



COMMON SENSE 250

FOR A SUCCESSFUL AMERICA

**ACCURATE AND MEANINGFUL INFORMATION, BALANCED PERSPECTIVES,
AND TRUTH AND TRANSPARENCY FOR A SUCCESSFUL AMERICA**

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Author's Preface

When I retired almost 8 years ago, I had three thoughts: I wanted to give back in some way, I wanted to write a letter to my children and grandchildren with life lessons as my grandfather had done for me, and I wanted to understand why America's political system didn't result in better leaders and solutions to issues. All three have come together in this pamphlet.

During my career as a Chief Financial Officer for various operating companies and a private equity firm, I found that success in any business requires an honest and thorough analysis of both its challenges and opportunities, and the development of an honest and thorough plan to minimize its challenges and maximize its opportunities. I believe the same is true for a Successful America.

In performing an honest and thorough analysis of America's political challenges, I identified specific problems that were contributing to its lack of success. I began working with reform organizations whose goals were to address those problems but saw insurmountable resistance. I found that our political systems are so intertwined with our economic systems that substantive political reforms are impossible without macro and fundamental changes to both our political and economic systems.

One of the benefits of being a parent and grandparent is developing a greater appreciation of the differences among people. We all have different personalities, skills, experiences, and environments. The result is different beliefs, feelings, and perspectives on issues. Such fundamental differences mean that consensus on solutions for issues isn't possible and that our goal must be to achieve a balance that represents the fairest representation of all interests.

A running buddy of mine used to say as we approached a steep hill - "every challenge is an opportunity to excel!" When I face a challenge in life I like to think of this saying and look for opportunities to excel. I hope each of you experience the same joy and happiness in your lives that I have in mine and that your challenges become "opportunities to excel" for you as they have for me.

Introduction

Common Sense by Thomas Paine was published in February 1776. Its purpose was to persuade the American people of the need for independence and the establishment of a democratic republic. It paved the way for the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

The most fundamental principles of the Declaration of Independence were:

- All people are equal
- All people are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness
- Governments derive their powers from their people
- The people have the right to alter their government to ensure their happiness

The most fundamental principle of the Constitution was:

- Governments are to ensure justice, tranquility, general welfare, and liberty for their people

Common Sense 250 is being published in February 2026, 250 years later. Its purpose is to persuade the American people of the need and opportunity to modify America's culture and systems to achieve a fair economic and political balance between the upper class and working class and balanced solutions for social issues, all in accordance with our founders' fundamental principles.

The upper class has had control over the working class throughout the first 250 years of America's history, as has been the case throughout human history. The economic impact of that control on the working class has ebbed and flowed many times. We are currently at a point where that control is having a significantly negative impact on the working class. Each such point in both American and human history has led to a catastrophic event (usually a revolution or war) to improve the balance.

Effectively balancing the interests of all of the people in our government, economy, and society would allow us to avoid a catastrophic event and provide the most effective checks and balances against the interests of a few dominating the interests of all in the future. Honestly and effectively pursuing and embracing the will of all of the people will lead to achieving that balance of interests.

The phenomenal and accelerating advancements in communications and technology, education and reasoning, and availability of information and perspectives provide the greatest opportunity in human history to effectively reflect and benefit from the full potential of embracing the will of "all" of the people and to achieve a huge leap forward toward a true democratic government, a real free and fair market economy, and a just and respectful society.

This pamphlet provides common sense information and perspectives on the challenges America faces today, the opportunities it has, and a foundation upon which it can build a successful America.

Business and the Economy

Purpose of Business and the Economy

The purpose of an economy is to efficiently and effectively generate the maximum goods and services and allocate those goods and services in the fairest manner possible to support that system.

Capitalism

Capitalism is the private ownership of capital for investments and socialism is the government ownership of capital for investments. Capitalism allows for the benefits of free and fair market determination of economic investments and therefore has the best potential for maximizing economic benefits for all. However, without sufficient checks and balances, capitalism can result in imbalances of power and benefits and therefore not be an effective and efficient economic system.

America has established sufficient checks and balances for free and fair capital markets and for free and fair corporate competition. Although America has established some checks and balances for employment and consumer markets, they have not been sufficient to create free and fair markets. The result is an economy where shareholders have an unfair influence over corporations and corporations have an unfair influence over employees and consumers (shareholder capitalism).

Shareholder Capitalism

America's shareholder capitalism has led to the goal of corporations (and therefore the economy) being to maximize profits for shareholders. In order to maximize profits for shareholders, corporations must keep wages for employees as low as possible and keep prices for products and services as high as possible, while keeping the quality of products and services as low as possible.

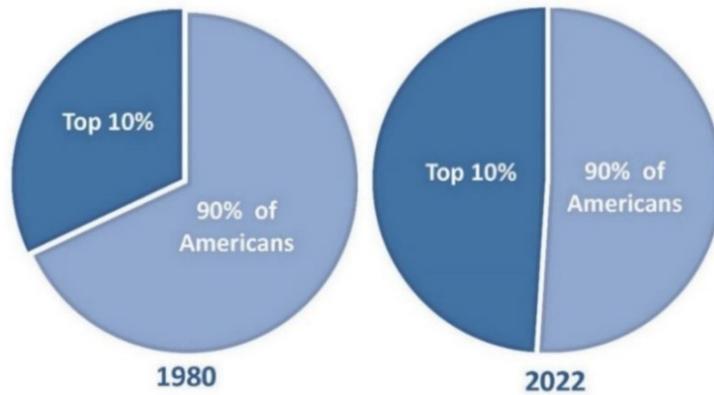
Management is incentivized to accomplish the goal of maximizing profits for shareholders by having the majority of their compensation tied to gains in the value of the shares of the corporation. The top 10% of the population (the upper class) owns 90% of all shares. The remaining 90% of the population are employees and consumers. The result has been an unfair and economically inefficient shift of income from the working class to the upper class over the past forty years.

Shift in US Income

Shareholder capitalism has led to lower wages, higher prices, and lower quality of products and services for the working class which have resulted in today's "affordability" crisis. Shareholder capitalism has also led to significant increases in prosperity for the upper class. Together these have created a sense of unfairness that is causing America's current, significant political and social unrest.

America's working class has seen its share of the total US income decline from 68% to 51% over the past 40 years. The cumulative impact is over \$40 trillion. The 2022 impact alone was \$2.5 trillion.

Share of US Income



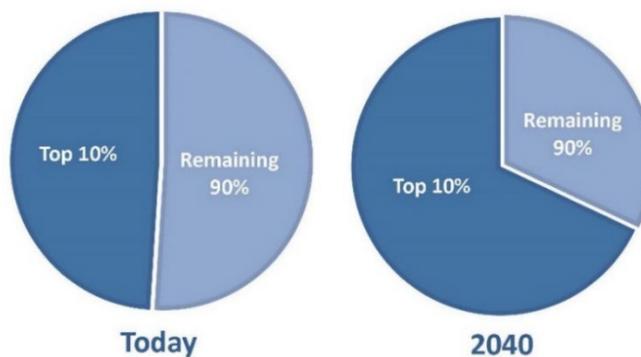
Without this unnecessary shift in income, every person in the working class (90% of Americans) would have 35% higher incomes today. See Attachment A for more information on the impact of shareholder capitalism on the distribution of US income by taxpayer group over the past 40 years.

Our economic system has resulted in a continually increasing percentage of America’s prosperity going to the top 10% of its population. It will not change on its own. Human nature is to do what’s in our own self-interest. The system must provide a balance of human nature so that it works for all, not just those at the top. A free and fair market system for working class markets (i.e., employment, consumer, and community) and upper class markets (i.e., shareholder and business) with sufficient, but not excessive, regulations that provide the goals, incentives, and guardrails for fair competition.

Continuing Shift in US Income

Over the past decade, the share of the increases in US income (i.e., America’s prosperity) going to the working class has averaged 40%. This is resulting in the current share of US income going to the working class of 51% to continue to decline. Without significant changes to America’s shareholder capitalism culture, the past forty year economic trends will not only continue but will accelerate with the benefits of increases in efficiencies expected to be generated by AI and robotics going to the upper class.

Projected Share of US Income

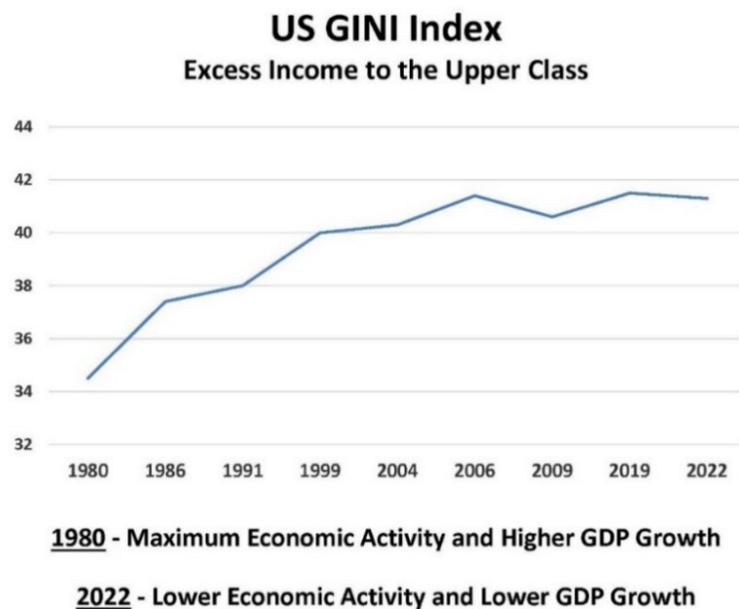


The only question is will we avoid this projection with rational intervention, or will it take macro shocks as it did in the early 20th century, which was the last time the US income imbalance was as high as it is today and the trends as negative. It took the macro shocks of a great depression and a world war to reverse those trends and lead to the fair and efficient income sharing America enjoyed forty years ago.

Impact on US Economy

The International Monetary Fund uses the GINI Coefficient to measure the level of income sharing between the upper class and working class of countries around the world. A GINI Coefficient level of 35 results in maximum economic growth and prosperity by achieving a sharing of income to the upper class that maximizes supply of capital and income to the working class that maximizes demand for goods and services.

The America's GINI Coefficient has been steadily increasing over the past forty years from 35 to 42, reflecting a steadily increasing imbalance of income between the upper class and the working class and therefore an increasingly inefficient and underperforming economy.



The average GINI Coefficient of the remaining 14 of the world's 15 largest economies is 36, reflecting more efficient and higher performing economies in those countries.

The disproportionate share of US income going to the upper class has led to excessive capital supply. The result is excessive income available to the upper class which has led to significant, not economically supported, price increases of high end assets (stocks driven by increasing PE multiples, upper class real estate, crypto currencies, etc.).

The working class use a greater percentage of their income for consumer purchases than the upper class. Since consumer purchases drive economic activity, the significant shift in income from the working class has limited US economic growth and therefore the prosperity of the country.

GDP growth over the past 20 years was primarily the result of deficit spending (which takes prosperity from future generations) and population growth (over 50% of which was from immigration). We will have no choice but to stop the deficit spending soon and our population growth has and will continue to slow. The result will be a near term and continuing decline in GDP.

In order to achieve maximum sustainable economic growth, America needs to achieve a balance of income between the upper class for capital requirements and working class for consumer demand.

Impact on the Free Press

Mainstream media and social media (the “free press”) are shareholder capitalism corporations. They have the same goal of maximizing shareholder value and management incentives tied to maximizing shareholder value as all other corporations. Although some more than others, all mainstream media and social media corporations use and misuse information and take advantage of political and social unrest and divisiveness to generate users and therefore revenue and profits for their shareholders. As a result, the increasing social and political unrest and divisiveness are made worse by mainstream media and social media goals of maximizing profits for the benefits of their shareholders.

Summary

Shareholder capitalism’s goal of maximizing shareholder interests has led to an unfair, inefficient, and unsustainable economy.

Politics and Government

Purpose of Government

The purpose of government is to ensure the fair pursuit of happiness for all its citizens by providing rules and regulations that result in the fair balancing of liberal and conservative beliefs and a fair and efficient balancing of economic interests of all citizens, as well as providing for citizens' security.

Misuse of Information

Politicians use misinformation (lack of information, partial information, spin, and lies) to get votes. Liberal and conservative politicians support and/or attack social issues that energize their voters. The result is elected leaders who must support their extreme positions, rather than compromise to find solutions that are balanced for the interests of all, and therefore a government in gridlock.

Political leaders have modified election and legislative process rules and procedures to advance their own self-interests, primarily getting re-elected, rather than balancing their self-interests with the public interest. The number of meaningful laws enacted by Congress has declined significantly. The laws that are passed are becoming more and more partisan.

Today there is an imbalance of influence by the upper class on political leaders which is benefiting the upper class and negatively impacting the working class. The result is working class voters assume there is a "deep state" controlling the establishment and that elections are rigged against them. Working class voters have lost faith in political leaders and democracy. They know the political and economic systems aren't working for them. They have turned to authoritarianism in frustration.

There are currently two political paths being pursued to overcome the current authoritarianism:

- Return to existing political and economic systems
- Modify existing political and economic systems with progressive/socialist policies

Neither path will address the macro and fundamental challenges caused by shareholder capitalism.

Impact of Shareholder Capitalism

Under shareholder capitalism the purpose of a corporation, and therefore the economy, is to maximize profits to maximize shareholder value. Corporate goals and management incentive compensation plans are tied to that purpose. As a result, corporation shareholders, board members, and managers use their influence to persuade politicians to enact laws and enforce regulations that are to the benefit of corporations to enable them to maximize profits and their shareholders' value. The impact is that the working class interests (employees and consumers) are negatively affected.

Shareholder capitalism has also negatively affected America's international relations. America's businesses and government put profits for shareholders over other countries' interests. We have established the purpose of both our economy and our government as being to make the wealthy wealthier, at the expense of the working class and interests of others around the world.

Summary

The working class being left behind politically, economically, and socially has led to a loss of faith in democracy and support for authoritarianism. America's political and economic systems are so intertwined that substantive political reforms are not possible without macro and fundamental changes to both our political and economic systems. Embracing democracy, free and fair economy, and ensuring accurately and meaningfully informed voters and employees is the only way to evolve America from near authoritarianism to progressing toward a true representative democracy.

Society and its Citizens

Purpose of Society

The purpose of society is to organize the interactions of its members for the best interests of all. Those interactions require a government to establish and enforce rules and an economy to determine how goods and services are created and fairly distributed to all members of society.

Beliefs

Beliefs are necessary for humans to process and respond to the complexities of life. They are influenced by our personalities and experiences and fundamental to who we are. They may be refined with additional information and perspectives from others, but we each have a fundamental point of personal preference on the spectrum of things ranging from the far left to the far right.

Beliefs will be influenced by our need to prioritize our short-term self-interests over those of others. Prioritization of short-term self-interests is a fundamental aspect of human nature (survival instinct). Our beliefs lead to feeling that others that don't share our beliefs as being less than us and the need to control what happens in accordance with our beliefs. We create perspectives on issues that fit our beliefs and achieve what is in our own self-interests.

Upper Class Beliefs Today

The upper class believe that the US economy is doing very well based on the following:

- Their incomes are high and growing
- GDP growth is high
- Stocks, crypto currencies, and other high end asset prices are high and increasing
- Working class incomes are higher than most other countries

They believe America's economic success is the result of shareholder capitalism and the fiduciary duty of corporations, their boards, and CEOs to maximize profits for the benefit of shareholders. They believe that democracy and the rule of law are the foundation for America's success.

The upper class believe that politicians need to "craft" messaging to convince the working class to vote to maintain the status quo. The political messaging on working class affordability has been:

- Immigrants are taking your high paying jobs
- China is taking your high paying jobs
- Inflation is causing your inability to support your family

Upper class liberals believe liberal views (e.g., financial, legal, religious, social, etc.) and liberal initiatives (e.g. DEI, BLM, gay rights, abortion, gun safety, etc.) are good and justify win at all costs politics. They believe gerrymandering and closed primaries are justified to win against opponents. They use political beliefs messaging to get votes. They see white working class males as racist, sexist, and homophobic. They don't understand how the white working class could support Trump, an anti-democratic, self-serving liar.

Upper class conservatives believe conservative views (e.g., financial, legal, religious, social, etc.) and conservative initiatives (e.g., abortion, gun rights, immigration, etc.) are good. They believe gerrymandering and closed primaries are justified to win against opponents. They use political beliefs messaging to get votes. They support Trump as a counter to liberal upper class views and initiatives. They don't believe he will actually be able to overthrow democracy and install a strongman autocracy in America. They believe low unemployment and modest gains in income for the working class should be sufficient.

Working Class Beliefs Today

The working class know there is something wrong but are unable to see the flaws in the systems. They are left to believe that there is a "deep state" or "cabal of pedophiles" controlling the economy and government for their own self-interests at the expense of the working class.

The working class believe the US economy is not doing well based on the following:

- Their incomes are low, not growing, and not sufficient to support their families
- GDP growth does not impact them
- Stock market, crypto, and other high end asset price increases do not impact them
- Their incomes relative to other countries' working class aren't important to them

The working class believe the upper class has been dishonest. They see political messaging as promises without delivering results. They see the upper class as getting ahead while leaving the working class behind. The working class believe the upper class is arrogant and condescending because of unfulfilled promises and the working class continuing economic struggles.

They believe there has been election fraud because the results of elections have benefited the upper class over the working class. They blame the democrats more than the republicans due to their large role in recent decades.

Working class women's participation in the workforce has increased. They have seen gains in their income relative to men, but they still only make 80% of what a man makes for the same job. Working class males have seen a decline in both employment participation and income relative to women. They have become more dependent on their spouses to provide support for their families. Black and white men both see the other race in the upper class getting ahead and therefore believe they are in the working class as well, which they are not.

The white working class believe liberal initiatives (e.g., DEI, BLM, Gay Rights, etc.) are part of why they are being left behind economically, politically, and socially by the upper class. They believe in legal, religious, social, but not financial, conservative views. They support Trump as a counter to liberal upper class views and actions.

Working class have given up on democracy and capitalism and have turned to authoritarianism as their best hope for a better economic future, creating serious political and economic risks. The working class believe democracy and rule of law have been used to leave them behind. They support Trump to clean house and create a government that takes care of the working class.

Balance of Interests

Balancing all individual interests and perspectives is the only way to function successfully as a society. The complete and honest consideration of all aspects of issues prior to determining a solution that best meets the interests of all people is required to find balance.

Following groups' interests require balance:

- Upper class and working class
- Urban and rural
- Conservatives and liberals
- Old and young
- White and non-white
- Christians, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Judaism, etc.

Short-term and long-term perspectives also require balance. Our self-interests are more important in the short term (food, shelter, safety, family, etc.), but the common good is important in the long term for our long-term self-interest.

Shared Values

Shared values are fundamental to society being able to balance its citizens' fair pursuit of happiness. Following are shared values and principles which are fundamental to a successful society:

- Human Rights
 - Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all
 - Equal social, civil, and legal justice for all
 - Freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, and petition
- Beliefs
 - In honesty, transparency, integrity, and right over wrong
 - In treating others as we want them to treat us
 - Faith in the goodness of God
 - Faith in the goodness of people through our faith in the goodness of God
- Free Market Economy
 - Efficient and effective economic activity for meeting the needs of society
 - Sufficient income for the upper class to fund business investment
 - Sufficient income for the working class to fund economic activity
 - Sufficient income for social issues (healthcare, retirement, etc.)
 - Sufficient transparency of information to maximize efficient free and fair markets
- Democracy
 - Governance of the people, by the people and for the people
 - Separation of church and state, but retain a faith in the goodness of God
 - Separation of powers within the federal government
 - Separation of powers between the federal and state governments
 - Security and wellbeing (physical, digital, health, etc.)
 - Sufficient transparency of information to maximize effective elections

No matter the skills, abilities, or experiences, all people have a heart, love for children, and belief in fair play and right versus wrong. Shared values, faith in God, and faith in the goodness of people can only surface if people believe their political and business leaders are treating them fairly.

Faith in the goodness of God is important to most people. Religions help us to understand that faith. Each religion has developed from different cultures seeking to understand the greater good through God. The fact that they have developed with different approaches is understandable. Fundamental to each religion is the belief in treating others as you would have others treat you. Accomplishing that is done by seeking the common good through the pursuit of truth and balance in all things.

Summary

There have been many advances in education, science, technology, communications, and Information availability over the past few decades that have had significant impacts on our social, political, and business environments. Further advances in those areas, along with the fundamentals of who we are as a collective people, provide us with the opportunity to realize America's potential.

America is the melting pot of the world. America's diversity of race, nationality, culture, and religion provides our challenges and opportunity. It is the foundation upon which to build a great country and become an example for the world. America has had a positive impact on world affairs for 80 years and has the potential to have an even greater, more positive impact in the future. A true representative democracy is a great political system with which to fulfill America's potential. A free and fair market economy is a great economic system with which to provide for America's prosperity.

Citizens can't individually, or in groups, solve the issues facing government, business, and society. Citizens can collectively establish shared values and demand that political and business leaders find solutions to issues based on those shared values and that are balanced for the best interests of all.

A Successful America

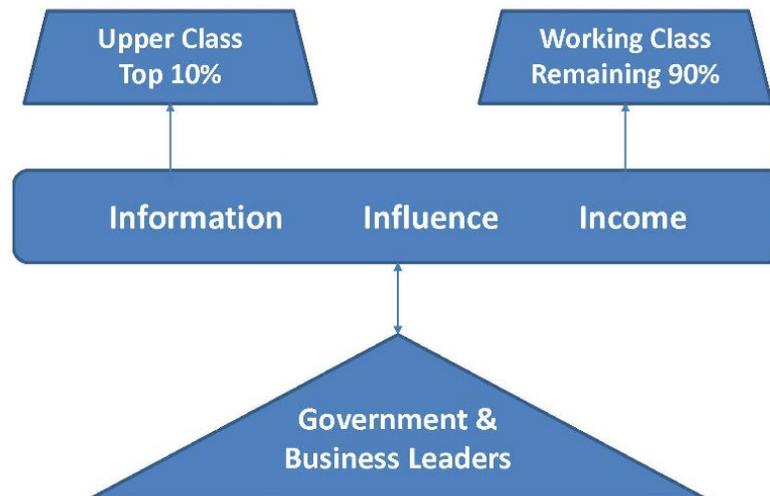
A Successful America is one where:

- Corporations balance the interests of the upper class (shareholders) and the working class (employees and consumers) to achieve maximum economic fairness and efficiency
- Voters elect candidates for public office with the best qualifications for the role and the goal of balancing the interests of all citizens
- Citizens respect the rights of others who are different, or hold different beliefs on issues, and accept the need to balance those differences for the common good

Informed Citizens

America was formed on the belief that free and fair, but government regulated, economic and political markets would result in the best solutions for the challenges and opportunities of society. Government regulations are required to balance influence and income for free and fair markets. Information is the foundation of influence and income. Accurate and meaningful information sharing is required for free and fair markets.

Equal Access to Information Balances Influence and Income



Only the government can ensure a fair sharing of accurate and meaningful information and only citizens can ensure independence of the government.

Informed Citizens Commission

The purpose of an independent Informed Citizens Commission is to create the foundation upon which economic and political systems and culture can be built which will result in business and political leaders who achieve balanced economic and social solutions in the best interests of all.

The goals for an independent Informed Citizens Commission would be to:

- Ensure accurate and meaningful corporate information for employees so they can choose corporations that create a fair and efficient economy that benefits everyone and provides:
 - A fair sharing of America's prosperity with the working class
 - Quality products for consumers and social responsibility
 - Sufficient, but not excessive returns for shareholders
- Ensure accurate and meaningful candidate information for voters so they can elect qualified and trustworthy leaders that create a government that represents everyone and that will:
 - Enact balanced laws that work for all people
 - Enact guidelines for a balanced economy
 - Provide economic and physical security
- Ensure accurate and meaningful issues and guidelines information for citizens so they can appreciate the viewpoints of others and create a society that respects everyone and elects:
 - Trustworthy leaders who will do what's in the best interests of all citizens
 - Trustworthy leaders who are honest, transparent, and respect others
 - Trustworthy leaders that will result in honest and respectful citizens

Accomplishing the above goals requires an approach that will be effective in guiding change via market forces and minimizing potentially abrupt and damaging government intervention.

The independent Informed Citizens Commission would be comprised of three divisions:

- ***Employee Information Division*** - an SEC-type entity that would ensure accurate and meaningful corporation reporting to employees for balanced influence and income
- ***Voter Information Division*** - an FTC-type entity that would ensure accurate and meaningful candidate reporting to voters for balanced and effective leadership
- ***Issues & Guidelines Office*** – an entity that would ensure accurate and meaningful Congressional Research Service reporting on issues to representatives and their constituents

The impact of the above would be more efficient and effective economic and political markets where businesses would evolve their corporate goals and management incentive compensation plans to include maximizing the interests of employees, customers, and communities, as well as shareholders, and representatives would balance the interests of all citizens.

See www.informedcitizens.com for more information on an Informed Citizens Commission and a pdf Overview document with information on its organization, operations, reporting, and independence.

A Fair Sharing of US Prosperity

Average Taxpayer								
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Top 0.1%</u>	<u>Next 0.9%</u>	<u>Next 4%</u>	<u>Next 5%</u>	<u>Next 15%</u>	<u>Next 25%</u>	<u>Bottom 50%</u>
1980 Actual Income (CPI adjusted)	\$56,511	\$2,300,737	\$276,941	\$177,140	\$125,735	\$92,622	\$57,935	\$20,006
2022 Actual Income	\$95,915	\$10,909,121	\$1,178,830	\$380,074	\$212,519	\$131,268	\$71,529	\$21,989
Percent Change from 1980 Actual (CPI Adj.)	70%	374%	326%	115%	69%	42%	23%	10%
2022 Shared Prosperity (70% increase for all)	\$95,915	\$3,904,974	\$470,043	\$300,655	\$213,406	\$157,205	\$98,332	\$33,956
Percent Change from 2022 Actual		-64%	-60%	-21%	0%	20%	37%	54%

Notes:

1980 Actual allocation of income among taxpayers was fair and economically efficient as reflected in the 1980 GINI Coefficient of 35

2022 Actual allocation of income among taxpayers was unfair and economically inefficient as reflected in the 2022 GINI Coefficient of 42

2022 Shared Prosperity allocation of income among taxpayers reflects the impact had the US maintained a fair and economically efficient GINI Coefficient of 35