

The Patriot's Toolbox

One Hundred Principles for Restoring
Our Freedom and Prosperity

The Heartland Institute

The Patriot's Toolbox

Fourth Revised Edition
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The Heartland Institute

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Preface to the Fourth Edition

The November 2016 election sent a strong message that “business as usual” was no longer acceptable to the American people. Voters resoundingly rejected the policies of the ruling and largely liberal political class. They don’t want economic stagnation, racial and class division, and socialism. *They want economic prosperity, harmony, and freedom.*

Donald Trump campaigned for president of the United States as a political outsider promising to undo much of his predecessor’s legacy. President Trump moved quickly to keep his campaign promises, using his executive authority and appointments to advance his agenda when Democrats and some Republicans in Congress blocked legislation needed to implement it. The president’s “coattails”—mostly Republican victories down the ballot in Congress and in state capitols across the country—are ensuring political change will occur regardless of whether the Trump administration is successful.

State and national policymakers, both Democrats and Republicans, are busy formulating, articulating, and implementing an agenda that will help freedom rise in America again. With their help, and the help of nearly a score of contributors from many of the country’s leading think tanks and advocacy groups, we have collected 100 bold steps policymakers can take, and some already are taking, to move the country in this new direction.

This new edition of *The Patriot’s Toolbox*, the fourth since the first edition was released in 2010, is completely rewritten and thoroughly updated to reflect the events of 2016 and so far in 2017. It offers an agenda for incumbent office holders, a platform for candidates for public office, and a report card for civic and business leaders and journalists following the policy moves of the Trump administration, Congress, and state lawmakers.

The word “patriot” appears in the title of this book because the principles we recommend would return the country to government based on the ideals of the Founders who led the American Revolution: liberty,

limited taxation, and limited government. The word “toolbox” appears because the principles can be used as tools to fix what is wrong with the country’s politics and public policies. Just as not every tool in a toolbox is used for every project, we don’t expect every reader to find every chapter and every principle useful to his or her effort.

The book consists of ten chapters. Eight of them significantly update topics covered in the third edition while two chapters—on firearms policy and constitutional reform—are new to this edition. Together, they provide a comprehensive collection of practical, evidence-based principles in the major fields of legislation. Additional research and commentary, including nearly all the sources identified in the references sections at the end of each chapter, can be found on The Heartland Institute’s website at www.heartland.org.

Attentive readers will notice some controversial topics are missing. Immigration, foreign policy, religion, and policies regarding race and gender—what has come to be called “identity politics”—are not addressed at all. This is in keeping with the decision we made when writing the first edition. These topics are just as important as the ones we chose to include but differences of opinion are based on values, personal experience, and interpretations of history that divide rather than unite conservatives, libertarians, and other members of the freedom movement. We therefore leave them to others to address.

We extend our sincere thanks to the following policy experts who contributed to this volume:

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Their bios appear at the end of the book. We also thank everyone who helped edit and proofread this new edition, including especially Diane Bast as well as Jessica Chen, Edward Hudgins, S.T. Karnick, Barbara Liang, and Arianna Wilkerson. Thank you, too, to the donors who make this book and all of the work of The Heartland Institute possible.

Herbert J. Walberg	Joseph L. Bast
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The Heartland Institute	The Heartland Institute

Introduction

Herbert J. Walberg

Americans want new leadership and substantial change. As this was written, in August 2017, President Donald Trump, who previously had not held political office, was using executive orders and appointments to repeal some of the policies adopted by his predecessor, Barack Obama. He and the new Congress were promising to go much farther, cutting and abolishing taxes, repealing costly regulations, and changing priorities to “put America first” and “make America great again.”

Of course, not all of Obama’s legacy is bad and not all of Trump’s ideas and plans are good. Still, the need for a change in direction was clear even before the November 2016 elections. The past eight years witnessed mounting frustration over the political, economic, and cultural direction of the country.

Americans suffered through an economic crisis and then stagnation—the longest economic recovery on record never to surpass 2 percent per year in GDP growth. Millions of people grew frustrated by the lack of jobs and opportunities for advancement and simply dropped out of the workforce (or never entered it after high school or college) and became dependent on new or expanded government entitlement programs.

The country experienced unprecedented fiscal irresponsibility. The national debt increased more over an eight-year period than the increase in the entire history of the United States prior to 2009. A war on manufacturing jobs and affordable energy was waged in the name of stopping “global warming,” a quest that seemed to take on quasi-religious meaning even as traditional religion was disrespected and mocked by elites.

Average Americans lost control over their local public schools as a result of federal policies leading to the adoption of a *de facto* national curriculum, the so-called “Common Core State Standards,” despite the long tradition of local control and despite laws outlawing such federal intervention. Similarly, millions of Americans lost their private health

insurance attributable to a new national program referred to as “Obamacare,” despite health insurance having always been the domain of state and not national regulators, and despite presidential promises that “if you like your current insurance plan, you can keep it.”

Not all of these problems and disturbing developments were attributable to policies adopted or supported by Obama. Many are the results of trends predating his administration and bipartisan actions going back many decades. The Founding Fathers’ vision of a republican form of government—of divided and limited powers in the service of protecting individual liberty rather than bestowing privileges—has been under attack almost since the Constitutional Convention of 1787 came to a close.

What is truly new today, in 2017, is not the change from one political party to another in the White House, but the opening of a window of opportunity to redirect both national and state public policies toward less reliance on government and more reliance on free-market solutions. How long that window will remain open is unclear. Developments in both foreign and domestic policy could lead to a return to Obama-era policies and attitudes.

For now, however, freedom-loving patriots have an opportunity to help change the course of the country. Nearly a decade after the Tea Party Movement popularized the slogan “take back our country,” we are once again at a moment in history when the need and opportunities for doing so are probably greater than at any time in recent memory. We have the best ideas, the most carefully thought-out roadmap, the support of the public, and sympathetic elected officials ready to act. It’s time to open the toolbox and get to work!

Overview of the Book

This book is not a treatise, a collection of reflections or opinions, or a memoir. It is definitely not a campaign book written to support or oppose the election of any candidate or the candidates of any political party.

The Patriot’s Toolbox was written by specialists with extensive backgrounds in state and national public policy. They worked closely with elected officials who either have successfully implemented the policies they recommend or who know first-hand the challenges of getting them adopted. Here are a few of the recommendations from each chapter:

■ **Chapter 1: Health Care** shows how we can attain better health care at lower cost by repealing Obamacare, reforming Medicaid and Medicare, reducing reliance on third-party payers, and repealing unnecessary regulations.

■ **Chapter 2: Energy and Environment** explains the errors of global

warming alarmists and radical environmentalists who want to paralyze America's economy and return the country to the living standards of third-world countries. It recounts the success of past efforts to protect human health and the natural environment, and it documents how America's natural resources can be safely developed with tremendous benefits for everyone.

■ **Chapter 3: Elementary and Secondary Education** documents the continuing failure of too many public schools to prepare the next generation for the duties of citizenship and self-sufficiency. It presents evidence of the success of school choice programs, such as vouchers and charter schools, and the promise of education savings accounts and programs that reward achievement and improvement.

■ **Chapter 4: Higher Education** explains the crisis in higher education as the quality of instruction is falling even though costs are rising out of control and students are facing ever-higher levels of debt. Many colleges and universities fail to graduate half their entering classes and are replacing solid instruction with liberal indoctrination. This chapter recommends a series of reforms that make higher education more affordable and more efficient.

■ **Chapter 5: Privatization** explains how governments at all levels can save taxpayers money and improve the quality of public services by contracting with private firms, using vouchers to encourage competition and empower consumers. The chapter further explains "load-shedding"; that is, ending the public provision of some services (such as operating golf courses) altogether.

■ **Chapter 6: Firearms** explains why the Founding Fathers thought private ownership of firearms was an essential protection of all the other rights guaranteed by the Constitution. It presents the overwhelming evidence that private ownership of firearms contributes positively to public safety.

■ **Chapter 7: Telecommunications** describes how the internet and modern communications technologies are producing great value, both economically and culturally. It points out ways governments interfere with the spread of affordable broadband and cellphone service by imposing so-called "net neutrality" rules, discriminatory taxes, and unnecessary regulations.

■ **Chapter 8: State Fiscal Policy** presents the latest evidence on how states compete with one another and with governments in other countries to attract and keep investment assets and productive citizens. The most successful states are those that keep taxes low, create transparent and accountable budgets, privatize public services to maximize competition, avoid corporate welfare, and protect state employees from politics.

■ **Chapter 9: Federal Tax Policy** describes the abuses and unfairness of the current national tax system, with its thousands of pages of tax code, crippling compliance costs, and perverse incentives for investors and workers. It offers policymakers ways to adhere to sound constitutional and economic principles when levying taxes.

■ **Chapter 10: Constitutional Reform** confronts the fact that the constitutional restraints the Founding Fathers thought they had imposed on the national government have been weakened or avoided over time, creating a need for constitutional amendments. This chapter refutes concerns of a “run-away convention,” explaining how a convention of states could be convened and the rules under which it would operate. The chapter also proposes some crucial amendments.

Each chapter presents ten principles, which we intend to be understood as enduring insights or key facts necessary for a solid understanding of a topic area. Every principle is succinctly presented, carefully documented, and accompanied by specific policy recommendations for turning the principle into real-world public policy. The result is 100 principles, all told, enough to fill even the most ambitious patriot's toolbox! They are summarized at the end of this introduction.

I urge our fellow patriots to at least skim this list of principles, and then read at least those chapters addressing topics of particular interest to you, your organization, or your family. Treat this book as a reference work, something to be returned to over time as issues arise and opportunities present themselves.

Most readers will recall the famous exchange between Benjamin Franklin and an anxious person outside the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Franklin was asked, “Well, doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?” He replied, “A republic, if you can keep it.” The republic is at risk today. This book is filled with tools to keep it safe, for ourselves and for future generations. I hope it is put to good use.

One Hundred Principles for Restoring Our Freedom and Prosperity

Chapter 1: Health Care

1. Repeal and replace Obamacare.
2. Reform Medicaid and Medicare.
3. Repeal existing regulations.
4. Expand health savings accounts.
5. Expand high-risk pools.
6. Encourage price transparency.
7. Expand the use of direct primary care programs.
8. Expand access to prescription drugs.
9. Remove regulatory barriers to medical innovation.
10. Reduce malpractice litigation expenses.

Chapter 2: Energy and Environment

1. Global warming is not a crisis.
2. End the war on fossil fuels.
3. Hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) is safe and beneficial.
4. National security requires affordable energy.
5. Energy self-sufficiency is achievable.
6. Air pollution is a fading challenge.
7. End subsidies to alternative energy producers.
8. Biofuels cannot replace oil.
9. Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards sacrifice lives for oil.
10. Replace the Environmental Protection Agency.

Chapter 3: Elementary and Secondary Education

1. The rising tide of mediocrity.
2. Common Core was not the answer.
3. Allow parents to choose.
4. School choice programs work.
5. Avoid new regulations.
6. School choice benefits teachers.
7. Design guidelines for voucher programs.
8. Design guidelines for education savings accounts.
9. Design guidelines for charter schools.
10. Digital learning: The future of education?

One Hundred Principles for Restoring Our Freedom and Prosperity (continued)

Chapter 4: Higher Education

1. Higher education in the United States isn't working.
2. Make students foot a larger share of the bill.
3. Promote free expression of ideas.
4. Increase transparency of costs and results.
5. Promote alternatives to college.
6. Emphasize instruction and raise academic standards.
7. Restructure university ownership and governance.
8. Revamp or eliminate federal student financial aid.
9. End destructive government regulation.
10. Reform or eliminate accreditation.

Chapter 5: Privatization

1. Identify privatization opportunities.
2. Prepare a business case evaluation.
3. Create a privatization center of excellence.
4. Choose contractors on best value, not lowest price.
5. Use performance-based contracting.
6. Provide effective monitoring and oversight.
7. Bundle services for better value.
8. Prepare a real property inventory.
9. Divest non-core assets.
10. Make the case to the public.

Chapter 6: Firearms

1. Americans have an individual right to keep and bear arms.
2. Bans on "assault weapons" are incoherent and self-defeating.
3. An increase in the number of guns does not lead directly to more gun crime.
4. Firearms possession among law-abiding citizens deters crime.
5. Defensive gun use saves lives.
6. Right to carry laws do not increase crime and may generate social benefits.
7. "Stand Your Ground" laws have been the historical norm in the United States.
8. The risk of firearms accidents is low and falling.

**One Hundred Principles
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(continued)

9. Large-scale illegal gun-running is a myth.
10. International experience does not support gun control in the United States.

Chapter 7: Telecommunications

1. Don't mandate net neutrality.
2. Eliminate rules left over from the monopoly era.
3. Avoid municipal broadband projects.
4. Reform carrier of last resort and build-out obligations.
5. Reform regulation of inter-carrier access charges and interconnection fees.
6. Repeal discriminatory taxes and fees on telecom services.
7. Prohibit the collection of sales taxes on online purchases that cross state lines.
8. Strengthen privacy and Fourth Amendment protections.
9. Prohibit government regulation of content.
10. Don't thwart expansion of Internet applications and e-commerce.

Chapter 8: State Fiscal Policy

1. Keep taxes low.
2. Avoid progressive income taxes.
3. Reduce reliance on excise taxes.
4. Create transparent and accountable budget processes.
5. Stop corporate welfare.
6. Remove regulatory barriers to prosperity.
7. Reform public pension and health care programs.
8. Fund school children, not schools.
9. Fix, don't expand, Medicaid.
10. Cap taxes and expenditures.

Chapter 9: Federal Tax Policy

1. Tax codes should be simple and understandable.
2. Collect taxes in the least invasive manner.
3. Make tax collection efficient.
4. Make the tax code stable and predictable.
5. Taxes should not be hidden from taxpayers.

**One Hundred Principles
for Restoring Our Freedom and Prosperity**
(continued)

6. The tax code should be neutral.
7. Taxes profoundly affect economic growth.
8. The broader the tax base, the better.
9. Everyone should pay the same income tax rate.
10. Perhaps it is time to repeal the income tax.

Chapter 10: Constitutional Reform

1. The national government is out of control.
2. Constitutional reform is the solution.
3. Fear of a runaway convention is unfounded.
4. Choose amendments carefully.
5. Agree on convention procedures ahead of time.
6. Require Congress to balance its budget.
7. Consider the Compact approach.
8. Require congressional approval of major regulations.
9. Require due process for all administrative law proceedings.
10. States can refuse to enforce federal laws.

I hope this brief overview whets the reader's appetite for the chapters that follow. Even more, I hope the principles recommended and the discussion and readings prove useful in developing legislation to help the country's patriots succeed in their goal of expanding and preserving American freedom and prosperity.