



If I were President

Effective Governance for an Effective Country

by **Steve Goodrich**

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“We in America do not have government by the majority — we have government by the majority who participate... All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent.”

— Thomas Jefferson

WE KNOW THE MESS WE ARE IN

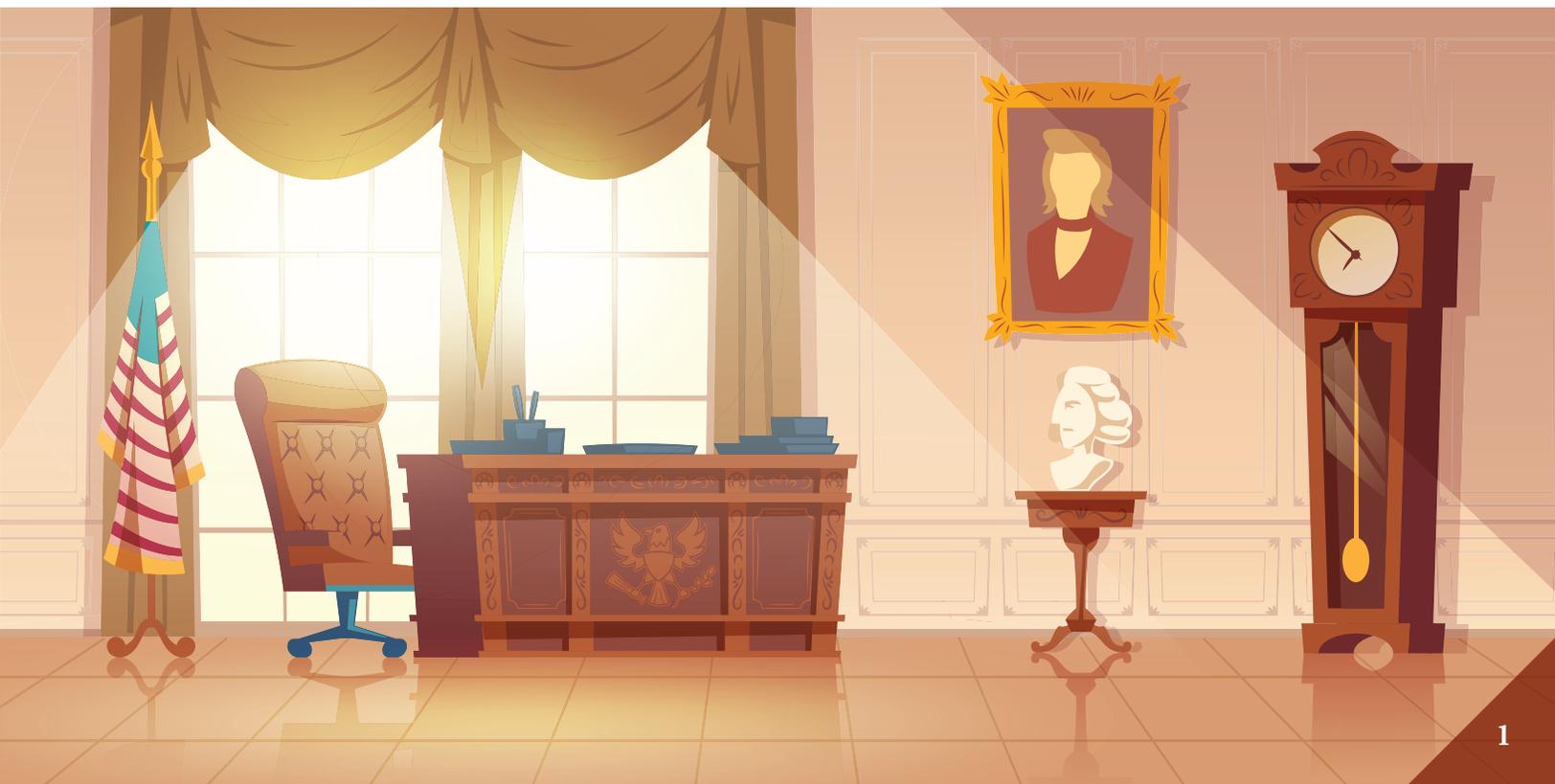
We need a dramatic change in the way we govern and operate the federal government and its underlying two-party political system (or should I call it the League of Aggressive Factionous Adversaries). Almost all of us agree that the current approach to governance is ineffective, ego-centric, hypocritical, and is causing us to head toward a moral and financial cliff that we may not be able to recover from. We can't get important work accomplished, government leaders are often functioning in their own vacuum, and our unique American values are being tested. This is not about one party, it's about all of us.

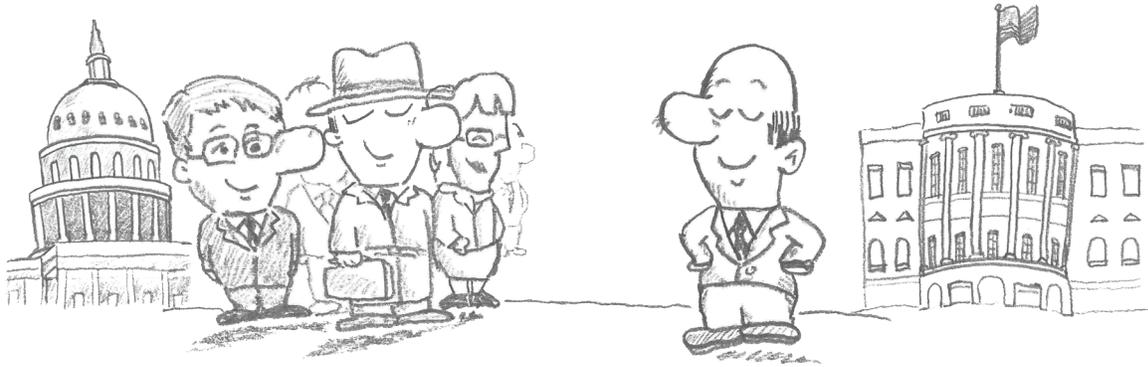
While the government does many great things (land a man on the moon, invent the internet, ensure a dignified retirement for the elderly, conduct medical research, protect our homeland, etc.), the current fiscal and political state and approach has diminished the United States. These two things (politics, and financial challenges), have caused us to hurl out of control. And unfortunately, although we hear about and discuss the problem daily, perhaps until we actually experience deeper strife, we will not be able to effectively achieve. As we all know, sometimes we find ourselves unable to act until a crisis hits, like a drug addict hitting rock bottom, or an epidemic hitting our shores. Either through disbelief that it will happen, addiction, ignorance, conceit, or stupidity, we continue down a destructive path. While most of us are well intentioned, the current political state is malicious in its intent and must change.

Even more scary is that the only plan that currently exists is political intent!

Ineffective governance aside, on one hand, we are just not getting as much done as we should. On the other, we can't do everything since we continue to overspend, and the day of reckoning will soon be upon us. We add more programs and spend faster than the revenue is received, and do not address ineffective, underutilized, or duplicative programs. Even more scary is that the only plan that currently exists is political intent (both party and individual), and not responsibility to the American people and the success of our Nation. The design of how our government is sound and includes the necessary checks and balances, it's the execution that's failing. Soon the American people will cease to be supported the way the founding fathers intended.

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Change will require a mustering of true individual courage, accountability, willingness to be uncomfortable, treating facts as facts, and identifying and agreeing on operating principles and critical imperatives. While self-change is possible, I suspect it may require forceful public demand for real change to happen. I will say that as a country our leaders have often risen to the occasion of a real and sudden crisis. We are just not good at being the frog in the frying pan while the temperature is reaching the boiling point.

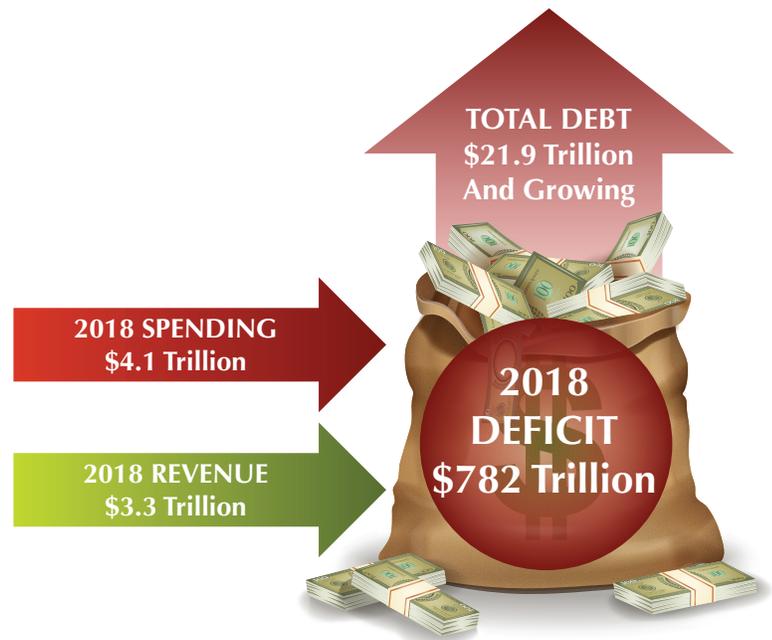
We outspend our income each year (the deficit). The deficit in 2018 was \$782 Billion and the interest on our almost \$22 Trillion in total debt was \$479 Billion. The actual dollar amounts no longer matter. What matters is we are not prioritizing our spending and have no plan to get it under control. We have no plan, because we do not have an effective governance system with which to create such a plan. It's not just financially irresponsible, it will harm the ability for the US to ensure strength and a strong way of life. Don't be fooled by the current "strong economy". We will soon have to pay the piper. It's easy to think everything is good with the nice new car in the driveway, until you find out one day you can't afford the car or the driveway! Like any family, we've got to get our spending under control and have a clear and meaningful plan or risk our way of life.

Further exacerbating the problem is our ability to kick the can down the road, overborrowing, political turn-over, and a broken budget process. We've got to stop looking for easy quick fix answers and get down to the hard work of government.

WHAT I WOULD DO

Many readers will accuse me of being naïve or Pollyanna. I confess I am, because I love my country and believe in my government. I have never prepared myself for, nor am I seeking the presidency. However, I have spent almost 40 years trying to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our federal government and want to throw my two cents in with the hope that it can guide those who do seek the presidency.

In any construction project you must first plan, design, and build a foundation before you build the structure. To be a good government in a democracy we must first have a strong foundation supported by good governance, a plan we can all agree to, actions that lead to results, and trust between all (even if we disagree). Its time to stop talking and do!



So, if I became president, I would plan and work together, act on imperatives, lead with standards, and engage our citizens.



PLAN AND WORK TOGETHER

Immediately upon election I would **host a National Summit**. The intent of this Summit would be to develop an America-focused **National Strategic Plan** addressing the important imperatives of our country. It would be a plan that all parties would agree to use, and by which the American people could measure performance. It would define and prioritize the most important things we need to work on together, provide a clear case for need (fact based and consistent with our Constitution and values), and include high-level milestones and major actions to be taken. The plan would identify specific actions and outcomes for each of the 4 years or longer.



I would **meet biweekly with political leaders** of both houses and parties to keep our plan on track and address issues. I would maintain a country-centric collaborative environment (yes, it would be difficult, but that is no reason to not do it). I would lead us toward working together. I would include Congress in critical BIG decisions such as attacking our enemy or dramatically changing our energy policy. I would engage non-conflicted experts in the various subject matters critical to our country. We would also decide what is the business of government and what should be addressed by others.

I would **work on the world stage** in the best interest of America and to develop collaborative relationships that both benefit us and the entire globe, addressing areas such as trade, terrorism, climate, and other issues that affect us all.

I would **make decisions** to benefit America, not myself. And, I would make them as quickly as possible based on facts and the best interest of America, in consideration of all current and anticipated factors, not political need. My re-election and the election of others would not be my focus. In fact, my objective would be to prepare the country for the next President, regardless of party.



ACT ON IMPERATIVES

I would **address imperatives critical to our times** with a phased plan for execution during my tenure and beyond. These would at a minimum include fiscal reform, immigration reform, citizen equality, infrastructure, national/domestic security as well as emergency response, criminal justice reform, innovation, environment, our world role, social programs, economic stability and growth, government operations, and the governance of our Nation. These would be incorporated into the transparent National Strategic Plan for all to see and engage in. We would create comprehensive solutions that truly fix things rather than just addressing them piecemeal.

For example, immigration reform will not be successful by choosing just one element. To see results you cannot just address only asylum, or only border protection, or only work visas, etc. To truly have an effective solution, you must address it all with the purpose of ensuring constitutional alignment, consistency with American values, and meeting our needs as a country. That is the key lesson here, most big issues facing our country require a holistic and comprehensive solution.



To do so, I would convene non-conflicted members to form working groups to address the various critical issues with clear purpose and recommendations taking no more than 4 months. Each group would be chartered with a set of principles and objectives to ensure fair, appropriate, and effective solutions that are comprehensive and lasting.

I would direct the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), appropriately resourced, to **measurably improve efficiency and effectiveness** across government agencies and programs. I would also begin a multi-year process, working with Congress and the workforce, to reform the civil service system to ensure respect for employees and effective performance of government programs. I would improve the budget cycle, process, and management, and eliminate or reform programs that are ineffective or only met the needs of a bygone era. As the largest buyer of goods and services in the world, I would make the procurement process more data driven, simpler, and transparent across agencies.

All of this would be codified in my **President's Management Agenda (PMA)**. It would include many of the elements of the current PMA such as a focus on improving data capacity, IT modernization, and respecting and improving the workforce. I would also include stimulating innovation, reducing government real property, strengthening the senior executive service, and strengthening the ability of our agencies to share best practices across agencies.

I would work hard to **establish a new culture** honoring acceptance of all of us as a nation of one for all and all for one. I see no place for discrimination of any type. To be a strong country, we must work together and put our energy toward the common good, not being limited by misguided beliefs.

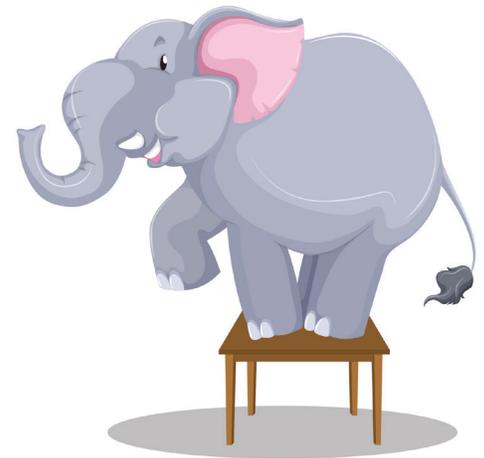


LEAD WITH STANDARDS

I would insist on **honesty, civility, collaboration, and results** with everyone I work with. I would insist that my staff deal only in **honest facts**, whether we liked them or not. And, I would work with Congress to eliminate government shutdowns and continuing resolutions from our lexicon.

I would appoint **experts to my cabinet**, regardless of party. Each would have a clear set of priorities and expected outcomes tied to the National Strategic Plan and management agenda.

My first act as President would be to **meet with all federal employees** (civilian and military) to honor them and establish a clear agenda for all to contribute to. I would listen to them and gain their input on the best way to serve America. I would modify the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) so that they could provide further input on their ideas and concerns.



ENGAGING CITIZENS AND BUILDING THEIR TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

I would give citizens a stronger forum to let their voices be heard. I would communicate directly with them, so they are aware of the intent, capacities, and limitations of its government to achieve all. And since great change usually comes from the bottom up (think voting rights), we need to listen to the people. I would **meet with Americans** at least once per month from all walks of life in a broadcast or town hall format, ensuring I touch all 50 states and territories during my tenure. I would use facts to explain our status and needs to the people. I would develop and implement an online tool called "Hear America Speak" to capture Americans' real-time input on the issues facing our country.

For national elections, I would work to ensure a fair, secure, simple, and accessible **voting system** for all eligible Americans, and ensure the right to vote for people of all states and territories. I would work to **eliminate the electoral college** for the presidency to ensure fairness and equity, and to ensure all voters are heard. We deserve a level playing field to include the elimination of gerrymandering and I



would work with Congress to require **proof of citizenship** to vote. I would direct **increased security** to our voting process protecting it against foreign attack. I would advocate for a common system. I would launch an **educational campaign** to alert Americans to outside influences, show them how to gather the facts and make independent choices in the voting booth.

Lastly, I would ask experts, scholars, Congress, States and the courts to **review our Constitution** and ensure its relevance for our time and the fair treatment, rights, and protection of all Americans. While I believe in what our founding fathers created and believe most of the Constitution is strong and relevant, we would make recommendations for change and adjust as needed to meet contemporary needs. I would also write a plain language version of the Constitution and distribute it to all Americans so they are well informed and can enact its mandates, ensuring a citizen-centered government.

CONCLUSION

This profile is perhaps incomplete, and perhaps difficult for many to swallow, and yes, the devil is in the details, it will be bumpy. However, I hope someone seeking the presidency truly cares about our country and can place our Nation above self and party. Perhaps we can succeed and rise again.

Let's bring trust to the American people and vote for the person, not the party. Let's change the way we do business, so we don't go out of business!

About the Author



Steve Goodrich is the CEO and President of The Center for Organizational Excellence, Inc. (COE) and author of *Transforming Government from Congress to the Cubicle*. He has over 40 years of experience leading organizations and advising top government and private sector leaders in organizational effectiveness. In addition, Steve is the Chairman of the Board of the Association of Management Consulting Firms (AMCF) and co-founder and Vice Chair of the Government Transformation Initiative (GTI). He has served on corporate and non-profit boards, a White House transformation committee, and has appeared on radio and television supporting topics on government leadership and transformation. You can reach Steve by email at sgoodrich@center4oe.com.



It's time to stop talking and do!

— **Steve Goodrich**