two examples.

It is hard to know the exact influence of special-interest money on the legislation passed by Congress, but we know it has a huge role—often hindering progress and innovation. Between 1989 and 2009, the healthcare industry gave \$313.8 million in campaign contributions to members of Congress. Of that, \$166.7 million, or 53 percent, went to members of the House and Senate who sit on one of the five committees with jurisdiction over healthcare reform, according to data from the Center for Responsive Politics.²

Campaign Contributions from Healthcare Industry (1989–2009)



\$166.7 million (53%)

Given to members of Congress with jurisdiction over health reform

Despite a worldwide consensus on the harmful effects of carbon emissions, Congress only recently passed legislation to limit the discharge of greenhouse gases. The energy industry spent lavishly on lobbying and campaign contributions to fight any proposal.

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The energy industry is betting millions that they can buy influence in Congress and protect their profits.

According to lobby disclosure reports, 34 energy companies registered in the first quarter of 2009 to lobby Congress on legislation to limit greenhouse gases, known as the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. These companies spent \$23.7 million—or \$260,000 per day—lobbying members of Congress in January, February and March of 2009. Many of these companies also made large contributions to members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which had jurisdiction over the legislation. Oil and gas companies, mining companies and electric utilities combined gave more than \$2 million to the 19 members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee from 2007 to 2009.³

The energy industry is betting millions that it can buy influence in Congress and protect its profits, even if that means blocking an important step toward clean, renewable energy and a healthier planet. Tackling problems like global warming must start by ending the flow

of the industry’s “Black Gold” of campaign contributions and lobbying cash to the most influential members of Congress.

It is impossible to say how each of these issues and many others would have been resolved in Congress if members were not dependent on these same companies for campaign contributions. What is clear, however, is that money and their willingness to invest it in campaigns gives these companies undue influence in the process of addressing national problems.

Second, private financing of political campaigns limits opportunities for qualified but unconventional candidates to run for and win elected office. Nine out of ten campaigns are won by the candidate who spends the most money. That drives candidates to focus more on fundraising and large donors than on mobilizing voters around ideas and issues. In 2010, the average winning House candidate spent \$1.3 million, and the average winning Senate candidate spent \$8.3 million.⁴ The astronomical cost of campaigns has made it increasingly difficult for citizens who are not independently wealthy and whose platforms do not appeal to wealthy donors to mount competitive campaigns against well-funded incumbents or well-connected political insiders. The



Thirty-four energy companies registered in the first quarter of 2009 to lobby Congress on the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 to limit greenhouse gases.

This group of companies spent a total of **\$23.7 million, or \$260,000 a day,** lobbying members of Congress in **January, February, and March.**

9 out of 10 political campaigns are won by the candidate who spends the most money



In 2010: Average winning House candidate spent: **\$1.3 million**

Average winning Senate candidate spent: **\$8.3 million**

need to raise enormous amounts of campaign cash creates barriers for huge segments of the population.

Third, private financing of campaigns forces members of Congress to spend too much time on fundraising, and not enough time on serving their constituents. US Representatives in contested elections spend 34 percent of their time, while in office, raising money for their next campaign rather than reading bills, responding to constituent concerns and meeting with voters to discuss legislative issues. And fundraising doesn’t end with a successful election; when new members of Congress and Senators enter the world of Washington politics, they are immediately asked to set fundraising goals not only for their future campaigns, but for their party’s fundraising arm as well.

For these reasons, many citizens feel locked out of their democracy and are cynical about the political process. America has one of the lowest voter turnout rates among the world’s democracies—54 percent during presidential elections and roughly 40 percent in off-year elections—because people simply don’t believe voting will change anything. They can see that their elected officials are more beholden to campaign

contributors than to their constituents. In order for a democracy to thrive and for the political process to produce outcomes that advance the interests of the public, citizens must have faith that the system works and adheres to the ideals under which their democracy was founded.

One Solution: Fair Elections

The key to strengthening America’s democratic process is to reform the campaign financing system by implementing Fair Elections, a voluntary system of public financing for campaigns. This plan gives participating candidates \$4 from a special public fund for each \$1 they raise in private gifts of \$100 or less. Candidates using this system are not allowed to spend any of their personal wealth or to accept any donations greater than \$100. By creating a system that prioritizes small donors, Fair Elections levels the playing field, provides opportunities for citizens to have their voices heard and allows elected officials to better serve the public interest. A candidate elected under a Fair Elections system won’t be beholden to a set of large campaign contributors, but rather to the general public, as America’s founders intended.

With the costs of campaigns skyrocketing, it has become difficult for citizens who are not independently wealthy and whose platforms do not appeal to wealthy donors to mount a competitive campaign.

Game Change: Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission

In 2010, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations and unions could spend as much as they want to influence elections. The decision in this historic case—Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission—overturns a century of campaign finance law by granting corporations and unions the same First Amendment right as citizens.

Prior to the Citizens United, the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act, commonly known as McCain-Feingold Act, prohibited corporations and unions from funding broadcast advertisements that mentioned a candidate.

Now, because their pockets are much deeper than the general public's, corporations are giving seven- and eight-figure contributions to campaigns, which are frequently used to purchase advertising, most of it negative. Since the passage of Citizens United, spending by independent groups climbed to nearly \$300 million in 2012.¹ This is more than double the amount spent by outside groups in 2008 before the decision.²

"I feel a great sense of disappointment and sorrow, because we did see the corruption that existed before [the McCain-Feingold Act]," said Senator John McCain (R-AZ) a co-sponsor of the McCain-Feingold Act. "And now you could make an argument that we've gone back further, even, than we had been before. Before there were at least some restrictions—particularly on corporations and unions... There will be scandals... There's too much money washing around the political arena today."³

Nearly 500 local governments, 16 states, 125 members of congress, and president Obama voiced support for a constitutional amendment to overturn. More than two million citizens signed a petition calling for an amendment.⁴

Public Citizen, a national nonprofit consumer advocacy organization that has been the leading organization in the push for a constitutional amendment, supports the Saving American Democracy Amendment introduced in the US Senate by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.)⁵ and its counterpart, the OCCUPIED Amendment, introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Ted Deutch (D-Fla.)⁶ US Senator Al Franken has also teamed up on the anti-Citizens United effort and has organized his own petition. All of these efforts agree that corporations do not have the same rights as real people and that they should not participate on our electoral process.

"I do believe everyone deserves a fair shake when they run for office," said Franken. "And a fair election is just not possible when corporations and wealthy individuals can swoop in and drown out the voices of hundreds of thousands of Americans with a single fat check."⁷



from the editor

Fair Elections has a proven track record of success and enjoys bipartisan support. Several states and cities have successfully implemented Fair Elections-style public financing. They have created an accountable government and restored confidence in the political process. Maine, Connecticut and Arizona all have Fair Elections at the statewide level. Eighty-five percent of Maine's legislature—Democrats and Republicans—was elected using a Fair Elections system of public financing. A recent poll found that 74 percent of Maine voters

surveyed wanted candidates for governor to use the system, and 55 percent said they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who did.

In 2008, Connecticut became the first state to have Fair Elections public financing passed by its legislature rather than through a voter referendum. Within two years, 81 percent of the Connecticut legislature was made up of politicians who used the system. By large margins, Connecticut voters believed that the influence



Roger Fulton, member of Washington Public Campaigns, stands with the Backbone Campaign's backbone puppet in front of Washington's state government building in Olympia rallying for clean elections.

of money on elected officials needed to be limited (82 percent) and that state politicians were more concerned with the needs of their campaign donors than the needs of the general public (62 percent).

Janet Napolitano, former Arizona governor and now Secretary of Homeland Security, is one of the most outspoken supporters of Fair Elections. To qualify for public funds, she gathered 4,000 contributions of \$5 each from Arizona residents. She sought and won Arizona's governorship twice using a Fair Elections-style public finance system. Voters like public funding because it makes elected officials more accountable, reduces conflicts of interest and gives them more choice at the polls.

Our problem with campaign finance is not so much the amount we spend, as it is who provides the money, what those donors get in return and how that distorts public policy and spending priorities. Keeping our elected officials dependent on the same wealthy, special interests they are supposed to regulate undermines public confidence in government and its ability to tackle the tough issues that face the nation. It's time to get our leaders out of the fundraising game and let them do the jobs we've elected them to do. Fair Elections is one possible solution. If your Representative supports Fair Elections, please thank him or her; if your Representative has not yet signed on, please ask him or her to do so.

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Bob Edgar is the president and CEO of Common Cause (www.commoncause.org). Edgar arrived at Common Cause with a long history of leadership and public service that included 12 years in Congress. There, he led efforts to improve public transportation, fought wasteful water projects and authored the community Right to Know provision of Super Fund legislation. He also served on the House Select Committee on Assassinations that investigated the deaths of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and President John F. Kennedy. Edgar was the general secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the US for seven years immediately before arriving at Common Cause.

Common Cause is a national nonpartisan, non-profit citizens' lobby working to make government at all levels more honest, open and accountable, and to connect citizens with their democracy.



Citizens Strengthening Democracy

Democracy is fluid and dynamic, and its roots are deepened through the active participation of its citizens; not just when it comes time to vote, but all the time. Revitalizing democracy in America is not just a possibility—it's already happening. Innovative approaches to civic participation are making sure that citizens have a greater voice in public decisions across the United States and around the world.

Increased participation in democracy is a critical solution to the disconnectedness that many Americans feel from their officials and institutions of national government. Only 19 percent of Americans now expect Washington to “do what is right” most of the time.¹ Only 38 percent believe that government generally “cares what people like me think.”² Americans are dismayed by the heightened partisanship that so often seems to get in the way of effective governance. They want their elected officials fighting against our greatest challenges, not each other.

Policy-makers, for their part, find it increasingly difficult to govern. They describe a political process defined by shallow media coverage, narrow-minded lobbying and turn to special interest campaigns and polls as a poor substitute for input from their constituents.

But, there is also very good reason—with proven means—to believe that civic engagement can be renewed. City budgets, disaster recovery plans, public policies and regional land-use plans have all been transformed by tapping the public's wisdom for better decision-making.



⋮ Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer
⋮ AmericaSpeaks

“So many different folk came together and shared their voice. We felt someone was actually listening. That is really what is important, not just having a voice, but having your voice heard.”

➤ Participant of an AmericaSpeaks meeting

Connecting citizens and decision-makers throughout the policy-making process helps ensure these and other public decisions are made for the common good.

By convening the public at an appropriate scale and within the context of an actual decision-making process, it is possible to link policy-making, free of corrupting influences, with the will of the people. We know that citizens are eager to participate in public life and do have the ability to make informed judgments on complex policy issues, if they believe the government will listen.

Participative Democracy in Action

Even the most complex policy conversations, such as healthcare reform or disaster recovery, benefit from the guidance of thoughtful, informed input from a representative group of citizens. In fact, public participation can develop new solutions, increase public understanding of the issue and generate broad support for implementation.

Citizens Plan New Orleans' Recovery

Four thousand New Orleanians helped shape the city's recovery plan after Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans residents who had returned home, and those displaced

to 20 other locations around the nation, participated in simultaneous, interactive, video-connected meetings. Participants represented the city's pre-Katrina demographics by income, age, race and geography: 64 percent of participants of the Community Congress were African American, and 25 percent had annual household incomes below \$20,000.

Participants successfully grappled with issues of flood protection, investments in education, land use and more. The Unified New Orleans Plan incorporated these public priorities, and at the end of the deliberations, 92 percent of participants agreed that the plan should go forward. The Unified New Orleans Plan was the first to get approval by all levels of local and state government, releasing over \$200 million in much needed recovery funds.

A County Renews Its Future

Civic leaders in Owensboro-Daviess County, Kentucky, engaged citizens in developing—and implementing—solutions for the toughest questions facing their community.

A demographically representative group of 650 residents participated in a day-long meeting to discuss

Current and displaced residents of New Orleans met simultaneously in 21 locations to develop a unified plan for rebuilding the Hurricane Katrina ravaged city.





Photo courtesy AmericaSpeaks

Demographically representative participants discuss key issues at small, facilitated discussion tables.

The community-led work groups continue to meet monthly, more than two years after the kick-off meeting, to work toward the community's vision. For example, the Region of Opportunity Action Group partnered with the city and county government to prepare a master plan for downtown, with unprecedented levels of public participation. The Healthy and Caring Community Action Group is expanding proven techniques to reduce substance abuse and coordinated a two-month volunteer program to help low-income families sign up for low-cost health insurance.

Healthcare Reform

Thousands of Californians came together at a day-long non-partisan conversation on healthcare reform to weigh in on critical policy options being considered by state leaders. Participants from every walk of life joined simultaneous conversations in eight locations across the state, all linked together by satellite. State lawmakers, including Governor Schwarzenegger, joined participants at the meeting.

their community's pressing issues in economy, government, the environment, healthcare and education. The mayor, the county judge, all city commissioners, a state senator and two state representatives attended the We the People 21st Century Town Meeting and deliberated with citizens.

Action items were prioritized by participants, leading to public responses from elected and community leaders. Within weeks of the meeting, workgroups met to take action on these priorities, in which more than 300 area residents participated. More than 1,000 residents stayed informed about the process through regular communications and updates.

“A gathering like this “reminds leaders of who they’re leading” and how citizens’ expectations of their leaders are changing.”

➤ Local organizer of AmericaSpeaks meeting

As a result of the meeting, healthcare reform moved closer to the shared priorities of these citizen participants on three-quarters of issues in debate and strengthened the ultimate outcomes. For example, the two cost containment approaches that were most important to participants (prevention and wellness, with 62 percent support, and, streamlining administrative procedures, with 51 percent support) correlated with a stronger focus in these areas in the final compromise bill than was present in previous proposals. A cap on insurer profits was supported by 58 percent of participants, which had originally only been in the governor's proposal but was then embraced by other legislative leadership in the compromise bill.

Participants had more positive attitudes about state government, a greater belief in their own ability to be heard and make a difference and were significantly more likely to take political action on healthcare compared to those who did not attend. Policy-makers hailed CaliforniaSpeaks for bringing in fresh public perspectives and generating a sense of urgency for bipartisan change.

Participatory Budgeting

Municipal budget spending priorities are being determined with the input of residents in a process called participatory budgeting. Now used in cities around the world, a pioneering example of participatory budgeting was developed in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Since 1989, Porto Alegre has held neighborhood, regional and citywide assemblies where residents suggest, deliberate and decide on spending priorities. The resulting budget is binding, although the council can suggest changes and the mayor can veto the budget (although there is no record yet of this happening).

Importantly, participants are from diverse economic and political backgrounds, to ensure city spending helps address a severe inequality in living standards between the one-third of residents who live in slums and other residents with better access to public amenities.

A World Bank study shows that participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre has led to an increase in sewer and water connections, from 75 to 98 percent of households.



Photo courtesy AmericaSpeaks

Involving hundreds, or thousands, of people in a public meeting enables the outcomes to have greater visibility and credibility with policy-makers, the media, and the public as a whole.



Photo courtesy Matt Apps Photography

Participation in national discussions on critical policy issues can be—like jury duty and voting—a normal part of every American’s civic life.

Wisconsin residents gather at their state capitol to protest a controversial bill put forth by the governor.

We now have an opportunity to transform the business of government so that citizens and residents are at the table.

The number of schools quadrupled, and the health and education budget increased from 13 percent to almost 40 percent.³

Successes in both large- and small-scale public participation projects, achieved over the past few decades, provide a road map for building a democracy in which citizens from every walk of life regularly meet and wrestle with tough policy questions, and then articulate their views to decision-makers.

This should not be a distant dream. Participation in national discussions on critical policy issues can be—like jury duty and voting—a normal part of every American’s civic life. Our Founders created a system of governance that was brilliant in its simplicity—those who are governed must participate and give their consent. It is time to recapture that vision so American democracy can fulfill its aspirations.

Opening Our Government

On his first full day in office, President Barack Obama issued a Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government that calls for a new system of transparency, participation and collaboration. Later that year, the Obama administration issued an Open Government Directive to all federal agencies that specifies the steps they must take to become more open. President Obama has taken a first step to bring the American people closer into the public decision-making that most affects our lives.

We now have an opportunity to transform the business of government so that citizens and residents are at the table—collaborating on framing key policy issues, working through tough decisions and creating the future we want for our communities and our country. People are interested, they are capable and have growing expectations that government is listening.

If we will transform government in a way that is not episodic, that really changes the system at all levels, then it is imperative that all levels of government make an institutional commitment to greater citizen participation. A successful commitment to public participation in government requires a mandate in all levels of government, allocating sufficient funds, training and supporting staff, as well as a culture of experimentation that encourages innovation.

Citizens, too, carry deep responsibility for renewing our democratic system. Greater participation will require an increased public capacity to collaborate across difference, make commitments to action, stay informed and hold decision-makers accountable.

Reforms like these will ensure a more inclusive political process, which in turn will generate better policies, develop the public knowledge and will to carry them out, and lead not only to a more just and strong society, but to an upward cycle of economic, social and political progress.

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Dr. Carolyn J. Lukensmeyer is an innovator in deliberative democracy, public administration and organizational development. She is Founder and President of AmericaSpeaks (www.americaspeaks.org), a US-based non-profit that develops and implements innovative deliberative tools. AmericaSpeaks provides citizens a greater voice in local, regional and national decision-making on the most challenging public issues of the day. Over 150,000 people have participated in AmericaSpeaks’ meetings where participants wrestle with complex issues, uncover shared priorities and offer recommendations to shape next steps. Lukensmeyer was Consultant (1993-1994) to the White House Chief of Staff and Chief of Staff (1986-1991) to Governor Celeste of Ohio. Lukensmeyer is author of numerous publications, including Public Deliberation: A Manager’s Guide to Citizen Deliberation, Institutionalizing Large-Scale Engagements in Governance: A Link Between Theory and Practice and Beyond e-Government and e-Democracy: A Global Perspective (2008).



Innovation in Government



⋮ Karen Thoreson,
⋮ Alliance for Innovation and
⋮ James Svava,
Center for Urban Innovation,
Arizona State University

To many people, the idea of “government innovation” may qualify as an oxymoron. Governments are often viewed as plodding institutions that keep doing what they have always done and are unresponsive to ideas for change. In actuality, local governments can be seedbeds for new approaches. To be sure, more local governments could come up with new ideas and be more receptive to adopting new approaches developed in other settings, but many have a solid record of innovation.

Local governments may be more prone to innovation because they are different than their state and federal counterparts. They are closer to the people served and have a much greater potential for citizen engagement. Typically they are much less gripped by partisan conflict, and they are more likely to give professionals a chance to analyze problems and look for solutions.

Examples of Local Innovation

At the Alliance for Innovation, each year we see hundreds of examples of how cities and counties are remaking their communities for the better. The examples below are just a taste of what is happening across America.

Local governments are closer to the people served and have a much greater potential for citizen engagement.

Puget Sound, WA

In early 2000, the eCityGov Alliance was formed by a group of city managers who sensed the opportunity and the demand from citizens for online services. None of the communities had adequate budgets to develop robust websites. Working together, they pursued cross-boundary Internet service portals to access permits, parks and recreation activities, maps and property information. In 2009, the partnership added portals for shared procurement, government jobs and human services. From the original nine partner cities, the Alliance is now serving 39 organizations—34 cities, one county, a fire district, two economic development councils and an airport—with a combined population of 1.3 million citizens across a four-county region.¹

Greensburg, KS

After a devastating tornado destroyed the entire town on May 4, 2007, the citizens, in partnership with their local government, decided to rebuild with sustainability principles governing all their actions. Three years later, the town has changed dramatically, with over 100 new homes, all of which are 40 percent more efficient than code, and many are aiming for LEED certification from the US Green Building Council. A wind farm with ten turbines produces enough power for over 4,000 households, making the town carbon neutral. Before the tornado, the town had little industry or economy to support the new generation. Now Greensburg is making its mark as one of the greenest towns in the nation.²

Washington, DC

In 2008, the DC Office of Technology hosted a contest to find new ways to make the City’s Data Catalog more useful for citizens. The Data Catalog, which contains open public data such as crime feeds, school test scores and poverty indicators, is considered the most comprehensive of its kind in the world. The contest resulted in the city having 47 different applications of iPhone,

Facebook and other web applications that citizens could download or install. The cost of the competition was \$50,000, but the value of the new applications is estimated to be in excess of \$2,600,000.³ Although Washington, DC discontinued future contests, the concept has been copied by other cities to advertise their transparency efforts and collaborate with citizens to address local issues.⁴



Photo courtesy Troy Dilport



Photo courtesy: One Block Off the Grid, 1blog.org

San Francisco, CA

Embracing the notion of sustainable power, San Francisco has issued local municipal bonds to allow local homeowners to purchase rooftop solar systems. The city's incentives, combined with state and federal subsidies, pay up to half the cost or more of a residential solar system, providing many San Franciscans the initiative to go solar.⁵ The city of San Francisco allocated \$9.5 million to fund the first year of the solar program, which launched in 2008. Since then, over 1,100 applications have been received, resulting in over 3.8 megawatts of solar power installed or soon to be installed.⁶

Chicago, IL

Based on evidence that children from all communities can achieve at the highest levels with strong school leadership, the Chicago Public Schools developed New Leaders for New Schools, a program to recruit and train highly effective principals. Launched in 2000, the program recruits individuals from both academic and corporate sectors. Then a rigorous training program provides the tools and guidance needed to lead underserved and underperforming urban schools. Preliminary findings indicate that students in elementary and middle schools led by New Leaders principals for at least three years are academically outpacing their peers by statistically significant margins. New Leaders principals were twice as likely as other principals to oversee 20-plus point gains in student proficiency scores. And high schools led by New Leaders show higher graduation rates.¹⁰



Photo courtesy: New Leaders for New Schools

There are four shared elements that help spur innovation: aligning needs or opportunities with solutions, leadership, collaboration and partnership, and citizen engagement.

How to Expand Innovation?

These examples are the tip of the iceberg. Innovation is expressed in many different ways, but there are four shared elements that help spur innovation: aligning needs or opportunities with solutions, leadership; collaboration and partnership, and citizen engagement.

Taken alone, these elements that encourage innovation cannot promise success of a new venture. However, together they represent a willingness to solve tough problems, take advantage of new opportunities, get more people on board and produce new and amazing results.

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Karen Thoreson is the president/chief operating officer for the Alliance for Innovation (www.transformgov.org). Prior to working for the alliance, she worked in local government in Glendale and Tucson, Arizona, and Boulder, Colorado. Thoreson also is a trainer and a speaker on public-private partnerships, community revitalization, innovation and strategic planning.

James Svava is professor of public affairs at Arizona State University and director of the Center for Urban Innovation (<http://urbaninnovation.asu.edu>). He is a member of the board of the Alliance for Innovation. Recent studies have focused on mayoral leadership in council-manager cities and referenda on form of government in large cities.



2000 CALORIES A DAY IS ALL MOST ADULTS SHOULD EAT



Giant apple raisin muffin

Healthy snack? Maybe not.

New York City, NY

Initiated by the office of Mayor Bloomberg, New York City has implemented some of the most cutting-edge health policies for food service establishments. Passed in 2006, the trans fat regulation prohibits restaurants from serving food with more than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving.⁷ To further support the goal of reducing obesity, heart disease, diabetes and other related diseases, the New York City Board of Health began requiring restaurants to list the calorie count for menu items.⁸ In early 2010, the Bloomberg administration initiated a campaign to cut salt to reduce the incidence of high blood pressure, strokes, heart attacks and other related problems. The goal is to get Americans to reduce their salt intake by 25 percent over the next five years.⁹

Photo courtesy: New York City Health Department





Bridging the Political Divide

• Bradford Kane
• The Bipartisan Bridge

Bipartisanship is necessary for our government to respond promptly and effectively to social and economic problems. It enables government to craft and implement a vision for long-term national success and is vital for strengthening our democracy.

Unfortunately, however, partisanship has become virulent in American politics. It gridlocks government and sets a tone of intransigence that aggravates cultural fragmentation and disenfranchises the electorate.

Whereas elections are designed to be combative, there is no need—or justification—for continuing that tenor once an election has determined the composition of our government. That is the time for bipartisanship, to enact sound policies, respect our elected leaders, reassert our nation’s moral high ground and reassert our global leadership. We do not need

to abandon our party affiliations or principles. Instead, we just need to commit to collaborate for effective government and relegate combative partisanship to the few months preceding the next general election.

There are many instances of bipartisanship in Washington. Although most attention is drawn to contentious issues that showcase partisan actions, many other issues are addressed by lawmakers of both parties working together. Though challenging, bipartisanship can be advanced through steps that facilitate collaboration between officials with diverse political views and philosophies.

What Is Bipartisanship?

Although there are no official benchmarks, basically, bipartisanship is the willingness of officials to communicate, collaborate, compromise and act across party lines in good faith for “win-win” policies and decisions, on the merits, on a sustained basis. Bipartisanship does not mean equality, and does not dictate relinquishment of power to achieve collaboration for its own sake. It should not confine progress to positions with near-unanimous support, as a “lowest common denominator” among all officials. It does not mean that the President or a majority in Congress should capitulate to ultimatums from legislators that would forestall progress on their principal initiatives.

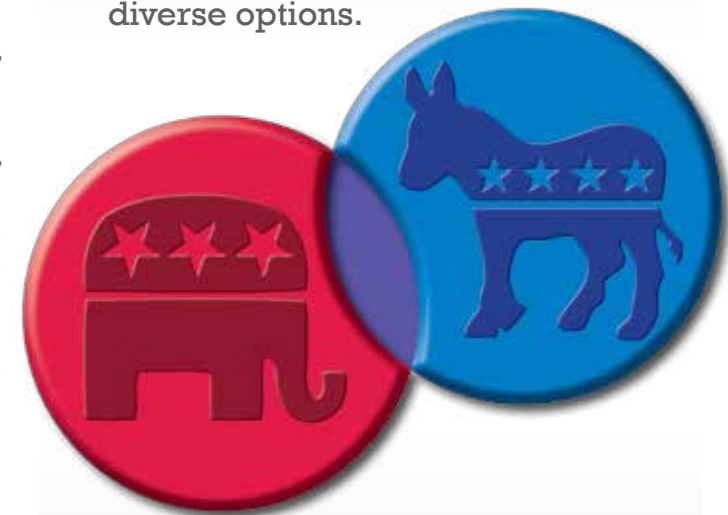
In Congress, bipartisanship has taken many forms, from specific actions to ongoing processes including:

- **Joint Sponsorship of Bills:** Legislation often has both Democratic and Republican sponsors, as well as many cosponsors from both parties. Past examples include the Kennedy-Kassebaum Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act and the Sarbanes-Oxley Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act. Recently, food safety legislation was jointly developed by Senators Harkin, Enzi, Durbin, Gregg, Dodd and Burr; child nutrition legislation was jointly developed by Representatives Miller (CA), Platts and McCarthy (NY); a tax fairness and simplification bill was drafted by Senators Wyden and Gregg; and other bills on technology and innovation, oil spill prevention and transportation issues also have bipartisan sponsors and cosponsors.

WHAT BIPARTISANSHIP IS:

The willingness of officials to **communicate, collaborate, compromise and act in good faith** on policies and decisions across party lines, on the merits, on a sustained basis.

Transcending the traditional dialectic between the parties by deliberating as **long-term vested partners** on creative, diverse options.



WHAT IT'S NOT:

- ✗ **Relinquishing power** to achieve collaboration for its own sake.
- ✗ **Confining progress** to positions with near-unanimous support, as a “lowest common denominator” among all officials.
- ✗ **Capitulation of the President or a majority in Congress** to ultimatums from legislators that would **forestall progress** on their initiatives.



Public domain photo courtesy Pete Souza/White House Photographer

During his campaign, President Obama expressed bipartisanship as an overarching tone based on mutual respect, receptivity to diverse opinions, openness to innovative yet practical solutions, debate that enhances understanding and decision-making based on facts rather than ideology.

Despite hurdles, he has crossed party lines and transcended partisan boundaries on many issues. For example, consensus building and compromise was evident in the president's deliberations over increasing the US troop presence in the Afghanistan War, his plan to increase teacher accountability in his education reform proposal, and the tax-cut extensions of December 2011, all of which appealed to Republicans. For the financial reform law of 2010, the President agreed to compromises that accommodated the views of both Republicans and Democrats. Even his healthcare reform proposals were initiated with a bipartisan approach, as President Obama convened

bipartisan "summits," met with Republican lawmakers to hear their views and continued to adjust his proposals during the legislative process to accommodate Republicans. Since a hand that is extended must be reciprocated if bipartisanship is to be achieved, the assessment of health reform's bipartisan nature should focus on the President's efforts and the compromises inherent in his proposals, rather than the final vote.

Advancing Bipartisan/ Post-Partisan Collaboration

There is no definitive methodology to promote bipartisanship/post-partisanship, since it is a good faith process rather than a singular product or outcome. Although there is some bipartisanship even in today's charged political atmosphere, more must be done. The following ideas could further stimulate a bipartisan/post-partisan spirit and materialize into constructive outcomes:

- **Discussion and Relationships:** Congress should establish informal working groups for legislators with different philosophies to meet weekly to discuss and collaborate on issues of the day. The groups would

- **Coalitions:** Occasionally, bipartisan groups form to address ongoing concerns. One case was the heralded Gang of 14, seven Republican and seven Democratic senators who collaborated to resolve differences on judicial appointments.

- **Working Groups:** Some issues are negotiated by small groups of legislators and can include packaging of provisions that appeal to legislators with diverse priorities. A high-profile example occurred during 2009 when a subgroup of senators from the Finance Committee (three Republicans and three Democrats) tried to resolve issues on healthcare reform. Although it was ultimately ill-fated, it did reach some points of agreement and refine the legislation for committee consideration. More recently, a "Gang of 6" senators, three Democratic and three Republican, began meeting in March 2011 to develop solutions to our nation's debt and deficit crises.

- **Votes:** In its most basic form, bipartisanship is exhibited by votes across party lines. Recently, Senators Snowe, Collins and Brown and the House Blue Dog Democrats have voted across party lines on prominent legislation, and many bills such as the Serve America Act receive broad bipartisan support.

To promote transparency and accountability, each bill that comes to the House or Senate floor for a vote should be accompanied by an analysis prepared by a non-partisan, objective office.

convene senators and representatives who don't already spend time with each other and might not otherwise have reason to do so, to foster cross-party relationships and increase understanding of each other's positions. Discussions should seek diversity of opinions, honest critiques of one's own positions, innovative solutions that transcend entrenched party positions and consensus on specific issues that are delegated to them by the leadership.

- **District Tours:** To foster understanding of the conditions, concerns and needs of each other's districts that impact decision-making, legislators from opposite parties should pair up for reciprocal tours of each other's districts. By proverbially "walking a mile in each others' shoes," they could better appreciate the concerns that their colleagues address.

- **Objective Analyses:** To promote transparency and accountability, each bill that comes to the House or Senate floor for a vote should be accompanied by an analysis from a non-partisan, objective office, e.g., Congressional Research Service. The analyses would include the qualitative impacts on various demographic groups (i.e., by income, geographic region and other factors where relevant, such as age, race/ethnicity, gender). Analyses should state the bills' fiscal impact and evaluate its short-term and long-term effects to encourage focus on long-term policy, which tends to deflate hot-button political issues.

- **Lobbying Reform:** Lobbyists should not be allowed to deliver a check one day and deliver views on legislation the next day. This nexus of money and policy, or campaign fundraising and legislation, is where many

For many years, Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy and Republican Senator Orrin Hatch were close friends, despite representing opposing parties. Their relationship can serve as a model to partisans into the future: that despite differing opinions and ideologies, it is possible to meet somewhere in the middle and forge lifelong friendships.

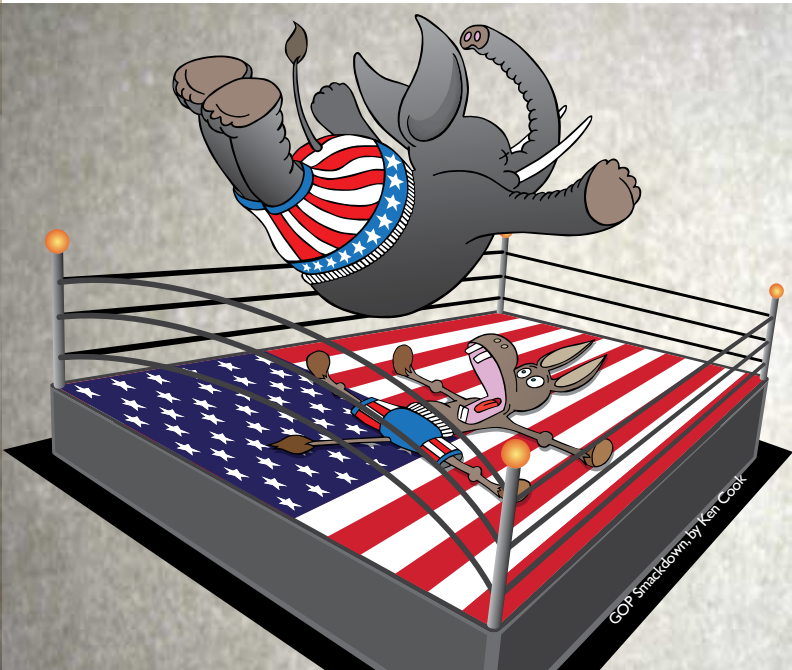


Photo courtesy Doug Mills/The New York Times/Redux



Photo by Jeff Snyder/PictureGroup via AP IMAGES

Jon Stewart and Steven Colbert's Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear brought together hundreds of thousands of people at the National Mall in Washington D.C. Its intent was to encourage and promote reasoned discussion in our country.



A staple in most newspapers, political comics show how embedded partisan bickering is in our political system.

abuses occur, both subtly and overtly. The efforts to ban veiled earmarks responded to this but did not go far enough. Although lobbyists who provide campaign donations should be prohibited from directly discussing legislative matters with members, they are still entitled to communicate their views. To provide an appropriate channel, Congress should create a system of Congressional Interest Group Offices (CIGOs) that lobbyists could contact to offer their input. CIGOs would produce briefing materials on issues coming to a vote in committee or on the floor, and on other issues requested by a legislator. Members would receive objective information that includes the views of lobbyists and others, and a critique of them, without the foul play or undue influence of lobbyists who argue for their clients irrespective of the public interest. CIGOs would be non-partisan, with staff that is hired for objective analytical abilities and expertise, rather than political ties.

Bradford Kane created and leads The Bipartisan Bridge (www.bipartisanbridge.org), which advances bipartisanship and post-partisanship for effective government through ideas and solutions on which Americans with diverse political philosophies can collaborate. Kane served as legislative counsel to a member, counsel to a House subcommittee and both deputy controller and a deputy secretary in the state of California government. Kane also was the CEO of a non-profit that provides job skills training via e-learning, was a member of a nationwide task force on media issues and worked for organizations that advance effective use of technology solutions.



• **Win-Win Accommodation:** At the start of each Congress, lawmakers could be asked to take a seminar on mediation and dispute resolution, for use in resolving legislative disputes. The seminars can set a tone of cooperation and collaboration. Topics would include “benevolent negotiations” to build trusted, reliable, long-term partnerships for sustained bipartisanship. Through “benevolent negotiations,” legislators would be encouraged to make good faith offers that address each others’ main needs, rather than staking out hard-line positions and then nickel-and-diming each other toward a middle-ground settlement. It advances a climate of respect, trust and accommodation, like mediation without a mediator, nurturing long-term relationships while hurdling an impasse.

Bipartisanship Is Pragmatic and Is Rewarded by Voters

Some partisans may assail bipartisanship as being impossible, impractical or simply naive. Yet, such assertions are usually made out of a lack of effort, creativity or willingness to abandon cynical and malevolent perceptions of political advantage. Bipartisan/post-partisan action is distinct from naive notions of harmony because it enables pragmatic progress.

As polls about Congress indicate, those who step up and lead the healing process are the ones more likely to be rewarded by the electorate. To those who are bold enough to collaborate across traditional barriers to govern effectively and achieve results, the aura of leadership will be bestowed. Voters hunger for leaders who recognize that, despite their differences, all lawmakers can, should and must work together toward mutually agreeable policies that benefit the American people.

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