READINGS ON THE GREAT SOCIETY AND REPUBLICAN REACTION

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Lyndon Johnson, “Great Society” Speech, 22 May 1964

…I have come today from the turmoil of your Capital to the tranquility of your campus to speak about the future of your country.

The purpose of protecting the life of our Nation and preserving the liberty of our citizens is to pursue the happiness of our people. Our success in that pursuit is the test of our success as a Nation.

For a century we labored to settle and to subdue a continent. For half a century we called upon unbounded invention and untiring industry to create an order of plenty for all of our people.

The challenge of the next half century is whether we have the wisdom to use that wealth to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of our American civilization.

Your imagination, your initiative, and your indignation will determine whether we build a society where progress is the servant of our needs, or a society where old values and new visions are buried under unbridled growth. For in your time we have the opportunity to move not only toward the rich society and the powerful society, but upward to the Great Society.

The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice, to which we are totally committed in our time. But that is just the beginning.

The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.

It is a place where man can renew contact with nature. It is a place which honors creation for its own sake and for what it adds to the understanding of the race. It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quantity of their goods.

But most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor.

So I want to talk to you today about three places where we begin to build the Great Society — in our cities, in our countryside, and in our classrooms.

Many of you will live to see the day, perhaps 50 years from now, when there will be 400 million Americans—four-fifths of them in urban areas. In the remainder of this century urban population will double, city land will double, and we will have to build homes, highways, and facilities equal to all those built since this country was first settled. So in the next 40 years we must re-build the entire urban United States…

The catalog of ills is long: there is the decay of the centers and the despoiling of the suburbs. There is not enough housing for our people or transportation for our traffic. Open land is vanishing and old landmarks are violated.

Worst of all expansion is eroding the precious and time honored values of community with neighbors and communion with nature. The loss of these values breeds loneliness and boredom and indifference.

Our society will never be great until our cities are great. Today the frontier of imagination and innovation is inside those cities and not beyond their borders.

New experiments are already going on. It will be the task of your generation to make the American city a place where future generations will come, not only to live but to live the good life…
A second place where we begin to build the Great Society is in our countryside. We have always prided ourselves on being not only America the strong and America the free, but America the beautiful. Today that beauty is in danger. The water we drink, the food we eat, the very air that we breathe, are threatened with pollution. Our parks are overcrowded, our seashores overburdened. Green fields and dense forests are disappearing.

A few years ago we were greatly concerned about the "Ugly American." Today we must act to prevent an ugly America.

For once the battle is lost, once our natural splendor is destroyed, it can never be recaptured. And once man can no longer walk with beauty or wonder at nature his spirit will wither and his sustenance be wasted.

A third place to build the Great Society is in the classrooms of America. There your children’s lives will be shaped. Our society will not be great until every young mind is set free to scan the farthest reaches of thought and imagination. We are still far from that goal...

But more classrooms and more teachers are not enough. We must seek an educational system which grows in excellence as it grows in size. This means better training for our teachers. It means preparing youth to enjoy their hours of leisure as well as their hours of labor. It means exploring new techniques of teaching, to find new ways to stimulate the love of learning and the capacity for creation.

These are three of the central issues of the Great Society. While our Government has many programs directed at those issues, I do not pretend that we have the full answer to those problems.

But I do promise this: We are going to assemble the best thought and the broadest knowledge from all over the world to find those answers for America. I intend to establish working groups to prepare a series of White House conferences and meetings—on the cities, on natural beauty, on the quality of education, and on other emerging challenges. And from these meetings and from this inspiration and from these studies we will begin to set our course toward the Great Society…

**Lyndon B. Johnson, “War on Poverty” Speech, 16 March 1964**

We are citizens of the richest and most fortunate nation in the history of the world. One hundred and eighty years ago we were a small country struggling for survival on the margin of a hostile land. Today we have established a civilization of free men which spans an entire continent.

With the growth of our country has come opportunity for our people--opportunity to educate our children, to use our energies in productive work, to increase our leisure-opportunity for almost every American to hope that through work and talent he could create a better life for himself and his family.

The path forward has not been an easy one. But we have never lost sight of our goal: an America in which every citizen shares all the opportunities of his society, in which every man has a chance to advance his welfare to the limit of his capacities.

We have come a long way toward this goal. We still have a long way to go. The distance which remains is the measure of the great unfinished work of our society.

To finish that work I have called for a national war on poverty. Our objective: total victory.
There are millions of Americans--one fifth of our people--who have not shared in the abundance which has been granted to most of us, and on whom the gates of opportunity have been closed.

What does this poverty mean to those who endure it? ...It means that the abundance, the comforts, the opportunities they see all around them are beyond their grasp...

Because it is right, because it is wise, and because, for the first time in our history, it is possible to conquer poverty, I submit, for the consideration of the Congress and the country, the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. The Act does not merely expand old programs or improve what is already being done. It charts a new course. It strikes at the causes, not just the consequences of poverty. It can be a milestone in our one-hundred eighty year search for a better life for our people...

First we will give high priority to helping young Americans who lack skills, who have not completed their education or who cannot complete it because they are too poor...I therefore recommend the creation of a Job Corps, a Work-Training Program, and a Work Study Program...

A new national Work-Training Program operated by the Department of Labor will provide work and training for 200,000 American men and women between the ages of 16 and 21. This will be developed through state and local governments and non-profit agencies...

A new national Work-Study Program operated by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare will provide federal funds for part-time jobs for 140,000 young Americans who do not go to college because they cannot afford it...

Fourth, we intend to create new opportunities for certain hard-hit groups to break out of the pattern of poverty. Through a new program of loans and guarantees we can provide incentives to those who will employ the unemployed. Through programs of work and retraining for unemployed fathers and mothers we can help them support their families in dignity while preparing themselves for new work. Through funds to purchase needed land, organize cooperatives, and create new and adequate family farms we can help those whose life on the land has been a struggle without hope.

Fifth, I do not intend that the war against poverty become a series of uncoordinated and unrelated efforts--that it perish for lack of leadership and direction. Therefore this bill creates, in the Executive Office of the President, a new Office of Economic Opportunity. Its Director will be my personal Chief of Staff for the War against poverty. I intend to appoint Sargent Shriver to this post. He will be directly responsible for these new programs. He will work with and through existing agencies of the government.

This program--the Economic Opportunity Act--is the foundation of our war against poverty. But it does not stand alone. For the past three years this government has advanced a number of new proposals which strike at important areas of need and distress. I ask the Congress to extend those which are already in action, and to establish those which have already been proposed. There are programs to help badly distressed areas such as the Area Redevelopment Act, and the legislation now being prepared to help Appalachia. There are programs to help those without training find a place in today's complex society--such as the Manpower Development Training Act and the Vocational Education Act for youth. There are programs to protect those who are specially vulnerable to the ravages of poverty--hospital insurance for the elderly, protection for migrant farm workers, a food stamp program for the needy, coverage for millions not now protected by a minimum wage, new and expanded unemployment benefits for men out of work, a Housing and Community Development bill for those seeking decent homes. Finally
there are programs which help the entire country, such as aid to education which, by raising the quality of schooling available to every American child, will give a new chance for knowledge to the children of the poor…

The Congress is charged by the Constitution to "provide . . . for the general welfare of the United States." Our present abundance is a measure of its success in fulfilling that duty. Now Congress is being asked to extend that welfare to all our people…

1964 Republican Party Platform

"For the People" Section One

For a Free People. Humanity is tormented once again by an age-old issue—is man to live in dignity and freedom under God or be enslaved—are men in government to serve, or are they to master, their fellow men?

It befalls us now to resolve this issue anew—perhaps this time for centuries to come. Nor can we evade the issue here at home. Even in this Constitutional Republic, for two centuries the beacon of liberty the world over, individual freedom retreats under the mounting assault of expanding centralized power. Fiscal and economic excesses, too long indulged, already have eroded and threatened the greatest experiment in self-government mankind has known.

We Republicans claim no monopoly of love of freedom. But we challenge as unwise the course the Democrats have charted; we challenge as dangerous the steps they plan along the way; and we deplore as self-defeating and harmful many of the moves already taken.

Dominant in their council are leaders whose words extol human liberty, but whose deeds have persistently delimited the scope of liberty and sapped its vitality. Year after year, in the name of benevolence, these leaders have sought the enlargement of Federal power. Year after year, in the guise of concern for others, they have lavishly expended the resources of their fellow citizens. And year after year freedom, diversity and individual, local and state responsibility have given way to regimentation, conformity and subservience to central power.

We Republicans hold that a leadership so misguided weakens liberty in America and the world. We hold that the glittering enticements so invitingly proffered the people, at their own expense, will inevitably bring disillusionment and true disappointment in place of promised happiness. Such leaders are Federal extremists—impulsive in the use of national power, improvident in the management of public funds, thoughtless as to the long-term effects of their acts on individual freedom and creative, competitive enterprise. Men so recklessly disposed cannot be safely entrusted with authority over their fellow citizens.

To Republicans, liberty is still today man's most precious possession. For every citizen, and for the generations to come, we Republicans vow that it shall be preserved.

In substantiation of this belief the Republican Party submits this platform. To the American people it is our solemn bond.

To Stay Free. The shape of the future is our paramount concern. Much of today's moral decline and drift—much of the prevailing preoccupation with physical and material comforts of life—much of today's crass political appeals to the appetites of the citizenry—can be traced to a leadership grown demagogic and materialistic through indifference to national ideals rounded in devoutly held religious faith. The Republican Party seeks not to renounce this heritage of faith and high purpose; rather, we are determined to reaffirm and reapply it. So doing, these will be our guides:
1. Every person has the right to govern himself, to fix his own goals, and to make his own way with a minimum of governmental interference.

2. It is for government to foster and maintain an environment of freedom encouraging every individual to develop to the fullest his God-given powers of mind, heart and body; and, beyond this, government should undertake only needful things, rightly of public concern, which the citizen cannot himself accomplish.

We Republicans hold that these two principles must regain their primacy in our government's relations, not only with the American people, but also with nations and peoples everywhere in the world.

3. Within our Republic the Federal Government should act only in areas where it has Constitutional authority to act, and then only in respect to proven needs where individuals and local or state governments will not or cannot adequately perform. Great power, whether governmental or private, political or economic, must be so checked, balanced and restrained and, where necessary, so dispersed as to prevent it from becoming a threat to freedom any place in the land.

4. It is a high mission of government to help assure equal opportunity for all, affording every citizen an equal chance at the starting line but never determining who is to win or lose. But government must also reflect the nation's compassionate concern for those who are unable, through no fault of their own, to provide adequately for themselves.

5. Government must be restrained in its demands upon and its use of the resources of the people, remembering that it is not the creator but the steward of the wealth it uses; that its goals must ever discipline its means; and that service to all the people, never to selfish or partisan ends, must be the abiding purpose of men entrusted with public power…

Section Two…

[Democratic] Failures at Home…

Failing the Poor…This Administration has proposed a so-called war on poverty which characteristically overlaps, and often contradicts, the 42 existing Federal poverty programs. It would dangerously centralize Federal controls and bypass effective state, local and private programs…

Retarding Enterprises. This Administration has violently thrust Federal power into the free market in such areas as steel prices, thus establishing precedents which in future years could critically wound free enterprise in the United States.

It has so discouraged private enterprise that the annual increase in the number of businesses has plummeted from the Republican level of 70,000 a year to 47,000 a year…

It has aggravated the problems of small business by multiplying Federal record-keeping requirements and has hurt thousands of small businessmen by forcing up their costs…

It has required private electric power companies to submit to unreasonable Federal controls as a condition to the utilization of rights-of-way over public lands. It has sought to advance, without Congressional authorization, a vastly expensive nationwide electrical transmission grid.

Betrayal of the Farmer. This Administration has refused, incredibly, to honor the clear mandate of American wheat farmers, in the largest farm referendum ever held, to free them of rigid Federal controls and to restore their birthright to make their own management decisions…

Weakening Responsibility. This Administration has moved, through such undertakings as its so-called war on poverty, accelerated public works and the New Communities Program in the 1964 housing proposal, to establish new Federal offices duplicating existing agencies,
bypassing the state capitals, thrusting aside local government, and siphoning off to Washington
the administration of private citizen and community affairs…

Section Three. The Republican Alternative…

Faith in the Individual

1. We Republicans shall first rely on the individual's right and capacity to advance his
own economic well-being, to control the fruits of his efforts and to plan his own and his family's
future; and, where government is rightly involved, we shall assist the individual in surmounting
urgent problems beyond his own power and responsibility to control…

In furtherance of our faith in the individual, we also pledge prudent, responsible
management of the government's fiscal affairs to protect the individual against the evils of
spendthrift government—protecting most of all the needy and fixed-income families against the
cruelst tax, inflation—and protecting every citizen against the high taxes forced by excessive
spending, in order that each individual may keep more of his earnings for his own and his
family's use. For instance, we pledge:

— a reduction of not less than five billion dollars in the present level of Federal spending;
— an end to chronic deficit financing, proudly reaffirming our belief in a balanced
budget;
— further reduction in individual and corporate tax rates as fiscal discipline is restored;
— repayments on the public debt;
— maintenance of an administrative, legislative and regulatory climate encouraging job-
building enterprise to help assure every individual a real chance for a good job;

… In furtherance of our faith in the individual, we also pledge the maximum restraint of
Federal intrusions into matters more productively left to the individual. For instance, we pledge:

— to continue Republican sponsorship of practical Federal-State-local programs which
will effectively treat the needs of the poor, while resisting, direct Federal handouts that erode
away individual self-reliance and self-respect and perpetuate dependency;
— to continue the advancement of education on all levels, through such programs as
selective aid to higher education, strengthened State and local tax resources, including tax credits
for college education, while resisting the Democratic efforts which endanger local control of
schools;
— to provide our farmers, who have contributed so much to the strength of our nation,
with the maximum opportunity to exercise their own management decisions on their own farms,
while resisting all efforts to impose upon them further Federal controls;

… In all such matters, it will be the Republican way to assure the individual of maximum
freedom as government meets its proper responsibilities, while resisting the Democratic
obsession to impose from above, uniform and rigid schemes for meeting varied and complex
human problems.

Faith in the Competitive System

2. We Republicans shall vigorously protect the dynamo of economic growth—free,
competitive enterprise—that has made America the envy of the world. For instance, we pledge:

…— assistance to small business by simplifying Federal and State tax and regulatory
requirements;
…— an end to power-grabbing regulatory actions, such as the reach by the Federal Trade
Commission for injunctive powers and the ceaseless pressing by the White House, the Food and
Drug Administration and Federal Trade Commission to dominate consumer decisions in the
market place;
…—a drastic reduction in burdensome Federal paperwork and overlapping regulations, which weigh heavily on small businessmen struggling to compete and to provide jobs…

**Faith in Limited Government**

3. We Republicans shall insist that the Federal Government have effective but limited powers, that it be frugal and efficient, and that it fully meet its Constitutional responsibilities to all the American people….

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**1964 Democratic Party Platform**

America is One Nation, One People. The welfare, progress, security and survival of each of us reside in the common good—the sharing of responsibilities as well as benefits by all our people.

Democracy in America rests on the confidence that people can be trusted with freedom. It comes from the connection that we will find in freedom a unity of purpose stronger than all our differences.

Our program for the future is to make the national purpose—the human purpose of us all—fulfill our individual needs…

**Freedom and Well Being.** There can be full freedom only when all of our people have opportunity for education to the full extent of their ability to learn, followed by the opportunity to employ their learning in the creation of something of value to themselves and to the nation.

**The Individual.** Our task is to make the national purpose serve the human purpose: that every person shall have the opportunity to become all that he or she is capable of becoming…

The demands on the already inadequate sources of state and local revenues place a serious limitation on education. New methods of financial aid must be explored, including the channeling of federally collected revenues to all levels of education, and, to the extent permitted by the Constitution, to all schools…

In order to insure that all students who can meet the requirements for college entrance can continue their education, we propose an expanded program of public scholarships, guaranteed loans, and work-study grants…

We will continue to fight until we have succeeded in including hospital care for older Americans in the Social Security program…

We will go forward with research into the causes and cures of disease, accidents, mental illness and mental retardation.

We will further expand our health facilities, especially medical schools, hospitals, and research laboratories…

**Democracy of Opportunity…**

We will:

Carry the War on Poverty forward as a total war against the causes of human want.

Move forward with programs to restore those areas, such as Appalachia, which the Nation's progress has by-passed.

Help the physically handicapped and mentally disadvantaged develop to the full limit of their capabilities.
Enhance the security of older Americans by encouraging private retirement and welfare programs, offering opportunities like those provided for the young under the Economic Opportunities Act of 1964, and expanding decent housing which older citizens can afford...

The Social Security program, initiated and developed under the National leadership of the Democratic Party and in the face of ceaseless partisan opposition, contributes greatly to the strength of the Nation...

We will encourage further support for the arts, giving people a better chance to use increased leisure and recognizing that the achievements of art are an index of the greatness of a civilization.

We will encourage the advance of science and technology—for its material rewards, and for its contribution to an understanding of the universe and ourselves.

**The Economy.** The American free enterprise system is one of the great achievements of the human mind and spirit. It has developed by a combination of the energetic efforts of working men and women, bold private initiative, the profit motive and wise public policy, until it is now the productive marvel of mankind...

It is the national purpose, and our commitment, that every man or woman who is willing and able to work is entitled to a job and to a fair wage for doing it.

The coverage of the Fair Labor Standards Act must be extended to all workers employed in industries affecting interstate commerce, and the minimum wage level and coverage increased to assure those at the bottom of the economic scale a fairer share in the benefits of an ever-rising standard of American living.

Overtime payment requirements must be increased to assure maximum employment consistent with business efficiency. The matter of the length of work periods should be given continuing consideration.

The unemployment insurance program must be basically revised to meet the needs of the unemployed and of the economy, and to assure that this program meets the standards the nation's experience dictates…

Training and retraining programs must be expanded. A broad-gauge manpower program must be developed which will not only satisfy the needs of the economy but will also give work its maximum meaning in the pattern of human life…

**Rural America…**
**The Nation's Natural Resources…**
**The City…**
**The Government…** We, the people, are the government. The Democratic Party believes, as Thomas Jefferson first stated that "the care of human life and happiness is the first and only legitimate object of good government." The government's business is the people's business…

**Aid to Depressed Areas…**
**Discrimination in Employment…**
**Collective Bargaining…**
**Minimum Wages…**
**Agriculture…**
**HOUSING…** The Housing Act of 1961 provides many of the necessary new and improved tools for providing housing for low and moderate income families, and for housing for the elderly…

The annual rate of grant assistance for Urban Renewal has risen from $262 million per year (1956 through 1961) to a rate of better than $630 million during the past 12 months…
Low rent public housing under Federal assistance is being provided senior citizens at an annual rate more than twice that for 1960…

Direct loan authorizations for housing for the elderly increased from $50 million in 1961 to $275 million in 1963. Maximum loan amounts have been increased to 100% of development cost. The Housing Act of 1961 expanded and strengthened the Federal program in this area. The Senior Citizens Housing Act of 1962 moved us another long step forward… Assistance has been given for more than 1,000 college housing projects including housing for more than 290,000 students and faculty, plus dining halls and other school facilities…

**Health**…More health legislation has been enacted during the past 8 1/2 years than during any other period in American history.

The Community Health Services and Facilities Act of 1961 has made possible 149 projects for testing and demonstrating new or improved services in nursing homes, home care services, central information and referral centers; and providing additional personnel to serve the chronically ill and aged. It has also provided additional federal funds for the construction of nursing homes.

The Hill-Burton Amendments of 1964, extend the program of Federal grants for construction of hospitals, public health centers, long-term facilities, rehabilitation facilities and diagnostic or treatment centers for five additional years. For the first time provision is made for the modernization and renovation of hospitals and health facilities. Funds for the construction of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities are substantially increased.

The Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Construction Act of 1963, authorized grants of $150,000,000 to States for constructing community Mental Health Centers, which emphasize the new approach to the care of the mentally ill, centered on care and treatment in the patients’ home communities…

The Maternal and Child Health and Mental Retardation Planning Amendments of 1963, along with the Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Construction Act of 1963, authorized a broad program to prevent, treat, and ameliorate mental retardation. The program provides States and communities needed research, manpower developments, and facilities for health, education rehabilitation, and vocational services to the retarded…

A 1962 amendment to the Public Health Act authorizes a new program of project grants to help meet critical health needs of domestic migratory workers and their families through establishment of family health service clinics.

Forty-nine projects in 24 States have received grants to assist an estimated 300,000 migrant workers.

One out of every ten migrant laborers is estimated to have received some health services through these projects.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, authorized in 1962, is now supporting research and training in eight major areas.

The National Institute of General Medical Sciences, also authorized in 1962, gives recognition to the significance of research training in the sciences basic to medicine. Two thousand research projects are currently being supported…

**A Program for the Aging**…The Social Security Act Amendments of 1961 broadened benefits to 5.3 million persons, increased minimum benefits for retired workers from $33 to $40 per month, permitted men as well as women to begin collecting reduced benefits at age 62.
The Social Security program now provides $1.3 billion in benefits each month to 19.5 million persons. One out of every ten Americans receives a Social Security check every month…

The Housing Act of 1961 increased the scope of Federal housing aids for the elderly…
Low rent public housing under Federal assistance has been provided senior citizens at an annual rate more than twice that for 1960.

The Community Health Services and Facilities Act of 1961 raised the ceiling on appropriations for the construction of nursing homes…

**Welfare**…The 1961 Public Assistance Amendments, extended aid for the first time to families with dependent children in which the parent is unemployed. Currently, 18 States have adopted this program. Aid is being provided to about 75,000 families with nearly 280,000 children.

The food stamp program is providing improved purchasing powers and a better diet for families and persons receiving general assistance.

The 1962 Public Welfare amendments provide the authority and financial resources for a new approach to the problems of prolonged dependency and some of the special needs of children.

Under these enactments and related provisions: 49 States have now qualified for increased Federal financial aid to provide help to families with economic and social problems, and to assist families dependent on public assistance back to economic independence…

18,000 unemployed fathers in needy families are currently on community work and training projects.

Three million children are now covered by the program of aid to families with dependent children; and under the 1962 amendments these children receive, in addition to financial assistance, other needed help toward normal growth and development.

Starting for the first time in 1963, grants for training child welfare workers have been made to 58 institutions of higher learning…

The Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation Act of 1961 provided 13 additional weeks of benefits to the long-term unemployed. 2.8 million jobless workers received $800 million in assistance…

**Education**…The Higher Education Facilities Act of 1963 provides $1.2 billion for college construction over a three-year period…

The Health Professions Educational Assistance Act of 1963 will increase the number of professional health personnel through construction grants for health teaching facilities…

The Vocational Education Act of 1963 authorizes a $956 million increase in Federal support for vocational education over the next five fiscal years…

In the last three fiscal years, there have been grants of $153.1 million in Federal funds to the States for purchases of equipment and materials, and remodeling classrooms to strengthen instruction in science, mathematics, and modern foreign languages…

The Library Services and Construction Act of 1964 broadened Federal aid to cover urban as well as rural areas, and to provide construction grants in addition to other library services…

**Natural Resources**…

In the field of water conservation…

In electric power…

In outdoor recreation…

For wildlife…Enactment of the Wetlands Bill of 1961 made it possible to create more new Waterfowl Refuges (27) than during any previous four-year period in our history.
The Clean Air Act of 1963 is already providing the first full-scale attack on the air pollution problems that blight living conditions in so many of our cities.

Enactment of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1961 launched the first massive attack on this conservation problem which has already resulted in 1,300 municipal waste treatment plans and the approval of projects that have improved the water quality in 18,000 miles of streams that provide water for 22 million people.

Cities and Their Suburbs...The Housing Act of 1961 marked the beginning of a new era of Federal commitment to the problems of a nation in which three-fourths of the population has come to live in urban areas...

The Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act of 1961 launched a broad attack on youth problems by financing demonstration projects, training personnel in delinquency work, and providing technical assistance for community youth programs...

Transportation...The Highway Act of 1961 resolved the lagging problem of financing the 41,000 mile interstate highway program, and the finished construction rate has almost doubled.

The far-reaching decision has been made that the United States will design and build a supersonic air transport plane—and thereby maintain our leadership position in international aviation. Congress has provided $60 million for the development of detailed designs...

Science...Space...Atomic Energy...

Oceanography...For the first time in history the United States is building a fleet expressly designed for oceanographic research...

Government Operations. "We shall reform the processes of government in all branches—executive, legislative, and judicial. We will clean out corruption and conflicts of interest, and improve government services."

This Administration has brought the personnel, morale, ethics, and performance of the Federal service to a point of high excellence...

Consumers...Domestic drug manufacturing establishments will now be required to register annually and be inspected by the FDA at least once a year. The Administration has vigorously supported Truth-in-Lending, Truth-in-Packaging, and Truth-in-Securities bills...

The Arts...

Lyndon Johnson, State of the Union Address, 4 January 1965

...Two hundred years ago, in 1765, nine assembled colonies first joined together to demand freedom from arbitrary power.

For the first century we struggled to hold together the first continental union of democracy in the history of man. One hundred years ago, in 1865, following a terrible test of blood and fire, the compact of union was finally sealed.

For a second century we labored to establish a unity of purpose and interest among the many groups which make up the American community.

That struggle has often brought pain and violence. It is not yet over. But we have achieved a unity of interest among our people that is unmatched in the history of freedom.
And so tonight, now, in 1965, we begin a new quest for union. We seek the unity of man with the world that he has built—with the knowledge that can save or destroy him—with the cities which can stimulate or stifle him—with the wealth and the machines which can enrich or menace his spirit.

We seek to establish a harmony between man and society which will allow each of us to enlarge the meaning of his life and all of us to elevate the quality of our civilization. This is the search that we begin tonight…

**TOWARD THE GREAT SOCIETY…** We worked for two centuries to climb this peak of prosperity. But we are only at the beginning of the road to the Great Society. Ahead now is a summit where freedom from the wants of the body can help fulfill the needs of the spirit.

We built this Nation to serve its people.

We want to grow and build and create, but we want progress to be the servant and not the master of man.

We do not intend to live in the midst of abundance, isolated from neighbors and nature, confined by blighted cities and bleak suburbs, stunted by a poverty of learning and an emptiness of leisure.

The Great Society asks not how much, but how good; not only how to create wealth but how to use it; not only how fast we are going, but where we are headed…

**A NATIONAL AGENDA**… I propose that we begin a program in education to ensure every American child the fullest development of his mind and skills. I propose that we begin a massive attack on crippling and killing diseases. I propose that we launch a national effort to make the American city a better and a more stimulating place to live. I propose that we increase the beauty of America and end the poisoning of our rivers and the air that we breathe. I propose that we carry out a new program to develop regions of our country that are now suffering from distress and depression. I propose that we make new efforts to control and prevent crime and delinquency… I propose that we honor and support the achievements of thought and the creations of art. I propose that we make an all—out campaign against waste and inefficiency…

We can help insure continued prosperity through:

— a regional recovery program to assist the development of stricken areas left behind by our national progress;
— further efforts to provide our workers with the skills demanded by modern technology, for the laboring—man is an indispensable force in the American system;
— the extension of the minimum wage to more than 2 million unprotected workers;
— the improvement and the modernization of the unemployment compensation system…

Second, we must open opportunity to all our people.

Most Americans enjoy a good life. But far too many are still trapped in poverty and idleness and fear.

Let a just nation throw open to them the city of promise:

— to the elderly, by providing hospital care under social security and by raising benefit payments to those struggling to maintain the dignity of their later years;
— to the poor and the unfortunate, through doubling the war against poverty this year;
— to Negro Americans, through enforcement of the civil rights law and elimination of barriers to the right to vote…

Our third goal is to improve the quality of American life.
THROUGH EDUCATION. We begin with learning. Every child must have the best education that this Nation can provide.

Thomas Jefferson said that no nation can be both ignorant and free. Today no nation can be both ignorant and great.

In addition to our existing programs, I will recommend a new program for schools and students with a first year authorization of $1,500 million…For the preschool years we will help needy children become aware of the excitement of learning.

For the primary and secondary school years we will aid public schools serving low—income families and assist students in both public and private schools.

For the college years we will provide scholarships to high school students of the greatest promise and the greatest need and we will guarantee low—interest loans to students continuing their college studies.

New laboratories and centers will help our schools——help them lift their standards of excellence and explore new methods of teaching. These centers will provide special training for those who need and those who deserve special treatment.

THROUGH BETTER HEALTH. Greatness requires not only an educated people but a healthy people. Our goal is to match the achievements of our medicine to the afflictions of our people. We already carry on a large program in this country for research and health. In addition, regional medical centers can provide the most advanced diagnosis and treatment for heart disease and cancer and stroke and other major diseases. New support for medical and dental education will provide the trained people to apply our knowledge. Community centers can help the mentally ill and improve health care for school—age children from poor families, including services for the mentally retarded.

THROUGH IMPROVING THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.

The City. An educated and healthy people require surroundings in harmony with their hopes. In our urban areas the central problem today is to protect and restore man’s satisfaction in belonging to a community where he can find security and significance…New and existing programs will be open to those cities which work together to develop unified long—range policies for metropolitan areas. We must also make some very important changes in our housing programs if we are to pursue these same basic goals. So a Department of Housing and Urban Development will be needed to spearhead this effort in our cities.

Every citizen has the right to feel secure in his home and on the streets of his community. To help control crime, we will recommend programs:

——to train local law enforcement officers;
——to put the best techniques of modern science at their disposal;
——to discover the causes of crime and better ways to prevent it.

I will soon assemble a panel of outstanding experts of this Nation to search out answers to the national problem of crime and delinquency, and I welcome the recommendations and the constructive efforts of the Congress.

The Beauty of America. For over three centuries the beauty of America has sustained our spirit and has enlarged our vision. We must act now to protect this heritage. In a fruitful new partnership with the States and the cities the next decade should be a conservation milestone. We must make a massive effort to save the countryside and to establish——as a green legacy for tomorrow——more large and small parks, more seashores and open spaces than have been created during any other period in our national history.
A new and substantial effort must be made to landscape highways to provide places of relaxation and recreation wherever our roads run. Within our cities imaginative programs are needed to landscape streets and to transform open areas into places of beauty and recreation. We will seek legal power to prevent pollution of our air and water before it happens. We will step up our effort to control harmful wastes, giving first priority to the cleanup of our most contaminated rivers. We will increase research to learn much more about the control of pollution…

Art and Science. We must also recognize and encourage those who can be pathfinders for the Nation’s imagination and understanding. To help promote and honor creative achievements, I will propose a National Foundation on the Arts.

To develop knowledge which will enrich our lives and ensure our progress, I will recommend programs to encourage basic science, particularly in the universities—and to bring closer the day when the oceans will supply our growing need for fresh water…

Barry Goldwater, Republican Nomination Acceptance Speech, 17 July 1964

…Now, my fellow Americans, the tide has been running against freedom. Our people have followed false prophets. We must, and we shall, return to proven ways— not because they are old, but because they are true. We must, and we shall, set the tide running again in the cause of freedom. And this party, with its every action, every word, every breath, and every heartbeat, has but a single resolve, and that is freedom - freedom made orderly for this nation by our constitutional government; freedom under a government limited by laws of nature and of nature’s God; freedom - balanced so that liberty lacking order will not become the slavery of the prison cell; balanced so that liberty lacking order will not become the license of the mob and of the jungle…

Fellow Republicans, it is the cause of Republicanism to resist concentrations of power, private or public, which enforce such conformity and inflict such despotism. It is the cause of Republicanism to ensure that power remains in the hands of the people. And, so help us God, that is exactly what a Republican president will do with the help of a Republican Congress…

Our towns and our cities, then our counties, then our states, then our regional contacts - and only then, the national government. That, let me remind you, is the ladder of liberty, built by decentralized power. On it also we must have balance between the branches of government at every level…

Jimmy Carter, Crisis of Confidence Speech, 15 July 1979

I promised you a president who is not isolated from the people, who feels your pain, and who shares your dreams and who draws his strength and his wisdom from you…

It’s clear that the true problems of our Nation are much deeper—deeper than gasoline lines or energy shortages, deeper even than inflation or recession. And I realize more than ever that as president I need your help. So I decided to reach out and listen to the voices of America. I invited to Camp David people from almost every segment of our society—business and labor, teachers and preachers, governors, mayors, and private citizens. And then I left Camp David to listen to other Americans, men and women like you…
This kind of summarized a lot of other statements: "Mr. President, we are confronted with a moral and a spiritual crisis…"

These ten days confirmed my belief in the decency and the strength and the wisdom of the American people, but it also bore out some of my long-standing concerns about our nation’s underlying problems.

I know, of course, being president, that government actions and legislation can be very important. That’s why I’ve worked hard to put my campaign promises into law—and I have to admit, with just mixed success. But after listening to the American people I have been reminded again that all the legislation in the world can’t fix what’s wrong with America. So, I want to speak to you first tonight about a subject even more serious than energy or inflation. I want to talk to you right now about a fundamental threat to American democracy…

It is a crisis of confidence. It is a crisis that strikes at the very heart and soul and spirit of our national will. We can see this crisis in the growing doubt about the meaning of our own lives and in the loss of a unity of purpose for our nation.

The erosion of our confidence in the future is threatening to destroy the social and the political fabric of America.

The confidence that we have always had as a people is not simply some romantic dream or a proverb in a dusty book that we read just on the Fourth of July.

It is the idea which founded our nation and has guided our development as a people. Confidence in the future has supported everything else—public institutions and private enterprise, our own families, and the very Constitution of the United States. Confidence has defined our course and has served as a link between generations. We’ve always believed in something called progress. We’ve always had a faith that the days of our children would be better than our own.

Our people are losing that faith, not only in government itself but in the ability as citizens to serve as the ultimate rulers and shapers of our democracy. As a people we know our past and we are proud of it. Our progress has been part of the living history of America, even the world. We always believed that we were part of a great movement of humanity itself called democracy, involved in the search for freedom, and that belief has always strengthened us in our purpose. But just as we are losing our confidence in the future, we are also beginning to close the door on our past.

In a nation that was proud of hard work, strong families, close-knit communities, and our faith in God, too many of us now tend to worship self-indulgence and consumption. Human identity is no longer defined by what one does, but by what one owns. But we’ve discovered that owning things and consuming things does not satisfy our longing for meaning. We’ve learned that piling up material goods cannot fill the emptiness of lives which have no confidence or purpose.

The symptoms of this crisis of the American spirit are all around us. For the first time in the history of our country a majority of our people believe that the next five years will be worse than the past five years. Two-thirds of our people do not even vote. The productivity of American workers is actually dropping, and the willingness of Americans to save for the future has fallen below that of all other people in the Western world.

As you know, there is a growing disrespect for government and for churches and for schools, the news media, and other institutions. This is not a message of happiness or reassurance, but it is the truth and it is a warning...
What you see too often in Washington and elsewhere around the country is a system of government that seems incapable of action. You see a Congress twisted and pulled in every direction by hundreds of well-financed and powerful special interests. You see every extreme position defended to the last vote, almost to the last breath by one unyielding group or another. You often see a balanced and a fair approach that demands sacrifice, a little sacrifice from everyone, abandoned like an orphan without support and without friends.

Often you see paralysis and stagnation and drift. You don’t like it, and neither do I. What can we do?

First of all, we must face the truth, and then we can change our course. We simply must have faith in each other, faith in our ability to govern ourselves, and faith in the future of this nation. Restoring that faith and that confidence to America is now the most important task we face. It is a true challenge of this generation of Americans…

We are at a turning point in our history. There are two paths to choose. One is a path I’ve warned about tonight, the path that leads to fragmentation and self-interest. Down that road lies a mistaken idea of freedom, the right to grasp for ourselves some advantage over others. That path would be one of constant conflict between narrow interests ending in chaos and immobility. It is a certain route to failure.

All the traditions of our past, all the lessons of our heritage, all the promises of our future point to another path, the path of common purpose and the restoration of American values. That path leads to true freedom for our nation and ourselves. We can take the first steps down that path as we begin to solve our energy problem…

What I have to say to you now about energy is simple and vitally important.

Point one: I am tonight setting a clear goal for the energy policy of the United States. Beginning this moment, this nation will never use more foreign oil than we did in 1977—never. From now on, every new addition to our demand for energy will be met from our own production and our own conservation…

Point two: To ensure that we meet these targets, I will use my presidential authority to set import quotas. I’m announcing tonight that for 1979 and 1980, I will forbid the entry into this country of one drop of foreign oil more than these goals allow.

Point three: To give us energy security, I am asking for the most massive peacetime commitment of funds and resources in our nation’s history to develop America’s own alternative sources of fuel—from coal, from oil shale, from plant products for gasohol, from unconventional gas, from the sun…

Moreover, I will soon submit legislation to Congress calling for the creation of this nation’s first solar bank, which will help us achieve the crucial goal of 20 percent of our energy coming from solar power by the year 2000.

These efforts will cost money, a lot of money, and that is why Congress must enact the windfall profits tax without delay…

Point four: I’m asking Congress to mandate, to require as a matter of law, that our nation’s utility companies cut their massive use of oil by 50 percent within the next decade and switch to other fuels, especially coal, our most abundant energy source.

Point five: To make absolutely certain that nothing stands in the way of achieving these goals, I will urge Congress to create an energy mobilization board which, like the War Production Board in World War II, will have the responsibility and authority to cut through the red tape, the delays, and the endless roadblocks to completing key energy projects…
Point six: I’m proposing a bold conservation program to involve every state, county, and city and every average American in our energy battle. This effort will permit you to build conservation into your homes and your lives at a cost you can afford.

I ask Congress to give me authority for mandatory conservation and for standby gasoline rationing. To further conserve energy, I’m proposing tonight an extra $10 billion over the next decade to strengthen our public transportation systems. And I’m asking you for your good and for your nation’s security to take no unnecessary trips, to use carpools or public transportation whenever you can, to park your car one extra day per week, to obey the speed limit, and to set your thermostats to save fuel. Every act of energy conservation like this is more than just common sense—I tell you it is an act of patriotism…

So, the solution of our energy crisis can also help us to conquer the crisis of the spirit in our country. It can rekindle our sense of unity, our confidence in the future, and give our nation and all of us individually a new sense of purpose…

I do not promise you that this struggle for freedom will be easy…

1980 Republican Party Platform

…For too many years, the political debate in America has been conducted in terms set by the Democrats. They believe that every time new problems arise beyond the power of men and women as individuals to solve, it becomes the duty of government to solve them, as if there were never any alternative. Republicans disagree and have always taken the side of the individual, whose freedoms are threatened by the big government that Democratic idea has spawned. Our case for the individual is stronger than ever. A defense of the individual against government was never more needed. And we will continue to mount it…

We seek energy independence through economic policies that free up our energy production and encourage conservation. We seek improvements in health care, education, housing, and opportunities for youth. We seek new avenues for the needy to break out of the tragic cycle of dependency. All of these goals—and many others—we confidently expect to achieve through a rebirth of liberty and resurgence of private initiatives, for we believe that at the root of most of our troubles today is the misguided and discredited philosophy of an all-powerful government, ceaselessly striving to subsidize, manipulate, and control individuals. But it is the individual, not the government, who reigns at the center of our Republican philosophy.

To those Democrats who say Americans must be content to passively accept the gradual but inexorable decline of America, we answer: The American people have hardly begun to marshal their talents and resources or realize the accomplishments and dreams that only freedom can inspire.

To those Democrats who say we face an "age of limits," we ask: Who knows the limit to what Americans can do when their capacity for work, creativity, optimism, and faith is enhanced and supported by strong and responsive political leadership and ideals.

To those who, with Mr. Carter, say the American people suffer from a national "malaise," we respond: The only malaise in this country is found in the leadership of the Democratic Party, in the White House and in Congress. Its symptoms are an incompetence to lead, a refusal to change, and a reluctance to act. This malaise has become epidemic in Washington. Its cure is government led by Republicans who share the values of the majority of Americans…

Free Individuals in a Free Society. It has long been a fundamental conviction of the Republican Party that government should foster in our society a climate of maximum individual
liberty and freedom of choice. Properly informed, our people as individuals or acting through instruments of popular consultation can make the right decisions affecting personal or general welfare, free of pervasive and heavy-handed intrusion by the central government into the decisionmaking process. This tenet is the genius of representative democracy…

**Government reorganization.** The Republican Party reaffirms its belief in the decentralization of the federal government and in the traditional American principle that the best government is the one closest to the people. There, it is less costly, more accountable, and more responsive to people's needs…

Our states and localities have the talent, wisdom, and determination to respond to the variety of demands made upon them...

We pledge to continue and redouble our efforts to return power to the state and local governments. The regionalization of government encouraged by federal policies diminishes the responsiveness of state and local governments and impairs the power of the people to control their destiny…

When we mistakenly rely on government to solve all our problems we ignore the abilities of people to solve their own problems. We pledge to renew the dispersion of power from the federal government to the states and localities. But this will not be enough. We pledge to extend the process so that power can be transferred as well to non-governmental institutions…

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1980 Democratic Party Platform

**Preamble.** In its third century, America faces great challenges and an uncertain future. The decade that America now enters presents us with decisions as monumental and fundamental as those we faced during the Civil War, during two World Wars, and during the Great Depression. Our current task is different from each of these historic challenges. But in many ways the challenge is the same: to marshall the talents and spirit of the American people, to harness our enormous resources, and to face the future with confidence and hope.

The task now before us is as global as the worldwide energy shortage, and as local as the plight of children in Appalachia. It reaches from the condition of older Eastern cities and the industries of the snowbelt, to the complex new demands of our sunbelt region and the special needs of our Western states. It is as basic as the entitlement of minorities and women to real equality in every aspect of the nation's life. It is as immediate as the refugee crisis in Miami and the natural disaster at Mount St. Helens. It is as futuristic as the exploration of space and the oceans. It is as idealistic as the spirit of liberty which imbues our Constitution. It requires nothing less than a continued dedication to Democratic principles by each element in our society—government, business, labor, and every citizen—to the promise and potential of our nation.

We live in a time when effective policy requires an understanding of the web of competing values and interests which exist in our country. We must combine compassion with self-discipline. We must forego simplistic answers for long-term solutions to our problems.

With the Republican leadership closing its eyes to the realities of our time and running for the Presidency on a program of the easy answer, of the pleasant-sounding political promise, it is time to take a page from Adlai Stevenson's 1952 presidential campaign—it is time "to talk sense to the American people." It is time to talk bluntly and candidly about our problems and our proposed solutions; to face up to our problems and respond to them.
If we fail in this important task...if we fail to lay the issues squarely before the American people, we could well allow the federal government to revert to four years of Republicanism—neglect of the poor and disadvantaged, disdain for working men and women, compassion only for the rich and the privileged, failure to meet the challenges of energy, inflation and unemployment, and a breakdown of the partnership among local, state and federal governments. We as Democrats must not let this happen.

After nearly four years in office, we Democrats have not solved all of America's problems.

Most of these problems we inherited. Eight years of Republican politics left this nation weak, rudderless, unrespected and deeply divided.

As a result of this legacy, despite our progress, inflation still erodes the standard of living of every American.

As a result of this legacy, despite our progress, too many Americans are out of work.

As a result of this legacy, despite our progress, complete equality for all citizens has yet to be achieved.

As a result of this legacy, despite our progress, we still live in a very dangerous world, where competing ideologies and age-old animosities daily threaten the peace.

As a result of this legacy, our nation is still subject to the oil pricing and production decisions of foreign countries.

We will not run from these problems, nor will we fail. The record of the past four years is a testament to what the Democrats can do working together…

**Chapter II: Government and Human Needs**

The Democratic Party has properly been known as the Party of the people. We Democrats believe in making government responsive to the needs of the people...making it work for the people. We do not claim that government has all the answers to our problems, but we do believe that government has a legitimate role to play in searching for those answers and in applying those answers.

The Democratic Party has a proud record of responding to the human needs of our citizens. After eight years of Republican government and systematic Republican efforts to dismantle all of the hard-won New Frontier and Great Society social programs, the Carter Administration and the Democratic Congress have resurrected, preserved and strengthened those programs which have proven effective.

In the areas of health care, housing, education, welfare and social services, civil rights, and care for the disabled, elderly and veterans, a Democratic President and a Democratic Congress have put the federal government back in the business of serving our people.

Our progress has been significant, and in many areas unprecedented. In 1980, the people must decide whether our country will continue that progress, or whether we will allow the federal government to revert to four years of Republicanism—which means neglect of the poor and disadvantaged, disdain for working men and women, and compassion only for the rich and the privileged.

We will not allow this to happen. We pledge to build on the Democratic record of the past four years—to continue the process we have begun.

While we recognize the need for fiscal restraint—and have proposed specific steps toward that goal—we pledge as Democrats that for the sole and primary purpose of fiscal restraint alone, we will not support reductions in the funding of any program whose purpose is to serve the basic human needs of the most needy in our society—programs such as unemployment,
income maintenance, food stamps, and efforts to enhance the educational, nutritional or health needs of children.

**Health.** The Carter Administration and the Congress have worked closely together to improve the health care provided to all Americans. In many vital areas, there has been clear progress.

The United States spent over $200 billion for health care in 1979. Despite these high expenditures and although we possess some of the finest hospitals and health professionals in the world, millions of Americans have little or no access to health care services…

The answer to runaway medical costs is not, as Republicans propose, to pour money into a wasteful and inefficient system. The answer is not to cut back on benefits for the elderly and eligibility for the poor. The answer is to enact a comprehensive, universal national health insurance plan.

To meet the goals of a program that will control costs and provide health coverage to every American, the Democratic Party pledges to seek a national health insurance program with the following features:

– Universal coverage, without regard to place of employment, sex, age, marital status, or any other factor;

– Comprehensive medical benefits, including preventive, diagnostic, therapeutic, health maintenance and rehabilitation services, and complete coverage of the costs of catastrophic illness or injury…

**Social Security**…The basic program and guarantee for older citizens is Social Security. It is the single most successful social program ever undertaken by the federal government. Ninety-five percent of those reaching 65 are eligible for this program: without it, 60 percent of the elderly would have incomes below the poverty level…

**Welfare Reform**…

Food Stamps—Hunger is one of the most debilitating and urgently felt human needs. A government pledged to a fairer distribution of wealth, income, and power, and to holding as a guiding concern the needs and aspirations of all, must also be a government which seeks to alleviate the hunger that results from economic conditions or personal circumstances. Over the years, the Food Stamp Program, expanded and made more responsive by a Democratic Congress and Administration, has become the bulwark of this nation's efforts to relieve hunger among its citizens…

**Education**…In the past four years:

– Federal aid to education has increased by 73 percent—the greatest income increase in such a short period in our history…

**Child Care**…The Democratic Party shall seek vigorously to enact an adequately funded, comprehensive quality child-care program based upon a national commitment to meet the health, safety, and educational needs of all children…

**Housing**…

**Transportation**…

**Urban Policy**…

**Science and Technology**…

**The Arts and the Humanities**…

**Domestic Violence**…The President has signed the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act; HUD has developed demonstration projects for shelters for battered women: the Community Services Administration has established a pilot Family Crisis Center Program to
assist low-income battered women and children; and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights held a Consultation on Battered Women in 1978…

**Law Enforcement…**

**Election Reform.** Recent reforms in the election process have aided immeasurably in opening the process to more people and have begun to reduce the influence of special interests. The limitations on campaign contributions and the public financing of Presidential elections are two reforms which have worked very well. Business political action committees continue to spend excessively, however. Further reform in this area is essential. In the 1980s we need to enact reforms which will:

–Provide for public financing of Congressional campaigns;
–Lower contribution limits for political action committees;
–Close the loophole that allows private spending in Presidential elections contrary to the intent of the election law reforms;
–Encourage voter participation in elections through use of simplified procedures for registration in states that lack mail or election day registration procedures, and by resisting efforts to reduce access to bilingual ballots; and
–Increase opportunities for full participation in all areas of party and government affairs by the low and moderate income majority of Americans…

**Environment.** We are charged with the stewardship of an irreplaceable environment. The Democratic Party must continue to be as environmentally progressive in the future as it has been in the past. Progress in environmental quality—a major achievement of the 1970s—must continue in the 1980s. The environmental problems we face today are, if anything, more challenging and urgent than those of ten years ago…

We must move decisively to protect our countryside and our coastline from overdevelopment and mismanagement. Major efforts are now underway to solve such problems as disappearing farmland and development on our barrier islands. These efforts should help forge a strong national consensus behind the realization that protection must be balanced with the need to properly manage and utilize our land resources during the 1980s…

New efforts at home and abroad will be required in the early 1980s to face squarely such global problems as the destruction of forests, the loss of countless irreplaceable species, growing world population, acid rain, and carbon dioxide buildup…

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**Ronald Reagan, First Inaugural Address, 20 January 1981**

…The business of our nation goes forward. These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed-income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people.

Idle industries have cast workers into unemployment, causing human misery and personal indignity. Those who do work are denied a fair return for their labor by a tax system which penalizes successful achievement and keeps us from maintaining full productivity…

We must act today in order to preserve tomorrow. And let there be no understanding—we are going to begin to act, beginning today.
The economic ills we suffer have come upon us over several decades. They will not go away in days, weeks, or months, but they will go away. They will go away because we, as Americans, have the capacity now, as we have had in the past, to do whatever needs to be done to preserve this last and greatest bastion of freedom.

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem.

From time to time, we have been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. But if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else? All of us together, in and out of government, must bear the burden. The solutions we seek must be equitable, with no one group singled out to pay a higher price.

We hear much of special interest groups. Our concern must be for a special interest group that has been too long neglected. It knows no sectional boundaries or ethnic and racial divisions, and it crosses political party lines. It is made up of men and women who raise our food, patrol our streets, man our mines and our factories, teach our children, keep our homes, and heal us when we are sick—professionals, industrialists, shopkeepers, clerks, cabbies, and truckdrivers. They are, in short, "We the people," this breed called Americans…

Our Government has no power except that granted it by the people. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed.

It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the States or to the people…

Now, so there will be no misunderstanding, it is not my intention to do away with government. It is, rather, to make it work—work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it…

It is no coincidence that our present troubles parallel and are proportionate to the intervention and intrusion in our lives that result from unnecessary and excessive growth of government. It is time for us to realize that we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams. We are not, as some would have us believe, doomed to an inevitable decline. I do not believe in a fate that will fall on us no matter what we do. I do believe in a fate that will fall on us if we do nothing. So, with all the creative energy at our command, let us begin an era of national renewal. Let us renew our determination, our courage, and our strength. And let us renew our faith and our hope…

In the days ahead I will propose removing the roadblocks that have slowed our economy and reduced productivity. Steps will be taken aimed at restoring the balance between the various levels of government. Progress may be slow—measured in inches and feet, not miles—but we will progress. Is it time to reawaken this industrial giant, to get government back within its means, and to lighten our punitive tax burden. And these will be our first priorities, and on these principles, there will be no compromise…
Republican Party, “Contract with America,” 1994

As Republican Members of the House of Representatives and as citizens seeking to join that body we propose not just to change its policies, but even more important, to restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected representatives.

That is why in this era of official evasion and posturing, we offer instead a detailed agenda for national renewal, a written commitment with no fine print.

This year’s election offers the chance, after four decades of one-party control, to bring to the House a new majority that will transform the way Congress works. That historic change would be the end of government that is too big, too intrusive, and too easy with the public’s money. It can be the beginning of a Congress that respects the values and shares the faith of the American family.

Like Lincoln, our first Republican president, we intend to act "with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right." To restore accountability to Congress. To end its cycle of scandal and disgrace. To make us all proud again of the way free people govern themselves.

On the first day of the 104th Congress, the new Republican majority will immediately pass the following major reforms, aimed at restoring the faith and trust of the American people in their government:

FIRST, require all laws that apply to the rest of the country also apply equally to the Congress;
SECOND, select a major, independent auditing firm to conduct a comprehensive audit of Congress for waste, fraud or abuse;
THIRD, cut the number of House committees, and cut committee staff by one-third;
FORTH, limit the terms of all committee chairs;
FIFTH, ban the casting of proxy votes in committee;
SIXTH, require committee meetings to be open to the public;
SEVENTH, require a three-fifths majority vote to pass a tax increase;
EIGHTH, guarantee an honest accounting of our Federal Budget by implementing zero base-line budgeting.

Thereafter, within the first 100 days of the 104th Congress, we shall bring to the House Floor the following bills, each to be given full and open debate, each to be given a clear and fair vote and each to be immediately available this day for public inspection and scrutiny.

THE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT. A balanced budget/tax limitation amendment and a legislative line-item veto to restore fiscal responsibility to an out-of-control Congress, requiring them to live under the same budget constraints as families and businesses.

THE TAKING BACK OUR STREETS ACT. An anti-crime package including stronger truth-in-sentencing, "good faith" exclusionary rule exemptions, effective death penalty provisions, and cuts in social spending for this summer’s "crime" bill to fund prison construction and additional law enforcement to keep people secure in their neighborhoods and kids safe in their schools.

THE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT. Discourage illegitimacy and teen pregnancy by prohibiting welfare to minor mothers and denying increased AFDC for additional children while on welfare, cut spending for welfare programs, and enact a tough two-years-and-out provision with work requirements to promote individual responsibility.

THE FAMILY REINFORCEMENT ACT. Child support enforcement, tax incentives for adoption, strengthening rights of parents in their children’s education, stronger child
pomography laws, and an elderly dependent care tax credit to reinforce the central role of families in American society.

THE AMERICAN DREAM RESTORATION ACT. A $500 per child tax credit, begin repeal of the marriage tax penalty, and creation of American Dream Savings Accounts to provide middle class tax relief...

THE SENIOR CITIZENS FAIRNESS ACT. Raise the Social Security earnings limit, which currently forces seniors out of the work force, repeal the 1993 tax hikes on Social Security benefits and provide tax incentives for private long-term care insurance to let Older Americans keep more of what they have earned over the years.

THE JOB CREATION AND WAGE ENHANCEMENT ACT. Small business incentives, capital gains cuts and indexation, neutral cost recovery, risk assessment/cost-benefit analysis, strengthening the Regulatory Flexibility Act and unfounded mandate reform to create jobs and raise worker wages.

THE COMMON SENSE LEGAL REFORM ACT. "Loser pays" laws, reasonable limits on punitive damages and reform of product liability laws to stem the endless tide of litigation.

THE CITIZEN LEGISLATURE ACT. A first-ever vote on term limits to replace career politicians with citizen legislators.

Further, we will instruct the House Budget Committee to report to the floor and we will work to enact additional budget savings, beyond the budget cuts specifically included in the legislation described above, to ensure that the Federal budget deficit will be less than it would have been without the enactment of these bills.

Respecting the judgment of our fellow citizens as we seek their mandate for reform, we hereby pledge our names to this Contract with America.