

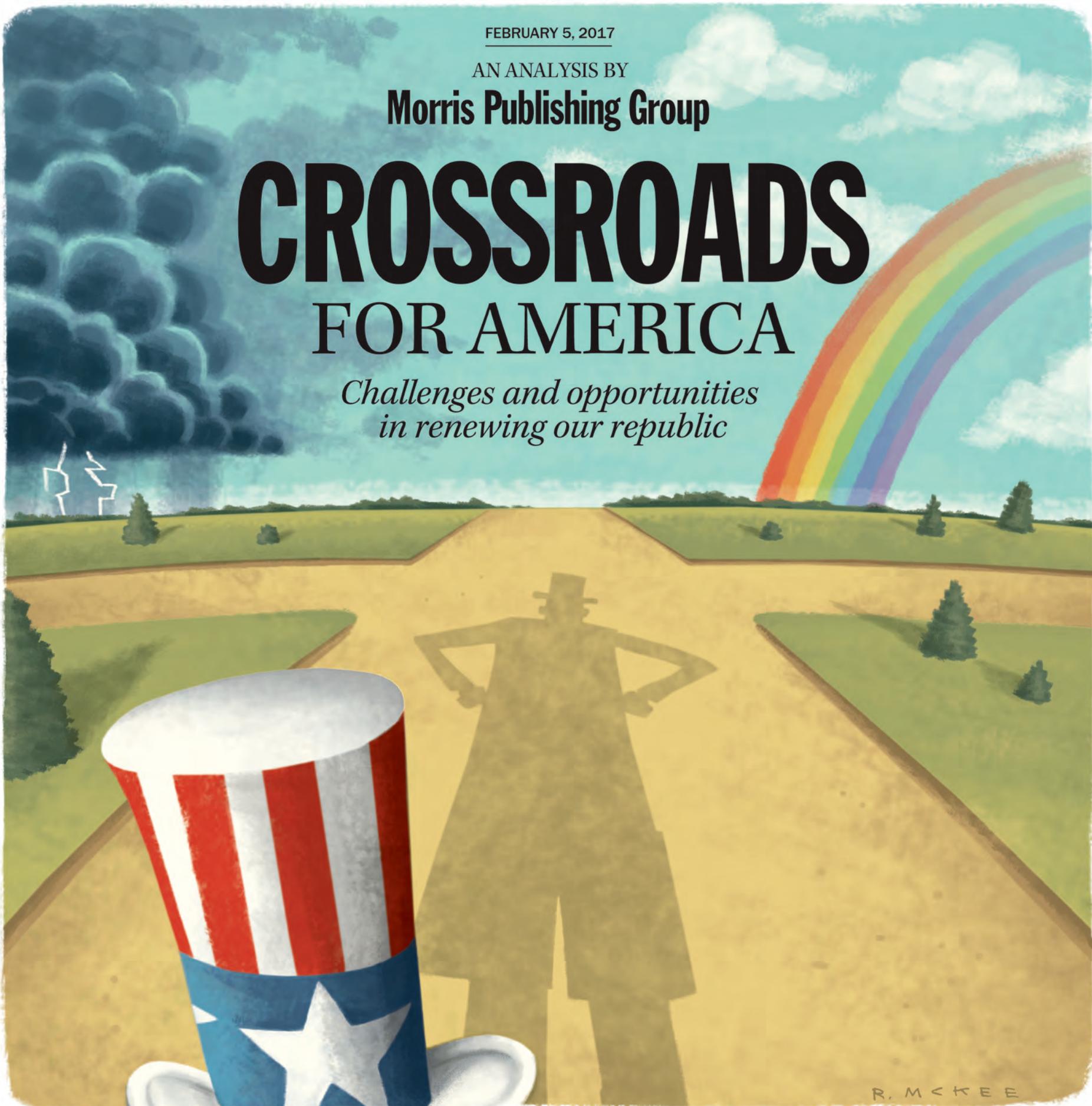
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AN ANALYSIS BY

Morris Publishing Group

CROSSROADS FOR AMERICA

*Challenges and opportunities
in renewing our republic*



R. MCKEE

INTRODUCTION

A closer look at the state of our Union

By William S. Morris III

America is at a crossroads. We face as many fundamental and fateful decisions as we have in more than a century.

What kind of country are we? What kind of government should we have – and how much should it do for us? What is the nature of our relationship to our government, and to each other? What is America’s role in the world?

An alarming number of Americans have become ominously dependent on the government financially. It’s unfortunate for those trapped by hardship – making it difficult for them to realize their potential as human beings – and wholly unsustainable for the country.

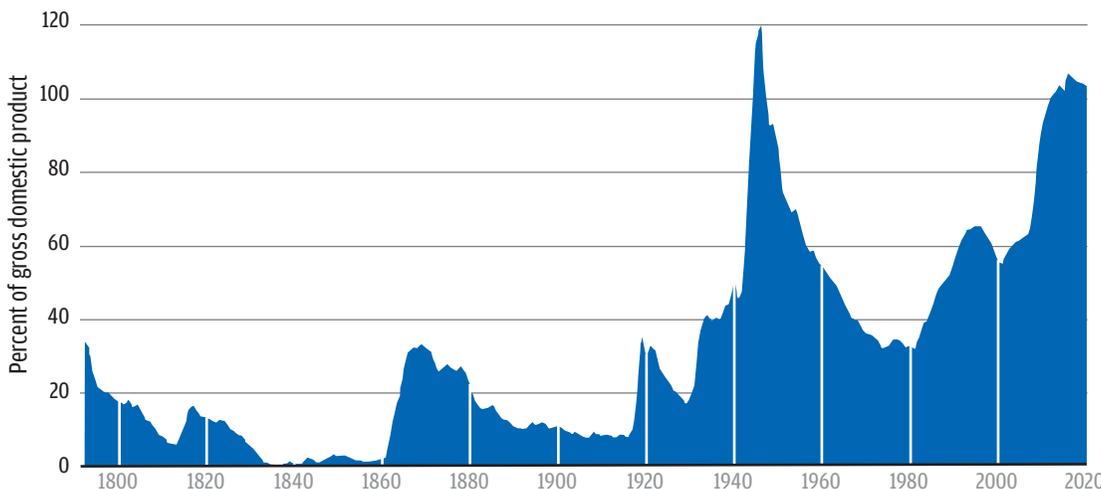
These are some of the many profound challenges we address in this special publication we’re calling “Crossroads for America.”

Through neglect, dispute and shortsightedness, this country has allowed our federal government to swell in size and scope, and our national debt to explode, even as our public infrastructure, economic footing and national security have all suffered mightily.

Our national debt is \$20 trillion and rising, and our future unfunded expenditures for Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security exceed \$100 trillion. Yet, year after year we go on living beyond our means and burdening future generations with our debt – which is patently immoral. All the while, the balance of power shifts

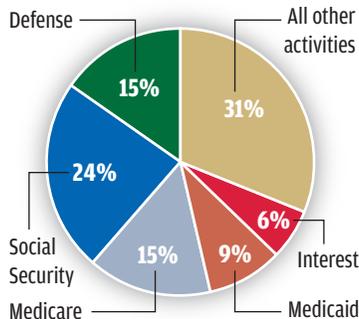
Accumulated gross federal debt

From fiscal year 1792 to fiscal year 2020



Source: usgovernmentspending.com

Shares of total federal spending, 2016



Source: Office of Management and Budget

perilously from the states to the federal government, and from the legislative branch to the executive.

Our southern border is nearly lawless, our immigration system dangerously chaotic and progress in the war on ter-

rorism inadequate to achieve victory.

How did we get here? Somewhere along the way, we went down the wrong road. Lured by the siren song of socialism since the days of Wilson and Roosevelt, we’ve traveled innumerable miles from our Founders’ wisdom. We’ve lost sight of the constitutional and Judeo-Christian principles that guided us for some 200 years: limited government, individual sovereignty and liberty, rights granted by God, and more.

Today’s public dialogue also falls woefully short of the spirit of our Founders when they concluded the Declaration of Independence with the words, “with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our For-

tunes, and our sacred Honor.”

It is that spirit with which we must come together as Americans to renew our republic.

We desperately need to return to those guiding principles that made this the greatest nation on Earth. We need to rein in our runaway federal government, reduce the current confiscatory rate of taxation, remove the yoke of government from our economy, reduce our dependence on it, restore our military, secure our border and reclaim our place of preeminence among nations.

We must first understand and appreciate the nature of America, and what makes it exceptional in the pantheon of history. Then we must rededicate ourselves to those principles and practices that have been proven to work over the 241-year American Experiment.

Total federal spending

Trillions of dollars



Source: Office of Management and Budget

With a new president and Congress, we have a historic opportunity to address these and other challenges facing the nation. President Trump has promised to do so, and we should hold him to it.

We must, as John F. Kennedy implored us, ask not what our country can do for us, but what we can do for our country.

And we must resolve, as Abraham Lincoln put it, that “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

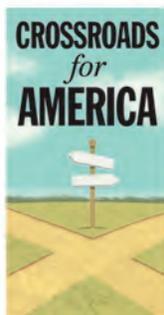
Crossroads indeed.

William S. Morris III is chairman of Morris Communications LLC.

ABOUT ‘CROSSROADS FOR AMERICA’

This is a special publication about our government, our country, our people and our future. ‘Crossroads for America’ is not attached to an election, a campaign, a movement, a specific group of people or a cause. It is a factual, comprehensive report about where the United States of America stands.

‘Crossroads for America’ is produced by Morris Publishing Group, which owns and operates 11 daily newspapers as well as non-daily newspapers, city magazines and free community publications in the Southeast, Midwest, Southwest and Alaska.



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CAPITALISM

Markets, like the nation, must be free

By Michael Ryan

There's a lot of buying and selling that goes on in the free market. Yet the one thing the free market can't seem to sell these days is itself.

As demonstrated dramatically in the odd and chaotic "Occupy" movement of a few years ago, a lot of folks just aren't buying the benefits of capitalism these days.

Young people in particular are a tough sell – even as they hold a Starbucks latte in one hand while they tweet their anti-capitalist rage on their smartphone. No irony there.

The free market – which is inseparable from freedom itself – simply needs to sell itself better. We need to tell its story and celebrate it. We need our young to buy into it.

Strangely, and ominously, we don't seem to tell the story very well. Consider: Junior Achievement, which introduces youths to the principles of the free market, has to rely on donations – and the permission of bureaucrats – to get into the schools.

Astonishingly, a Harvard University poll last year found that a majority of Americans ages 18 to 29 don't even support capitalism: 51 percent oppose it, while 42 percent support it.

Amazing. Frightening. This is the heart of American life. It's the very key to economic freedom and vitality. And yet, it's a tough sell among our young?

We'd better wake up and address this. It isn't just the very young that need to hear it, either. Of the Harvard poll, 'The Washington Post' wrote, "Only among respondents at least 50 years old was the majority in support of capitalism."

One of our problems may be that post-Cold-War youths have been brought up outside the looming shadow



Associated Press

Enlightened self-interest drives a free market and brings products to consumers.

of communism. In addition, the media do a much better job of highlighting capitalism's occasional outrages, such as Enron, than all that the free market does for humanity.

This is a crisis of confidence. And it's insane. Again, the free market is part and parcel of freedom.

"Capitalism is what people do if you leave them alone," is how an economics professor at the London School of Economics once put it.

Writes Robert Hessen, senior research fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution, "Capitalism, a term of disparagement coined by socialists in the mid-19th century, is a misnomer for 'economic individualism,' which Adam Smith earlier called 'the obvious and

simple system of natural liberty.'"

Citing such an outwardly simple thing as how a can of tuna gets to your store shelf, columnist and economist Walter Williams calls capitalism an "economic miracle."

From sea to shelf, he writes, "It is not a stretch of the imagination to suggest that millions of inputs and people cooperate with one another to get canned tuna to your supermarket." And, he notes, "The average well-stocked supermarket carries over 60,000 different items."

So why do the producers, processors, truck drivers, stores and all the others involved in feeding you do it? "Most of them don't give a hoot about you and me," Williams writes. "Some of them

might hate Americans, but they serve us well and they do so voluntarily. The bottom line motivation for the cooperation is people are in it for themselves."

In other words, enlightened self-interest drives the free market – and drives essential products to your door.

"It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner," the legendary economist Smith wrote, "but from their regard to their own interest."

A website listing the supposed pros and cons of capitalism included, as one of the free market's shortcomings, that it ignores social benefits. Far from it! Capitalism actually produces a mind-boggling number of social benefits.

"By pursuing his own interest," Smith wrote, a business person "frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it."

No other economic system has risen so many up out of poverty. Even capitalism's own opponents in the Harvard poll were hard-pressed to come up with a better alternative.

Indeed, besides all the other benefits of capitalism – including economic freedom, life-sustaining products and services, growing the economic pie (rather than just cutting it up), and putting a premium on efficiency – it's arguable that one of the main byproducts of capitalism is happiness: Polls show the happiest people on Earth live primarily in capitalistic, democratic countries.

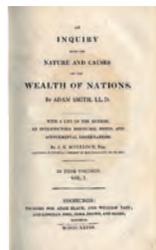
Most of the best-fed folks, too.

It's crazy, and dangerous, that such large portions of our youths would lose sight of all this.

It's essential for our future that we make it clearer to them.

Michael Ryan is the editorial page editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Georgia.

LOOKING BACK



Adam Smith's classic work, 'A Wealth of Nations', explained the benefits of the Invisible Hand in guiding a free market system.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge to our free market is that our young don't seem to comprehend its value and principles: over half of millennials in one survey even oppose capitalism.

Our schools appear not to be teaching it, and nonprofit Junior Achievement – which does – has to pass the hat in order to get its free-market curriculum into schools.

The media accentuate capitalism's warts, such as Enron, but don't tell the free market's success as they should.

OPPORTUNITIES

With the nation's first pure businessman as president, there's an opportunity to bring about a revival of appreciation for all the free market has done, and can do, for the world.

A study of East Germany vs. West Germany, and North Korea and South Korea, would illustrate the difference between statism and capitalism.

We also need to understand the nature of failure. Wendy Milling, writing in 'Forbes', noted that "Statists believe that the failure of individuals within a capitalist system amounts to a moral claim (against) those who have not failed. They believe these failures are an indictment of capitalism itself."

42%
AMERICANS
BETWEEN 18-29
WHO SUPPORT
CAPITALISM

Source: Harvard University poll

NATIONAL DEBT

Nation's cash flow worse than advertised

By Mike Clark

American households understand debt.

Too much of it can put you in the poorhouse.

On a national scale, however, debt is less easy to understand. Can't the nation just print more money?

Even on a national scale, however, too much debt can hurt America.

Mortgaging the future: Like a homeowner using credit for groceries, debt ought to be used for big national projects with a multi-generational payoff like roads and bridges. Without those investments, quality slowly declines.

America is the greatest nation in modern history because the private market has been free to operate at superior levels.

If government stifles that private market, then the entire foundation of America is at risk.

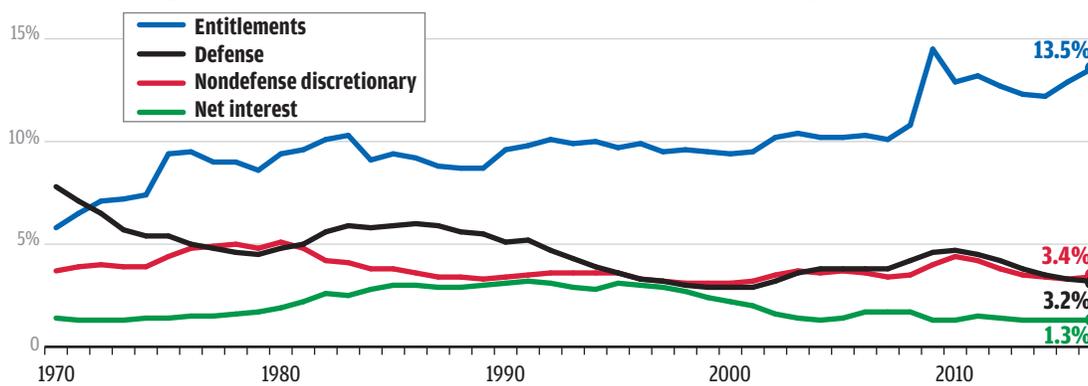
Here are ways that debt hurts America:

- **Cuts in benefits:** When debt is used as a substitute for a stagnant economy, something has to give, which means cuts in programs.

- **Higher interest rates:** When the government borrows too much, it squeezes private equity markets. That pushes up interest rates for everyone.

- **Higher taxes:** At current trends, by about 2040 all of the government's tax revenues will be eaten up by entitlements and interest on the debt. This simply cannot happen.

Federal spending as a share of gross domestic product



Source: Office of Management and Budget

- **The crisis factor:** When the next major recession hits and the nation needs to increase government spending to stimulate the economy, that ability will be stifled. That means the economic crisis will be worse than it should be.

Though the nation's annual budget deficit has declined in recent years – thanks to budget cuts forced by a sequester – the debt continues to rise.

The ratio of federal debt as a percentage of gross domestic product has climbed to levels not seen since World War II.

Liberals downplay the issue, referring to “debt scolds” and pointing out that some nations like Japan have been living with high levels of debt for years. But Japan also has been suffering with a stagnant economy.

Can't we print money? Yes, Americans old enough to remember President Jimmy Carter recall “stagflation,” high

inflation rates combined with a poor economy — the worst of both worlds.

Those in the financial world understand that the nation's balance sheet is in crisis.

David Walker, former comptroller general of the United States, has been spreading the word about the debt crisis.

“Our nation's financial condition is worse than advertised,” he said.

Walker is concerned about mounting liabilities and unfunded commitments. Politicians are great at making promises that future generations must keep.

Americans generally don't save enough, the government overspends and debt is being used to cover it all.

But the worst deficit is one of leadership, Walker says.

“We need leaders who will face the facts, speak the truth, work together and make tough choices,” he said.

Walker says that Americans are hungry for truth and leadership.

That is where President Donald Trump comes in. He is bold, he isn't worried about political correctness and he certainly isn't playing the Washington spin game.

Mary Meeker, one of America's most influential financial analysts, produced a book-length report on the state of the American economy titled ‘USA Inc.’

Her conclusion: There are huge warning signs.

- America's cash flow is deeply in the red.

- Net worth is negative and deteriorating largely due to unfunded entitlements.

“In effect, USA Inc. is maxing out its credit card,” Meeker writes. “It has fallen into a pattern of spending more than it earns and is issuing debt at every turn.

The outlook is not all nega-

tive, however. Grover Norquist, in his book ‘End the IRS,’ writes about the anti-spending revolt of the tea party that followed the presidential election in 2008. After 30 years of fighting for limited government, he was both “surprised and delighted.”

Taxes or economic growth won't work as solutions, Meeker writes. The only realistic solution is to cut spending on entitlements.

The responsible course is to announce a plan and phase in spending cuts so as not to shock the economy. Bipartisan plans to deal with the debt have been floated in recent years but there has been a deficit of leadership to enact them.

“Only God knows when we might have a debt crisis and God's not telling us,” Walker said. “But what we do know is we're not exempt from the laws of prudent finance. You can't spend \$1 trillion plus or more each year than you take in.”

To quote an editorial in the ‘Economist’, a British publication: “The country's long-term fiscal problems are immense. It taxes like a small government country but it spends like a big government one. Eventually demography – and the huge tribe of retiring baby boomers who expect pensions and health care – will bankrupt the country.”

We know what needs to be done. Now we need leaders to take action.

Mike Clark is the editorial page editor of ‘The Florida Times-Union’ in Jacksonville.

CHALLENGES

Our out-of-control national debt risks ever-higher tax rates and interest rates, slows growth and cripples investment and innovation.

Our debt is an immoral surcharge on our children and grandchildren – a bill we are leaving them.

The national debt also endangers our ability to react to future economic crises. Washington is nearly out of tricks to cover over the dreadful financial picture.

\$61,537

EACH AMERICAN'S PORTION OF THE NATIONAL DEBT AS OF JAN. 23, 2017

Sources: U.S. Treasury, U.S. Census

OPPORTUNITIES

Cutting government spending, instituting pro-growth policies and balancing the budget are essential. Now.

House Speaker Paul Ryan, a deficit hawk, and businessman President Donald Trump should be able to come together to steer the nation toward a balanced budget.

Higher economic growth could help federal revenues – as it did in the 1980s, when pro-growth policies led to a doubling of revenues.

ENTITLEMENTS

Reform now, for day of reckoning coming

By Damon Cline

You may not be around after 2033. But your children and grandchildren probably will.

And they likely will wish you and your peers had done something to fix the nation's decades-old entitlement programs – Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

Because by 2033, those programs – along with federal debt payments and America's newest entitlement, Obamacare – will consume every dollar of federal revenue.

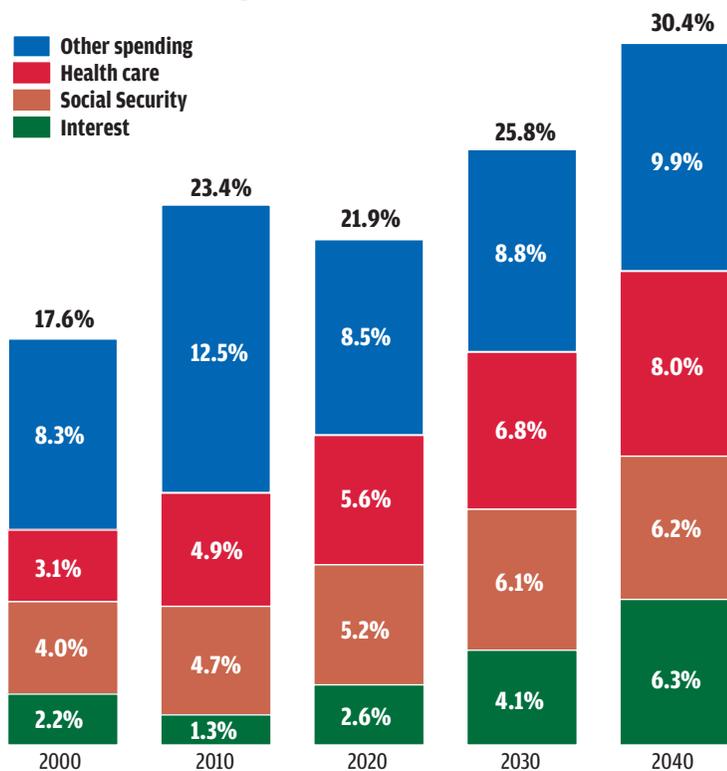
Nothing left for national defense, transportation, scientific research, space exploration or the FBI. Nothing.

Today, the debt- and payroll tax-funded entitlement programs already siphon off half of all federal revenue. The figure is closer to two-thirds if means-tested federal welfare programs are factored in.

“The country cannot and should not sustain the current course of excessive spending and borrowing,” writes The Heritage Foundation in its 2017 Blueprint for Reform policy agenda.

Social Security, the oldest of the entitlements, already is bankrupt. Its trust funds contain only IOUs – “a chit in the drawer” somewhere in Washington, D.C. that implies the federal government owes that money to Social Security recipients,” Florida-based economic consulting firm Capital

Federal spending under current policies as a share of gross domestic product



Source: Congressional Budget Office (2015)

Formation Counselors, Inc. notes in a recent report.

Each generation to date has been promised more in benefits than they contributed in payroll taxes. That was fine in 1950, when 16.5 employees funded every recipient, but not today, where the worker-to-

recipient ratio is about 3-to-1.

The year 2033 also marks the final year Social Security can pay full retirement benefits. Sans reform, the Congressional Budget Office in December estimated benefits would be cut 31 percent in 2034 – 10 percent points higher than its 2014

estimate.

Financial advisors have long told clients not to fully count on Social Security in retirement.

“Whenever I do a comprehensive financial plan with clients, we automatically cut the future Social Security benefits 25 percent to 30 percent,” Rose Swanger, an advisor with Knoxville, Tenn.-based Royal Alliance Associates told investment site ThinkAdvisor. “...If by the time they retire they are still able to receive 100 percent benefits, good for them.”

Equally broken are Washington's 52-year-old health programs – Medicare, for those 65 and older (and young people with certain disabilities), and Medicaid, a federal-state program for the poor.

Both are based on bureaucratic central planning and unlimited spending that guarantees neither access to quality care nor incentives for price-based competition.

The 2010 passage of Obamacare only compounded the problem by adding 20 million more people to the government-run health care rolls.

Most enrollees were put into an expanded Medicaid program, with the rest receiving subsidies to buy private insurance through state exchanges, which last year saw premiums skyrocketed in 46 states by as much as 116 percent, according to the Department of Health & Human Services.

Central to all of Obamacare's flaws is the requirement that people with pre-existing conditions pay no higher premiums than healthy people. That is why the unpopular individual mandate had to be included: to force the young and healthy to buy something they don't want or need.

And because the government defines what qualifies as “insurance,” those who already had coverage they liked found out – contrary to President Obama's repeated assertions – that they couldn't keep it.

No wonder Charles Blahous, a former trustee of the Medicare and Social Security systems, calls Obamacare “the greatest act of fiscal irresponsibility ever committed by federal legislators.”

The health care programs, much like Social Security, will not be fixed with simple tweaks that have enabled lawmakers to kick the can down the road.

Tough choices are ahead, and though politically unpopular, they are necessary to keep future generations from paying a debt they didn't ask for and can't afford.

“Some people may have to get their health care in different ways,” says Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at Cato Institute. “And some, who can afford it, may have to pay more.”

Damon Cline is the business editor of ‘The Augusta Chronicle’ in Georgia.

LOOKING BACK

America has always cared for its elderly and poor. Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, in particular, wrote extensively on safety nets for people unable to provide for themselves because of their age or health.



But welfare services were a function of local governments, which enabled aid givers to know those they helped and prevented freeloading.

The safety net was federalized and bureaucratized in the 20th century with the establishment of Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid – programs that had been in financial straits for decades by the time the Obama administration and Democrat-controlled Congress exacerbated the problem by passing Obamacare in 2010.

CHALLENGES

Unless changes are made, “entitlement” spending will eat up every dollar of the federal budget by 2040.

Social Security – the one you pay into your whole working life and therefore have an unquestioned right to receive back – is already bankrupt, thanks to Congress “appropriating” your retirement savings for ongoing federal operations.

There used to be 16 workers for every Social Security recipient; now there are only three – even as benefits grow for each generation.

OPPORTUNITIES

First things first: We must demand that Congress stop raiding our Social Security retirement savings. If a business owner were diverting an employees' pension fund to operate the business, he or she would be in prison.

Payroll taxes should be reduced to allow individuals to save more on their own for retirement and disability.

Public policy groups recommend increasing retirement ages to account for longer life and work expectancies while transitioning to a means-tested benefit system.

Where practical, allowing for privatization of at least a portion of young workers' Social Security savings ought to be explored.

TAXATION

Little is 'fair' in current income tax code

By Damon Cline

Income taxes are one aspect of federal law every American has dealt with personally.

The topic was no doubt on the minds of voters in November as they chose the candidate who pledged to overhaul the U.S. tax code – which many rightly criticize as being needlessly complex, difficult to administer and unjust in how it rewards and punishes economic behaviors.

“Our No. 1 priority is tax reform,” Treasury secretary nominee Steven Mnuchin told CNBC. “This will be the largest tax change since Reagan.”

President Trump says he wants rate cuts for all taxpayers. Under his plan, the top individual rate would fall from 39.6 percent (technically 43.4 percent with the 3.8 percent Obamacare surtax) to 25 percent, with lower rates graduated down to 10 percent. Corporate taxes would be slashed from 35 percent to 15 percent, and the small business rate would be set at 15 percent.

The cuts would reduce federal revenue, but would pay for themselves over time through economic growth. The exact price tag is open for debate: The Tax Policy Center estimates Trump’s plan would cost \$9.5 trillion over a decade; the Tax Foundation says it’s more like \$2.6 trillion to \$5.9 trillion.

Regardless, analysts expect the political debate and media coverage to focus on the “fairness” of tax cuts for wealthy individuals and big businesses.

“Most Americans are OK with the amount of tax they

pay,” notes Pew Research Center senior writer Drew DeSilver. “It’s what other people pay, or don’t pay, that bothers them.”

If a debate is to be had, policymakers and the public should be armed with the facts about who pays taxes and who doesn’t.

The share of Americans who pay no tax at all is rising, from 21 percent in 1990 to 45 percent in 2015. Of those who do pay, the rich pay the most: The much-maligned top 1 percent of wage earners, in fact, pay more than the bottom 90 percent combined.

For example, well-off households making more than \$1 million a year account for 13.7 percent of all U.S. income but 21.6 percent of all taxes, according to an analysis by the nonpartisan Tax Foundation.

Middle-class households earning less than \$100,000, on the other hand, account for 38.8 percent of American income but only 23.3 percent of the tax burden.

Low-income households have even lower burdens, and may actually have “negative tax rates” – meaning they get more money back from the government than they pay, thanks to refundable credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit. Factor in federal benefits, such as food stamps and Medicaid, and some receive as much as \$8 in federal benefits for every \$1 paid in taxes, the Tax Foundation says.

Cato Institute economist and senior fellow Daniel J. Mitchell argues the century-old income tax has evolved from a means

of funding essential government operations to a primary tool for wealth redistribution.

“The worst thing is that the income tax enabled the modern welfare state,” he wrote in a 2013 commentary. “Before the income tax, politicians had no way to finance big government. Their only significant pre-1913 sources of revenue were tariffs and excise taxes.”

As for businesses, America’s corporate tax rate already is the highest in the industrialized world, which policy analysts say discourages foreign investment in the U.S., incentivizes American companies to keep foreign profits overseas and encourages business owners to file as individuals.

Corporate income taxes made up 35.8 percent of federal revenue in 1945 but only 10.8 percent today.

The greatest irony of the previous administration was its belief that tax incentives work selectively, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Chief Economist J.D. Foster wrote for The Heritage Foundation in a 2012 commentary. That’s how it could support hiking cigarette taxes to discourage smoking but reject the notion income tax cuts would spur new spending, investment and job creation.

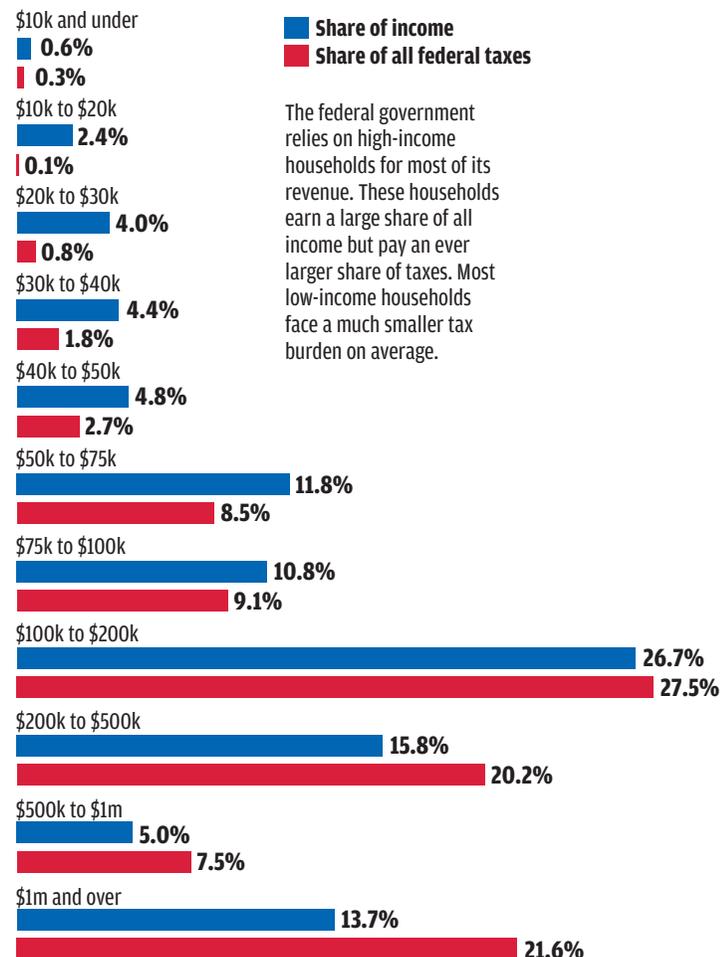
“When it comes to the behaviors that are truly relevant for a strong economy,” he wrote. “President Obama and friends turn a blind eye to incentives.”

The new administration shouldn’t make the same mistake.

Damon Cline is the business editor of ‘The Augusta Chronicle’ in Georgia.

Almost half of federal revenues come from households making over \$200,000

Total income and of all federal taxes by income group (2015, projected)



Note: Figures are projected. Income groups are not adjusted for household size. Percents may not add to 100 because of rounding. Source: Staff of the Joint Committee on Taxation (2015)

LOOKING BACK



The current tax code started at 400 pages in 1913; today it is over 74,000 pages.

CHALLENGES

The U.S. tax code is so complex, the Cato Institute noted in 2003, that “there are up to 1.2 million paid tax preparers in the country – six times more than the number of troops in Iraq.”

The tax code picks winners and losers – and nothing breeds special-interest lobbyists more quickly.

“The income tax distorts financial planning and business investment,” says Cato, “and it encourages tax avoidance and evasion. Because the income tax is built on an unworkable base of ‘income,’ the law is continually changing.”

OPPORTUNITIES

Tax reform and simplification is one of the most important things this Congress and president can do.

Alternatives to the income tax, including the Fair Tax, deserve a look. “The United States hobbles itself in today’s international economy by continuing to rely so heavily on income taxation,” writes Michael J. Graetz, professor of Law at Columbia University Law School.

Graetz suggests a Fair Tax-style “broad-based tax on sales of goods and services now used by more than 150 countries worldwide.”

ECONOMY/JOB

Washington: Don't tread on economy

By Damon Cline

If the past eight years taught America anything about Washington's ability to cook up economic growth, it's that the best recipe is no recipe at all.

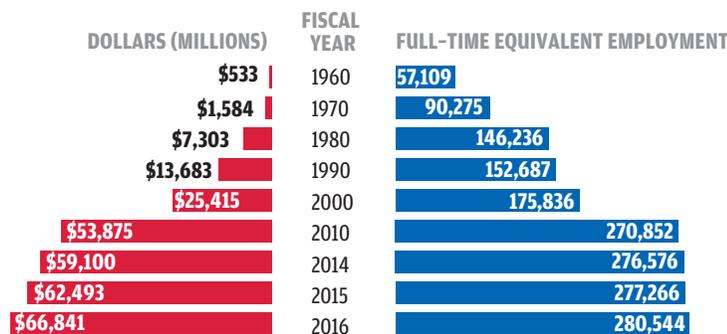
More jobs and wealth could have been created after the Great Recession had Washington done nothing. Instead, misguided intervention helped make the recession recovery the longest since the 1960s.

Attempts to spur consumer spending and job creation through gimmicks ("cash for clunkers"), large loan guarantees to dubious enterprises (solar energy firm Solyndra) and massive boondoggles (the American Recovery Act) were absolute failures with little to show for the nearly \$1 trillion they cost U.S. taxpayers.

"Economic growth is not the consequence of some master economic plan managed by the government," writes Discovery Institute Senior Fellow Jay Wesley Richards. "It results from millions of people individually seeking what is in their own interests by providing what is in the interests of others. ... This isn't rocket science. It's common sense, and it's been true for thousands of years."

Free-market advocates, economists and business leaders say government's heavy

Increased federal regulatory activity: spending and staffing



*Note: Figures are by fiscal year; figures for 2015 and 2016 are estimated
Sources: Heritage.org; George Washington University; Washington University (St. Louis)

hand needs to be smacked away before further damaging America's free enterprise system, the greatest source of wealth creation in human history.

"Our government's decades-long, top-down approach to job creation has failed," Charles Koch, chairman and CEO of Koch Industries wrote in a 'USA Today' op-ed in 2014. "Its policies have made our problems worse, leaving tens of millions chronically un- or underemployed, millions of whom have given up ever finding meaningful work."

Some economic policy groups say the best thing the Trump administration and new

Congress can do is to undo the economy-strangling federal bureaucracy.

The Heritage Foundation, in its Blueprint for Reform 2017 policy agenda, notes the past decade's false narrative: that unbridled capitalism caused the recession and that the "heroic application" of the Obama administration's bailouts, stimulus schemes and new regulations "saved America from an even darker economic fate."

The reality is that government meddling helped produce the 2008 crash in the first place, with policies that extended home loans to millions who could not afford them.

And since then, Washing-

ton's "help" has only accelerated joblessness through mushrooming welfare programs, and discouraged employers from expanding and creating new jobs because of a misguided obsession with minimum-wage hikes and costly employer mandates.

Consider the burdensome Affordable Care Act and Dodd-Frank legislation, both passed in 2010. During the four years before their passage, average American wages increased 3.4 percent. Four years after, wage averages had fallen 1.1 percent.

The Competitive Enterprise Institute calculated that federal regulation compliance costs American companies nearly \$2 trillion a year. Every dollar a company spends on regulation is one less dollar it has for employee pay, benefits, research and development, and more.

No wonder companies are trying to get by with as few full-time workers as possible: In December 2006, the number of American part-time workers seeking full-time employment was 4.18 million. By December 2016, the number was 33 percent higher, at 5.58 million.

Some employment regulations, such as workplace safety rules, are necessary and justified. But an equal number are not, such as the Great Depression-era Davis-Bacon Act, a law requiring that federal construc-

tion contractors pay "prevailing" (i.e., union scale) wages.

It was passed expressly to protect Northern whites from competing with black workers from the South. Yet it remains on the books, despite inflating federal project costs 10 percent, because "labor unions still find it useful to limit competition from non-union workers," the Heritage Foundation writes.

Americans don't need more reasons not to work. Too many already have opted out of the workforce based on the latest labor participation rate, a measure of work-eligible people who are employed or are actively seeking employment. The rate fell to 62.7 percent in December – the lowest rate since the Carter administration. That means nearly four in 10 Americans don't work and have no plans to.

Aristotle spoke 2,500 years ago on the concept of rewarding what you want to encourage and punishing what you seek to diminish. Based on how the federal government treats the private economy, what would the Greek philosopher and scientist say if he were alive today?

Would he see government as an economic investigator? Or an impedier?

Damon Cline is the business editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Georgia.

LOOKING BACK

America has created more wealth and lifted more people out of poverty than any other nation in history because, for most of its 241-year history, it let free markets operate freely. Just as the Founding Fathers intended.

Thomas Jefferson, in his first inaugural address, said a "wise and frugal government" shall leave citizens free "to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of labor the bread it has earned. This is the sum of good government."

CHALLENGES

During the past eight years, more than 20,000 new regulations costing more than \$108 billion have been put in place, almost 20 percent of which exceed the 1995 Unfunded Mandates Reform Act threshold of \$100 million.

America's highest-in-the-industrialized-world corporate tax rate impedes investment, innovation and hiring, while Obamacare mandates discourage hiring more than 50 employees, and the hiring of full-time workers.

"Last year alone," the National Federation of Independent Business wrote last fall, "43 new major rules sucked more than \$22 billion out of the economy."

62.7%

NUMBER OF AMERICANS WORKING OR ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR WORK

OPPORTUNITIES

Taxes must be reduced, as well as government regulations.

Repealing Obamacare will free up employers from its mandates, and repealing Dodd-Frank's strangling restrictions on businesses and investments will help as well. Dodd-Frank has been a small-bank and small-business killer, and has choked lenders with outlandish "compliance" costs.

Every major federal agency regulation should be required to have congressional approval before taking effect.

Balance the federal budget. It will free up money for investment and growth in the private sector.

HEALTH CARE

Obamacare will not cure nation's ills

By Mike Clark

Americans live in an era of technological wonders that couldn't even be imagined generations ago.

The increasing power of computers puts all of the world's information in the palm of a hand.

Nowhere are the changes more dramatic than in the medical field.

Heart operations are commonplace.

Hip and knee replacements are routine.

Americans generally are living longer with a better quality of life.

But few of these innovations have touched the delivery of health care. It's still conducted on a 20th century model that costs too much for no better quality than other developed nations.

So when President Barack Obama rammed through his Affordable Care Act without a single Republican vote in Congress, it was doomed from the start.

Even the supporters of Obamacare admit that it did too little to control costs. While access was increased for about 20 million additional Americans, the bill eventually would be too great.

Of course, this is a complicated issue. Health now accounts for one-sixth of the economy. There is no single health care system in America, but four of them. T.R. Reid described them in his book, 'The Healing of America.'

- The employer model: Most



Michael Holahan/The Augusta Chronicle

Technological innovations have made health care better so people are living longer, but paying for it is still stuck in the 20th century.

working Americans get their health insurance through their employer, a model that originated in World War II when wage and price controls prevented employers from giving wage increases. Most Americans are satisfied with this model and few have left their employers for Obamacare.

- The military model: This affects active-duty military through TriCare and veterans through the VA. It's entirely government run. American Indians also receive health care through the government. The bureaucratic flaws, however, have been seen in the VA.

- The Medicare model: This affects those 65 and older as well as those on Social Security disability. Americans are generally satisfied with this model.

- The cash model: For working people without health insurance, this is where the

crisis exists. Until Obamacare, they paid high retail prices for health care and were in danger of going into bankruptcy.

Obamacare changed everything. First, the pluses that even Republicans support:

- Allowing young people to remain on their parents' policies until age 26. Since the young generally aren't sick, this isn't expensive.

- No more prohibitions on pre-existing conditions. This can get expensive for insurers unless there are enough healthy people to counter the expenses or revenue elsewhere.

- Insurers may no longer put caps on their yearly or lifetime coverage expenses for your essential health benefits. People shouldn't go bankrupt over health care.

Nevertheless, Obamacare is failing as insurance.

Expenses are too high. Not

Health care costs per capita (in U.S. dollars)

United States per capita health care spending is more than twice the average of other developing countries.

Italy

\$3,207

U.K.

\$3,971

Japan

\$4,152

Australia

\$4,177

France

\$4,367

Canada

\$4,506

Sweden

\$5,003

Germany

\$5,119

Switzerland

\$6,787

United States

\$9,024

OECD average

\$3,620

Note: Data for 2014 or latest available.

Source: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD Health Statistics 2016, June 2016

enough young and healthy are joining. There aren't enough choices for people. Major insurers are pulling out or pulling back.

In order to cut costs, insurers are limiting choices of

physicians and plans, just like Medicaid or just like that hated three-letter abbreviation, HMO (Health Maintenance Organization).

Meanwhile, the choices that American consumers have elsewhere in their lives are not available in health care. It's often too complicated.

And there often aren't enough primary care doctors to help patients navigate the health care system.

There are a variety of good Republican plans in the mix such as the Better Way plan from Rep. Paul Ryan or the recently released plan from the Republican Study Group.

Here is what Americans can expect from the Republican president and Congress:

- More choices.
- Less government control.
- Access favored over guarantees.
- More individual responsibility.
- More simplicity, less complexity.

In the final analysis, as a former Mayo Clinic CEO in Jacksonville said, with health care, you can't have it all.

You can have two of the following three:

- Lower cost
- High quality
- Universal access

Of these three, cost must come first, otherwise health care costs will squeeze the entire economy.

Until costs are addressed, the crisis will persist.

Mike Clark is the editorial page editor of 'The Florida Times-Union' in Jacksonville.

CHALLENGES

The Department of Health and Human Services announced last October that insurance plans offered under Obamacare would see premium increases of 25 percent on average - though the increases were much higher in some places, including Arizona where the increase was a whopping 116 percent.

News reports last year said a third of the country might be left with just one health insurer in their Obamacare exchange, as insurance companies bailed on the federal program.

\$6,400

THE AVERAGE DEDUCTIBLE FOR A FAMILY ON THE SILVER PLAN WITH OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS

Source: New York Post

OPPORTUNITIES

With a Republican Congress and White House, alternatives to Obamacare now have an opportunity to pass.

While preserving popular facets of the law, such as coverage for pre-existing conditions, more market-based and patient-centered approaches are bubbling up in Congress.

Republicans, who initially missed the health-care train leaving the station, now have an opportunity to put forth something that not only expands access and controls costs but also works.

GOVERNMENT DEPENDENCE

War on Poverty's collateral damage

By Damon Cline

Are we winning the war yet? Is victory even possible?

Those are questions about the ongoing “War on Poverty” Americans should ask before allowing Washington to continue dumping money into welfare programs that simply do not work.

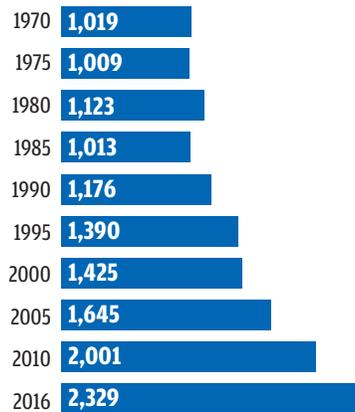
Aside from reducing poverty among the elderly, nothing about America's poor has significantly changed in the 50 years that federal bureaucrats have burned through an unconscionable \$20 trillion in the name of compassion.

Many would argue there is nothing compassionate about confiscating from the public an amount equivalent to the national debt with nothing to show for it.

“We may have made the lives of the poor less uncomfortable, but we have failed to truly lift people out of poverty,” writes Michael Tanner and Charles Hughes with Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank. “...Self-sufficiency has hardly budged since the 1960s. That's because most welfare programs are designed simply to provide material goods rather than to empower individuals.”

More than 100 anti-poverty programs provide everything from food and housing to child care and utility payments to those deemed to qualify. Yet very few of the bureaucrat-run initiatives require recipients to work – something policy ana-

Number of federal subsidy programs



Source: Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

lysts say would reduce poverty, encourage self-sufficiency and preserve the nation's precious safety net for those who truly need it.

In the global context, America's poor are extraordinarily well-off: roughly half of poor households own a computer, 98 percent have a TV and two-thirds have cars. And despite all the talk of “food insecurity,” America's low-income population has disproportionate rates of adult and child obesity.

Wellesley College Professor Robert L. Paarlberg notes that less than 1 percent of American households face “very low food security” on a typical day, yet 18 percent currently receive food stamps, a benefit of the welfare program known officially as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance program,

or SNAP.

Washington-based conservative group The Heritage Foundation notes that the most rapid growth in SNAP recipients has been what the government terms “ABAWDs,” or able-bodied adults without dependents. An estimated 5 million work-capable adults are on the dole.

The Obama administration's removal of work requirements enacted in the 1990s has caused total SNAP enrollment to skyrocket from 17.2 million in 2000 to 45.8 million in 2015, with costs swelling during the same period from \$20.7 billion to \$83.1 billion.

The nation's \$1 trillion-a-year welfare machine not only incentivizes people against work, but encourages out-of-wedlock births, a scenario that disproportionately sets children up for a life of poverty and non-productivity. In 1965, roughly 8 percent of children were born to unmarried mothers. Today, that number exceeds 40 percent.

Runaway welfare sends mixed messages in other ways. The federal Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, for example, gives away massive quantities of “free” baby formula at the same time the government advocates mothers rely on breast milk.

Despite their lack of success, Matt Grossman, a political scientist at Michigan State University, writes in “The Washington Post” that welfare

policies always “center on what additional actions government should take” rather than whether the programs should end.

Even the left-leaning Brookings Institution says the best anti-poverty program is a job. The Washington-based group says Americans have a 98 percent chance of avoiding poverty by simply doing three commonsense things:

- 1) Graduate from high school
- 2) Get a full time job – any job
- 3) Wait until marriage to have children

Overgenerous unemployment benefits in recent years have helped make joblessness a viable lifestyle option. A group of academic researchers and the Institute for International Economic Studies has concluded the Obama administration's expansion of jobless benefits to as much as 73 weeks in some states made the Great Recession worse than if the unemployment benefits had been left at the historic 26-week period.

Milton Friedman said that “one of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results.”

But it doesn't take a Nobel Prize-winning economist to understand that when it comes to social welfare policy, America has been making a great mistake for a very long time.

Damon Cline is the business editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Georgia.

CORPORATE WELFARE

Individuals aren't the only ones addicted to government handouts.

Washington this year is set to waste more than \$100 billion on “corporate welfare” in the form of subsidies and regulatory protections for certain businesses and industries, according to Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at Cato Institute, a conservative public policy research organization.

The number of federal subsidy programs is mind-boggling: The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance lists more than 2,300 federal assistance programs spread across five cabinet departments.

Many federal programs – such as the Export-Import Bank – and massive appropriations legislation – such as the federal “Farm Bill” – are sustained by lawmakers influenced by corporations, lobbyists and special-interest groups seeking benefits at taxpayers' expense.

The Ex-Im Bank, for example, puts the public on the hook for more than \$140 billion worth of foreign loan guarantees for Boeing, General Electric and other giant multinational corporations that should be able to finance deals on their own.

CHALLENGES

The welfare state, which has its roots in President Wilson's progressivism, exploded with FDR's “New Deal” and Lyndon Johnson's “Great Society.” Now they and other “mandated” social spending take up two-thirds of the federal budget and are growing.

Welfare programs with no limits turn safety nets into hammocks, and make it difficult to inspire self-reliance.

After adding work requirements for able-bodied recipients in 1996, “Welfare rolls dropped by half, and the poverty rate for black children reached its lowest level in history in the years following,” writes one of welfare reform's authors, Robert Rector. But in 2012, the Obama administration waived work requirements, and welfare rolls and costs have skyrocketed since.

OPPORTUNITIES

Reinstituting work requirements for welfare could reduce welfare rolls and boost employment: Maine Gov. Paul LePage, for example, reduced the number of able-bodied people without dependents getting food stamps by 80 percent just three months after instituting work requirements in 2014.

President Trump has much fat to cut from bureaucracies that administer the failing programs: In 2012 they spent the equivalent of \$20.610 for every poor person in America. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance lists more than 2,300 federal assistance programs spread across five cabinet departments. Over a three-year period, “USA Today” reported in 2013, “the Government Accountability Office found 162 areas where agencies are duplicating efforts.”

There's plenty of corporate welfare to be cut as well. Washington this year is set to waste more than \$100 billion on subsidies and regulatory protections for certain businesses and industries, according to Chris Edwards, director of tax policy studies at the Cato Institute.

LAW AND ORDER

At the intersection of Black and Blue Lives

By Michael Ryan

Law and order is among the most popular genres on television.

In real life, it's not so popular these days.

There was arguably a war on law enforcement the past year, fueled by a particular handful of killings of black men by police in the past three years.

Several of the killings were clear outrages – including the one of a fleeing pedestrian shot in the back by an officer in North Charleston, S.C., in 2015 and the 16-bullet gunning down of an admittedly bizarre-acting, but not imminently threatening, man in Chicago in 2014.

The flashpoints, which trace back to 2014's shooting in Ferguson, Mo., and the reaction to them – in some cases the over-reaction to them – caused 2016 to be the worst year for race relations since the 1960s.

And it was the worst year-plus for law enforcement in memory. Officers have been targeted for several years for abuse and violence: In 2015, Black Lives Matter protesters chanted “Pigs in a blanket, fry 'em like bacon.” And in 2016, some 64 officers were gunned down.

The violence against police was never worse than on July 7, 2016, in Dallas, where Micah Xavier Johnson shot down five police officers in cold blood and wounded another nine, as well as two civilians.

The sinister sniper attack took place, ironically enough, while police were protecting



Associated Press

Members of an honor guard carry the flag-draped casket holding slain Dallas Police officer Michael Krol, one of five police officers killed by a lone gunman during a protest in Dallas last summer.

anti-police protesters.

Critics faulted the Obama administration for failing to quell the racial unrest or adequately supporting law enforcement.

“It’s a war on cops,” the executive director of the National Association of Police Organizations said after the Dallas massacre. “And the Obama administration is the Neville Chamberlain of this war.”

The increased danger and decrease in moral support appeared to lead to less assertive policing in various big cities. One report on the first half of 2016 indicated, according to Fox News, that “proactive stops in Chicago were down 80 percent from the year before and that the Second City saw

a decline in gun arrests and gun confiscations of 37 and 35 percent, respectively.”

Similar concerns about police pullbacks arose in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray in a police van. Public officials there fanned the anti-police flames – though ultimately, none of the six officers charged was convicted for a single crime.

Heather MacDonald of the Manhattan Institute noted that Los Angeles officers “are advising one another that it’s crazy to get out of their cars, unless it’s a 911 call.”

Not surprisingly, many believe civilian-on-civilian shootings have increased as a result of the anti-police climate.

This can’t go on. It must stop here and now.

A competing “Blue Lives Matter” movement has sprung up to support police and promote better law enforcement PR. The website bluelivesmatter.blue – “founded and run entirely by active and retired law enforcement officers” – argues that “political leadership and mass media are failing to stand for truth.”

It also says, “In today’s evolving society, an increasing number of citizens fail to accept responsibility for their actions and attempt to escape the consequences through outward blame.”

We couldn’t agree more. Individual responsibility would

prevent the vast majority of these conflagrations. Don’t break the law. Don’t flee from police. Obey lawful police orders.

Body cameras, which growing numbers of police agencies are adding, also encourage officers to be responsible.

Media outlets also could help, by resisting the temptations to sensationalize confrontations between blacks and “blues,” especially before all the pertinent facts are in.

The Ferguson case is Exhibit A: The media portrayed Michael Brown as an innocent victim with a “Hands up, don’t shoot” approach. Instead, as even the Obama Department of Justice found, Brown was the aggressor.

Law enforcement officers and their supporters are also looking to President Trump for help. He received endorsements from such groups before the election, and one pre-election survey found 84 percent of working officers planned to vote for him.

Mr. Trump and his Department of Justice can, and should, set a much more pro-law enforcement tone.

It’s ultimately up to all of us to cool the temperatures of the last few years, though. With the immediacy of the Internet, it’s easy to overreact to cases we know little about.

As all those law-and-order TV shows illustrate, there are always unexpected plot twists.

Michael Ryan is editorial page editor of ‘The Augusta Chronicle’ in Georgia.

CHALLENGES

A series of shootings of black men by police over several years led to an anti-law-enforcement movement and climate in 2016.

Law enforcement officers have felt under siege – and, in fact, have been ambushed and killed in frightening numbers – perhaps causing them to police less aggressively and giving criminals more leeway.

A few of the shootings in question appear unjustified, but others were justified. Nonetheless, the reaction to them – in many cases overreaction – has led to a sharp deterioration in race relations.

OPPORTUNITIES

With a new year and new presidential administration, support for law enforcement should surge in 2017. Across the country, although police have been unfairly maligned, agencies are looking at what they can do to improve community relations – including outreach to youths, community education programs and increased training. As reported by ‘USA Today’:

- Law enforcement departments such as in Phoenix are doubling minority recruiting.
- “Atlanta’s Police Foundation raises money to give officers an incentive to live in refurbished homes in Atlanta at no cost for two years.”
- Started by a former Cleveland Browns football player, a community outreach group there “is dispatched to provide crisis prevention to calm things down.”

SEPARATION OF POWERS

Checks and balances is law of land

By Michael Ryan

Have you ever thought about how absolutely crucial certain constitutional provisions are to your own life?

We often take freedom of speech and religion for granted, though they are always under assault. And everyone knows, by now, our constitutional protections against unreasonable search and seizure, self-incrimination and more.

What would you say if we told you that the Separation of Powers is right up there with our most important constitutional principles?

“When James Madison shaped a new constitutional system for the United States,” argues George Washington University Law School professor Jonathan Turley, “he and his fellow framers had one overriding fear: tyranny.

“They wanted to divide power between three branches and create lines of separation that prevented the concentration of power in any single branch. The framers based their ideas on an understanding of human nature – and human weakness. They tried to create a system in which ambition would check ambition.

“To this day, many Americans misunderstand the separation of powers as simply a division of authority between three branches of government. In fact, it was intended as a protection not of institutional but of individual rights, by preventing any branch from assuming enough power to become tyrannical.

“No branch is supposed to have enough power to govern alone.”

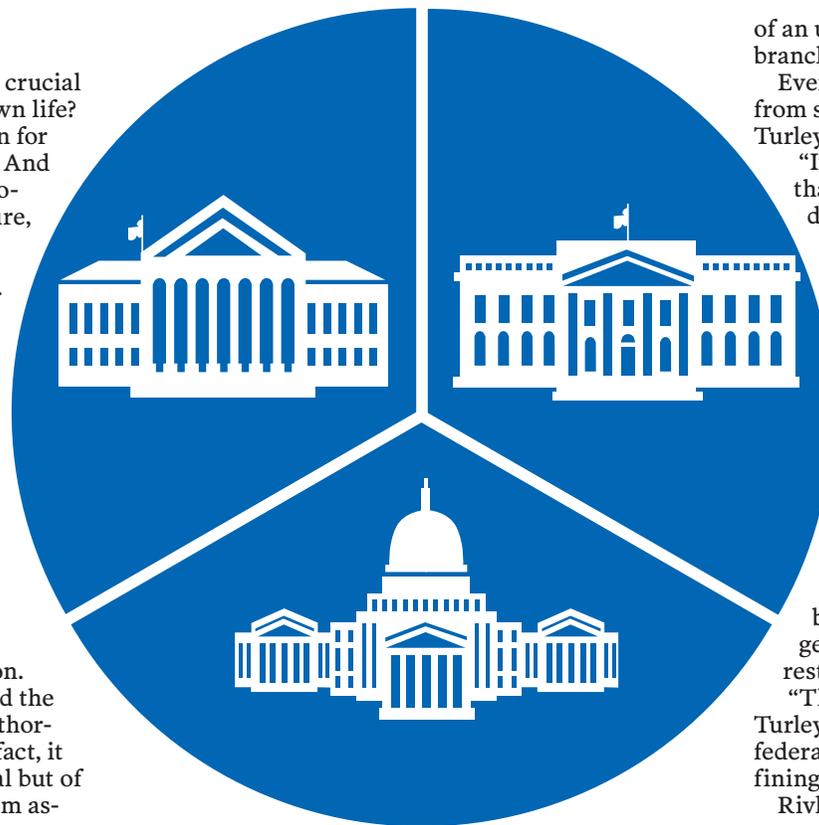
Yet, that’s precisely where we’ve been headed in recent years – with innumerable executive orders that circumvent the deliberations of our elected members of Congress and take a torch to the Separation of Powers.

It’s rule by fiat – precisely what the nation’s Framers sought to avoid.

“The worst legacy of the Obama administration,” write constitutional scholars David B. Rivkin Jr. and Elizabeth Price Foley in the ‘Wall Street Journal,’ “may be disdain for the Constitution’s separation of powers.”

The Obama administration, they write, “has rewritten laws, disregarding its constitutional duty to faithfully execute them.”

“When Congress recently refused to pass the



DREAM Act to change immigration laws to protect potentially millions of deportable individuals,” Turley writes, “he simply ordered the very same measures on his own authority. The same unilateral measures were ordered in health care, drug enforcement, online gambling and other areas. ...

“Under this approach, Congress is being reduced to an almost decorative element in governance – free to approve but not to block presidential demands.”

That’s rule by fiat, by whim – the fickle, autocratic rule of man, not the rule of law this nation was founded on.

Turley, who has made it clear he voted for Obama and supports many of his policies – and who rightly notes that the alarming growth of presidential power predates Obama – nonetheless warned: “The United States is at a constitutional tipping point: The rise

of an uber presidency unchecked by the other two branches.”

Even those who support the policies should shrink from seeing a president ram them through unilaterally, Turley says.

“It is often more important how we do something than what we do. Priorities and policies (and presidents) change. What cannot change is the system upon which we all depend for our rights and representation.”

Turley adds: “There’s no question that previous presidents abused their power, but what we’re seeing with the Obama administration is really a systemic circumvention of Congress, and remarkably, he’s doing that with the applause of his own party, members of the legislative branch.”

The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled Mr. Obama violated the Separation of Powers by circumventing the Senate on appointments to the National Labor Relations Board. And the courts have occasionally put the brakes on other rogue executive actions. But in general, the courts have been loath to step in and restore the Separation of Powers.

“The danger of this concentration of authority,” Turley cautions, “is made more acute by the failure of federal courts to perform their vital function in confining the branches to their constitutional spaces.”

Rivkin and Foley suggest Congress amend the law to require congressional approval of major executive-branch regulations. They also argue Congress should make it clear that federal agencies can’t simply interpret laws however they wish. Congress, they say, should also strengthen its power to hold maverick agencies and officials in contempt.

And, in the wake of the Obama administration’s unilateral and highly dangerous Iran nuclear agreement, Congress should require such international treaties be treated as treaties – which, under the Constitution, must be approved by the Senate.

Moreover, the next president should be duly respectful of the Separation of Powers.

“It should be the highest priority of the Trump administration and Congress,” Rivkin and Foley write.

It’s utterly fundamental, and paramount, to our system of self-governance and our way of life.

Michael Ryan is editorial page editor of ‘The Augusta Chronicle’.

CHALLENGES

Presidents cannot be allowed to use executive orders to circumvent our lawmaking body, which is Congress. That is rule by fiat.

The courts have occasionally trimmed the Executive Branch’s sails, but the courts are poorly equipped to act swiftly enough to blunt the executive’s overreaches.

The Constitution depends on an Executive Branch that respects the checks and balances and responsibilities of the other two branches.

OPPORTUNITIES

The president and Congress must rededicate their respective branches to their respective roles under the Constitution. Law is written by Congress, executed by the Executive Branch and interpreted and applied to circumstances by the Judicial Branch. The appointment of Supreme Court justices who respect and enforce the Separation of Powers is paramount.

“The first step toward restoring the structural integrity of the Constitution,” writes constitutional expert Matthew Spalding, “is for Congress to reassert its legislative authority (and power of the purse) and, as much as possible, to cease delegating what amounts to the power to make laws to administrative agencies. ... Congress needs to relearn the art of lawmaking.”

OUR GOVERNMENT

 **THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION**



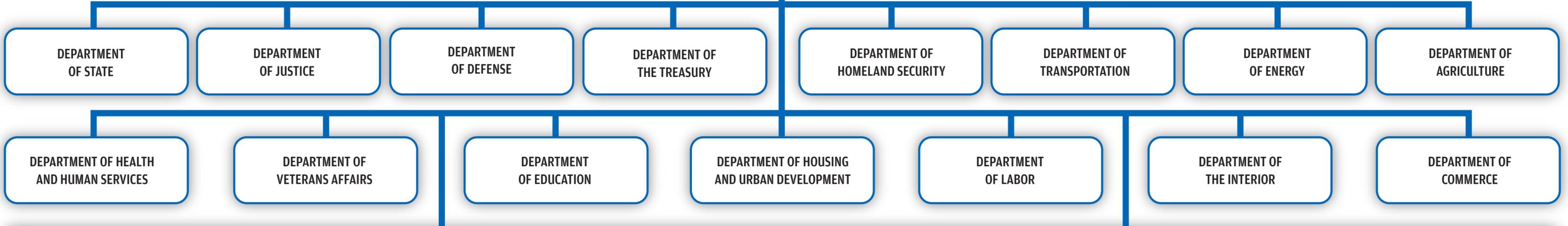
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH
 Architect of the Capitol
 Congressional Budget Office
 Government Accountability Office
 Government Printing Office
 Library of Congress
 United States Botanical Garden
 The Congress
 Senate House



EXECUTIVE BRANCH
 The President
 The Vice President
 Executive Office of the President
 Council of Economic Advisers
 Council of Environmental Quality
 National Security Council
 Office of Administration
 Office of Management and Budget
 Office of National Drug Control
 Council of Science and Technology Policy
 Office of The United States Trade Representative
 Office of The Vice President
 White House Office



JUDICIAL BRANCH
 The Supreme Court of the United States
 Administrative Office of the United States Courts
 Federal Judicial Center
 Territorial Courts
 United States Courts of Appeals
 United States Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces
 United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims
 United States District Courts
 United States Court of Federal Claims
 United States Court of International Trade
 United States Sentencing Commission
 United States Tax Court



A SAMPLING OF MAJOR INDEPENDENT AGENCIES, ENTITIES AND GOVERNMENT CORPORATIONS

- | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Administrative Conference of the United States | Farm Credit Administration | General Services Administration | National Transportation Safety Board | Railroad Retirement Board |
| African Development Foundation | Federal Communications Commission | Inter-American Foundation | Nuclear Regulatory Commission | Securities and Exchange Commission |
| Broadcasting Board of Governors | Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation | Merit Systems Protection Board | Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission | Selective Service System |
| Central Intelligence Agency | Federal Election Commission | National Aeronautics and Space Administration | Office of the Director of National Intelligence | Small Business Administration |
| Commodity Futures Trading Commission | Federal Housing Finance Agency | National Archives and Records Administration | Office of Government Ethics | Social Security Administration |
| Consumer Financial Protection Board | Federal Labor Relations Authority | National Capital Planning Commission | Office of Personal Management | Tennessee Valley Authority |
| Consumer Product Safety Commission | Federal Maritime Commission | National Credit Union Administration | Office of Special Counsel | Trade and Development Agency |
| Corporation for National and Community Service | Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service | National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities | Overseas Private Investment Corporation | United States Agency for International Development |
| Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board | Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission | National Labor Relations Board | Peace Corps | United States Commission on Civil Rights |
| Environmental Protection Agency | Federal Reserve System | National Mediation Board | Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation | United States International Trade Commission |
| Equal Employment Opportunity Commission | Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board | National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) | Postal Regulatory Commission | United States Postal Service |
| Export-Import Bank of the United States | Federal Trade Commission | National Science Foundation | | |

Source: presidentialtransition.sites.usa.gov

FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

Nation's ideals built upon God's laws

By Heather Martin

I hear a lot of talk about the disunity of the American people.

The election cycle we just went through, and the reaction to the outcome, just keeps sending that point home.

But we should not despair. I see signs that many Americans are returning to our foundational ideals. These powerful and liberating ideas are being revived, and they are good for individual Americans and the republic of the United States.

THE REVIVAL OF NATURAL LAW

“Natural Law” is the great gem of Western civilization, and a specific interpretation of it through the lens of Christianity is the beating heart of the republic of the United States.

Where do humanity's rights and freedoms come from, according to the Founding Fathers? It's written right in the beginning of the Declaration of Independence: “the Laws of Nature and Nature's God.”

The American revolutionaries were appealing to the Natural Law and the Law Giver. The Natural Law gives freedom, individual rights and responsibilities, and punishment for transgression of the law. Natural Law applies equally to everyone, and governments are created to protect the rights and the freedom granted by the Natural Law Giver.

When governments cease to do this, “it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.”

God grants rights, responsibilities, and freedom to individuals; people create governments to protect them. This is where we get the idea of “limited government.” We don't want the government to do things for us; we want the government to make a space for us to do things for ourselves.

Has the United States completely upheld the tenets of the Natural Law? Sadly, no. Has any civilization? Any individual? No. But it is our gold standard.

Natural Law nurtures creativity and independence. It emphasizes the incredible gift and power that individuals have over their own lives. That is why inventors and entrepreneurs flock to America. People with ideas and vision come here because people with aspirations, goals and dreams want to come

to the place where they can make them a reality.

The revival of interest in Natural Law is the freeing of the American mind, and the revival of the American spirit. Want all ships to rise with the tide? This is the way.

THE REVIVAL OF NATIONALISM

Many people think nationalism is a dangerous symptom of oncoming tyranny, but nationalism is not the seed that must blossom into war, genocide, or xenophobia. Nationalism, balanced by Natural Law, is necessary for the perpetuation of the United States of America.

In fact, nationalism is necessary to create and maintain any country. Part of Natural Law is the *Imago Dei*, which says that humans are made in the “image of God.” Our differences are part of the sacred gift of being human; however, we are not the same. We are equal in worth, but not in attributes, attitudes, thoughts and abilities.

People who share values create nations and governments to preserve them, because, as Madison wrote, “If men were angels, no government would be necessary.”

Governments will not exist for long if they do not represent the people who have given them legitimate power, unless they resort to tyranny and oppression.

A nationalist who uses Natural Law as a guide ensures the future of his country, with no need of dehumanizing those outside it. We must make choices that preserve our civilization. To ensure the perpetuation of representative government, we must breed and educate citizens who uphold our Constitution and understand the things that preserve and destroy our republic.

THE REVIVAL OF PROPERTY RIGHTS

Marxism, collectivism, wealth redistribution – whatever you want to call it, the idealized notion of state control of property has seduced even many Americans.

But when we embrace Natural Law and take advantage of the divine gift of American citizenship, private ownership sounds better and better.

John Locke, in the fifth chapter of ‘The Second Treatise On Civil Government,’ writes that God gave the Earth to mankind in common. The earth



Associated Press

produces things that sustain the life of a man, but he must remove these things from nature to use them.

The action of the man physically removing the object is “labor.” The man's labor attaches his ownership to the object.

Work literally creates private ownership. Labor creates value.

We do not live in a hunter-gatherer society, and our wealth is not measured in stored provisions, but in money. The principle still applies. What right does anyone have to separate people from their property, when the individual attached it to himself through his labor?

Increasingly, Americans are realizing they would rather be master of their property, rather than turning it over to a wasteful and capricious government only to have it apportioned out by political expedience.

We cannot be truly free if the fruits of our labor are not ours to apportion as we see fit.

These and other founding principles

CHALLENGES

Our founding principles are what bind the nation – yet, they have fallen out of fashion in many circles. Our founding documents were written centuries ago, critics say – and the Founders aren't in vogue.

OPPORTUNITIES

Our schools, elected leaders and media need to change the current fashion – by rising above political correctness and recognizing the uplifting and universal principles this nation was founded upon. They include:

- Individual Liberty
- Federalism (the delegation of limited powers to the federal government “while the states and the people retain those powers not delegated.”)
- Limited Government (“The philosophy that the national government has only those powers given to it in the Constitution.”)
- Representative Government (A republican system where the people select representatives to represent their interests as they make and carry out laws.)
- Private Property (“A system where individuals have the right to obtain and control possessions, as well as the fruits of their own labor.”)
- “All Men Are Created Equal” (“The understanding that there is no natural class of rulers among people, and that all are born with the same unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”)
- Separation of Powers/Checks and Balances (A system of distinct powers to prevent an accumulation of power in one branch, and in order to ensure each branch can stop the others from growing too powerful.)

– www.billofrightsinstitute.org

are central to our survival as a nation. And they are making a comeback – notably in much-maligned “new media”: podcasts, the internet and social media. These new-style patriots talk about freedom of speech, upholding the Second Amendment, and entrepreneurship.

The new American rebel is the same as the old: an America-loving individual who speaks up for our founding principles. It's an uphill battle, but one we must wage.

The freedom we have in America is precious. Cherish it.

Heather Martin is founder of the Federalist Club of Columbia County, Ga.

IMMIGRATION/BORDER SECURITY

Skilled workforce needs immigration reform

By Mike Clark

America is a nation of immigrants. We also are a nation of laws.

The estimated 11 million immigrants who are here outside the legal immigration system is a challenge to everything this nation stands for.

Yes, many of these immigrants do hard work that is needed by employers.

Yes, the Obama administration has deported record numbers of illegal immigrants.

Yet the fact remains, the nation must deal with this historic wave of immigration that hasn't been seen at this level since the dawn of the 20th century.

Because the situation is complex and because it affects many lives, it has been difficult to arrive at a solution.

Yet many conservatives have offered realistic plans, especially those in states with large numbers of undocumented residents.

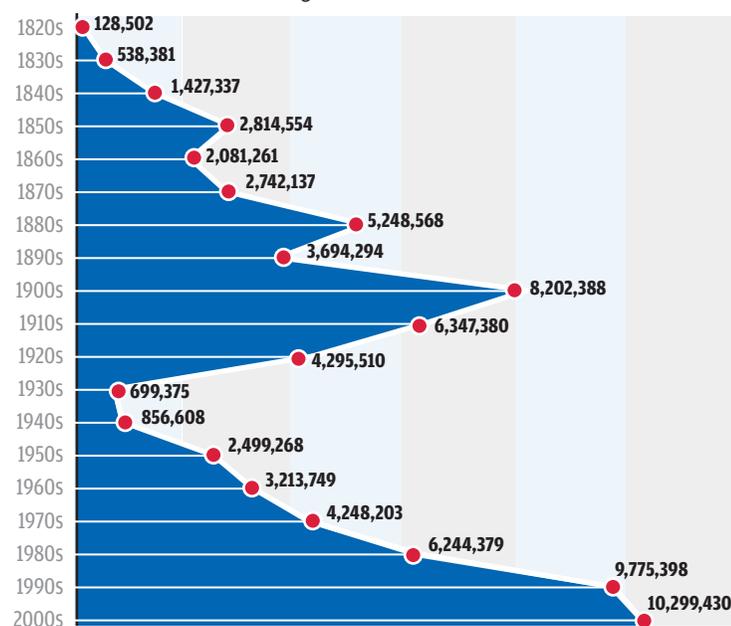
Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush wrote a book with Clint Bolick titled 'Immigration Wars: Forging an American Solution.'

"We believe that our nation's immigration policy is a disaster but one that can be successfully fixed through a combination of political leadership, bipartisan consensus and – as with most difficult issues facing our nation – recourse to basic American values," Bush wrote.

Solutions have been undermined by ideological rancor, demagoguery and political

Total immigrants by decade

This chart shows, by decade, the number of legal immigrants who came to America from 1820 through 2009.



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security

cowardice, he writes.

Bush insists that borders must be secured before any reforms are considered. Whether that includes a wall, a fence or other means depends largely on the topography.

Public opinion surveys show that about 2 in 3 Americans support a process by which immigrants can obtain lawful status so long as they speak English, pass background checks and pay restitution.

Under the Bush plan, once these requirements are completed, immigrants would have

to complete community service and then would become eligible to earn permanent legal residency, but this would not lead to citizenship

Hidden within this controversy is the fact that the current immigration system is broken with not enough attention given to skilled immigrants who offer more value and will create jobs and provide essential services.

In 1970, work-based immigration accounted for 70 percent of all newcomers to the United States. In recent years that has

flipped so that about 70 percent of immigrants are family members.

There are too few slots for immigrants with high skills, especially graduates of America's world class universities.

Mitt Romney had the right idea when he said that all immigrant college graduates in so-called STEM fields – Science, Technology, Engineering and Math – ought to have Green Cards attached to their diplomas.

Too often, these talented immigrants must leave the country. As a result, Canada is advertising for college grads in Silicon Valley and Chile has set up an enclave for talented American college graduates.

Even though Canada has 10 percent of the population of the U.S., it issues more employment-based visas than the U.S.

Foreign entrepreneurs can obtain a visa in Chile in a few weeks. As a result, 500 new companies were started there in just two years.

"Many of those who flocked to Chilean Valley, as it has been dubbed, would rather have gone to America, but couldn't face a decade of immigration humiliation," reports the 'Economist.'

What a waste of talent – all because the U.S. immigration system is broken.

Data show that for every 100 foreign-born technology and engineering workers there are 260 jobs created for native-born workers.

Also, 40 percent of Fortune

500 companies in the U.S. were started by immigrants or the children of immigrants.

The number of businesses started by native-born Americans declined between 1996 and 2011, but the business start-up rate soared by 50 percent among immigrants, Bush wrote.

"In a world where these brains have more options than ever in Asia and Europe, we drive them away at our economic peril," 'The Wall Street Journal' noted.

As Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, said in 'Time' magazine, there is a middle way between mass amnesty and mass roundups, attrition through enforcement.

"Instead of allowing the illegal population to grow every year, we start enforcing the law inside the country," he said.

A reformed immigration system would include two essential elements of efficiency: certainty and predictability, Bush writes.

Another possibility is a "touchback" system in which an illegal immigrant returns to his home country and re-enters the U.S. under supervision.

America, like most of the developed world, is aging.

Immigrants are needed in the work force but this must be done legally.

America must repair its broken immigration system.

Mike Clark is the editorial page editor of 'The Florida Times-Union' in Jacksonville.

LOOKING BACK



Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses,
yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of
your teeming shore,
Send these, the
homeless, tempest-tost
to me,
I lift my lamp beside the
golden door.

Author: Emma Lazarus

CHALLENGES

Decades of neglect of our southern border has led to millions of illegal immigrants. According to the Federation for American Immigration Reform: Illegal immigration "costs U.S. taxpayers about \$113 billion a year at the federal, state and local level. The bulk of the costs – some \$84 billion – are absorbed by state and local governments."

"Education for the children of illegal aliens constitutes the single largest cost to taxpayers, at an annual price tag of nearly \$52 billion."

"At the federal level, about one-third of outlays are matched by tax collections from illegal aliens. At the state and local level, an average of less than 5 percent of the public costs associated with illegal immigration is recouped through taxes collected from illegal aliens."

OPPORTUNITIES

Securing the border would cripple the flow of illegal immigrants and drugs flowing over the border, and would reduce the risk to immigrants who might otherwise risk their lives to come to the United States illegally.

Getting hold of our immigration system will allow the U.S. to admit only immigrants capable of prospering and assimilating.

Ending illegal immigration could help America's poor the most. Writes 'The Wall Street Journal': "Harvard immigration specialist George Borjas finds that during the 1980s and 1990s, low-skilled immigration reduced the wages of U.S. born high-school dropouts by about 10 percent."

AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE WORLD

U.S. foreign policy tied to military power

By Dr. Craig Douglas Albert

The United States is an exceptional country – imagined from philosophical republics of theoretical history.

It was designed as the exemplar republic: a shining city on the hill of hope in the midst of decaying regimes in the “graveyard of history.”

A cursory glance at its history shows a foreign policy and military prowess that allowed its ascendancy to global leadership after WWII. But it has not always been this way, and isn't now. Perhaps a President Trump will position the U.S. again at the forefront of global primacy.

America started as an isolated republic, trying to keep free of global entanglements. The Founding Fathers argued fiercely over its international posture.

George Washington wanted to steer clear of the wars of Europe – but he directed domestic actions with an aggressive policy of homeland security. Jefferson, too, was often wary of power politics, but silently ordered the incursion to Tripoli, solidifying U.S. power over the seas.

Hamilton made no bones about it: America ought to be the global military leader, though there is some debate on whether he was sincere in seeking American glory.

Regardless of early debate, the U.S. defeated fascism and communism, and is the defending champion of two World Wars.

Our country rose to unchallenged global preeminence, becoming the sole superpower



Associated Press

Three F/A-18C Hornets fly in formation over the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk during the second Gulf War.

with the fall of the Soviet Union. It went virtually unchallenged until 9/11, though even after that tragedy, no nation-state has dared to challenge us openly, and only rogue actors and terrorists, fighting unconventionally, dared to test the awakened tiger.

But even those actors suffered mightily at the hands of the American behemoth.

With the presidency of George W. Bush, the world may not have respected the U.S., but they certainly feared it. According to Machiavelli, it is better to be respected and

feared, but if one cannot be both, the latter is more prudent.

Under the Obama Doctrine, however, the world saw the collapse of American global dominance.

President Obama sought to make the U.S. more respected by remaking its image into an actor that sought global fairness and multilateralism, combined with a cosmopolitan identity. He apologized for the unilateralism and aggressive foreign policy of decades past.

This could be seen as a noble endeavor, but as Machiavelli and even Thucydides makes clear, bad actors mistake virtue for weakness. As a result, America is not respected and no longer feared.

Whereas rogue states knew what would happen to their regimes if they sought to counterbalance American power too much under the Bush presidency, these same actors have positioned themselves brilliantly in the age of American virtue.

North Korea persists; Iran is playing a meticulous game of nuclear chess; red lines were crossed without serious reprisals; and Russia – under the exceptional Machiavellian realpolitik of Vladimir Putin – is embarrassing the U.S. around the world, and expanding its regional hegemony toward Europe and the Middle East.

The world is edging ever closer to global anarchy – where, to paraphrase Hobbes, it could become a war of everyman against each. To prevent this global anarchy from re-emerging, the United States must once again assert itself as the dominant global leader.

Lines must be drawn and,

if crossed, public displays of retaliation must be severe, to paraphrase Machiavelli.

To be clear, under Trump the U.S. should not pursue war or seek to globally put boots on the ground. But it must once again seek a foreign policy that is a maintenance of American power and influence.

According to realist international theory, great powers seek naturally to balance great powers – especially the supreme powers. This will always happen. The Obama administration saw the loss of U.S. power from its foreign policy as acceptable in the name of global friendship. But it can be argued that President Obama misunderstood man's nature. He sees humanity as naturally good, where the Obama Doctrine makes sense. It has proven, however, to be otherwise.

To survive and thrive in a Hobbesian state of nature – and by all honest accounts, this is the global reality – a leviathan must rise and lead, creating hierarchy and order out of anarchy and chaos.

Under a Trump administration and well into the future, the United States, in the name of global order and American self-interest, ought to behave once again as that shining city on a hill, that no rouge actor, whether a nation-state or terrorist group, would dare to challenge.

If it cannot be respected and feared, it must at least be feared.

Craig Douglas Albert, Ph.D., is assistant professor of political science at Augusta University.

LOOKING BACK



I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic...

U.S. military enlistment oath

CHALLENGES

About half of Americans believe the country has been made weaker in the past eight years.

The Obama administration's decision to release billions to the Iranians “will only increase their funding of terrorist activities in the Middle East and beyond,” writes Richard A. Epstein at Hoover.org. “The resulting political instability will only exacerbate the human migration tragedy that is taking place today.”

America has ceded its leadership and influence to Russia's Vladimir Putin.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Increase the size of the U.S. Army to 540,000 active-duty soldiers, which the Army Chief of Staff says he needs to execute current missions.
- Rebuild the U.S. Navy toward a goal of 350 ships, as the bipartisan National Defense Panel has recommended.
- Provide the U.S. Air Force with the 1,200 fighter aircraft they need.
- Expand the U.S. Marine Corps to 36 battalions.
- Invest in a serious missile defense system to meet growing threats.

Source: www.donaldjtrump.com

FOREIGN POLICY

Time to leave 'lead from behind' in past

"I am very optimistic about Iraq. I mean, this could be one of the great achievements of this administration."

– Vice President Joe Biden, in 2010

By Michael Ryan

In Iraq and in Syria, as in Libya, where the unofficial Obama Doctrine was written – “leading from behind” – America’s foreign policy is in tatters today.

Iraq’s descent into chaos led to the rise of ISIS, an even more savage incarnation of al-Qaida, and whose real and reputed acts of terror have reached across Europe and the Atlantic.

Libya’s devolution – and the decision to leave our consulate there poorly guarded on Sept. 11, 2012 – led to the deaths of four Americans and the biggest scandal of the Obama administration.

Elsewhere, Russia has annexed Crimea and has cast a lengthening shadow across Ukraine, the Baltics and Eastern Europe.

Our “leading from behind” in Syria – and Mr. Obama’s failure to enforce his own “red line” against Syria’s use of chemical weapons against its own people – created a power vacuum in the Mideast that Vladimir Putin gladly and quickly filled. The roiling violence and anarchy there led to a Muslim migration crisis that has consumed Europe in turmoil.

Meanwhile, China has been “asserting itself in the South China Sea,” writes M.G. Oprea at TheFederalist.com, “most notably by constructing man-



Associated Press

An Iraqi flag waves on the rubble of the destroyed Mosque of The Prophet Jonah, as Mosul City is seen in the background. The revered Muslim shrine was destroyed in 2014 by Islamic State militants who overran the city and imposed their harsh interpretation of Islamic law. The mosque was built on an archaeological site dating back to 8th century BC, and is said to be the burial place of the prophet.

made islands in the disputed Scarborough Shoal. By declaring this area, which is home to important international shipping lanes, part of China’s sphere of influence, China is threatening both its neighbors and international trade.”

And while North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is viewed here as little more than a farcical irritation, the irritants in his arsenal now include nuclear weapons.

“I can’t really think of any concrete success that President Obama’s had in terms of foreign policy,” Nile Gardiner, a foreign affairs analyst at the Heritage Foundation, told *The Washington Times*. “You can

point to an overall weakening of American power on the world stage and an eroding of key alliances.”

Under “lead from behind,” America – like the character George Bailey in the movie *‘It’s a Wonderful Life’* – has been given the chance to see what the world would be like without it. And it’s not pretty.

This is no time for America to lead from behind.

America must reassert itself – not just militarily, though that must be done after the draconian downsizing of our Armed Forces, sustained in the so-called “sequestration” cuts. The world needs American values, influence and leadership.

Some of our most pressing foreign policy challenges, and what should be done:

- ISIS must be obliterated. It’s amazing that the world’s most powerful nation has been having such a hard time doing it. President Trump must rally the free world to get the job done once and for all.

- While the Obama administration entered into an unrati- fied, and dangerous, nuclear treaty with Iran – and paid the terror-supporting regime at least \$11.9 billion, and perhaps three times that – the Trump administration should tear up the deal and take steps to curb Tehran’s regional ambitions.

- After the Obama adminis-

tration shamefully abstained and let an anti-Semitic United Nations rebuke Israel for its West Bank settlements, the Trump administration should now reaffirm America’s commitment to our close ally and only democratic nation in the region.

- As a related matter, the Trump administration and Congress should consider whether to defund the United Nations unless and until it re- vokes its most recent anti-Israel resolution.

- Considering that our close allies in Britain have voted to leave the European Union and go it alone – rightly seizing back their sovereignty, their laws and their immigration future – we should make it abundantly clear that the United Kingdom has a friend and trading partner in America.

- Likewise, while insisting on full financial and manpower participation from member states, we should reaffirm our commitment to NATO – one of the most important alliances in history.

- While more carefully screening immigrants and refugees, we must also take the fight to the terrorists – and, once again, muster the courage to recognize the enemy as “Islamic radical terrorists.”

Leading from behind and carefully parsing words hasn’t gotten America anywhere – and it’s gotten much of the world in an atrocious mess.

It’s time to lead from the front.

Michael Ryan is editorial page editor of *‘The Augusta Chronicle’* in Georgia.

CHALLENGES

A misguided receding of American power and influence has left the Mideast in flames, Europe awash in migrants and Russia and China on the move.

America’s pullback from the war on terror has allowed the Islamic State far too much time and space with which to project terror in Europe and America.

With all the terror and turmoil in the world, the United Nations took time to censor Israel for building homes, of all things.

3.5%
OF AMERICA’S GROSS
DOMESTIC PRODUCT
IS SPENT ON
NATIONAL DEFENSE

OPPORTUNITIES

American power and values bring order to the world. The new administration, mindful of the need to avoid unnecessary military entanglements, must not be shy in using American power and influence in the name of order, peace and justice.

With the help of international partners and the world Islamic community, the Islamic State and all other terror networks must be destroyed.

The U.N.’s outrage against Israel should inspire Congress and the president to determine whether the world body’s questionable priorities and actions are worthy of American values and funding.

CHINA

China keeps tight grip on trade imbalance

By Damon Cline

President Donald Trump has said that China's economic treatment of America is akin to personal assault.

"We can't continue to allow China to rape our country," he told an Indiana crowd in May. "That's what they're doing. It's the greatest theft in the history of the world."

Although U.S. consumers have benefitted from an abundance of cheap Chinese-made goods, the trade relationship with the world's second-largest economy has been mostly "take" and very little "give" – as evidenced by the U.S.-China trade deficit, which hit a record \$367 billion in 2015, up from \$343 billion the previous year.

Some of the imbalance with the world's most populous nation stems from its low standard of living, in which its huge population serves as the world's low-price workshop. But the communist nation also manipulates free-market principles – up to and including the deliberate undervaluation of its own currency – to give it an unfair advantage.

Government data illustrate the situation:

• **Trade is mostly one-way:** The United States receives 18 percent of all Chinese exports, but China gets just 7 percent of American exports.

• **China has high barriers:** America is slapped with Chinese tariffs of 9.7 percent and 5 percent on agricultural and non-agricultural goods, respectively. But when Chinese goods enter the U.S., the tariffs are just 2.5 percent and 2.9



Associated Press

percent.

• **China has two sets of rules:** Chinese firms investing in the U.S. benefit from American rule of law and consistent regulation. American companies investing in China have testified they faced corruption, hostile regulation and needless bureaucratic delays.

• **China has no respect for intellectual property:** The United States Trade Representative ranks the People's Republic of China as consistently among the worst intellectual property offenders, and a 2013 bipartisan commission report estimates the nation's theft of American technology and innovation costs the U.S. economy \$300 billion a year.

"Their whole telecom industry is built on theft," notes Derek Scissors, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. "That high-speed rail industry they're bragging about? It's all based on theft."

• **China manipulates its currency:** China ensures its

exports remain cheap and America's exports remain expensive by purchasing U.S. Treasury notes to prop up the dollar when it loses value against the yuan. The constant buying has made China America's largest foreign lender for years (though it recently lost the distinction to longtime No. 2, Japan).

• **China's economic data are untrustworthy:** Statistics on unemployment, inflation and per-capita income are controlled by the Communist Party.

Chinese corporations propped up by state-owned banks are essentially "zombie companies" according to Capital Formation Counselors, Inc., a Florida-based economic consulting firm.

"(China's) prosperity may have been primarily funded by untraceable internal debt, as one financial entity funds another without a valid external audit," the firm said in a recent report. "...Many banks in China

Top foreign creditors

Japan	\$1108.6*
China, Mainland	\$1049.3
Ireland	\$275.2
Cayman Islands	\$260.6
Brazil	\$258.3
Switzerland	\$229.5
Luxembourg	\$221
United Kingdom	\$211.9
Hong Kong	\$185.5
Taiwan	\$183.1

*in billions of dollars for month ending November 2016

Source: Treasury Department

are full of loans that cannot be repaid and are being rolled over and are not written off."

All this imbalance comes with a cost: America's debt to China – \$1.115 trillion – is 29 percent of all our foreign-owned public debt. In other words, nearly one-third of America's financial obligations are to a non-ally seeking to become the world's dominant superpower.

There also is a price to be paid for getting 90 percent of our laptops, 70 percent of cell-phones and 40 percent of our apparel from China: domestic jobs. U.S. manufacturing jobs declined 34 percent between 1998 and 2010 as companies who couldn't compete either went out of business or outsourced jobs to lower-cost markets – including China.

China's unabashed mercantilism has enabled state-controlled steel and coal industries to supply half the world's consumption. Perhaps most telling is the latest Fortune Global 500

list, where China trails only the U.S. in the number of corporations.

America's trade deficits are not new – the U.S. has had one every year since 1975. But the growing imbalance with China since its entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001 poses a national security risk that must be addressed by the new administration.

Scissors, an expert on China trade relations, said intermediaries such as the World Trade Organization cannot be counted on to bring China into compliance. Bold, but strategic, policymaking by the Trump administration is the only solution.

"We're not going to get the Chinese to change by talking to them. There is 20 years of evidence that shows that does not work," he said. "They can't be talked into anything; they have to be shoved into it."

Damon Cline is business editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Georgia.

CHALLENGES

The reform-minded China that the Clinton and Bush administrations helped welcome into the World Trade Organization in 2001 is worlds apart from modern-day Beijing.

"They stopped reforming in 2002 when they changed their government," says Derek Scissors, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. "We were dealing with one group of people and we ended up with a different group of people. That turned out to be the biggest mistake of U.S. trade policy, maybe ever."

29%
OF U.S. FOREIGN-OWNED PUBLIC DEBT IS OWNED BY CHINA

OPPORTUNITIES

Derek Scissors advocates chipping away at Beijing's domestic industry subsidies and focusing on its most egregious trade violation: intellectual property theft.

Targeted measures, as opposed to blanket tariffs, would ensure that only Chinese firms that break the law are punished, he said.

Scissors said the administration should press international institutions, such as the World Bank, to adopt a two-tier system giving countries that provide transparent economic data more consideration than those that do not.

CYBERSECURITY

Computers, networks are next battlefield

By Michael Ryan

Pearl Harbor and the 9/11 attacks were actual assaults on our homeland, acts of war in which thousands of people died.

But while nothing can hold a candle to the physical devastation wrought by enemy bombs and hijacked airliners, the fact is we are under cyberattack every day in this country – in fact, by some estimates, as many as 500,000 times each day, at a potential cost of \$2 trillion by the year 2019.

Cyberattacks, as a primer by the University of Maryland University College puts it, are unwanted and unauthorized intrusions on people's and institutions' "computers, networks, programs, and data."

They could've included "appliances." Even refrigerators come with internet-capable Wi-Fi these days.

In short, our governments, our businesses and our homes and personal electronic devices are under constant attack from countries, organizations and criminals – and the United States and nearly every one of its citizens are vulnerable.

"We're dealing with a cyber-insurgency – a cyberinsurgency that began about 20 years ago through orchestrated efforts by both the Chinese and Russian governments," Strategic Cyber Ventures CEO Tom Kellermann told Fox News' Bret Baier recently. "What's changed is, now hackers from around the world are colonizing U.S. cyberspace."

The bad actors, both government and private, are basically breaking in to burglarize or stalk you, Kellermann says.

It's particularly problematic for ordinary citizens, Kellermann notes, "because most individuals do not know how to secure their homes, their devices or their corporate networks."

It's even worse for the federal government.

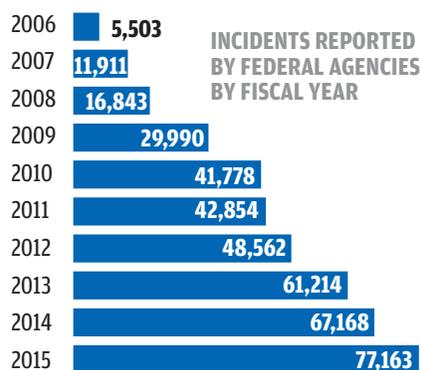
A 2014 breach of computer files at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, which was traced to the Chinese



File/Associated Press

A cybersecurity analyst protects the nation's power, water and chemical plants, electrical grid and other facilities from cyber attacks.

Cyber incidents



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team and Office of Management and Budget data by the GAO

government, exposed personnel and security clearance information on millions of federal employees and contractors, and compromised many of their families' privacy.

"Officials said the breaches rank among the most potentially damaging cyber heists in U.S. government history because of the abundant detail in the files," wrote 'The Washington Post'.

And, of course, everyone now knows

that Russia is believed to have hacked the Democratic National Committee in an alleged attempt to influence the 2016 U.S. election.

"We also see cyberthreats challenging public trust and confidence in information services and institutions," Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing recently.

Even Iran and North Korea are improving their ability to launch "disruptive or destructive" cyberattacks, Clapper said – ominously adding that "nonstate actors" such as terrorist groups are also making increasing incursions into cyberspace.

Our computers – and our phones and perhaps someday our toasters – are the new global battleground. Cyber has become a leading – if not the leading – national security threat.

"Clearly," Clapper said, "cyber will be a challenge for the U.S., the intelligence community and our national security for the foreseeable future. And we need to be prepared for that."

This country doesn't seem to have a broad strategic plan for combatting cyberattacks.

We'd better get our act together, and quickly. To wit:

1. "Insufficient attention and insufficient strategic thought has been given to cyber and cybersecurity for years," Kellermann says. "I think the time has come to recognize cybersecurity as a national- and economic-security imperative. We should recognize and appreciate that we are being colonized in cyberspace."

"It's an absolute imperative that (President Trump) take this issue more seriously and begin to invest in the cybersecurity of the United States of America."

Indeed, President Donald Trump has named former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani – who brilliantly shepherded that city through the aftermath of 9/11 – the chairman of a White House cybersecurity task force.

2. Clapper also recommends separating U.S. Cyber Command from the National Security Agency and putting two different people in charge of them.

3. Kellermann also suggests Internet-connectable device manufacturers make it a higher priority to secure their products and to teach users to do the same.

One other key to securing the nation is increased partnerships between the government and private sector computer experts. It's something the city of Augusta, Augusta University and the state of Georgia are on the forefront of, with a planned \$50 million Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center in Augusta, and with the nation's Army Cyber Command moving to nearby Fort Gordon.

"The center will be a state-owned cyber range," says Gov. Nathan Deal's office, "that brings together academia, private industry and government to establish cybersecurity standards across state and local agencies to develop and practice protocols for responding to cyber threats."

We'd better all come together. We're all under attack.

Michael Ryan is editorial page editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Georgia.

CHALLENGES

All of us with internet-connected devices – which is to say nearly all of us – are vulnerable to computer-based attacks.

America's enemies are in a constant state of cyberwarfare with us – yet we have been slow to produce a comprehensive counter-strategy.

A 2014 breach of federal government computers exposed millions of federal employees and contractors and even their families to foreign hacking and espionage.

OPPORTUNITIES

Recognition of the breadth and depth of the threat to our homes, businesses and country is the first step.

Training, training, training! Education, education, education! Our schools must react to the emergence of cyber threats the way we responded to Sputnik.

New alliances and partnerships must form. The federal government, state of Georgia and Augusta University have joined for the education and training of tomorrow's cyber warriors.

ENERGY

America ties destiny to natural resources

By Damon Cline

America's preeminence in the world is partly because of its plentiful natural resources – and its ability to use them.

But never in American history has an administration made it so onerous and politically unpopular to tap its own wealth.

Under President Obama, the federal government fenced off vast swaths of the 28 percent of America's land it owns from mining and exploration, regardless of its desolation or remoteness.

Meanwhile, his administration's unrelenting pursuit of punitive regulations, high taxes and overzealous environmentalism slowed America's ability to achieve energy self-sufficiency, forcing it to continue relying on foreign nations – including terrorist-supporting countries – for its fuel and mineral needs.

Even with America's "energy renaissance" – driven by advances in drilling and extraction – the U.S. remains a net importer of petroleum products, as it has been since 1953.

The Trump administration says it is "committed to eliminating harmful and unnecessary policies" such as the Climate Action Plan – President Obama's "global warming" treatise – and the Environmental Protection Agency's "Waters of the United States" rule, which gives the agency authority over virtually all rivers, lakes and streams.

"Sound energy policy begins with the recognition that we have vast untapped domestic



Associated Press

President Donald Trump signs an executive order in January advancing the development of the Keystone XL pipeline.

energy reserves right here in America," the White House website says.

His administration is correct in its usage of "vast." America's oil- and natural gas-rich shale deposits could contain as much as 264 billion barrels – an amount larger than Saudi Arabia, Venezuela or Russia, according to a report issued last year by an independent Norwegian consulting firm, Rystad Energy.

When the U.S. controls its energy destiny, consumers win.

The consumer price index has risen 12 percent since 2009, but gasoline and electricity are 43 percent and 31 percent lower, respectively. Instead of rationing and price spikes of the 1970s and '80s, today's consumers benefit from a rapid drop in prices that began in 2014 when U.S. production matched – and, for a few months, exceeded –

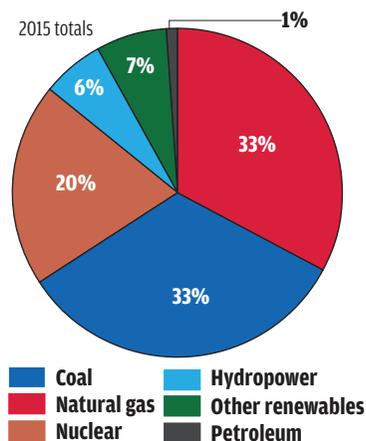
Russia's and Saudi Arabia's.

Imports today account for a quarter of U.S. petroleum, down from 60 percent in 2006. Imports could fall to zero by 2028, the U.S. Energy Information Administration says.

The U.S. already is a net exporter of natural gas. Starting with the Barnett Shale play in Texas in 1997, the industry has grown from just 1 percent of domestic production in 2000 to more than 25 percent today, notes Peter Kaznacheev, a managing partner for London-based Khaznah Strategies Ltd., in a policy analysis for Cato Institute.

A similar "shale revolution" is happening in Canada's oil sands, he said, further undermining the influence of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, the global cartel whose members include Iran, Venezuela and Libya.

Where does electricity come from in U.S.?



Source: U.S. Energy Information Association

The EIA estimates shale gas will supply nearly half of America's natural gas by 2035. Cheap natural gas and strident federal clean air regulations have caused American power producers to shift to cleaner burning natural gas, which helped U.S. carbon dioxide emissions drop to their lowest level in 20 years in 2012.

But coal, which also is used to make cement and steel, isn't going away anytime soon. Many power plants have been outfitted with expensive "scrubbers" to strip carbon from emissions, and the U.S. still has nearly one-third of the world's reserves.

Coal is declining as an electricity source, but is still used nine times more than heavily subsidized power from solar and wind plants.

Federal forecasts show an increase in renewable energy in the coming decades, but they

will remain a small component of the overall electric generation industry, which depends on traditional hydroelectric, fossil fuels and nuclear energy to meet baseload and peak demands.

Nuclear, a powerful but politically maligned source of carbon-free electricity, is in the early stages of a comeback as new reactors are under construction near Augusta, Ga., and north of Columbia, S.C. Last year, federal regulators greenlighted two more near Gaffney, S.C.

But hamstringing nuclear's expansion is Washington's failure to deliver on a permanent repository for spent fuel, which remains highly radioactive for millennia.

The Obama administration, without citing technical or safety issues, halted construction on the Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada in 2009, forcing nuclear plants to continue storing waste in deep pools and above-ground casks.

The Nuclear Energy Institute notes taxpayers have paid more than \$5 billion in damages to utility companies for Washington's failure to abide by the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, which required a repository to be open by 1998.

"Damages could reach more than \$29 billion by 2022 and up to \$500 million annually after 2022," the trade group said.

It's time for a declaration of energy independence in America. We've got the power. Now we just need the willpower.

Damon Cline is business editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Augusta, Ga.

CHALLENGES

More than half of land in the 11 resource-rich Western states is owned by the federal government, which has had a hands-off policy for mining and exploration under the Obama administration.

Concerns over carbon emissions – based primarily on long-term forecasts of models that have failed to accurately predict temperatures over the past two decades – have been more alarmist than reasonable, leading to dubious public policy, such as the obstruction of the Canada-to-U.S. Keystone XL pipeline project.

We've tried the central government approach, and it hasn't worked: Of \$10.7 billion doled out to 5,098 businesses for 31,540 renewable energy projects under the Obama administration, about 40 percent of the funding, \$4.3 billion, went to 36 wind farms – and 'The Wall Street Journal' could only confirm about 7,200 jobs created, far short of the 100,000-plus claimed.

OPPORTUNITIES

Aside from Russia – which has twice the land mass – no other country is blessed with more land wealth than the U.S.

In addition to being a top five nation for natural gas, gold and copper, America has the most timber-producing acreage and nearly a third of the world's coal. It also has major petroleum fields and sizable deposits of silver, aluminum ore, phosphates, potash, uranium and molybdenum.

Other than opening up federal lands to energy development, administrative and legislative actions should focus on repealing harmful executive orders and laws while depoliticizing federal agencies that declared bureaucratic warfare on certain industries during the previous administration.

CIVILITY

Listen my children and you shall hear

By Michael Ryan

In this very special 24-page section, which is about renewing our republic, we're exploring the biggest challenges facing America today.

But none might be bigger than civility – or the lack thereof.

If we can't treat each other with respect, dignity and civility, after all, then how are we going to even discuss all our challenges and opportunities?

Yet, increasingly, it seems we can't.

On the internet, on the streets, on the political stage, on television and even at the entertainment industry's award shows, America is simply tearing itself apart with its political and social disputes. We boycott companies and even whole states. Performers and designers blackballed the incoming first family. First daughter Ivanka Trump was verbally assaulted on an airplane. Some of us threaten to move to another country because our presidential candidate didn't win. Some stores and clerks refuse to serve those of other political persuasions. Friendships are lost over social media posts.

It's gotten way out of hand.

With mere intolerance of each other and coarse acrimony toward each other, we seem to be doing what a Civil War, two World Wars, the tumultuous 1960s' racial strife and assassinations and Vietnam protests, and even the Sept. 11 at-

tacks could not – which is to tear at the very fabric this nation is stitched with.

This is Job 1, folks. We've got to learn how to live together as Americans again.

It's not just our politics, either. Writing in the 'Harvard Business Review', professors Christine Porath and Christine Pearson note that, "Over the past 14 years we've polled thousands of workers about how they're treated on the job, and 98 percent have reported experiencing uncivil behavior."

Incivility can hurt a business's bottom line, they say, through the lower productivity of dispirited or indignant workers, turnover and damage to customer relations.

"Companies we've worked with," the two wrote, "calculate that the tab for incivility can run into the millions. Some years back Cisco put together a detailed estimate of what incivility was costing the company. ... Even in this exemplary workplace, it was estimated that incivil-

ity cost \$12 million a year."

What has caused all this? A perfect storm of circumstances.

After decades of mostly one-party rule in Washington, the two parties have traded pre-eminence in recent decades – paving the way for added friction. New ideas and ways of thinking have bubbled up through the internet and other alternative media. An unfortunate consumer ethic – that the customer is always right – has been hammered into our heads.

Moreover, with our technological ability to share every single one of our opinions with the world at any given moment, we've heated up the public debate – and in many cases we've forgotten ourselves, as the British might say: We've thrown manners out the door and convinced ourselves that, for instance, we know something about basketball that Michael Jordan does not.

Mostly, the institutions that used to instill civility – the family, the church

– have lost influence over children, while society's waves of boorishness have washed over them.

Our schools have been left to try to pick up the pieces.

What can be done? First, we must recognize the problem with incivility, and the gravity of it. It has, in effect, become a national security issue because it, more than any external force, is capable of tearing us apart as a nation.

Our political leaders should lead us in a discussion on the critical need for civility – and should lead by example as well. Viewers should turn away from programs, particularly news or political ones, that offer rank incivility. Media companies

should make civility a priority. Families, churches, businesses and schools should teach it. Cisco embarked on a "global workplace civility program," realizing it was in the company's best interest.

More important, we need to understand that it's in the nation's best interest as well.

America is not bound by ethnicity, as most every other nation on Earth is. We're tied together by our relationship to each other, by our shared ideas and ideals. That relationship, the fabric of America, is fraying.

If America dies from its own self-inflicted wounds, future generations won't be all that selective in whom they blame.

We will have all been present.

Michael Ryan is editorial page editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Georgia.

CHALLENGES

We seem to have overdone self-esteem in our children and underdone respect in many others. "Having a grown man scream into your face about not accepting expired coupons when you're at the age of 17 really makes you take stock in civilization," one citizen wrote about civility.

The fact that our two political parties are near-equal in power, and that there are so many careerists in Congress, makes for a combative national political scene.

Traditional media get ratings and make money off two people arguing with each other. Meanwhile, in social media, everyone else gets in on it.

Poor parenting – largely a result of family breakdown and the church's decreased role in civic life – also contributes to coarseness.

95%
OF ALL AMERICANS
SAY CIVILITY IS A
PROBLEM, WITH 74%
SAYING IT DECLINED
IN RECENT YEARS

2016 Civility in America Survey

OPPORTUNITIES

Civility needs to be taught in homes and schools again. Adults need to model civility for youths and children.

Programs and organizations have been created to encourage civility, including the National Institute for Civil Discourse at the University of Arizona – founded after the Tucson shooting that killed six and wounded 13, including then-Rep. Gabrielle Giffords. The NICD works toward:

- Elected officials who are capable of working to solve the big issues facing our country.
- A public that demands civil discourse as well as government that works in the best interests of the country as a whole.
- Media that inform citizens in a fair and responsible way.

MEDIA

Nation needs media to heed founders' call

"Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

– Thomas Jefferson

By Michael Ryan

Our Founders knew the critical importance of a free press to a free people. That's why, through the First Amendment, they protected the press from government intervention.

"In addition to educating and reporting, the press serves as the public's independent watchdog, charged with keeping governments, businesses and other organizations in check," Caroline Little, then the CEO and president of the Newspaper Association of America, wrote in 2013.

"Thanks to diligent reporting," she added, "citizens are empowered to take a stance on critical issues, enact change and demand the best from their leaders."

"First Amendment freedoms like speech and press are essential rights. Self-government is impossible without them," notes BillofRightsInstitute.org. "The Founders saw press freedom as a bulwark of liberty and a means of assuring justice in government."

Scottish social commentator Thomas Carlyle once wrote of the British government, "Burke said there were Three Estates in Parliament (clergy, nobility and commoners); but, in the Reporters' Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important far than they all..."

Yet, consider: The United



Associated Press

White House press secretary Sean Spicer used his first media briefing to berate the mainstream media.

States – the land of the First Amendment – last year ranked just 41st in the world in press freedom, according to an index by the international organization Reporters Without Borders.

Nor are the media regarded well today: Gallup announced last year that "Americans' trust and confidence in the mass media 'to report the news fully, accurately and fairly' has dropped to its lowest level in Gallup polling history, with 32 percent saying they have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the media."

Republicans were especially tough on the media in the Gallup poll last year, with only 14 percent saying they trust the media. With Democrats, it was 51 percent.

Why is this happening? A number of reasons.

First, there's been an explosion of media outlets, the vast

74%
OF US ADULTS THINK NEWS MEDIA TEND TO FAVOR ONE SIDE WHEN COVERING SOCIAL ISSUES

Source: Pew Research Center

majority of which don't include trained journalists – and some of which not only have an agenda but also spread false information (sometimes knowingly).

As a result, "fake-news" became a big issue toward the end of 2016 – though it must be said much of the fake news angst might have come from disappointed Hillary Clinton sup-

porters looking for a scapegoat for her loss. But Donald Trump also recently lashed out at what he called fake news.

So, while some fake news really is fake, there's another category of fake news: that which a politician or partisan simply doesn't like.

Another reason for the decline in trust of the media is bias. There's a reason Republican trust in the media plummeted last year, during the election, from 32 percent: They perceive, rightly so in many cases, that so-called mainstream media outlets are in the tank for Democrats. Even some in the mainstream media have acknowledged it at times.

With the explosion of agenda-driven and largely unaccountable media and social media outlets, it's never been more imperative for the traditional media – those well-known, time-honored brands

in print, television and radio – to get their act together. The media's credibility, and their lens through which we view the world, has a direct impact on the public's trust of society's other institutions, particularly our government.

Today's widespread lack of trust and increasing cynicism in our institutions endangers our nation's very future.

National media organizations should make it their high-priority in the coming years to restore trust in them, and in the institutions they cover – by covering them without pride or prejudice, and by focusing on the most important issues facing the nation, rather than on the shiny object or the flash-in-the-pan trivial story that constantly distracts us.

That requires having a game plan – and taking stock of what those important issues are, such as those in this section.

For example: While our mushrooming national debt has become a national security issue – thanks to our leaders' abject inability or unwillingness to balance our budget and live within our means – it was hardly mentioned in the omnipresent, multi-year presidential campaign just ended. Our leaders and prospective leaders might not have wanted to talk about it, but the press and the people should've insisted on it.

We in the traditional media must set ourselves apart from the ambient noise with quality, thoughtful and objective coverage of the challenges facing America.

Michael Ryan is editorial page editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Georgia.

LOOKING BACK



people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the

CHALLENGES

- Trust in media is at an all-time low
- An explosion in media outlets dilutes accountability
- Real and perceived bias taints traditional outlets
- There's no discernible plan for staying focused on major issues

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Increased civic and media literacy, which schools and media could teach
2. Better social media policies on news vs. fake news
3. Better fact-checking and more trustworthy fact-checkers
4. Resurgence of traditional journalistic practices
5. More government transparency

Source: "5 Steps Toward Rebuilding Trust in the Media," www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/five-steps-toward-rebuilding-trust-media/

CIVICS

Citizenship is the small cost of freedom

"Most of us don't understand the idea of self-government enough to be properly astonished by it."

— Eric Metaxas, author of *'If You Can Keep It'*

By Michael Ryan

We absolutely need to be astonished by the idea of self-government – or we might soon lose it.

Frighteningly, the evidence points to our losing it: Roughly 75 to 80 percent of high school students fail on basic tests of civics and history. Some 70 percent of adults fail, too. Many local elections have turnouts in the low teens, if not worse. And have you seen those person-on-the-street interviews where folks can't answer fundamental questions about America or its leaders?

What happens to a self-governed nation when so many of the "selves" have tuned out?

We need to always remember that we have two lives: a private one and a public one – the latter being the attention we pay to, and the amount of involvement we have in, the important events and issues in our communities, country and world.

Most of us are blessed with rich, full, even overindulged private lives. How's your public life?

And shame on anyone who tries to tell you that civics and citizenship are boring.

Indeed, in the movie 'The American President', Michael Douglas plays a president of the U.S. who is trying to get his young daughter excited about civics class. He has her read the first few phrases of the Constitution: "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union..."

"See?" Douglas' character says. "Grabs you right off the bat. It's a page-turner!"

He's absolutely right. This self-government thing is exciting stuff – espe-



cially when you consider the alternative: Well over 95 percent of everyone else who has ever lived on this planet has toiled under a king, dictator, junta or some other heavy-handed and absolute authority.

This is the first nation in history where the founding documents declare, in writing, that the individual is sovereign over his or her own life. We are the freest people in history. And we had darn well better be astonished by it if we want it to endure.

What can we do to keep the Statue of Liberty's torch lit? Plenty.

First, let's pump up our public lives. Let's dedicate ourselves to these three things:

- Character
- Brotherhood
- Citizenship

These are the three legs of the self-governance stool – the qualities and virtues that make self-governance possible to begin with.

It all begins with character.

"Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people," John Adams eloquently pointed out. "It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

In short, to work on the country, we need to work on ourselves.

Second, get involved as much as you can – in both public and private civic endeavors: local government, political campaigns, nonprofits and more. Keep up on the news.

Write your elected leaders and newspaper editors. Run for office or support the candidate of your choice. If you've never experienced an election night as a campaign supporter, you don't know what you're missing!

A self-governed nation is only as good as the quality and attentiveness of its citizens.

"That is the wonderful, spectacular genius of it all – and the terrible, sobering danger of it all, too," writes Eric

Metaxas.

There are some things we must do as a country, too, to ensure that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Civics – the inspiring, exhilarating, page-turning kind Michael Douglas was talking about – must be taught in every school.

Our young simply must be taught to appreciate our unique and blessed history – especially as it compares to the unfortunate and desperate history of the rest of the world from the very beginning.

Our public and private leaders should lead us in a national dialogue about character, brotherhood, citizenship – and the seat of the self-governance stool: responsibility.

Houses of worship have been made to believe they must be silent on matters of governance. Poppycock. The spiritual underpinning of our founding, embodied by the "Great Awakening" is undeniable and inseparable from our destiny.

Far from prohibiting churches from participating in our national dialogue, they must understand that they are essential to it.

It would help, too, if the nation's businesses promoted civics and good citizenship much as they advocate for the United Way. And would a more energized, active citizenry not benefit businesses as much as it does the nation?

Most important, get excited! Allow yourself to be astonished by this country and the unprecedented liberty we've been bequeathed.

And with a soaring sense of gratitude, but sober responsibility too, let's "mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor" to keep freedom's fire blazing.

Michael Ryan is editorial page editor of *'The Augusta Chronicle'* in Georgia.

LOOKING BACK



The National Archives and Records Administration was formed in 1934 and is charged

with preserving the nation's historical documents. America's charters of freedom are on display in its Washington headquarters.

CHALLENGES

Some 75-80 percent of American youths fail on tests of basic civics. Adults also fail at a rate of 71 percent.

A nation of free people cannot govern themselves if they've lost the blueprint for that self-governance.

We have private and public lives. We've indulged, often over-indulged, our private lives, yet have neglected our public lives – by failing to vote faithfully, stay up on the news and newsmakers and pitch in in our communities.

OPPORTUNITIES

Luckily, the opportunities for civic involvement are limitless. Join a civic club, volunteer for a political candidate, attend government meetings, write your leaders and newspaper editors and more.

We simply must do a better job of teaching the basics of American history, American government and civics in our schools. Our new presidential administration could lead a push for it, and the First Lady could even make it her cause.

There are myriad books and other sources of information on the unique nature of this republic we love. One of our favorites is the book 'If You Can Keep It', by Eric Metaxas.

AMERICA'S IDENTITY

And to the Republic, for which it stands...

By Michael Ryan

We should be amazed at the rise of Bernie Sanders.

We should also be alarmed.

A plug on Amazon.com for his book 'Our Revolution' recalls that the presidential candidate was "just an Independent senator from a small state with little name recognition. His campaign had no money, no political organization, and it was taking on the entire Democratic Party establishment."

Yet, despite all that – and despite being a self-avowed socialist – his revolution nearly took hold: He earned 43 percent of the vote in the 2016 Democratic primary.

Sanders talked openly about changing the nature and identity of the country – not even Barack Obama was so open about "fundamentally transforming" America – and nearly won a major party primary.

The bottom line is, America's identity as a republic with a limited government and hardy, self-reliant individuals free to chart their own destinies is no longer assured or even agreed-upon.

America has a full-blown identity crisis.

In a story headlined "How stable are democracies? 'Warning signs are flashing red,'" the 'New York Times' writes:

"Across numerous countries, including Australia, Britain, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States, the percentage of people who say it is 'essential' to live in a democracy has plummeted, and it is especially low among younger generations."

In fact, according to researchers Yascha Mounk and Roberto Stefan Foa, only about 30 percent of millennials say it's "essential" to live in a democracy.

In their paper last July in the 'Journal of Democracy,' Mounk and Foa write that, to older Americans, living in a



National Archives

The U.S. Constitution was signed and adopted in September 1787, setting up America's form of government as a republic limiting the power of government.

democracy is "an almost sacred value. When asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how 'essential' it is for them 'to live in a democracy,' 72 percent of those born before World War II check "10," the highest value."

In contrast, 26 percent of millennials say it's not even important to select leaders in free elections.

"What we find is deeply concerning," Mounk and Foa write. "Citizens in a number of supposedly consolidated democracies in North America and Western Europe have not only grown more critical of their political leaders. Rather, they have also become more cynical about the value of democracy as a political system, less hopeful that anything they do might influence public policy, and more willing to express support for authoritarian alternatives."

That's scary – especially the part about supporting an authoritarian regime. In particular: the number of Americans who think "army rule"

would be a good thing or a very good thing was 1 in 16 in 1995. It was up to 1 in 6 in 2014.

"While those who hold this view remain in the minority," Mounk and Foa write, "they can no longer be dismissed as a small fringe, especially since there have been similar increases in the number of those who favor a 'strong leader who doesn't have to bother with parliament and elections'..."

We clearly can't afford to be complacent about this, just hoping youths will come around.

Note Mounk and Foa:

"Three decades ago, most scholars simply assumed that the Soviet Union would remain stable. This assumption was suddenly proven false. Today, we have even greater confidence in the durability of the world's affluent, consolidated democracies. But do we have good grounds for our democratic self-confidence? ...

"Even in some of the richest and most

politically stable regions of the world, it seems as though democracy is in a state of serious disrepair."

So many people seem to believe America is just a location where we happen to have a lot of stuff and a lot of freedom. And the American Dream seems to be all about consumerism.

America is much more than that. It's a set of ideas and ideals – most importantly, the principles that our rights come from God and that the individual is sovereign.

We need to remind ourselves – and our children need to be taught – how special and unique that is. Yet, we talked recently with a group of eighth graders – who, the teacher confirmed, probably never had even heard the term "American exceptionalism."

Everything needs periodic renewal, and our republic is no different. But to renew our republic, we need to understand how extraordinary and one-of-a-kind it is.

And how fragile.

"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction," President Ronald Reagan once said. "We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free."

We don't need a revolution. We need a renaissance – a recommitment to the ideas, ideals and principles that make this republic the greatest nation on Earth.

For that, we don't need a charismatic leader. We need an educated and engaged electorate.

Michael Ryan is the editorial page editor of 'The Augusta Chronicle' in Georgia.

LOOKING BACK

"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."



CHALLENGES

A startling 45 percent of 18-to-34-year-olds believe that international law should supersede the U.S. Constitution.

A Harris Interactive National Survey found, as 'The Washington Times' put it, that "American society is increasingly polarized and divided - and that knowledge of the nation's common heritage and ideals is eroding."

Adds 'The Washington Times': "63 percent maintain that American national identity is growing weaker; 24 percent state that Americans are already so divided we can no longer sustain a common identity. Most alarming is the result among younger respondents: Those below age 35 are more likely to declare that there is no national identity."

OPPORTUNITIES

A number of organizations have risen up to promote and educate young Americans on our nation's history and our founding principles. They have created patriot curricula available for schools, churches and other organizations throughout the nation.

One such organization is the nonprofit Values Through History (www.valuesthroughhistory.com), which has a curriculum and interactive program called "Why America is Free."

We need to ramp up early-American history education, and the U.S. Department of Education needs to pave the way for such curricula to get into every school in America.