

## Government Corruption

### How It's Supposed to Work

The United States of America was founded on inspiring ideas, ideals, principles and values, including:

From the Declaration of Independence:

- All people are created equal, deserve fair treatment, and have rights that may not be taken away, by government, or anybody: including rights to live, be free, and pursue happiness as we choose.
- Our government is created primarily to protect those rights, before anything else we task it with.
- The government is given its powers by the people, primarily to protect our human rights.
- Government is to be strong enough to protect those rights, yet limited to that and not stronger, unless we specifically task it with something else.
- If it doesn't do that, the people have a right and responsibility to declare and conduct revolution, and take those rights back from government, or whoever or whatever took them.

From the U.S. Constitution and its Amendments:

- We agree to be governed by laws we create, and those laws apply to everyone equally.
- True democracy, where everybody votes on everything, is too inefficient and unfeasible. We can't all be involved in everything in such a huge organization, so we'll use a representative democracy, in which we elect, hire and hold responsible representatives to make decisions and work for us.
- Laws are created by a Congress, a meeting of those representatives, in two groups to be sure we fairly represent everyone: a House of Representatives with 2-year seats allocated by population, and a Senate, with each State getting two 6-year seats. Both houses have to agree to make law, and so does the President, or Congress must agree so much it overrides a veto with a 2/3 vote. That's to be sure we agree, and prevent corruption, anybody having too much or abusing power.
- We elect/hire a President to serve no more than two 4-year terms and give that person powers to execute and manage what Congress says to do, command the armed forces, negotiate treaties and appoint people to help, like an executive cabinet and judges, which the Senate must approve.
- We have a judicial system of courts to interpret and enforce laws, make sure they jibe with the Constitution and its intent, and make fair decisions resolving disagreements and enforcing laws.
- These 3 branches are intended to serve as "checks and balances" on each other, to be sure none of them or anybody else gets too much power and can overcome the will and rights of the people.
- A 4<sup>th</sup> branch, independent journalism, informs the public about news and issues, so we can cast informed votes for representatives, advocate, work with representatives, and rebel, if needed.

In addition, we expect government to operate with principles of good governance, including being:

- Accountable
- Effective and Efficient
- Fair
- Honest
- Law and Rule Abiding
- Open and Transparent
- Representative
- Responsive
- Unconflicted

The U.S. holds this up as a model for best government and actively works to replicate it in the world. Much of the world has been receptive to that, and the U.S. derives much of its influence from global perceptions and respect that these ideals and this system are moral, just and worthy of emulation.

## How It's Corrupted

Unfortunately, after more than 200 years of effort, this system has been fundamentally corrupted. Historically, people in the U.S. have thought of ourselves as principled, moral, just, right and good. Corruption is something experienced in other countries, 3<sup>rd</sup> world dictatorships and the like, not in ours. One might argue that corruption is the most defining attribute of our U.S. government now.

Without corruption, we'd expect our government to maintain integrity with its founding ideas, ideals, principles and values; evolve, grow and adapt to change; make good decisions; uphold human rights; and follow good governance principles. Corruption causes conflict with or subversion of founding ideas, ideals, principles and values; laws and actions that don't adapt well to change or serve the people; and/or not providing good governance. Some ways the U.S. government has been corrupted include:

### *Election Corruption*

U.S. election procedures, systems, voting, voter eligibility and outcomes have been corrupted.

### *Electoral College*

In 2016, the current U.S. President became the 6<sup>th</sup> to gain office while losing the national popular vote, the 2<sup>nd</sup> to do so in the last 5 presidential contests. He got 46% of the people's votes, 3 million less than his opponent, who got 48%. Yet, he got 57% of the electoral vote, versus his rival's 42%, so he won.

As President, he's been historically unpopular, with the distinction of being the first President in polling history without one single day in which a majority of U.S. people approved of his performance in office. A majority of people has actually disapproved of his presidency throughout most of his time in office.<sup>1932</sup> We have a system that often gives most of its people what they don't want and don't choose, at least for offices of President and Vice President, arguably the world's most powerful government positions.

Election outcomes like this, with Presidents and Vice Presidents in power after most vote against them, with a majority of voters disapproving of them throughout their terms, unable to do anything about it, undermine public faith in elections and government and produce alienation and despair in voters.<sup>1933</sup> It's perceived as unfair, frustrating voters, making votes irrelevant, leading many to not vote at all.<sup>1934</sup> We know this system has problems. That's why there have been nearly 800 congressional proposals to amend or abolish the Electoral College, perhaps more than for any other feature in the Constitution.<sup>1935</sup>

The Electoral College came about because most people in the 1700s had few ways to know President or Vice President candidates, to be able to submit informed votes. We could know Congress candidates, who were close enough, in our states, but candidates for President and VP were too far away for most. As a solution, instead of casting votes directly for President and Vice President, we'd elect Electors,<sup>1936</sup> people we did know and trust, to go learn about those candidates and vote as they think people who elected them would want, making their best decisions. States determine how Electors are elected.

Smaller States worried their wishes, issues, people and problems would be ignored by government run by people elected to power from more populous states or regions, and they negotiated so each State would each get 2 Electors, plus allocations to all based on populations, balancing numbers of states and numbers of people, like having Congress with two houses, a Senate and House of Representatives, did.

Presidents and Vice Presidents were not party package deals. They were to be voted for individually, regardless of political party. Becoming President or Vice President requires 270 of 538 Elector votes.

The Constitution doesn't require a popular vote for President or Vice President. States put that in place, giving people the perception of having a voice, and States ways to direct Elector votes.

There are other rules for this Electoral College system. For example, Electors are not allowed to vote for both a President and a VP from their own State. Technically, it was illegal for Dick Cheney to be George W. Bush's VP, because both were from Texas, and the election was close enough Cheney would have lost without Electoral College votes from Texas (but they were allowed in that chaotic election.)

*This whole system is obsolete.* We have ways to know these candidates now, and have for a long time. It is not necessary to elect Presidents and Vice Presidents using this workaround Elector method, because the underlying conditions have changed, and people can get information on candidates now. The premise for the existence of the Electoral College is now false, so, arguably, it needs to be replaced.

It also needs to be replaced because it is corrupted. We don't vote for Electors, people we know and can trust to vote as we'd want them to, or because we respect their integrity and decisions. Typically, Electors are appointed in "slates," batches, by political parties, and directed to vote their party's ticket. If their party wins the statewide popular vote for President/VP, they are then appointed Electors.

When people vote for President/Vice President, which the Constitution doesn't require or address at all, that is just used by States to select people we don't know to vote for President/Vice President. It's not always easy to even find out who Electors are. State rules try to determine how Electors vote. 48 States give all Elector votes to the ticket that wins the majority popular vote. Maine and Nebraska don't. Some citizen votes count more than others, and inconsistencies create ways to game the system.

The Democratic Party is popular mostly with communities of color and college-educated whites; while The Republican Party has been popular mostly with older voters and whites without college degrees. These different bases of support are not uniformly distributed throughout the country.

By 2040 or so, 70% of people in the U.S. will live in 15 states. That 70% of people will elect 30 senators. 30% of U.S. people in 35 states (who are increasingly more old, white, rural, male and conservative than in the 15 most populous states) will elect 70 senators, 70% of senators, more than a 2/3 supermajority. That means 15.3% of the people (51% of 30% in those states) effectively control Congress, confirmation of treaties and whoever the President wants as judges, cabinet members and other appointed positions. The Senate can stop any law proposed by the House of Representatives, and so can the President. These factors can give Republicans control of the U.S. government. Should any one party have control?

This demographic phenomenon can similarly impact outcomes of U.S. President/VP package elections. Because all states are given two votes in the Electoral College, in addition to Electoral votes they get based on their respective populations, these less populated states have disproportionate weight in votes they cast in the Electoral College. In 2016, one electoral vote in Wyoming represented 200,000 citizens, and an electoral vote in California represented over 700,000. So, citizens' votes in Wyoming were 3.5 times more impactful those in California. Votes of increasingly older, rural, white, conservative citizens in the 35 least populated states count more, and these people support the current President, now.

(For Democrats to address this imbalance, they'd need to convince older white males in rural States to change views and votes, or they'd need enough folks with its values and votes to move to these States, increasingly abandoned by young and educated for big cities of perceived opportunities. It is difficult to assign responsibility for this change, which is so greatly impacting U.S. politics and government, but these demographic shifts are definitely associated with dominant political power in U.S. government.)

The two base votes per state, along with the winner-take-all method most states use to award their electoral votes, often leads to misalignments between the popular vote and the Electoral College vote. For example, in 1980, Ronald Reagan won nearly 51% of the popular vote, but 90% of the electoral vote. In 1912, Woodrow Wilson won 42% of the popular, but 82% of the electoral vote. In 1992, Bill Clinton won 43% of the popular, but nearly 70% of the Electoral College vote. These misalignments can lead to undesirable outcomes and bad feelings from the perspectives of members of either U.S. political party.

The current President's election was very narrow. If less than 1% of his votes in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan, 77,000 (0.05% of) votes,<sup>1937</sup> had gone to his rival, she'd have won in the Electoral College, as she did in the popular vote. That tiny 2016 margin is actually pretty typical in presidential contests, with the Electoral College system. Half of presidential elections have been decided by less than 75,000 votes cast across the country, even when there are large differences in popular votes.

The Electoral College system meant that in 2000, George W. Bush could win the presidency with only 21 million of 105 million votes cast. 79% of votes cast did not factor in determining who became president. In 2008, Barack Obama only needed 40 million of 131 million votes cast to win in the Electoral College. 70% of votes cast did not factor in determining who became president. This frustrates irrelevant voters.

Electoral College Electors are mostly required by State law or other agreements to vote as States direct. However, in practice, Electors can vote however they want, facing no more than a misdemeanor or small fine, usually \$1,000, and it's doubtful if even those charges would prevail in court if challenged. The ability of an Elector to defect and vote other than as directed is considered by many to be corrupt.

Because of this Electoral College system, not one small state with only 3 electoral votes got a single visit from major party President or VP candidates in final months of the 2016 campaign. After winning their nominations, the current President and VP did not step foot in 26 states, while the rival team neglected nearly three-fourths of the country, where they believed they either could not win or could not lose.

94% of all campaigning occurred in just 12 states, and 70% of all campaign events were in 6 states (Florida, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Virginia and Michigan). Future Presidents and VPs don't show up in 3/4 of U.S. States to even pretend to listen to their people's needs and wants, spending crazy money on ads and energy on campaigns in "swing states," while ignoring 38 states and all territories. Contested States are important to politicians afraid of losing future elections, and they're always fixated on future elections, their own or others'. In power, they pander to them, like being tough on Cuba, long after normal relations with China, Russia and other communist nations, to be popular in Florida, or giving big agriculture subsidies to be popular in Iowa, while ignoring needs in other States.<sup>1938 1939 1940 1941</sup> So, that 51% of the 30% of people in 35 States determines control of power and the Presidency, but Presidents are ignoring them, leaving their needs and issues unmet. That is corrupt and causes harm.

The Electoral College system is corrupt and no longer serving the People, because:

- It's no longer necessary and therefore obsolete, because people can now know President and VP candidates, to be able to cast informed votes about them. Conditions for which this workaround was designed have changed, and it is now unnecessary.
- People do not vote to elect Electors, as intended, to represent them in President/VP elections, and learn and vote as their people would want them to. They're selected and unknown by people, and this creates suspicion and bad feelings in voters, and leads to voter alienation and despair.

- State rulemaking tries to force Electors to vote certain ways, making them break laws to vote as their people would want them to, but doing that is perceived as corrupt by some.
- These rules make it all but impossible for anyone not endorsed by the two dominant U.S. political parties to be elected President or VP, creating a corrupt duopoly of power, suppressing 3<sup>rd</sup> parties.
- At least the 49.999% of people's votes in 48 states do not count in electing Presidents and VPs, because of how those States award and direct Elector positions and votes.
- The system does not fairly account for demographic changes from people driven to big cities by government, business and economic forces decimating rural and small-town societies in the U.S.
- President and Vice President elections are now focused on gaming the Electoral College system, causing candidates and Presidents/VPs to ignore people and issues in three-fourths of States.
- These problems create alienation, distrust, resentment and other bad feelings in U.S. people, harming our society and representative democracy, causing us not to vote and be divided.

### Two-Party System

The U.S. has an entrenched system of two dominant political parties, which is fundamentally corrupt. Practically speaking, only representatives of two political parties have any real chance of being elected: Republican or Democrat. Any other effort to create and use another political party to build support for values, issues and ideas not represented by Republicans or Democrats is essentially shut out in the U.S.

Founding Fathers of the U.S. were originally opposed to political parties and believed candidates for public office should do so on the basis of individual merits and efforts. For example, John Adams said: *"There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution."*<sup>1942</sup>

A monopoly is when one party dominates a market. There is a proven tendency in human nature to abuse monopoly power, because customers have no alternative, monopolists have all the power, so monopolists can and eventually usually do raise prices, abusively profit and get away with other harms. Dictators, kings and single party systems are political monopolies. The U.S. political system is a duopoly.

A duopoly is a monopoly, with 2 parties, rather than 1. All those two parties have to do is collude, by communicating and agreeing, which is illegal, or by mirroring each other's behavior without colluding, which is perfectly legal. Then, they can inflict all kinds of harms, unless regulated. Multi-party systems are more like healthy markets, with lots of choice and competition, where abuses tend to self-regulate.

In a duopoly, if both parties are corrupt and manipulated by a giant military industrial complex, taking 77% of all money federal government has discretion how to spend, all politicians have to do is not talk or do anything about it. They don't have to conspire on that. They can all be obliged to the same donors, giving each money to get elected and saying military spending cuts are off the table to get more, insubstantial political donations relative to the enormous volume of "the take" from U.S. taxpayers.

A duopoly is simple, compared to a multi-party system, in that there is a binary choice of one or other. Simple isn't enough to make it work. Elections are often perceived as contests for the lesser of 2 evils. We are not excited by either, but one's so bad we have to work to keep the worse one out of power. So, the choice we are presented with is like: do you want to punch yourself in the left or right eye?

Other “third” parties, common in other countries, are practically perceived as evil in the U.S., because they may take votes away from the only candidate who can prevent the worse candidate from winning.

The Electoral College system, with 48 States giving all Elector votes to one winner of the popular vote, causes people to oppose other political parties than the main two. A tiny portion of overall votes to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party can cause one of the main parties to lose to the other main party in a State, swinging all State Elector votes, enough to change the outcome of an entire national Presidential election.

In 2000, Ralph Nader, running as Green Party nominee, finished third in the popular vote with just 2.7% of U.S. and 1.6% of Florida votes, but those Florida votes (and other weird stuff in that election still argued about) took just enough votes from Democrat Al Gore in Florida that Republican George W. Bush could claim a win there. And, because the single winner gets all Florida Elector votes, that 1.6% of votes in one state was enough to change the national election outcome.<sup>1943</sup> 97,000 votes for one 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidate in one State was enough to change the national Presidential election result, 0.09% of the 105 million votes cast nationally. This corrupt systemic flaw suppresses 3<sup>rd</sup> parties in the U.S.

Without 3<sup>rd</sup> parties there is little opportunity to blow the whistle on duopoly collusion, call out issues both parties ignore, make duopoly candidates talk about things they otherwise avoid, offer alternative interpretations, ideas, plans and focuses, or promote other values. The system corruptly blocks out third parties, via duopolist bureaucratic complicities that create onerous requirements to get on ballots, by making it impossible or difficult for third parties to get public campaign financing, and not allowing third party candidates airtime, interviews, coverage or abilities to participate in debates. That’s corrupt.

Republicans say they serve common people, but they court and are beholden to big campaign donors. Democrats say they serve common people, but they court and are beholden to big campaign donors. Big money wins, no matter who wins, because, in the end, whoever is elected owes them and depends on them for money to get elected. Big money owns both U.S. political parties in our duopoly. Corrupt.

Lots of people in the U.S. are frustrated by not having any real or practical alternative to the duopoly, withdrawing from political elections, issues and government monitoring and political activism, contributing to embarrassingly low voter turnouts. That is a corruption of U.S. government and politics.

U.S. government and politics have largely degenerated into partisanship, intense division between people supporting one party or other devoting enormous time and energy to undermining the other, rather than working together to accomplish what helps all. Each views its group as good, the other evil. Each sees evidence for that preconception everywhere. Each is riled up with anger, resentment, fear, hate, anxiety, greed, and other base emotions targeted at the other. Fundamental disagreements exist, which can’t be resolved from dominant base emotion states. What one does, the other tries to destroy, leaving everyone in the country with little net progress and extraordinary waste. That is corrupt.

Duopoly elections are presented and perceived like sports competitions between blue and red teams, in which winners get political power to do whatever they want, like kings or dictators. News organizations line up around that, with little presentation, analysis or discussion of policy ideas, values, proposals or past performance. Rather, they focus on game statistics like: money raised so far, “likeability” and endorsements. Many people adopt political party affiliation with no more thought than when they adopt religions or sports teams. Why are you a democrat, Catholic or Washington Redskins fan? Because where I live, that’s what we are. Not because of anything anybody actually thinks themselves.

In 2018, only 22% of U.S. people said the Democratic and Republican parties do a good job representing the political views of U.S. people, down from 32% in 2012,<sup>1944</sup> a result of 2 party system corruption.

The U.S. two-party system is corrupt, at least, because it suppresses alternate views and candidates, enables unregulated duopoly abuses, alienates voters and citizen participation in government, and makes it easier for big money to dominate and manipulate elected representatives of both parties.

### Political Party Nominations

There is corruption within U.S. political parties in how money is raised, spent and allocated to candidates and causes, and in how candidates receive official party nominations.

In 2016, the Democratic Party was dishonest in how it selected Hillary Clinton over Bernie Sanders as nominee for President, and corrupt in its money dealings.<sup>1945 1946</sup> The Republican Party seems to have chosen winning political power at any price, over the nation's laws and principles, and its people?<sup>1947</sup>

### Campaign Finance

Political elections are now dominated by election competitions conducted through long and expensive PR, marketing and advertising campaigns. Candidates believe their ability to win depends on how much money they raise for their campaigns, and, with elections every 2, 4 or 6 years, representatives and candidates are almost always focused on raising money for elections. So, they're constantly courting and soliciting money, campaign contributions. They give access to donors, who often demand influence. So, there's constant pressure on representatives to raise money, and make people who donate it happy. That corrupts fair and unbiased decision-making, choices of issues to focus on, and laws or rules made.

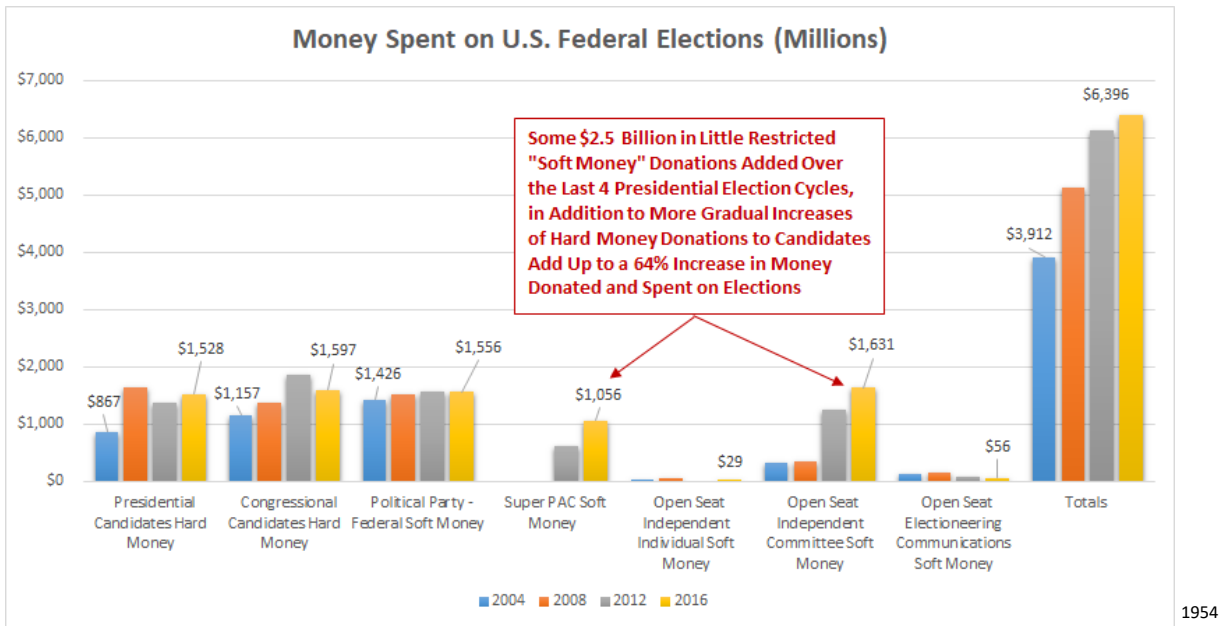
Elections are supposed to be fair ways "We the People" decide who to hire in our key government roles. In 2016 federal elections, \$6.5 billion was spent to get 471 people elected,<sup>1948</sup> more than the National Science Foundation gets per year.<sup>1949</sup> In Britain, political parties can only spend \$30 million the year before an election, and TV campaign ads are banned. In Canada in 2015, a member of Parliament spent \$12,000-\$90,000 on elections. A member of the U.S. House spent \$500K, Senate \$1.5 million. We spent \$4 billion on Congress elections in 2016, while only 25% of us approved of the job Congress was doing.

In 2016, \$2.4 billion was spent influencing who we hired for the jobs of President and Vice President,<sup>1950</sup> jobs that paid salaries of \$400,000 and \$230,700 a year.<sup>1951</sup> Over 4 years, these 2 jobs pay \$2.5 million in salaries, plus housing, travel, pensions and other perks. So, people spent 950 times more to get people elected President and Vice President than their salaries pay them for the jobs. Does that make sense?

In 2018, Rick Scott spent \$64 million of his own money to get elected to the U.S. Senate in Florida, a job paying \$174,000 a year. In 2010, Meg Whitman spent \$177 million, 4 times her opponent, \$144 million of her own money, running for California governor,<sup>1952</sup> a position paying \$174,000 a year (and lost).<sup>1953</sup>

Why would people do that? People in powerful public positions can make or influence decisions that can help others make far more money than that, and there will be a payback later, somehow?

What Meg Whitman did in California is like somebody paying others \$12 million dollars to convince you to hire her at U.S. minimum wage for a job to manage the inventory, cash register, safe and employees at your family business for 4 years. Would you fall for that? That only makes sense if somebody's getting more than \$12 million in value from your business? That is corrupt.



1992 to 2016, spending by presidential candidate committees rose from \$330 million to \$1.52 billion, increasing 362%; congressional candidate committee spending rose from \$689 million to \$1.6 billion, increasing a comparatively modest 132%. These are restricted “hard money” donations. Hard money political donation rules limit how much any one person can donate, prevent corporations from donating, require disclosure of who donates, and have other restrictions to try to limit corruption and harms.

Under cover of legal gobbledygook and government bureaucratic information overload, rules have been changed to let those hard money rules be bypassed, so individuals and corporations can funnel virtually unlimited money to political elections, and hide what they’re doing, kind of like there are rules that only rich people can follow that allow rich people to hide their income and wealth to reduce their taxes.

Among these, 5 years ago, a U.S. court made it legal to use “Super PACS” for individuals or corporations to contribute unlimited amounts of money to political campaigns without disclosing what they’re doing. This is kind of like a drug cartel laundering money to be able to bribe government? That is corrupt.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* legalized essentially unlimited payments to influence elections, and for various other forms of campaign and political influence, from individuals and corporations, providing legal ways to affect U.S. politics, elections, laws and policies, using the argument that spending money to buy politics is an expression of free speech. Bribery is protected, as long as you’re not directly paying politicians, but instead play a little game? That’s like saying giving a cop’s wife a bunch of money to convince her husband not to arrest you is just exercising free speech, not bribery? All humans communicate. That’s free speech. Not all humans have money to spend buying elections. Corrupt. That ruling also allows anybody to spend any amount of money advertising for any politician.

501(c)(4) organizations are legal conduits in the U.S. for channeling money to influence politics, while not disclosing the sources of that money.<sup>1955</sup> Another legal middleman for bribery? Corrupt.

There are other games at play. Taken together, these manipulations of campaign finance rules have led to \$2.5 billion in additional money going to federal political campaigns over the last 4 presidential election cycles, a big part of a 64% increase in election campaign contributions in the period.<sup>1956</sup>



Mostly, sophisticated people (the already wealthy and powerful) can launder as much money as desired into anybody's political campaign without others knowing they did it, but they can convince those they contributed to that they did it, and if they didn't do it, they wouldn't be in office, and if politicians don't do the donor requested favors it won't happen again, and they will no longer be in office/power.

A member of the House of Representatives barely gets sworn into office before these donors and their lobbyists start showing up in their offices, pointing out there's not much time to raise money for the next campaign. In return for their support, they would like to request... It works the same in the Senate, except there is more time to get at them. Congress does not have term limits, so there are not many "lame duck" periods when congresspeople can just "do the right thing" without money manipulations. It works the same way for President/VP, except the money is far, far bigger. Corruption.

The Russian government, and many other "dark money" manipulators, spent millions influencing the U.S. Presidential election in 2016, through social media, paying for social media services designed to influence highly targeted demographics in the U.S. That influence was enough to change the outcome of the 2016 President/VP election, needing only to change as few as 77,000 votes. U.S. interests spent even more on social media. Even after that, there are still in 2019 no U.S. rules requiring a hostile foreign government, dark money manipulators or U.S. social media companies to disclose social media spending to influence political campaigns in the U.S.<sup>1957</sup> Corrupt.

In 2015, 84% of people in the U.S. believed money has too much influence in U.S. political campaigns; 85% believed candidates who win public office promote policies that directly help the people and groups who donated money to their campaigns, most of the time (55%), or sometimes (30%); and 85% believed campaign finance is in need of fundamental changes (39%), or complete rebuilding (46%).<sup>1958</sup>

In 2018, 77% of the U.S. public agreed there should be limits on the amount of money individuals and organizations can spend on political campaigns; 20% disagree. 65% say new campaign finance laws could be written that would be effective in reducing the role of money in politics, while 31% say any new laws would not be effective. What is being done to make that happen?

71% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents and 85% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents agree there should be limits on campaign spending. 54% of Republicans and Republican-leaning independents and 77% of Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents agree new laws that would be effective in limiting the influence of money in politics could be written.

Nearly three-quarters of the public (74%) says it is very important that major political donors not have more influence than others, while an additional 16% view this as somewhat important, 90% altogether.

Only 26% of people in the U.S. feel the statement "people who give a lot of money to elected officials do not have more influence than others" describes the country very or somewhat well; 72% say this does not describe the country well, with 43% saying it describes it "not at all well."<sup>1959</sup> We are spending more and more money on political campaigns, and, no matter our party affiliation, we are less and less satisfied with what our elected government does, even if people win who we want to win, sometimes.

These are high levels of bipartisan support, in these times of partisan bickering. Most people in the U.S. agree our federal government is corrupted by money in politics and want to write laws to eliminate that. That's one of the things people are angry and resentful about, no matter which party they identify with. Until that happens, there's very little chance of solving most of our many wicked social problems.

## Low Voter Turnouts

In part because of alienation by government corruption, but also because of laziness, unavailability of a party that appeals to us, voter suppression, living in states where our votes won't count because of the electoral college, not registering to vote, and lack of time, U.S. voter turnouts are very low. In 2016, the President of the U.S. was elected with 63 million votes, just 27% of eligible voters nationwide, in what is basically a two-choice vote. U.S. Presidential elections usually get a turnout somewhere near 55% of eligible voters, and mid-term congressional elections usually have turnouts near 40%. (Germany has about 80% voter turnouts.)<sup>1960</sup> The U.S. is 26<sup>th</sup> out of 32 OECD nations in voter turnout.<sup>1961</sup>

## Voter Suppression

Many who don't vote cite as reasons various obstacles making it hard to vote, disproportionately affecting increasing numbers of poor and people of color. "Poll closures and limited voting hours" disproportionately affect the poor and minorities, because they're more likely to be working many jobs, be single parents, or lack transportation to polls. "Registration problems", like Voter ID laws, affect minorities and poor disproportionately. For example, 1 in 10 U.S. adults doesn't have a government-issued photo ID, which 31 states require to vote. "Too busy" may sound like a lame excuse, but the poor and people of color are more likely to live in single-parent households, and work multiple jobs with less pay, job security, flexibility, workplace power, and reliable transportation.

U.S. territories residents, 98% non-white, can pay taxes, serve in the military and vote in primaries, but they can't vote for president in a general election.

Of people with disabilities, 1 in 5 have difficulties accessing polls. In 2012, 1 in 7 who didn't vote in the presidential election said it was because of "illness or disability". U.S. minorities and poor are far more likely to have untreated illnesses, because they disproportionately can't afford U.S. health insurance.<sup>1962</sup>

Laws prevent many who are victims of the criminal justice system from voting. That's 1 in 40 U.S. adults, 6.25 million people prevented from voting, disproportionately non-whites and poor, because of racial disparities in the U.S. criminal justice system,<sup>1963</sup> up 430% from 1.18 million in 1976. In Florida and Mississippi 10% of people can't vote because of this.<sup>1964</sup>

The War on Drugs began during the Nixon administration in the 1970s as an offensive strategy to combat political opposition, particularly protesting the Vietnam War, because drug use was correlated with anti-administration protest and opposition. Making drugs illegal allows government to lock up and remove voting rights of half a million U.S. prisoners there for drug offenses, 1 in 5 people in prison, and for many of the 1.7 million people, 0.7% of adults, in the criminal justice system for illegal drugs.<sup>1965</sup>

Collectively, these and other voter discrimination laws corrupt democracy, by preventing citizens and residents from voting, and they are often strategically and deliberately created and enforced, in order to affect election outcomes. This is corruption of the basic principle that all people are created equal and deserve the same rights to participate in our democratic government decision-making processes.

## Gerrymandering

Gerrymandering is a widespread corruption of elections. That's when people in power strategically mess with how voting district maps are drawn to provide advantages to one political party.

For example: if there are to be 4 voting districts on a map, and district boundaries are drawn so most citizens reliably inclined to vote for the “other party” are within one district boundary, and majorities of those reliably inclined to vote for “our party” live in each of the 3 other districts, (called “packing”) then, voting district map drawers have created a biased mechanism for getting 3 members of their party and only 1 member of the other party elected, as long as most vote the way they’re already inclined to.

It’s possible to have more total votes cast for the “other party” in the area, but still have “our party” win 3 times more seats in the election. That creates a 3 to 1 advantage from the area in legislative votes, assuming the elected vote party lines, which they’re often corrupted to do, because they often depend on money raised by party fundraising machines to get elected. (Another gerrymandering mechanism called “cracking” spreads “other party’s” supporters across multiple districts to dilute their influence.)

Gerrymandering can explain how our U.S. president took office, despite getting fewer votes, and how in that 2016 election his party won many of its U.S. House and Senate seats, and control of the legislature. Of 435 U.S. House and 4,700 state house/assembly seats up for election that year, 4 times more districts were gerrymandered in its favor. In the 2 dozen most populous states with most Congress seats, 3 times more House districts were gerrymandered in its favor, including “battleground states” important in presidential elections. "The outcome was already cooked in, if you will, because of the way the districts were drawn." His party’s win in Michigan's State House Districts had only a 1-in-16,000 probability of occurring by chance; in Wisconsin's Assembly districts, a 1-in-60,000 likelihood of happening randomly.

Persistent advantage and "clear evidence that aggressive gerrymandering is distorting the nation's congressional maps" has created a "threat to democracy." Gerrymandering produces a "phantom constitutional right" of proportional political representation. His party had full control of 25 state legislatures and 29 governorships with time to carry out redistricting from the 2010 Census, growing to 33 legislatures and governorships by the 2018 election, giving this party gerrymandering advantages creating structured bias in election outcomes for both chambers of Congress and the presidency.<sup>1966</sup>

So, in plain language, our government is corrupt because of cheating in ways voting maps are drawn. That cheating makes elections unfair and dishonest. That’s corrupt, no matter which party does it.

### [Voting Machine Corruptions](#)

Voting machines used in the U.S. are susceptible to hacking, and there are many examples of attacks against tally servers, voter registration systems, election night reporting and registration systems, and other electronic systems that can outright change voting outcomes or at least cast doubt on vote tallies.

Electronic voting machines are easy for competent hackers to hack, as has been demonstrated often.<sup>1967</sup> Hackers call computer voting system vulnerabilities “staggering.”<sup>1968</sup> It takes less than 7 minutes.<sup>1969</sup>

Voting machines could easily be hacked by foreign governments, voting machine company employees, AIs, polling place volunteers, or any competent person. So, we keep using them, doing nothing about it?

At least 10 states had election systems probed or attacked in the 2016 elections; 5 have all electronic systems (where there’s no paper trail, making elections impossible to audit); and another 8 states have counties with all electronic systems and no paper trail. Even in states with paper ballot audit abilities, those audits are typically not conducted, so there is no way to know if elections are fair or corrupted.<sup>1970</sup> We don’t even know if our elections are hacked and corrupted in at least a fourth of U.S. states.

Many voting machines are more than 10 years old, running on no longer supported operating systems, using prone to fail components, like any 10-year-old computer system would be.<sup>1971</sup> These antiquated systems are failing and corrupting elections, even without anybody trying to interfere with them.

It doesn't matter what your politics are. Do you want to have election systems anyone can corrupt?

### Social Media Abuse

Elections have been corrupted through “free” social media, which serve as noisemakers and echo chambers for people’s and organization’s egos, emotions, vanity, greed, spin, prejudices and images, and then very profitably sell personal user data and custom abilities to sell or otherwise influence us. They enable real or fake people or organizations to say or show anything, real or fake, about anyone or anything, real or fake, without any real standards or supervision, and they rile up addictive behaviors and produce “zombie states” in users that increase our vulnerabilities to being influenced.

For the 2016 election, there was a concerted effort by Russia that successfully influenced elections. Russia’s Internet Research Agency (IRA) exploited U.S. political divisions and manipulated its systems.<sup>1972</sup> In 2018, 13 IRA Russians were indicted, and 33 sanctioned, for interfering in the 2016 U.S. election, including reaching “millions” of U.S. residents through Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

IRA-controlled Twitter accounts had “tens of thousands” of followers, and many U.S. political figures were retweeting IRA content and memes. The IRA used social media to organize rallies, some supported by the President’s campaign, and influences included the IRA convincing someone via Craigslist to walk around New York City dressed as Santa Claus wearing a mask of the future President’s face.<sup>1973</sup>

More than a billion 2016 election related posts<sup>1974</sup> limited to 140 characters were shared on Twitter, with zero requirement that a single word in them be true, and no penalties to anyone if they weren’t. The current U.S. President uses Twitter to lie to the people every single day, in a documented way.<sup>1975</sup>

YouTube, Tumblr, PayPal and Google+ were also used by Russia, adapting digital marketing techniques to target audiences across multiple channels, interfere with the 2016 election and alter its result. *"Social media have gone from being the natural infrastructure for sharing collective grievances and coordinating civic engagement, to being a computational tool for social control, manipulated by canny political consultants and available to politicians in democracies and dictatorships alike."*<sup>1976</sup>

Cambridge Analytica, whose VP was the President’s campaign advisor, used data on 50 million Facebook users obtained via Facebook (a third of the number who voted in the 2016 election) to target them with sophisticated manipulation and influence techniques to affect the election outcome. *"We exploited Facebook to harvest millions of people’s profiles. And built models to exploit what we knew about them and target their inner demons. That was the basis the entire company was built on."*<sup>1977</sup>

That influence is disputed, but both the President’s campaign and Facebook claimed Facebook impacted voters enough to tip the outcome of that very close election. Facebook itself did for the campaign what Cambridge claimed to do. His campaign spent 80% of its digital ad budget on Facebook, \$70 million, and Facebook sent staff, with cleared political views, to aid in the effort and help the campaign know and use every secret button, click and technology they had, like A/B testing to increase ad effectiveness. Facebook allows microtargeting of messages based on all kinds of things, including race, gender, age, location, likes, dislikes, things you’ve clicked on, anywhere, information about your friends...<sup>1978</sup>

Facebook was then the largest news organization in the U.S. Yet, it offered almost no quality control on any news on its platform. People can share very manipulative things in targeted ways on Facebook. Almost anyone can pay Facebook for the kinds of services the President's campaign did, to convince people almost anything. There were no limits on what anybody can pay to corrupt elections in the U.S., or anywhere, on Facebook, no disclosure requirements to let people know where "news" comes from, no real limits to what kind of disinformation could be used. Facebook's business is being a propaganda and influencing channel for individuals and organizations. That's how it makes its money.

The current U.S. President wouldn't be President without Facebook, or Twitter, or Russian interference, or any number of other little things. His Electoral College victory came down to 77,000 votes, while he lost the popular vote by 3 million. Social media corruption can fairly be credited with that win.

Social media can also be credited with the "Fake News" phenomenon that has delegitimizing all news reporting and information sharing, because it made and makes no distinction between truth and lies. Now, people don't know what to believe, and "alternate facts" are no less real than verified facts,<sup>1979</sup> corrupting the people and the independent journalism 4<sup>th</sup> branch of government in the U.S.

### *Lobbying Corruption*

Government offices are besieged by special interests seeking privilege and approval for what they want. An entire, enormous \$3 billion a year<sup>1980</sup> political lobbying industry has evolved in the United States: professional, paid and often for-profit efforts to influence representatives on behalf of special interests. It works. It would not exist if it didn't. There are 23 federal lobbyists per U.S. congressperson.<sup>1981</sup> Similar ratios exist in lobbyists per legislator in U.S. state governments.<sup>1982</sup>

Government lobbying, as it exists in the U.S., is fundamentally corrupt, in many ways, including:

#### Raising money for elected officials, which creates indebtedness and favoritism, buying votes:

On average, a U.S. Senator raises more than \$14,000 dollars every single day, in order to stay in office. One of the easiest ways to do that is to use lobbyists, who make big donations and organize fancy fundraisers for elected officials in order to buy influence for their clients.

*"You can't take a congressman to lunch for \$25 and buy him a steak. But you can take him to a fundraising lunch and not only buy him that steak, but give him \$25,000 extra and call it a fundraiser."*<sup>1983</sup>

Here's how it works. Let's say you're a big bank. You want to buy influence with a senator on the banking committee, so he'll vote your way on an upcoming bill. The easiest way would be to just give \$100,000 directly to the senator's reelection campaign. But that would be illegal. Federal law prohibits companies from making donations directly to candidates. So instead, you hire a lobbying firm.

The lobbying firm can legally organize a fundraiser that contributes \$100,000 to the senator's campaign. The lobbyist happens to have friendly chats about what you want with the senator and/or his/her staff. At the end of the day, the senator has \$100,000, knows exactly where the money came from, and knows which way to vote if he wants the money to keep flowing. But, nobody has broken any laws!

On average, for every dollar spent influencing politics, the nation's most politically active corporations receive \$760 from the government. That's a 76,000% return on investment. And it works on both sides of the aisle. Top lobbying firms raise big money for Republicans and Democrats at the same time.

### Lobbyists Actually Literally Write Many of the Laws:

For example, Congress used the 2014 omnibus budget deal to secretly repeal law preventing the People from again bailing out big banks engaged in risky derivatives trading, what caused the Great Recession. Citigroup played a major role in the 2008 crisis and also got billions of federal stimulus/bailout dollars. 70 of the 85 lines in the bill were written by Citigroup lobbyists. Two key paragraphs were copied almost word for word. Citigroup literally wrote its own rules. Members of Congress who backed the bill got big money from Wall Street, mostly channeled through fundraisers, but also through other “soft money” channels designed to go around rules preventing corporations from giving money to officials.

The same thing happens all the time. Lobbyists for the chemical industry may author a bill that stops efforts to restrict toxic chemicals. Oil company lobbyists write bills giving oil companies subsidies. Sometimes, lobbyists even brag about how few changes the politicians make to their work.

### Lobbyists Effectively Bribe Legislators with Lucrative Job Offers

Lobbyists routinely offer Congress members and staffers lucrative jobs at their or their clients’ firms. Negotiations often take place while representatives are still in office, ostensibly working for The People. With multi-million-dollar payoffs pending, legislators are very willing to help out their future employers. *“I would say to [the Member], ‘When you’re done working on the Hill, we’d very much like you to consider coming to work for us.’ The moment I said that, we owned them. And what does that mean? Every request from our office, every request of our clients, everything that we want, they’re gonna do.”*<sup>1984</sup>

The phenomenon of members of Congress going to work for lobbying firms and their clients is called “the revolving door.” It’s extremely common: in the 1970s, less than 5% of retiring legislators went on to become lobbyists. Now, half of retiring senators and a third of retiring house members do.

Revolving door gigs are lucrative. Congresspeople who become lobbyists get an average 1,452% raise. No surprise they throw votes lobbyists’ ways with that kind of money on the line. And that’s just lobbyists we know about. With loopholes in how law defines lobbyists, many officials go on to take what are effectively revolving door lobbying jobs without having to officially register as lobbyists. These “shadow lobbyists,” like former Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-GA), are lobbyists in all but name, and paid just as much. Researchers estimate there’s actually twice as much lobbying as what’s publicly disclosed, making the lobbying business of influencing politicians a \$7 billion industry.

Lobbying itself, advocating a position to an elected official, is protected by the First Amendment. Individuals and groups have the right to express their opinions to Congress about how proposed legislation might affect them, and to try to convince lawmakers to take their side. Problems come from imbalances between the wealthy and powerful who can afford to pay lobbyists, versus common people and public interest groups that can’t. Lobbying is tremendously slanted toward the already rich and powerful, especially business interests. For each \$1 labor and public interest groups spend lobbying, businesses and their associations use \$34. Of the 100 organizations spending the most on U.S. lobbying, 95 represent businesses, consistently.<sup>1985</sup> Problems also come from lobbyists routinely using money, favors, gifts, or lucrative job offers to do the convincing for them. That is corrupt.<sup>1986</sup>

Corporations spend \$3 billion a year lobbying Congress, 30% more than the total budgets of Congress. The biggest companies have more than 100 lobbyists each, letting them work on everyone in Congress, regularly, raising money for them and offering what amounts to bribes to them and their staffs.

Because lobbying works, successfully creating laws and rules that work in their clients' favor, and because of enormous imbalances of lobbying money and efforts in favor of business, wealth and power, laws, rules, policies, subsidies, opinions and practices overwhelmingly favor business, wealth and power, over the common human beings and citizens of the U.S.

Nature, ecosystems, indigenous and common people, natural resources and others have few lobbyists and lobbying resources compared to the business interests working hard to exploit them, or indifferent to any harms done to them, because their incentives are to make money for their business interests. Because of that, we have legal behavior doing great harm to nature, environments and beings.

In the 2015-16 election cycle, oil, gas and coal companies spent \$354 million in campaign contributions and lobbying and got \$29 billion in U.S. subsidies, an 8,200% return on investment. 88% of those gifts went to legislators from one party, and 97% of those opposed taxing carbon pollution. The current administration supports the coal industry,<sup>1987</sup> suppresses climate science and grave warnings of the majority of informed scientists that harms we are doing will result in catastrophic climate changes, pulls the U.S. out of the Paris Agreement and aggressively guts environmental protections. That's corruption.

Telecommunication companies recently succeeded in dismantling "Network Neutrality" regulations to prevent them from exploiting their natural monopoly communication networks to discriminate against those delivering services over that infrastructure, in favor of their own services.<sup>1988</sup> One way that was done was with "AstroTurf Lobbying", using services of for-profit companies that cheat in various ways to appear to be "grass roots" efforts representing the public. In the public comment period for the FCC's decision eliminating Net Neutrality, 10 million names were used to submit comments that were falsified, not sent by them, or even sent using names of dead people, of 25 million total comments received.<sup>1989</sup> The telecom industry has spent many millions for lobbying over long periods to achieve this unfair outcome that harms competition and public consumers, but increases its profitability. Corrupt.

The gun lobby in the U.S. is powerful and relentless, like greater military industrial complex lobbies. Keep profits high by keeping bullets flying! Gun sellers don't bear costs for lives their wares destroy. They have no incentive to stop gun violence. Quite the opposite. Gun violence is good for business. 63% of U.S. gun owners say a main reason they own a firearm is for protection against other people.<sup>1990</sup>

Citizens are begging the U.S. government to do something to stop the epidemic gun violence in the U.S. On average, there's one mass shooting a day in the U.S., where somebody, almost always a citizen, shoots at least 4 people.<sup>1991</sup> Once a month, it's at a school, and teachers and children are shot.<sup>1992</sup> Since John Lennon was shot, on December 8, 1980, more U.S. people have been killed by guns in the U.S. than have died in all U.S. wars, combined, ever, anywhere in the world.<sup>1993</sup>

In an average U.S. year, 115,000 people are shot in accidents, murders, assaults, suicides or by police,<sup>1994</sup> 17,000 of them children.<sup>1995</sup> In 2017 in the U.S., more children were shot dead than active duty military plus on-duty police officers,<sup>1996</sup> while the U.S. operated 7 wars and military activity in 140 countries, and arrested and incarcerated 5.5 times the numbers and percentages of people of average nations.<sup>1997</sup> Epidemic gun violence in the U.S., on average, leaves one child bleeding or dead every single hour. Thousands of U.S. schools conduct active-shooter drills, in which children, as young as 4, hide from pretend murderers in dark closets and bathrooms. Death by gun is the 3rd-leading cause of children's deaths in the U.S. The U.S. Government doesn't track school shootings,<sup>1998</sup> but they averaged one a week in early 2018.<sup>1999</sup> There are 50,000 more gun stores than McDonald's restaurants in the U.S.<sup>2000</sup>

The power of the firearm business lobby, especially as exercised by the National Rifle Association (NRA), prevents meaningful change in U.S. gun laws and associated harms. That is corrupt.

The wealthy and powerful conduct relentless government lobbying efforts over decades to continually create advantages for the wealthy in business and tax rules. Like, taxes on income from capital gains from financial speculations are taxed at lower rates (20%) than income from real labor (maybe 40%), rules that let the rich pass wealth to inheritors with minimal taxes and play games to avoid taxes,<sup>2001</sup> and rules that allow companies to shield income from taxes through artificial off-shore tax shelters.<sup>2002</sup>

Famous arguments that tax cuts to the wealthy “trickle down” to lower tiers of the economy as jobs and higher wages have been clearly demonstrated false. Yet, in 2017, another \$1.5 trillion tax cut was again justified that way, which is adding \$2 trillion to our debt.<sup>2003</sup> The wealthier get more from the tax cuts, absolutely and proportionally. Households getting \$500,000 to \$1 million get proportional gains 4 times bigger than those earning \$40,000. The top 1% gets 21% of the benefits in 2018, 83% in 2027.<sup>2004</sup>

The richest 10% already owns 75% of the country’s wealth, including 80% of all publicly traded stock, while half of the people don’t have even \$1 in retirement savings and 78% live paycheck to paycheck,<sup>2005</sup> part of big income and wealth inequality problems. The rich get even more as a result of this tax cut.<sup>2006</sup> Campaign finance rules and lobbying made that happen. That’s corruption.

U.S. healthcare is the world’s most expensive, and its costs are rising faster than most.<sup>2007 2008</sup> We spend \$10,000<sup>2009</sup> per year per capita for health care (up from \$146 per person in 1960, <sup>2010</sup> a 6,903% increase), twice other industrialized nations’ average,<sup>2011</sup> more than any other nation as a percent of GDP, 19%.<sup>2012</sup> Together, we spend \$3.3 trillion<sup>2013</sup> (328% of FADS) on healthcare in the U.S., 1 in every 6 dollars in the U.S. economy, \$2 trillion (164% of FADS) more than if we did healthcare like other developed nations, almost 2/3 more than our Federal Government gets to decide how to spend in a year.

The U.S. healthcare system is the worst performing of developed nations overall, and for healthcare outcomes, access and equity.<sup>2014</sup> It has highest or near-highest rates of infant mortality, obesity, heart and lung diseases, STDs, and disability.<sup>2015</sup> It is 42<sup>nd</sup> in life expectancy and 48<sup>th</sup> in maternal mortality,<sup>2016</sup> a maternal mortality rate twice Canada’s, 3 times Italy’s.<sup>2017</sup> Half of adults have high blood pressure.<sup>2018</sup> The #3 cause of death in the U.S. (after heart disease and cancer) is something that happens to us in the U.S. healthcare system, which we did not have when we went into it.<sup>2019</sup>

Besides Mexico and Turkey, the U.S. is the only industrialized nation that doesn’t guarantee health care access for its people.<sup>2020</sup> It’s so unaffordable, 30 million people under 65 (10%) don’t have insurance.<sup>2021</sup> 45,000 people a year in the U.S. die from lack of healthcare.<sup>2022</sup> In 2016, 114 million people in the U.S. (35%) didn’t have dental insurance,<sup>2023</sup> and many who do still can’t afford needed dental work.

20% with health insurance still can’t pay, and 60% of those use most of their savings on medical bills.<sup>2024</sup> Medical debt is the #1 source of personal bankruptcy filings,<sup>2025</sup> part of half of personal bankruptcies.<sup>2026</sup> 25% of senior citizens declare bankruptcy and 40% mortgage or sell homes due to medical expenses.<sup>2027</sup> 1 in 5 U.S. adults has big problems paying medical bills, more than 2X the next highest country’s rate.<sup>2028</sup> 24 million (10% of) adults carry medical debt from the last year.<sup>2029</sup> 31 million are underinsured.<sup>2030</sup>

Healthcare system costs are crippling for many businesses and households, not affordable for too many. Because of that, many employers try to avoid paying for medical insurance for their employees.<sup>2031</sup> High employee medical insurance costs can be the difference between viable and a non-viable businesses.



Many people in the U.S. feel stuck in their jobs, because they're afraid of losing their medical benefits. Many take jobs based in part on medical insurance coverage. Some choose desperately to commit crimes and be imprisoned, because that's the only way they can get medical care.<sup>2032</sup> High medical insurance costs increase further with age, making those costs a huge deal for older and retired people.

There are so many insurance companies, providers, consultants and others in the healthcare system, and their operations and interactions are so different and complex, 25% to 30% of U.S. healthcare system costs go to administration,<sup>2033</sup> twice that of Canada's nationalized, single-payer system.<sup>2034</sup>

Before Obamacare, 1 in 7 U.S. people were denied health insurance because of pre-existing conditions, big stuff like arthritis, cancer or heart disease, also little stuff like acne, injury or being overweight. Many with easy to fix problems ended up with worse problems, like disability, inability to contribute, and bankruptcy, because they were excluded from coverage by profit-seeking insurance companies.<sup>2035</sup> Now, they aren't, but there are hordes of lobbyists to government trying to kill Obamacare.<sup>2036</sup>

The U.S. healthcare system performs horribly regarding mental illness, with repercussions rippling out through society and the economy. Mental illnesses are the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading U.S. cause of disability and affect 20% of U.S. people.<sup>2037</sup> Yet, less than half of those with mental illnesses get ongoing, managed care.<sup>2038</sup>

Politically, it seems to be almost impossible to improve health systems in the U.S., because anything that really improves health or reduces expense for healthcare harms some special interest's profit prospects. We can't fix these wicked problems, because special interest money, lobbying and manipulation efforts keep the system broken, so they can continue to exploit the brokenness for money.<sup>2039</sup> That is corrupt.

Per capita, the U.S. spends the most on pharmaceuticals of any nation, by far,<sup>2040</sup> with the highest prices. Pharmaceutical companies spent \$4 billion lobbying in the last 20 years, the most of any industry,<sup>2041</sup> influencing government, for example, to stop single-payer health insurance, prevent insurers from negotiating lower drug prices, and to reduce oversight and restrictions of public efforts to verify their drug efficacy and safety claims. Combined lobbying and influence efforts make it virtually impossible to fix the U.S. healthcare system without fixing lobbying and campaign finance corruption. Corrupt.

All of this is grotesquely corrupt. It is doing real people and our environments real harm, at huge scales. Most wicked problems relate to the problem of government corruption, and won't be fixed until it is.

### *Think Tank Corruption*

Think tanks are institutes, corporations or other groups organized to study particular subjects, like policy issues or scientific problems, and provide information, ideas, possible solutions and recommendations. Think tanks can provide very valuable services, focusing top minds on important issues and problems, researching them and coming up with analyses, reports and advice, to help us make progress. In 2017, there were 1,872 think tanks in the U.S., 3.6 times as many as in the #2 country, China, and a quarter of the world's 7,815 think tanks. 9 of the top 20 in the world were in the U.S.<sup>2042</sup>

A conflict with think tanks, as with so many things, is they need financial and other resources to exist, pay their people, pay for office space and research, and do the work they do. Some are publicly funded, or funded through academic institutions, which gives them freedom to be able to pursue the truth, wherever it takes them. Most need to raise money somehow, creating opportunities for corruption.

Wealthy and powerful individuals and corporations have most of the money, so that is where many think tank organizations go to get the money they need to survive. Many of the wealthy and powerful only provide money if the think tank produces or will produce something they value and want to pay for.

That leads to things like the Brookings Institution, which is the #1 think tank in the U.S., and the world, taking money from corporations to advocate for their business projects and other interests in ways that are not independent and unbiased, like taking \$400,000 for biased advocacy for a corporate housing development project in San Francisco that leveraged its reputation for unbiased intellectual analysis.<sup>2043</sup>

Corporations and wealthy donors use think tanks in this way to influence all kinds of things, including government policies, laws, rules and investments. Government, and others, believe on reputation they are being presented with thoughtful, top-shelf, unbiased intellectual analyses and recommendations, but they are instead being presented with top-shelf, biased, intellectual deceit on behalf of others.

On issues as varied as military sales to foreign countries, international trade, highway management and real estate development, think tanks become vehicles for corporate influence and branding campaigns, what's really lobbying in disguise, without even the rules limiting lobbying to try to keep people honest. Corporations spend millions with think tanks to influence government and make billions in profits. "Independent" think tank reports provide "cover" to justify government decisions pushed by business.

Brookings doubled its annual operations to \$100 million in a decade, in part because of how it sells its shadow lobbying services to corporations, and sells its "unbiased" intellectual prestige to governments, the public and others.<sup>2044</sup> Many think tanks do this, throwing the credibility of many of them in doubt. Think tanks know they'll lose credibility if they disclose they do this, so, of course, they all say they don't, and they do provide unbiased services. But many also provide biased services, even allowing donors to review and edit reports before publication, or know expected findings of research before it's conducted.

Most think tanks are non-profits, so people and corporations get tax write-offs for donating to them, making it cheaper to buy influence than it would otherwise be.

Some "think tanks" are funded almost entirely by individuals and organizations with intended long-term strategies to create change that will benefit them. These think tanks work for decades, continuously pushing funders' agendas, as if it were unbiased intellectual work. Special interests create, fund and provide (often undisclosed) missions to think tanks, whose purpose is to influence government laws, policy making and enforcement, create deep and fundamental changes to society and social rules and practices, and promote various ideological agendas and long-term business and political strategies.

For example, the billionaire Koch Brothers are infamous for massively funding long-term and short-term efforts to achieve their political and ideological ends, through networks of think tanks, Astroturf groups and other methods that cloak monetary donations, organizational influence, and actual agendas.<sup>2045</sup> The Koch empire is spending \$300-\$400 million to influence politics in 2018 and 2019.<sup>2046</sup>

The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) writes, publishes and promotes position papers, policy advice, strategic and tactical plans, and other efforts to influence government, laws, policies and perceptions, supporting a long-term effort to create a global government and economy run primarily by and for business and global elites. It has been called the most visible manifestation of the U.S. Establishment, an intergenerational cabal of global financial elites, acolytes and wannabees, advocating dismantling sovereignty, corrupting government, war and centralized power via a foreign policy think tank front.

It publishes many papers and studies pushing that agenda, but its most influential strategy is placing members in government, no matter which party is in power, where they affect government and inform CFR leaders. Members of the CFR have dominated the administrations of every U.S. president since Franklin D. Roosevelt, no matter whether the President is Republican or Democrat. From CFR's 1921 founding until 2008, "21 secretaries of defense or war, 19 secretaries of the treasury, 17 secretaries of state, and 15 CIA directors have hailed from the Council on Foreign Relations."<sup>2047</sup> Its members<sup>2048 2049</sup> have penetrated every U.S. administration since then, including the current one, and Obama's.

CFR members contributed, via papers and think tanks, to what many perceive amounted to a successful coup in the U.S. CFR Director, Dick Cheney, as CFR member George H.W. Bush's Secretary of Defense, found strategic meaning in a 1992 *Defense Policy Guideline (DPG)*.<sup>2050</sup> It basically said: in the period of peace and prosperity following the Soviet Union agreeing to dismantle and pursue opening its society and economy, and a joint de-escalation of military might and dangerous nuclear arsenals, with hope and desire for a new era of peace and prosperity, negotiated by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev, the U.S. really had no other military competitor. It should build its military and take global supremacy.

To do that, the U.S. should:

- Hugely increase "defense" spending and assert U.S. lone superpower status,
- Discourage industrial nations from challenging the U,S,
- Develop and maintain mechanisms for deterring potential competitors,
- Prevent emergence of regional competitors and new rivals,
- Adopt the use of preemptive force, unprovoked warfare,
- Forsake multilateralism and act independently to get its own way,
- Be able to handle multiple major regional contingencies at once,
- Intervene in foreign global disputes, even if not directly related to U,S, interests,
- Show the leadership necessary to establish and protect "a new order", and
- Shape circumstances before crises arrived.

It stated: the U.S. must "*show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests.*" Secretary Cheney was reported to say: "*You've discovered a new rationale for our role in the world.*"

A think tank produced a 1998 paper, via legitimizing Harvard University: "*Catastrophic Terrorism: Elements of a National Policy*",<sup>2051</sup> by a former Deputy Secretary of Defense and CIA Director, a guy who'd become Secretary of Defense, and a guy who'd later be named head of the 9/11 Commission.

Under the heading "Imagining the Transforming Event," it talked about how power could be gained, human rights curtailed, surveillance state mechanisms expanded, and empire expanded if there was a massive catastrophic event conducted by terrorists, like bombing the World Trade Center.

*"Such an act of catastrophic terrorism would be a watershed event in American history. It could involve loss of life and property unprecedented in peacetime and undermine America's fundamental sense of security, as did the Soviet atomic bomb test in 1949. Like Pearl Harbor, this event would divide our past and future into a before and after. The United States might respond with draconian measures, scaling back civil liberties, allowing wider surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects, and use of deadly force."*

*"An act of catastrophic terrorism that killed thousands or tens of thousands of people and/or disrupted the necessities of life for hundreds of thousands, or even millions, would be a watershed event in America's history. It could involve loss of life and property unprecedented for peacetime and undermine Americans' fundamental sense of security within their own borders in a manner akin to the 1949 Soviet atomic bomb test, or perhaps even worse. Constitutional liberties would be challenged as the United States sought to protect itself from further attacks by pressing against allowable limits in surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects, and the use of deadly force. More violence would follow, either as other terrorists seek to imitate this great "success" or as the United States strikes out at those considered responsible."*

*"Using imagination, we hope now to find some of the political will that we know would be there later, "after," because this nation prefers prevention to funereal reconstruction. When this threat becomes clear the President must be in a position to activate extraordinary capabilities."*

A think tank, *Project for the New American Century (PNAC)* published *Rebuilding America's Defenses*,<sup>2052</sup> September 11, 2000, which has been called an "alt-right *Mein Kampf*", Hitler's pre-3<sup>rd</sup>-Reich manifesto. It largely restated the 1992 *Defense Policy Guideline (DPG)*, calling for consolidating political power, building-up U.S. military power, and unilateral and proactive use of force, to assert global supremacy and further U.S. interests. To become undisputed world leader, they needed a big powerful catalyst to force Congress and the public to go along with their imperialist plan.

*"Further, the process of transformation, even if it brings revolutionary change, is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor."*

A few months later, George W. Bush was selected U.S. President by the U.S. Supreme Court, after a very close election, with the determining and very disputed votes in Florida, where his brother was governor. Dick Cheney became his Vice President. 23 members of the Project for the New American Century and 18 CFR members participated in the Bush administration, including:

- Dick Cheney – Vice President (CFR & PNAC)
- Donald Rumsfeld – Secretary of Defense (PNAC)
- Robert Gates – Secretary of Defense (CFR)
- Condoleeza Rice – Secretary of State (CFR)
- Colin Powell – Secretary of State (CFR)
- Richard Armitage – Deputy Secretary of State (PNAC)
- Robert B. Zoellick – Deputy Secretary of State (PNAC)
- Paula Dobriansky – Undersec. State, Global Affairs (PNAC)
- Peter Rodman – Assistant Secretary of Defense (PNAC)
- Michael Chertoff – Sec. of Homeland Security, co-author of U.S. Patriot Act (CFR & PNAC)
- John Wolfowitz – Dep. Secretary of Defense (CFR & PNAC)
- John Bolton – Ambassador to United Nations (CFR & PNAC)
- Elliot Abrams – National Security Council (PNAC)
- Richard Holbrook – Special Envoy for Afghanistan & Pakistan (CFR)
- Richard Perle – Defense Policy Bd. Advisory Comm. (PNAC)
- Brent Scowcroft – National Security Advisor (CFR)
- Henry Paulson – Secretary of the Treasury (CFR)
- Tommy G. Thompson – Secretary of Health and Human Services (CFR)
- Elaine L Chao – Secretary of Labor (CFR)
- Eliot A. Cohen – Counselor to State Department (PNAC)
- Douglas Feith – Under Sec. of Defense for Policy (PNAC)
- I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby – Chief of Staff, VP Cheney (PNAC)
- Dov Zakheim – DoD Comptroller missing \$2.3 trillion (PNAC)
- Bruce Jackson – Pres. of US Committee on NATO (PNAC)
- Randy Scheunemann – Advisor to Rumsfeld on Iraq, Committee on NATO (PNAC)
- Zalmay Khalilzad – Ambassador to Iraq (PNAC)
- Seth Cropsey – Director Int'l Broadcast Bureau (PNAC)
- Francis Fukuyama - President's Council on Bioethics (PNAC)
- David Wurmser – State Department Special Assistant to John Bolton (PNAC)
- Philip Zelikow – Head of 9/11 Commission (PNAC)<sup>2053 2054</sup>

Exactly a year after PNAC's manifesto was published, 9/11 happened.

- The three World Trade Center towers came down in New York,
- after two were supposedly hit by hijacked airliners,
- at free fall speeds, argued impossible without controlled demolition,<sup>2055</sup>
- where security services were being provided by a company for which George W. Bush's brother was a board member and another relative was board chairman and CEO,<sup>2056</sup>
- where there were suspicious security projects underway prior to the event,<sup>2057</sup>
- the third tower, never struck by anything, also fell at freefall speeds,
- the Pentagon was hit by something, allegedly a 3<sup>rd</sup> hijacked airplane,
- in an area keeping defense spending records, killing accountants, one day after the Defense Secretary had warned of \$2.3 trillion in untracked and untrackable military spending,<sup>2058 2059</sup>
- another hijacked plane crashed, killing all aboard,
- all of which was not prevented because Vice President Cheney was leading military exercises, removing most preventive forces, including scenarios with hijackers of airliners, which created confusion and made systems designed to prevent exactly what was happening dysfunctional,<sup>2060</sup>
- despite repeated warnings it was going to happen.<sup>2061 2062</sup>

There are still many questions about what actually happened on 9/11.<sup>2063</sup> Is it surprising so many people still have not reached closure and don't believe official U.S. government accounts of what happened?

There is no dispute that the U.S.:

- Experienced on 9/11/2001, one year after PNAC's 9/11/2000 report release, a "catastrophic and catalyzing event – like a new Pearl Harbor," an "act of catastrophic terrorism that killed thousands or tens of thousands of people and/or disrupted the necessities of life for hundreds of thousands, or even millions", an event which "would divide our past and future into a before and after", a "watershed event in American history" which would produce "loss of life and property unprecedented in peacetime and undermine America's fundamental sense of security".
- The U.S. initiated "draconian measures, scaling back civil liberties, allowing wider surveillance of citizens, detention of suspects, and use of deadly force", in an endless "War on Terror" with an amorphous enemy that will never disappear, giving the President war powers that do not end and have no oversight, enacting the Patriot Act curtailing human rights, kidnapping and torturing people, operating the world's largest and most invasive spy and surveillance systems, which can penetrate privacy of almost everyone in the world, causing a million deaths, etc.,<sup>2064 2065</sup>
- Increased its "defense" spending by 194%, from \$301.7 billion in 2000<sup>2066</sup> to \$886 billion in 2018,<sup>2067</sup> for by far the world's largest and most expensive military, spending more than the next 10 militaries combined, 77% of FADS, with 10 times the overseas bases as all of the rest of the world combined, at war in 7 countries and operating in about 140, increasingly without oversight or audit,<sup>2068</sup>
- Has ever since that event been asserting lone superpower status,<sup>2069</sup>
- Discouraged industrial nations from challenging the U.S., developed and maintained mechanisms for deterring potential competitors, and prevented emergence of regional competitors and new rivals, leaving the U.N. Human Rights Council,<sup>2070</sup> Paris Agreement,<sup>2071</sup> UNESCO,<sup>2072</sup> Arms Trade Treaty,<sup>2073</sup> Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty with Russia,<sup>2074</sup> Latin America's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative,<sup>2075</sup> threatened NATO over war crime prosecutions,<sup>2076</sup> etc.,

- Adopted the use of preemptive force, unprovoked warfare, at least by invading and occupying Iraq, which had never credibly threatened the U.S. in any way, plus Syria, Yemen, Niger,<sup>2077</sup> now Iran?<sup>2078</sup>
- Has forsaken multilateralism and acted independently to get its own way, as in 126 military interventions since 2000, 7.4 per year, versus 2.2 per year in the preceding 50 years,<sup>2079</sup>
- Been able to handle multiple major regional contingencies at once, intervened in foreign global disputes, even if not directly related to U.S. interests, shown the leadership necessary to establish and protect "a new order", shaped circumstances before crises arrived, and exercised global power in an empire building manner, as in military actions in 134 countries now,<sup>2080</sup> actively at war in at least 7 countries in 2018: Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, and Niger,<sup>2081 2082</sup>
- Pursued foreign policy designed to establish systems that benefit the U.S. and its financial elite,
- Is by far the world's largest arms dealer,<sup>2083</sup>
- Has a fundamentally if also sophisticatedly corrupt government,<sup>2084</sup> and
- Think tanks and other disguised advocacy organizations contribute to all of that.

Given the shocking levels of corruption in the U.S. and its government, and the way everything was laid out beforehand, is it surprising people believe in theories that the events of 9/11 haven't been fully or accurately explained? Given what came after, is it surprising some people suspect this was a coup? Think tanks have major roles in corrupting our government and society.

#### *Congress Research, Staffing and Oversight Corruption*

The Constitution makes it very clear that it is essential that the 3 internal branches of government, and the external free press 4<sup>th</sup> branch, retain integrity, evaluate each other formally and comprehensively, and perform checks and balances on each other, or power is not balanced and corruption happens. Congress is failing in maintaining its capacities and integrity, doing its job, and in its oversight functions.

In 1995, Congress leaders fired 1 of 3 staffers at the Government Accountability Office, Congressional Research Service and Congressional Budget Office, and defunded the Office of Technology Assessment. These independent offices provide(d) unbiased study, analysis and reporting services to Congress, so Congress can make informed decisions and provide quality oversight. Those moves have been called "Congress's self-lobotomy", and the cuts remain mostly unreversed, making it hard to get good info.

The Congressional Research Service provides unbiased information and analyses to inform congressional decision-making. In 2012, it found tax cuts don't generate revenue. That enraged tax cut advocates, who pulled the report, trashed CRS experts, and cut its funding \$5 million. The General Accounting Office provides essential information to Congress, on almost any subject. One dollar of its funding saves U.S. taxpayers \$90. 1980 to 2015, its staff was cut by a fifth. In 2017, when the Congressional Budget Office debunked claims the tax cut would create jobs, it was savaged, instead of improving the law.

The Office of Technology Assessment was Congress's only agency doing unbiased research on science and technology issues. Congressional leadership killed it. Today, few know it existed, and many in Congress are uninformed on science and technology, harming abilities to make quality decisions and conduct oversight of vital developments, like the Internet, nanotechnology, CRISPR, space exploration, Artificial Intelligence, social media, election security, bio/medical technologies, self-driving cars, pharmaceuticals and climate change. Federal government spends \$94 billion on information and communication technologies (ICT), as Congress spends \$0 on independent assessments of ICT issues.<sup>2085</sup>

Congress's committee system has been largely dismantled, shifting power from committee chairs to party leadership. 1994 to 2014, committee staffing declined 35%, as party leadership funding rose 89%, an imbalance disempowering many congressional committees. Bills now increasingly originate in party leadership offices and lobbyist suites, and are forced through without analysis or alteration. Lawmakers often never see important legislation until right before it's voted on. They don't have time to read it, and many are so full of legalese they are not intelligible even if they are read. Importantly, they do not allow time or resources for independent, unbiased publicly paid experts to read and understand them, analyze their likely and possible impacts, and help our elected representatives make good decisions.<sup>2086</sup>

The 2017 failed effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act, which would have remade one-sixth of the U.S. economy, had no congressional hearings and was introduced just a few hours before being voted on in the dead of night. Legislation is no longer being grown organically through hearings and debate.

Congress remade its committees in the 1970s to challenge Nixon's presidency and transfer power to rank-and-file lawmakers. Committees and subcommittees were given flexibility to study their issues. Congress strengthened itself, hired smart people and got the best information available. Afterwards, the House had 6,000 hearings per year. That fell to 4,000 in 1994, 2,000 in 2014, a two-thirds reduction.

For decades, most legislation got to the Congress floor via committee, but in the 1990s, that changed. By 2014, 40% of big-ticket legislation bypassed committees. A committee chair has much less power today to realize meaningful legislation, and House rules now essentially block the amendment process, so bills can't be modified by members of the wider chamber.

In 2014, the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee toiled months with Democrats, Republicans and budget experts to craft a tax reform bill. Party leadership killed it almost immediately, in order to deny President Obama a legislative accomplishment. The Committee has almost no oversight hearings. For example, it had no hearings on the 2017 tax cut.

Congress didn't bring in administration officials for a single public hearing on the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement. Congressional committees meet far less often than normal. Increasingly, party leadership, lobbyists and the White House make our government decisions, bypassing Congress, because it's easier for special interests to influence them than all of Congress.

Added to committee weakness, House reps proportionately employ fewer staffers now than in 1980. From 1980 and 2016, as the U.S. population rose by nearly 97 million people and districts grew by 40%, on average, aides in House member offices decreased, and total House staff increased less than 1%.

Congress allows the White House to dominate policymaking. Trade power rests with Congress, via Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, but, over and over, Congress willingly, eagerly, hands that power to the President. Congress gave away power to the President to renegotiate NAFTA, and issue tariffs. Doing so, Congress abandons its job, giving away its power to increasingly powerful presidents.

Congress doesn't have the resources to counter growing corporate lobbying. Between 1980 and 2006, the number of organizations in D.C. with lobbying arms doubled. From 1983 to 2013, lobbying spending increased 1,600%, from \$200 million to \$3.2 billion. Corporations now devote more resources to lobby Congress than Congress spends to fund itself. As the 2017 tax cut was being prepared, 6,200 registered tax lobbyists besieged 130 aides on the Senate Finance Committee and Joint Committee on Taxation, with a ratio of 50 lobbyists to 1 staffer, disfavoring the People, jamming it down our throats.

In 2016, there were only 1,300 aides on all House committees combined, counting communications and clerical workers. Congress' expert staffs are dwarfed by lobbyists' staffs. Lobbyists flood congressional offices with information on issues and legislation, and lawmakers have come to rely on that information, because they do not have the capacity to develop better or unbiased information independently.

Congress is failing spectacularly in its responsibilities to provide oversight for government and its laws. For every \$3,000 Congress spends on government programs, it spends \$6 to oversee them, 0.2%.<sup>2087</sup>

Most government programs are first approved by Congress in an "authorizing bill," which describes the program's initial direction and creates the legal authority for it to operate. Congress then funds the program in a separate appropriations bill. It is then supposed to oversee program function, periodically, evaluating whether it is working as intended, or if it should be eliminated or changed. That's called "congressional oversight." Some programs legally require Congress to do oversight, but Congress is generally expected to provide oversight on any government law, program or effort it creates.

Congress is largely not doing the oversight, voting to extend funding, or arguing about funding, instead of providing oversight and addressing issues via authorizations. As a result, our bureaucratic programs grow with little constraint or accountability, budgets don't get passed and government closes, and executive power grows unchecked, since the executive branch manages most agencies and programs.

In 2018, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found 410 expired authorizations that continued getting appropriations. That's not new. Congress has failed to provide oversight and re-authorize many agencies and programs, for decades, while still funding them. The Federal Election Commission (FEC) was last authorized in 1981; Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in 1998; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 2010. Congress is not overseeing them, or many other agencies and programs.

When Congress fails in its funding responsibilities, as in governments shutdowns, results are very visible. It's national news when agencies close, federal employees go without paychecks, and services stop. When Congress fails in its major responsibility of oversight, the results are less visible. There's no news.

Many laws let executive agencies issue their rules, of increasing length and detail. Lack of congressional oversight and reauthorization debate lets bureaucracies write laws, instead of our democratically elected representatives, and creates a government less and less accountable to Congress and citizens. Unfortunately, bureaucracy run amok is not breaking news and rarely gets headlines or attention.

Making it worse, the "Chevron Doctrine" requires courts to defer to federal agencies' interpretations of their regulatory powers when law is ambiguous, explicitly or implicitly, and the agency's interpretation is not "unreasonable." Where Congress disagrees with an agency's actions or interpretations, legislators have power to change the law and redirect the agency. That's supposed to happen, but mostly doesn't.

When courts defer to agencies and Congress refuses to engage in a meaningful reauthorization process or oversight, the only release valve for unpopular executive agency action is appropriations legislation. Without oversight and reauthorization, a lawmaker's best avenue to address agency problems is to target agency funding in an appropriations bill, raising the stakes for appropriations bills unnecessarily.

Since the current budget process was established in 1974, Congress has completed all appropriations bills on time only 4 times (1977, 1985, 1989 and 1997). It is hanging up government funding, rather than dealing with problems by doing needed oversight, or addressing issues in reauthorization processes.<sup>2088</sup>



Congress is to represent people, do research, get public input, negotiate, and develop consensus on laws it passes, which explicitly direct the executive branch what to do and how. It is to vote to fund what it has agreed for government to do, and then oversee what government does, to be sure it's doing what was intended, and revise direction of what government should be doing, and how, by changing the laws. It's not doing oversight and redirection. It hangs up funding, which can hang up government function. That allows executive power to grow. It creates situations where a new President can come into office, appoint new people to head government agencies, and largely change what the agencies do, and how.

For example, the current President appointed new people to head the Environment Protection Agency; and they come in and direct their staffs to rewrite rules that change what the EPA does, and how. So, we have laws like the Clean Water Act, in which Congress directed government to prevent pollution of our waters, being unwound and gutted, with increasing harm to our waters, environment and health.<sup>2089</sup> The President trashes our environment without changing any laws. Congress does nothing about it.

Our President just made a rule letting healthcare providers refuse to do abortions, and the next one can come in and say they have to.<sup>2090</sup> No matter what anybody's views on abortion are, most would agree that it is not something to be arbitrarily decided for others by one person. That is what Congress is for, to work out tough questions like this by doing the hard work of debating it, gathering public input on it, reaching agreement on it and passing law. Lack of oversight gives this unchecked power away.

What our government is doing, as directed by our more democratic law creation function, is corrupted by lack of congressional oversight, allowing any new president to come in and fundamentally change what government does, and how, without needing to change laws or go through democratic process. Congress is inadequately staffed to do its job, overrun by lobbyists, and lacks independent research.

The President is abusing too much power, which Congress gives him, without checks.<sup>2091</sup> That is corrupt. That is a failure of U.S. government and representative democracy, and a violation of the Constitution. Government is corrupt, and one person has too much power, which is too easy to abuse, because Congress isn't exercising its constitutional right and responsibility to provide oversight and check power.

Since 2009, an average of 17% of people approve of the job Congress is doing. 75% now disapprove.<sup>2092</sup>

### *Good Governance Principles Corruption*

Government is increasingly corrupted into not following basic principles of good governance.

#### *Accountable*

Being accountable means government representatives and employees know what's expected of them, report completely to management and the public what they know and do, and how, and are evaluated based on how they perform, publicly, with consequences for performance.

Do you think your government and its representatives are accountable to you, who they work for?

Despite getting half the Federal Annual Discretionary Budget, for decades, 77% now, the Department of Defense can't or won't audit how it spends taxpayer funds. In 2018, the accounting firm hired to audit the Pentagon announced it couldn't. DoD's financial records were so full of bookkeeping problems, irregularities and errors, a reliable audit was not impossible. DoD can't or won't tell our representatives, who gave them the money and funded a \$2.7 trillion organization, what they are doing with that money.

That's not new. Since 1990, law requires all federal government departments and agencies to develop auditable accounting systems and submit to annual audits. All are in compliance, except the Pentagon.

September 10, 2001, the U.S. Secretary of Defense had a dramatic press conference at the Pentagon, announcing the military he was officially responsible for couldn't track transactions worth \$2.3 trillion. An amount 5X as big as the Pentagon's \$313 billion budget that year was lost or "untrackable."

That was big national news for one 24-hour news cycle, including the Secretary's scary comment that our real adversary was not China or Russia, but was "closer to home: It's the Pentagon bureaucracy," and his warning that tracking down those missing transactions "could be...a matter of life and death." The next morning, September 11, 2001, 4 hijacked commercial jets crashed into 2 World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania, or something, and the issue died until 2018.

For decades, DoD's leaders and accountants have committed huge, unconstitutional accounting fraud, "cooking the books" to mislead Congress and increase its budgets. It's literally been making up numbers in financial reports to Congress, with trillions of dollars of unverified transactions, knowing Congress uses the misleading reports to decide how much money to give them. Congress just goes along with it.

At least a brain-numbing \$21 trillion of Pentagon transactions between 1998 and 2015 can't be traced, documented or explained, the amount of our current national debt, 1,315% of FADS, more than the U.S. Gross National Product, the world's largest at \$20 trillion. Nobody can know for sure how much of that was or wasn't spent legitimately, or for what. There are things like an unsupported adjustment of \$100 billion to a \$200 million Accounts Receivable balance. People would be fired for that anywhere else.

Nobody does anything about this fraud, way bigger than anything that exists in the private sector. Congress just lets it happen, not doing jobs they were elected to do. In fact, it's being institutionalized. New accounting rules allow agencies that operate classified programs (the DOD and spy agencies) to falsify financial statement figures and shift the accounting of funds to conceal classified operations.<sup>2093</sup>

Nobody else does it at this scale, but our government does many other shady things with our tax money. The Pentagon is exercising no accountability and is not being held accountable. With that corruption, it can do all kinds of illegal and unacceptable things, and nobody can stop them, or even know about it.<sup>2094</sup> That's just one egregious example of our government not being accountable to us.

### Effective and Efficient

That means government delivers results to expectations and meets stakeholder needs in reasonable timeframes, with efficient uses of resources.

Do you believe our government is effective and efficient?

From 2004 to 2019, twenty big federal agencies admitted paying out \$1.2 trillion in improper payments (104% of FADS), more than the federal government had discretion to decide how to spend in 2018.<sup>2095</sup> 2018, the amount was \$140 billion, \$12 billion a month, (12% of FADS), more than it spent on education.

In 2018, we had the longest government shutdown in U.S. history, furloughing 380,000 federal workers, making 420,000 working without pay, closing public facilities, etc., in a squabble over a border wall.<sup>2096</sup>

Apparently, our President spends two-thirds of his time doing nothing in particular.<sup>2097</sup>

## Fair

That means government adheres to the principle of fairness, and treats all stakeholders equally.

Do you think government is fair in its principles, laws and dealings?

In 2018, the Federal \$1.5 trillion tax cut gave households getting income of \$500,000 to \$1 million a proportional gain 4 times bigger than those getting \$40,000 a year. The top 1% gets 21% of the 2018 benefits, 83% in 2027.<sup>2098</sup> 4-14% of tax cut benefits are going to employees, 56% to shareholders.<sup>2099</sup> The wealthiest 1% owns 40% of the country's wealth, and the richest 10% owns 80% of all publicly traded stock, while half of the people in the U.S. can't afford the basics of life and have no savings,<sup>2100</sup> part of a big income and wealth inequality problem, and the rich get even more with this tax cut.<sup>2101</sup> After this tax cut, billionaire Warren Buffet has lower tax rates than his secretary.<sup>2102</sup> Is that fair?

The wealthy and powerful pay lobbyists, thinktanks and election committees to get what they want, and the common people are not represented and lose, routinely, at massive scales. Is that fair?

## Honest

That means government representatives operate openly and in good faith, with integrity, openly stating the truth to the best of their knowledge and abilities, to earn and maintain the trust of the People.

Do you think your politicians are honest?

The current U.S. President gave 2,000 demonstrated lies or misleading claims, an average of 5.9 per day, in his first year in office, which grew to 6,000, 16.5 per day, his second year in office, 8,158 in 2 years.<sup>2103</sup> It took 601 days for the first 5,000, at 8 per day; 226 for the next 5,000, increasing to 23 per day.<sup>2104</sup> These falsehoods have accelerated. His response: "Well, I try. I do try ... When I can, I tell the truth."<sup>2105</sup> Perhaps he cannot even tell the difference between the truth and falsehood? How can we trust a President, or anyone, who lies to or attempts to mislead us routinely? How long would it be before you fired anyone who worked for you in any other role in your life if you caught them lying to you like this?

## Law and Rule Abiding

That means people in government comply with the laws, codes, guidelines and regulations of the U.S., and other communities in which they operate, and apply the laws equally and fairly to all.

Do you think your politicians and other government representatives follow the laws and rules?

- Examining the President and his campaign, the Mueller investigation indicted, convicted or got guilty pleas from 34 people and 3 companies, including top advisers to the President, and Russian spies and hackers with Kremlin ties who interfered in the 2016 election in the President's favor, and found that the President either committed or tried to commit obstruction of justice crimes, with several ongoing investigations unresolved.<sup>2106</sup> Most in Congress can't even read the report.<sup>2107</sup>
- The President personally intervened in a plan to relocate the F.B.I.'s Washington, DC headquarters, to protect his business property a block away, which violates the law.
- Executive office officials and members of Congress trade personal stocks while serving in top government positions, and making policy decisions and laws benefiting companies in which they own stakes, causing them to profit. Does that violate the law?

- In his first 698 days in office, the current President spent 218 days at his own properties,<sup>2108</sup> bringing big groups of people, including security, spending taxpayer money there, violating law against using public office to make personal money, like having the Secret Service spend \$63,000 at one property and \$137,000 on golf carts at others, in one three-month period.
- The President uses his office to enrich himself through his businesses, like lifting sanctions on a Chinese telecommunications firm with close ties to the Chinese government 2 days after his own real-estate project got a \$500 million loan from a company owned by the Chinese government, despite objections of both parties in Congress. That violates the law.<sup>2109</sup>
- The President's personal fortune was founded in cheating U.S. laws to illegally pass huge wealth from his father to him without paying required taxes.<sup>2110</sup>

### Open and Transparent

Open means people working in government must understand that they work in service to the People and be open to, solicit, listen to and take seriously inputs from the People. Transparent means decisions, how they are made, who is involved in them and how, actions taken and how, and performance measures are all communicated clearly to everybody in reasonable amounts of time.

Do you think your government representatives are open and transparent?

Lobbyists and donors have open access to our representatives, but common people do not, really.

U.S. government employees are not free to say what's going on in their (especially classified) operations, because of legal and employee related restrictions. Whistleblowers and leakers are punished and/or prosecuted.<sup>2111</sup> Government doesn't disclose it, so we can't stop it. Huge and increasing amounts of government information is classified, unavailable to the press or public, like 78 million decisions to classify government information in 2014, though experts deemed 50% - 90% safe to release.<sup>2112</sup>

### Representative

Government representatives are expected to represent us and our values, principles and laws well, showing integrity, being polite, being good hosts, behaving well, and being held to high standards.

Do you think your government representatives are doing this?

See the endnote article for 543 examples of the current President not doing this.<sup>2113</sup>

The opinions of the bottom 90% of income earners in the U.S. have a "near-zero" impact on U.S. law. The number of people for or against an idea has no impact on likelihood that congress will make it law. "The preferences of the average American appear to have only a miniscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy." In the last 5 years, the 200 most politically active companies in the US spent \$5.8 billion influencing our government with lobbying and campaign contributions. Those companies got \$4.4 trillion in taxpayer support, earning a return of 750 times their investment."<sup>2114</sup>

### Responsive

Government works for us, the People, to address our major concerns, problems and opportunities.

Do you think your government and its representatives are responsive to you? Is government responding adequately to the wicked problems we've explored together?

The United States was the first country to adopt a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), over 50 years ago, and the law is actively used by journalists, civil society groups, researchers, and members of the public. Government agencies' performance in responding to FOIA requests has gotten worse in recent years, and a 2016 reform law was designed to ease disclosures. However, responsiveness declined in 2017, with applicants receiving either no records or redacted materials in response to 78% of requests.<sup>2115</sup>

### Unconflicted

That means government representatives cannot have significant direct or indirect personal interests that overlap with their responsibilities, including personal financial interests, family member interests or affiliated business interests, so there is no bias in decision-making or performance of responsibilities.

Not to get too bogged down in a gazillion examples, but some ways current Executive branch members have conflicts of interest in their jobs include:

- The President appointed his own son, daughter and other family members to influential positions, and overrode their security clearance decisions, which is a series of personal conflicts of interest.
- The President's son-in-law and top aide uses his position to benefit his businesses, as an example, by getting the Qatari government to invest in one while being one of the administration's top policymakers for the Middle East region, and playing a central role in U.S. policy toward Qatar; and getting loans for his own real estate business by meeting with a private equity fund and bank at the White House and discussing getting the equity fund founder a position in the White House.<sup>2116</sup>
- More than 164 former lobbyists work in the President's administration.
- The President's director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention bought personal stock in food, drug and tobacco companies after taking charge of an agency that regulates them.
- The President's former E.P.A. head asked his staff to contact party donors to help his wife get a job, and rented a condominium on Capitol Hill for \$50 a night, well below market rate, from the wife of an energy lobbyist whose project the E.P.A. approved.<sup>2117</sup>
- The President abandoned past practice to allow unlimited donations from wealthy individuals and corporations to raise record sums, \$107 million, for his inauguration. He used it to help friends, including paying his wife's friend's company \$26 million to help plan the event. The money raised has still not been accounted for.<sup>2118</sup>
- The current President has unprecedented conflicts of interest, since he hasn't divested or extricated himself from his business holdings. Rather than the standard practice of handing their operations to a blind trust, he is letting two sons run the businesses, and he maintains contact with his sons.<sup>2119</sup>
- The President had the secret service pay him \$1.6 million for the use of his own plane during his Presidential election campaign.<sup>2120</sup>
- The President maintains ownership of a downtown Washington, D.C., hotel that he rents from the government, effectively acting as both tenant and landlord. It's a hot spot for foreign dignitaries seeking to win favor with the administration. He uses the government to promote his properties, including his Florida resort, where membership fees doubled to \$200,000 a year after he became president, giving members chances to influence the president for the cost of a membership.
- The President appointing a small bank president to an influential Federal Reserve Bank position shortly after it gave him loans for his personal business.<sup>2121</sup>

### *Elected Official Rules Corruption*

There are extremely few rules or laws that prevent an elected U.S. congressperson from being corrupt. They can take unlimited money to get elected from any person, or any corporation, if done properly. They can write laws about anything at all, or bring laws to vote on that anyone at all writes for them. They can have personal investments they make any amount of money on, affected by their public work. They can pay hush money for crimes, like sex offenses, using public or campaign money, and not suffer.

The president has even fewer rules or laws restricting corrupt activities,<sup>2122</sup> except a 2-term limit, but congresspeople can stay in elected roles in Congress as long they're alive and re-elected, without limit.

### *Federal Corruption of State and Local Governments*

Historically, the Federal Government was needed for common interests of U.S. states and communities, like to protect from outside military threats, fairly and efficiently enable and oversee international and interstate commerce, provide a stable common currency, and assure a functional financial system. States and local communities would retain the power to decide state, regional and local issues.

However, the Federal Government exerts power on states and communities with overreaching laws and policies, blackmailing them with federal funding they depend on, for things like roads and highways.<sup>2123</sup>

The U.S. government is too big and removed from local issues to rule over them fairly and efficiently. Yet, it does, because it's more efficient for special interests to manipulate one big government than many smaller governments.

### *Overwhelming Complexity*

The scale and complexity of laws, policies, rules and systems is too much for most individual citizens to understand and interact with, because we are so busy trying to make our individual lives work, with stagnant real wages and increasing real costs and worries. Individuals can't afford to be informed in detail or to actively engage with government on complex issues. Too many are not educated well enough to be able to follow and engage with government, with its complex legal and procedural ways. Bureaucratic systems, processes and reporting are too complex for us to oversee.<sup>2124</sup> That's corrupt.

### *Defying International Laws and Communities*

Internationally, the U.S. nation and empire has so much financial and military power it can choose whether to comply with international law, and there isn't much the rest of the world can do about it.<sup>2125</sup>

For example, the U.S. violates international human rights laws it agreed to follow, and even wrote.<sup>2126</sup> The U.S. revokes or denies visas to International Criminal Court personnel who are investigating U.S. war crimes and abuses, like kidnap or torture, and may do that with those who seek action against Israel.<sup>2127</sup> The U.S. defied United Nation's agreements to move its embassy to Jerusalem, and threatened to cut U.N. funding when the U.N. voted to denounce the move.<sup>2128</sup>

There is an active, long-term effort by wealthy powerful special interests to get the rest of the world to adopt U.S. models, because they know how to manipulate U.S. government and get what they want, while most people continue to think we are living in an idealistic and functional democracy.

Not following international laws and agreements is abuse of power and corruption.

### *Political Corruption of Judicial Branch*

The judicial system is intended to be fair, unbiased and independent. However, increasingly, U.S. judges are elected or appointed on the basis of their political views and other ideology,<sup>2129</sup> so they will enforce, support and uphold what the powerful want. That is corrupt.

### *Whistleblowing Corruption*

When people are aware of misconduct or breaking the law, we are supposed to be protected against reprisal by employers, or anybody else, if we share that information with government, new agencies and the public, for the benefit of the public. Whistleblower and anti-retaliation protections include:

- The Whistleblower Protection Acts,<sup>2130</sup> protecting government employees, among others,
- The False Claims Act,<sup>2131</sup> allowing people to sue on behalf of government and receive a bounty,
- The Sarbanes-Oxley Act,<sup>2132</sup> protecting whistleblowers at publicly traded companies,
- State False Claims Acts,<sup>2133</sup> and others for the environment,<sup>2134</sup> food safety,<sup>2135</sup> and others.<sup>2136</sup>

Government increasingly cracks down on “leakers” and whistleblowers<sup>2137</sup> to protect their corruptions, like its attacks on Wikileaks, which has provided safe passage for whistleblower information sharing.<sup>2138</sup>

### *Federal Reserve and Banking System Corruption*

According to Joseph Stiglitz, former World Bank head economist, and a Nobel-prize winner, the U.S. Federal Reserve system structure is so fraught with conflicts, it’s corrupt and undermines democracy.

*“If we [i.e. the World Bank] had seen a governance structure that corresponds to our Federal Reserve system, we would have been yelling and screaming and saying that country does not deserve any assistance, this is a corrupt governing structure.”* If another country had presented a plan to reform its financial system, including a regulatory regime that copied the Federal Reserve system – *“it would have been a big signal that something is wrong.”*

Clear conflicts of interest include, Fed banks being largely governed by a board of directors that includes officers of the banks they’re supposed to be overseeing. Banks appointed those who bailed them out in the Great Recession. Banks appointing regulators is like criminals appointing their judges?<sup>2139</sup>

Congress gave away its authority to control its monetary system to the Federal Reserve banking system, which allows banks to create unlimited amounts of money and control the economy.<sup>2140</sup> Corrupt.

### *Media Corruption*

A very important, less formal, 4<sup>th</sup> branch of U.S. government is a system of fair and honest reporting of news and information, so citizens understand what is happening in the country, government and world, so we can knowledgably and responsibly participate in public conversations about what is happening, and decide what to do about it, if anything. We can’t do our jobs as citizens without good information. Freedom of the Press was called out in the Constitution’s 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, as essential.

U.S. news and information reporting system is corrupted by wealth and power via concentration of media ownership and control. In 1983, 50 companies controlled 90% of all U.S. media; in 2011, 6 did, run by 232 media executives.<sup>2141</sup> In 2017, the FCC let companies own even higher media concentrations: up to 39% of all U.S. TV households, and 6 of 10 local TV, newspaper and radio “media voices”.<sup>2142</sup>

Different companies can have the same major owners. 15 billionaires own most U.S. news media,<sup>2143</sup> giving them extraordinary ability to influence what we know and think about. The owners are able to influence news and information reporting, turning many news channels into propaganda mechanisms. This is a fundamental threat to functional democracy and government in the U.S., because people do not get fair and factual information on which to base our government interactions and thoughts.<sup>2144</sup>

Only 22% of us “trust a lot” information we get from local news organizations, whether online or offline, 18% information from national news organizations, and 14% from friends and family. 74% say news organizations tend to favor one side or the other in political news.<sup>2145 2146</sup> That’s corrupt

#### *Sexual Discrimination and Abuses of Power*

Sexual assault is one of the most underreported violent crimes in the U.S. 70% of victims never report it. Even after the MeToo movement arose, 76% don’t report workplace harassment, fearing retaliation, or thinking nothing will change. 138 elected/appointed officials have been reported for sexual harassment, assault, misconduct or violence against women since the 2016 election. A quarter remain in office.<sup>2147</sup> 1997 to 2017, 268 such complaints were settled with \$17 million in taxpayer money. At least 80% of such complaints don’t go through channels reported in those figures.<sup>2148</sup> That is corrupt.

Through September 2018, the current administration had separated from their parents and imprisoned 12,800 children of asylum seekers and immigrants seeking entry into the U.S., and there were over 5,800 complaints of sexual abuse on those unaccompanied minors through that date.<sup>2149</sup> Is that OK?

#### *Public Opinion That Government is Corrupt*

In 21 of its 23 years, the U.S. was one of the “Top 20 Least-Evidently-Corrupt Countries”, but, in 2015, 75% of us said government corruption was widespread, and we were the most pessimistic on the list.<sup>2150</sup> In 2017, 60% of us said the U.S. was more corrupt than the prior year, the White House was our most corrupt institution, and corruption was getting worse. “Corruption chips away at democracy to produce a vicious cycle, where corruption undermines democratic institutions, and in turn, weak institutions are less able to control corruption.”<sup>2151</sup> 85% of us wanted to change campaign finance rules.<sup>2152</sup>

2018 polls had government corruption as our most important topic,<sup>2153</sup> “laws enacted by our national government these days mostly reflect what powerful special interests and their lobbyists want”, said 75% of us; and the U.S. dropped 4 places, out of the top 20 countries, in the Global Corruption Index;<sup>2154</sup> When politics are corrupt, what’s important to us is less important than priorities of the privileged.<sup>2155</sup> For the 4<sup>th</sup> year in a row, a survey of U.S. fears showed corrupt government officials was our #1 fear, with 74% “afraid” or “very afraid” of government corruption. 5 of our top 10 were fears about our environments, with the next highest fear 12% lower, 2 were about loved ones getting sick or dying, and one was about having high medical bills.<sup>2156</sup> People in the U.S. were 3 times more afraid of our own politicians than we were of all reptiles (snakes, lizards, alligators, crocodiles and the like).<sup>2157</sup>

In 2019, a past U.S. President said the U.S. is now an “oligarchy” in which “unlimited political bribery” has created “a complete subversion of our political system as a payoff to major contributors.”<sup>2158</sup> Barely 17% of the U.S. people trust our government always or most of the time.<sup>2159</sup> Only 32% of people in the U.S. are proud of our political system.<sup>2160</sup>



## Need for Change to Address Government Corruption

The conception of U.S. government was that it would be conducted by qualified, caring and thoughtful people elected by and responsible to those they represent. Its main purpose is to protect human rights, balancing power to prevent corruption. Now, government too often works for wealthy individuals, lobbyists, corporations, and special interests that fund campaigns, have access to representatives, and write laws and policies they demand in return for their money and influence to put and keep representatives in power. Its institutions and systems have been deeply and fundamentally corrupted.

Special interests, like the CFR, “military industrial complex,” “Oil and Gas,” “Big Pharma,” “Wall Street” and other industry and influence groups are so powerful and dominant that there is, practically, little elected government officials or the public can feasibly do to oppose them, short of active rebellion.

The U.S. public is disappointed, jaded and disengaged by this corruption. We perceive correctly that we have little power and influence as the game is now set up, and special interests will have their way with government, no matter how we vote, so many don’t bother. We are afraid of our own government.

The U.S. is adrift in a new “Gilded Age”, a term Mark Twain used to invoke the notion of something cheap, shoddy, “gilded” to look expensive, but actually with a phony gold-like coating. Not a golden age.

Marx, acknowledging Hegel, once wrote that, “History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce.” We’re in an era of tragic farce, in which a growing proportion of people know the game is rigged, government and corporations are, individually and colluding together, corrupt and doing harm.<sup>2161</sup>

Government in the U.S. is fundamentally and sadly broken and corrupt. We know it, consciously or unconsciously, as human beings using common sense, and we are frustrated and angered by it and/or determined to profit from it. Yet, the U.S. promotes and markets itself as idealistic, fair and wholesome, to its public and the rest of the world. And many of its people and much of the world still believes it.

Until and unless government is fixed, it’s unable to fix our many “wicked problems”. We can change!

Become an informed citizen, understand what’s going on in the world, and share quality information with others! Write to elected representatives and government officials expressing informed opinions and concerns, even if you don’t think it makes a difference! At least you’re doing something to live with integrity and engage with problems. Be an informed voter and vote, but don’t just wait for elections!

Corrupt political party affiliation is not what’s most important. Support individuals in government who have integrity, relevant abilities and good values! Write to news organizations and reporters! Protest! Organize and participate in grass roots efforts to effect meaningful change! Don’t spend any money to support any organization that is part of the corruption, and write and tell them what you are doing!

Support political finance reform! Nothing will be fixed with these wicked problems until that is fixed. Government works for you. You’re the boss. Be a good boss! Hire good people! Insist on good performance, or fire them! Call them and razz them for their failures and laud their successes!

Don’t let corruption of government let you feel helpless! There are many things you can do in your life and spheres of influence that can make a difference with these wicked problems; focus on those!

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