CAMPAIGN
for
COMMON
GOOD

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AMERICANS WANT RESULTS. WE WERE ONCE ABLE TO TACKLE HARD PROBLEMS. PEOPLE TOOK RESPONSIBILITY AND GOT THINGS DONE. IT’S TIME TO TAKE BACK OUR ABILITY TO MAKE THINGS WORK SENSIBLY.

The COVID-19 fiasco is a wake-up call that American government is, literally, out of anyone's control. Washington couldn't get the job done—not timely testing, not adequate protective gear, and not coordinating critical responses. Worse, government prevented public health experts from doing their jobs. Vital decisions were delayed for weeks as each decision had to pass through the eye of the Washington needle.

Governing shouldn't be this hard. We saw it at work when states had to handle the surge of COVID patients. State officials acted decisively. They liberated doctors, nurses, and others to care for the surge of sick patients with whatever resources they could find. Instead of focusing on complying with detailed rulebooks, these heroes did what it took.

It's time to reclaim the American can-do spirit. That requires government that's smart, not tangled in red tape. Focusing on results—not mindless compliance—will unleash energy at every level of society. Instead of dotting every “i” and filling out forms that no one reads, Americans can roll up their sleeves and take responsibility. Instead of legal bickering, officials and citizens alike can be accountable for how they do.

ALL GREAT CHANGE COMES FROM A SIMPLE IDEA THAT SUDDENLY BECOMES OBVIOUS AND UNAVOIDABLE. OUR SIMPLE IDEA IS THAT GOVERNMENT MUST FOCUS ON RESULTS. OFFICIALS AND CITIZENS ALIKE MUST BE FREE TO USE COMMON SENSE. ONLY THEN WILL THINGS WORK SENSIBLY. ONLY THEN CAN PEOPLE BE ACCOUNTABLE.

Why is it that new leaders get elected, but old problems don't get fixed? All the accumulated laws and regulations—150 million words in the federal government alone—stifle leadership at the same time that they suffocate our freedom. No one designed this system—regulations just piled up, decade after decade.

It doesn't take genius to remove mindless red tape from schools, hospitals, and public health agencies. No great wisdom is needed to cut obsolete programs and reset priorities, so we can address new challenges—not just pandemics, but also climate change and updated infrastructure. Listen to the frustrations of any teacher, nurse, or small business owner. Daily life is like a legal pressure cooker. Can you prove that what you just did is legally correct? Is your paperwork in order?

OUR CAMPAIGN FOR COMMON GOOD PROPOSES A NEW GOVERNING VISION BUILT ON THE SOLID FOUNDATION OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY. JUDGE HOW WE DO, DON’T TELL US HOW TO DO IT.

The new governing vision we propose is this: Simplify regulatory frameworks into coherent goals and guiding principles, more like the Constitution. Instead of causing failure by entangling everyone in red tape, hold people accountable for results.

Now's the time. COVID has exposed why government fails so often while also stifling individual initiative. Bureaucratic paralysis is the inevitable result of trying to create a government better than people.

Our goal is to put people in charge again, at every level of society. Giving people responsibility is not discretion to do whatever they want, but an affirmative duty to meet public goals. All the checks and balances are still present, including accountability up the official hierarchy and courts.

The hard part is to build a movement for change. Washington is a mighty fortress for the status quo. Powerful interest groups in Washington exist mainly to preserve business as usual. All that red tape is imbedded in law. New leaders can't deliver on promises of good government.

THAT’S WHY REFORM NEEDS YOU, AND YOUR FRIENDS, AND YOUR CONVICTION THAT AMERICAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS AN OVERHAUL.

Rebooting Washington will be a historic change, comparable in scope to the changes in the 1960s, the 1930s, and the Progressive era. Change always happens in big gulps. The effect is like a dam bursting—as in the 1960s, with civil rights, environmental protection, and other reforms that were unimaginable to Washington insiders only a few years before.

Pressure for change is building. Broad alienation and pent-up frustration are reflected in the crazy political rhetoric. But where's there a coherent vision of what the change should be? Join us to restore core principles of good government and a free society. If our common sense principles strike a deep chord, help us activate the untapped energy of other Americans.

WE WILL SUCCEED BECAUSE OUR PRINCIPLES ARE GROUNDED IN A TRUTH KNOWN TO ALL AMERICANS: NOTHING WORKS UNLESS A PERSON TAKES RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE IT WORK. AMERICA’S STRENGTH COMES FROM INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE. WE AIM TO OVERHAUL WASHINGTON TO RECLAIM THIS STRENGTH.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN AT COMMONGOOD.ORG OR CONTACT PHILIP K. HOWARD AT CAMPAIGN@COMMONGOOD.ORG.
PRINCIPLE ONE: GOVERN FOR GOALS

Government must focus on results, not red tape. Simplify most law into legal principles, such as in the Constitution, so that public servants have responsibility to get the job done.

PRINCIPLE TWO: HONOR HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

Nothing works unless a person makes it work. Bureaucracy fails because it suffocates human initiative with central dictates. Bureaucracy means people, preventing us from acting on our perceptions, values, and common sense. Giving people the freedom to make a difference is essential for our fulfillment and self-respect.

PRINCIPLE THREE: EVERYONE IS ACCOUNTABLE

Any broken link in the chain of accountability disables democracy. Officials must be accountable for results. Only then can political leaders be accountable for results. Accountability is the currency of a free society. Unless there's accountability all around, officials and citizens soon find themselves tangled in red tape dictating daily choices. That's why accountability is essential to restoring meaning and honor to public service.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: REBOOT REGULATION

Too few government programs work as intended. Many are obsolete. Most squander public and private resources with bureaucratic micromanagement. They need to be repealed or re-built, not to get rid of government but to make it work again. Rebooting old programs will release vast public resources for current needs, such as climate change, infrastructure, income stagnation, and fighting pandemics. Campaign rules should also be rebooted; almost any changes that disrupt existing political structures will be useful.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: BRING GOVERNMENT BACK TO THE PEOPLE

Responsibility works for communities as well as individuals: Give local organizations more control and ownership of public services. Just as planning for pandemics requires national competence, coping with a spreading pandemic requires local leadership and adaptability.

PRINCIPLE SIX: ENFORCE BOUNDARIES ON LAWSUITS

Sue-for-anything justice has infected the culture with debilitating defensiveness. Instead of striding towards our goals, Americans tiptoe on eggshells because any disagreement or accident can erupt into a years-long legal ordeal. Responsibility is the only cure here as well: Judges must take responsibility to act as gatekeepers, drawing boundaries of reasonable claims as a matter of law. Create expert health courts to restore trust in patient relations.

PRINCIPLE SEVEN: RESTORE THE MORAL BASIS OF PUBLIC CHOICES

Public trust is essential to a healthy culture. This requires officials to adhere to basic moral values—especially truthfulness, the golden rule, and stewardship for the future. All laws, programs, and rights must be justified for the common good. Every public dollar involves a moral choice. No one should have rights superior to anyone else.