



COMMON SENSE

FOR INFORMED CITIZENS

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

Rick Schwenk
April 2026

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Author's Preface	2
Introduction	3
Economy and Business	4
Purpose of an Economy	
Capitalism	
Shareholder Capitalism	
Shift in US Income	
Continuing Shift in US Income	
Impact on US Economy	
Impact on Social Security	
Impact on the Free Press	
Summary	
Government and Politics	8
Purpose of Government	
Misuse of Information	
Impact of Shareholder Capitalism	
Summary	
Society and Citizens	10
Purpose of Society	
Beliefs and Self-interests	
Balance of Interests	
Shared Values	
Summary	
A Successful America	14
Informed Citizens	15
An Informed Citizens Commission	16
Declaration of Independence for Informed Citizens	18
Attachment A – Fair Distribution of US Income	
Attachment B – Informed Citizens Commission	

Author's Preface

When I retired, 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 early 1776. Its purpose was to persuade the American people of the need for independence from the British monarchy 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 for Informed Citizens is being published 250 years later. Its purpose is to persuade the American people of the need for independence from an unfair and inefficient economy and unqualified and untrustworthy leaders and the establishment of an Informed Citizens Commission to provide the people with independent influence on America's economy, government, and society.

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 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.

The Economy

Purpose of an Economy

The purpose of an economy, and therefore each business and financial market within the 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. 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.

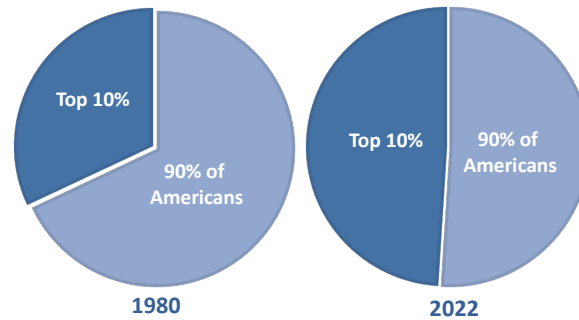
Management is incentivized to accomplish the goal of maximizing profits for shareholders by having the majority of their compensation tied to gains in the value of the shares of the corporation. The top 10% of the population (the upper class) owns 90% of all shares. The remaining 90% of the population 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 \$50 trillion. The 2022 impact alone was \$2.5 trillion.

Share of US Income



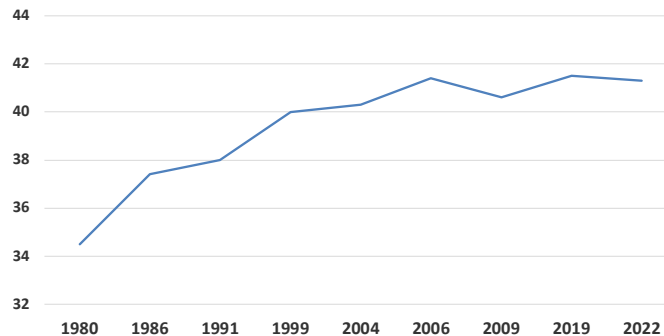
Without this unnecessary shift in income, average income in the working class (90% of Americans) would be 35% higher today. See Attachment A for more information on the impact of shareholder capitalism on the distribution of US income by taxpayer group over the past 40 years.

Impact on US Economy

The International Monetary Fund uses the GINI Index to measure the level of income sharing between the upper class and working class of countries around the world. A GINI Index 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.

America's GINI Index 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.

US GINI Index Excess Income to the Upper Class



1980 - Maximum Economic Activity and Higher GDP Growth

2022 - Lower Economic Activity and Lower GDP Growth

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

The result of America's increasing imbalance of income between the upper class and working class is an excess of income available to the upper class which has led to significant, not economically supported, price increases of high end assets (stocks, 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.

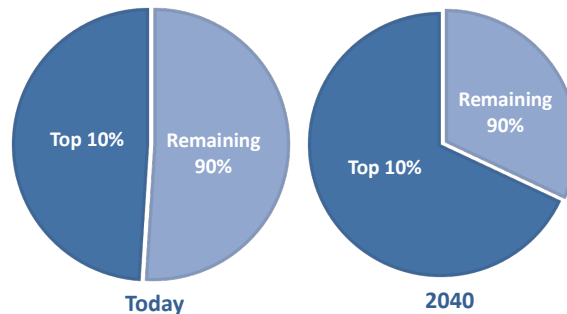
Impact on Social Security

Social security taxes are projected to be insufficient to meet social security payment requirements over the next 75 years by \$25 trillion. If the shift in income from the working class to the upper class had not happened, there would not be a shortfall because the working class would be paying sufficient taxes to fund the requirements. The majority of the upper class income is not subject to social security taxes while all of the working class income is subject to social security taxes.

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 (90% of Americans) 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 generated by AI and robotics going to the upper class (10% of Americans).

Projected Share of US Income



Achieving this projection is unlikely. The only question is will we avoid it with rational intervention, or will it take a catastrophe or catastrophe's as it did in the early 20th century (great depression and world wars), which was the last time the imbalance in the US income was as high as it is today and the trends as negative as they are today, to reverse those trends and lead to the fair and efficient income sharing America enjoyed throughout the middle decades of the 20th century.

Summary

Shareholder capitalism's goal of maximizing shareholder interests has led to an unfair, inefficient, and unsustainable economy, political polarization, and social unrest.

Our economic system will not change on its own. Human nature is to do what's in our own self-interest. Our economic system must provide a balance 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 is the only way to balance the human nature trait of doing what's in our own self-interests.

A Successful America requires Informed employees who will require corporations to balance the interests of the upper class (shareholders) and the working class (employees and consumers) to achieve maximum economic fairness and efficiency.

Politics and Government

Purpose of Government

The purpose of government, and therefore each elected representative and political party within government, is to ensure the fair pursuit of happiness for all citizens by providing rules and regulations that result in the fair balancing of liberal and conservative beliefs and in a fair and efficient balancing of economic interests of all citizens, and to provide security for its citizens.

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.

Leaders

Without accurate and meaningful information on candidates, voters are left to select leaders based on personality, positions on issues, and/or misinformation.

The more politicians, mainstream media, and social media distort the truth for their own and their donors and shareholders' interests the less real the "will of the people" becomes. We must restore truth and transparency to politics, business, and society to benefit from the real "will of the people", which is the only way to realize the goodness of God through the goodness of people.

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, a 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.

A Successful America requires Informed voters who will elect candidates for public office with integrity and honesty, the skills and experience for the role and responsibilities, and the wisdom required to find balanced solutions for the issues and opportunities facing America and the world.

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 and Self-interests

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.

Our beliefs are 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 to 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.

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.

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 and for his support of their financial interests (lower taxes, etc.). They don't believe he will actually be able to overthrow democracy and install a strongman autocracy in America.

The upper class don't understand why the working class are unhappy. They believe low unemployment and modest gains in income for the working class should be sufficient. They believe 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

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 larger 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.

The 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

Common Sense

No matter the skills, abilities, or experiences, all people have a heart, love for children, and belief in fair play and right versus wrong. People's shared values, faith in God, and faith in the goodness of people can only surface if they believe their political and business leaders are being honest and are treating them fairly, which will only happen if their political and business leaders are being honest and 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 requires Informed citizens who will 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.

A Successful America

A Government that Represents Everyone with qualified and trustworthy leaders who

- Enact laws that are balanced for liberal and conservative views
- Enact laws that provide for a fair and efficient economy
- Provide physical, cyber, and economic security

An Economy that Benefits Everyone with fairness and efficiency that results in

- 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

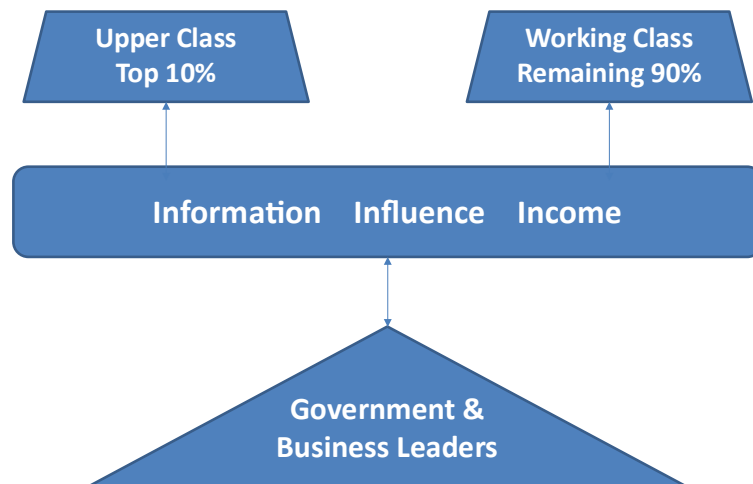
A Society that Respects Everyone with accurate and meaningful information for

- 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 who will result in honest and respectful citizens

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. Equal access to accurate and meaningful information is required for free and fair markets that balance influence and income.

Equal Access to Information Balances Influence and Income



Equal access to accurate and meaningful information will result in:

- Informed voters who will elect candidates for public office with integrity and honesty, the skills and experience for the role and responsibilities, and the wisdom required to find balanced solutions for the issues and opportunities facing America and the world
- Informed employees will requires corporations to balance the interests of the upper class (shareholders) and the working class (employees and consumers) to achieve maximum economic fairness and efficiency
- Informed citizens will 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

Only a government agency like an Informed Citizens Commission can ensure a fair sharing of accurate and meaningful information to pursue a Successful America and only citizen oversight can ensure the independence of that government agency.

An Informed Citizens Commission

Goals: Truth and Transparency

Ensure accurate and meaningful candidate information for voters so they elect qualified and trustworthy leaders who will enact:

- Campaign finance reforms that will result in elected representatives enacting legislation in the best interests of all citizens (eliminate big money donations)
- Election reforms that will result in elected representatives enacting legislation in the best interests of all citizens (eliminate partisan control of elections)
- Legislative procedure reforms that will result in elected representatives enacting legislation in the best interests of all citizens (eliminate partisan procedures)

Ensure accurate and meaningful corporate information for employees so they can choose corporations that balance the interests of the upper class (shareholders) and the working class (employees and consumers) to achieve maximum economic fairness and efficiency with:

- Corporate goals that balance the interests of the employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders
- Corporate board representation that balances the interests of the employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders
- Management compensation that is tied to achieving goals that balance the interests of employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders (*eliminate management shareholder equity compensation* because it prioritizes shareholder interests over the interests of employees, consumers, and communities)

Ensure accurate and meaningful information on issues for citizens so they can appreciate the viewpoints of others and create a society that respects everyone and results in:

- Accurate and meaningful government issues reporting for voters
- Accurate and meaningful business issues reporting for employees
- Accurate and meaningful social issues reporting for all citizens

Note: The above Goals may change based on the information and perspectives developed by the Citizens Research Services (see the Summary and Citizens Research Services sections below).

Organization:

The Informed Citizens Commission would be organized to achieve its Goals, as follows:

A Voter Information Division to ensure accurate and meaningful candidate information for voters so they can elect qualified and trustworthy leaders that will lead to a fair and efficient government that represents everyone.

An Employee Information Division to ensure accurate and meaningful corporate information for employees so they can choose corporations that will lead to a fair and efficient economy that benefits everyone.

Citizens Research Services to ensure accurate and meaningful issues and guidelines information for elected officials and citizens so they can better appreciate the viewpoints of others leading to better legislation and a society that respects everyone.

Advisory Board of citizen volunteers to review Employee Information Division, Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services recommendations and to provide the Commissioners with a collective rating or ratings on the accuracy and adequacy of those recommendations relative to the Informed Citizens Commission Goals.

Commission of citizen volunteers to review regulations and reporting proposed by the Employee Information Division, the Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services, consider input from the Advisory Board on the proposals, consider whether they accomplish the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission, and approve, disapprove, request revisions, or request further information on those regulations and reporting proposals.

Support Offices to support the Commissioners, Advisory Board members, and staff of the Employee Information Division, Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services.

See Attachment B for more information on an Informed Citizens Commission.

Declaration of Independence For Informed Citizens

*“We the Citizens of these United States of America do hereby Declare our Independence from an Unfair and Inefficient Economy and Untrustworthy and Unqualified Leaders and do hereby demand an **Informed Citizens Commission** to provide Citizens with influence over America’s economy, government, and society.”*

Macro and fundamental changes to America’s economic and political systems are required to avoid encountering a very serious, near-term catastrophe or catastrophes, to overcome America’s current very serious challenges, and to take advantage of America’s very significant opportunities.

Accomplishing those macro and fundamental changes will be very difficult. There will be many people who believe their economic self-interests will be significantly impaired by such changes in the short term. However, these changes will evolve over time and as shown in Attachment A the impact on those people will be fair. They are also essential to recovering from our current high-risk, negative environment and realizing America’s potential for our children and grandchildren.

Although difficult, if all people of goodwill (moderates, liberals, progressives, conservatives, MAGA supporters, upper class, working class, white, black, brown, male, female, different religions, etc.) join together to support one goal of bringing truth and transparency to business and government with an **Informed Citizens Commission** we can accomplish the macro and fundamental changes to our economic and political systems required to achieve a Successful America, where:

- Informed voters elect candidates for public office with integrity and honesty, the skills and experience for the role and responsibilities, and the wisdom required to find balanced solutions for the issues and opportunities facing America and the world
- Informed employees require corporations to balance the interests of the upper class (shareholders) and the working class (employees and consumers) to achieve maximum economic fairness and efficiency
- Informed 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

To sign the **Declaration of Independence** and send an email to your elected representatives demanding an **Informed Citizens Commission** go to www.informedcitizens.com/sign-the-declaration

A Fair Sharing of America's Prosperity

Per Average Taxpayer								
	Total	Top 0.1%	Next 0.9%	Next 4%	Next 5%	Next 15%	Next 25%	Bottom 50%
1980 Actual Income (adjusted for inflation)	\$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
2022 Income with a Fair Sharing of Prosperity	\$95,915	\$3,904,974	\$470,043	\$300,655	\$213,406	\$157,205	\$98,332	\$33,956

Notes:

1980 Actual Income distribution was fair and economically efficient as reflected in the 1980 GINI Index of 35

2022 Actual Income distribution was unfair and economically inefficient as reflected in the 2022 GINI Index of 42

2022 Income with a Fair Sharing of Prosperity distribution reflects the impact had the US maintained a fair and economically efficient GINI Index of 35

Attachment B

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Index

	<u>Page</u>
1. Goals	2
2. Organization	3
3. Voter Information Division	4
4. Employee Information Division	6
5. Citizens Research Services	7
6. Advisory Board	9
7. Commissioners	10
8. Support Offices	11
9. Operations	12

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Goals

Truth and Transparency

Ensure accurate and meaningful candidate information for voters so they elect qualified and trustworthy leaders who will enact:

- Campaign finance reforms that will result in elected representatives enacting legislation in the best interests of all citizens (eliminate big money donations)
- Election reforms that will result in elected representatives enacting legislation in the best interests of all citizens (eliminate partisan control of elections)
- Legislative procedure reforms that will result in elected representatives enacting legislation in the best interests of all citizens (eliminate partisan procedures)

Ensure accurate and meaningful corporate information for employees so they can choose corporations that balance the interests of the upper class (shareholders) and working class (employees and consumers) to achieve maximum economic fairness and efficiency with:

- Corporate goals that balance the interests of the employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders
- Corporate board representation that balances the interests of the employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders
- Management compensation that is tied to achieving goals that balance the interests of employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders (*eliminate management shareholder equity compensation* because it prioritizes shareholder interests over the interests of employees, consumers, and communities)

Ensure accurate and meaningful information on issues for citizens so they can appreciate the viewpoints of others and create a society that respects everyone and results in:

- Accurate and meaningful government issues reporting for voters
- Accurate and meaningful business issues reporting for employees
- Accurate and meaningful social issues reporting for all citizens

Note: The above Goals may change based upon the information and perspectives developed by the Citizens Research Services (see the Organization and Citizens Research Services sections below).

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Organization

The Informed Citizens Commission would be organized to achieve its Goals, as follows:

- **A Voter Information Division** to ensure accurate and meaningful candidate information for voters so they can elect qualified and trustworthy leaders that will lead to a fair and efficient government that represents everyone.
- **An Employee Information Division** to ensure accurate and meaningful corporate information for employees so they can choose corporations that will lead to a fair and efficient economy that benefits everyone.
- **Citizens Research Services** to ensure accurate and meaningful issues and guidelines information for elected officials and citizens so they can better appreciate the viewpoints of others leading to better legislation and a society that respects everyone.
- **Advisory Board** of citizen volunteers to review Employee Information Division, Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services recommendations and to provide the Commissioners with a collective rating or ratings on the accuracy and adequacy of those recommendations relative to the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission.
- **Commission** of citizen volunteers to review regulations and reporting proposed by the Employee Information Division, the Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services, consider input from the Advisory Board on the proposals, all relative to the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission, and approve, disapprove, request revisions, or request further information on those regulations and reporting proposals.
- **Support Offices** to support the Commissioners, Advisory Board members, and staff of the Employee Information Division, Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services.

Independence. The Informed Citizens Commission would be an independent, non-partisan agency with rotating citizen volunteer commissioners and advisory board members. Rotating citizen volunteers would ensure the Informed Citizens Commission’s independence. Independence is critical to develop the trust of citizens and overcome the lack of trust of current leaders and the establishment. Any attempt to inappropriately influence the selection process or decisions of a Commissioner, an Advisory Board member, or any employee of the Employee Information Division, Voter Information Division, Citizens Research Services, or Support Office would be a crime punishable with a minimum of 1 year in prison and up to 15 years in prison.

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Voter Information Division

The Voter Information Division would be responsible for developing the candidate reporting requirements that would accomplish the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission. Those reporting requirements would provide voters with the information they need to elect qualified and trustworthy leaders who will represent everyone. The Voter Information Division would recommend candidate information reporting requirements regulations to the Commissioners and Advisory Board. The Voter Information Division would be responsible for implementing and enforcing the regulations approved by the Commissioners. This would result in candidates providing accurate and meaningful information about themselves and their supporters so voters could make more informed voting decisions. This information would also be used by the press, think tanks, research and educational institutions, governments, and other entities for analysis for better political, economic and social perspectives.

Organization. The Voter Information Division would have the staff, either directly or through the Support Offices, to research and determine what information and in what format that information should be to ensure voters have accurate and adequate information from candidates to elect the most qualified leaders, to determine what regulations would be required to ensure that the information is provided and that it is in the format required, and to enforce those regulations.

Reporting. Following are sample candidate information reporting requirements:

- **Background and qualifications**
 - Name, address, and candidate website
 - Education, experience, and skills for the office
 - Goals for the office and the country
- **Positions**
 - Position on balancing solutions for the benefit of all citizens
 - Positions on key issues and balanced solutions for addressing those issues
 - Position on Citizens Research Services recommendations
- **Sources of campaign funding**
 - By major donor and PAC
 - Each major donor and PAC's position on key issues and solutions
 - Explanation of differences with each major donor and PAC's positions

Information Access. The Voter Information Division would require candidates to provide, and update as necessary, all required candidate information reporting in a summarized enough format to be useful for all eligible voters and in a detailed enough format for maximum benefit for the most sophisticated eligible voters. Both reporting formats would be made available on a Voter Information Division maintained website that would be available to all eligible voters and that would include comparisons between candidates running for the same office (see Vote-USA.org and BallotReady.org). Candidate websites will be required to include a link to the Voter Information Division website.

Recommendations for Changes in Laws and/or Constitutional Amendments. The Voter Information Division would recommend to Citizens Research Services any suggestions for candidate reporting

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

requirements that would provide voters with the information they need to elect qualified and trustworthy leaders that require changes to laws and regulations and/or constitutional amendments. Two examples would be 1) truth and transparency in political speech and campaign advertising and 2) changes to campaign finance, including limits to political contributions, public financing of political campaigns, and/or limited influence of political donors during and post elected officials’ terms.

Use of Candidate Information. The Voter Information Division would also be responsible for developing and recommending to the Commissioners and Advisory Board individual and team candidate evaluation processes, procedures, and forms, as well as suggested evaluation criteria for voters to consider using in their evaluations of candidates for elected office.

Evaluation Criteria. Following are sample candidate evaluation criteria:

- **Integrity, honesty, and transparency**
 - Positive ads, based on record, not attacking opponent or opponent party
 - Actions consistent with messaging
 - Transparent with the information required for this rating
- **Skills and experience for the office**
 - Government and business experience
 - Education
 - Goals for the office
- **Enact balanced approaches to challenges and opportunities**
 - Short-term and long-term impacts
 - Middle class and upper class interests
 - The Informed Citizens Commission Goals

Information Access. The Voter Information Division would be responsible for creating the infrastructure required, including technology to support access to process, procedures, and forms, to implement the approved individual and team candidate evaluation processes, procedures, and forms, as well as suggested evaluation criteria approved by the Commission.

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Employee Information Division

The Employee Information Division would be responsible for developing and recommending to the Commissioners and Advisory Board corporate reporting requirements for accurate and meaningful information for their employees, potential employees, and the public that would be required to accomplish the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission. It would be responsible for implementing and enforcing the regulations approved by the Commission. This would help employees make informed employment decisions, consumers make informed buying decisions, and communities make informed community support decisions. This information would also be used by the press, think tanks, research and educational institutions, governments, and other entities for analysis for better political, economic and social perspectives.

Organization. The Employee Information Division would have the staff, either directly or through the Support Offices, to research and determine what information and in what format that information should be to ensure employees have accurate and adequate information from corporations for free and fair employment markets, to determine what regulations would be required to ensure that the information is provided and that it is in the format required, and to enforce those regulations.

Reporting. Following are sample corporate information reporting requirements:

- **Corporate Goals and Board Representation**
 - Corporate goals and how they are balanced for the interests of all participants (employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders)
 - Board representation and how it is balanced for the interests of all participants (employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders)
- **Management Compensation Plans**
 - Management compensation plans and how they are designed to accomplish the corporate goals, particularly those that balance the interests of all participants
 - Shareholder equity value included in management compensation plans, if any, and how management is incentivized to balance the interests of the other participants
- **Management and Employee Compensation**
 - Compensation of the CEO, senior management, and each quartile of employees, along with the multiple of the CEO and senior management compensation to the average of each quartile of employees as compared to Citizens Research Services recommendations
 - Roles, responsibilities, compensation levels and structures for each group

Information Access. The Employee Information Division would require corporations to provide, and update at least annually, all required reporting information in both a sufficiently summarized format to be useful for all employees and potential employees, as well as a sufficiently detailed format for maximum benefit for the most sophisticated employees and potential employees. Both reporting formats would be made available on the corporation’s public website presented in an Employee Information Division format. The corporation would be required to notify all employees and potential employees of the availability of that information and any updates thereto.

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Citizens Research Services

Citizens Research Services would be responsible for researching and recommending to the Commissioners and Advisory Board, high level, accurate, and meaningful information, analysis, and reporting on the issues facing our government, economy, and society that would be of most benefit to elected representatives and the people they serve (e.g., voters, employees, business leaders, the press, think tanks, educational institutions, governments, and other entities); baseline, high level guidelines for solutions to those issues; methods for measuring those solutions and results of those measurements; and evaluations of proposed legislation against those issues and guidelines that would be required to accomplish the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission. The guidelines would include potential timeframes for realization, which could take many years, even decades.

Organization. Citizens Research Services would assume the responsibilities and staff of the Congressional Research Services* agency. It would continue to support congressional representatives, but with transparency, in addition to supporting citizens. Being part of the Informed Citizens Commission would provide political independence. Political independence is essential as its job is to balance knowledge and experience of those on the left and right and those in the upper class and working class to achieve the most balanced solutions to issues Americans face and opportunities Americans are presented with.

Reporting. Following are samples of issues that Citizens Research Services should consider researching and reporting on information and guidelines:

- **Purpose of the economy:** The purpose of the economy and therefore each business within the economy and its financial markets. Compare and contrast our current shareholder capitalism economy with a fully free and fair markets economy.
- **Economy:** Accurate and meaningful information and guidelines for the following categories that would facilitate achieving the goal of a fair economy that shares prosperity with all citizens
 - Corporate goals, board representation, and board, CEO, and management incentive compensation plan objectives and rewards that balance the interests of employees, consumers, communities, and shareholders
 - Fair Top 10% Share of Income
 - Fair 90% Share of Income
 - Fair US GINI Index
 - Fair tax rates, effectively flat considering all taxes, once fair income disparity is achieved
 - Reasonable, Risk Weighted Equity Returns
 - Reasonable Long-term Interest Rates
 - Reasonable Inflation Rate
 - Reasonable GDP Growth Rate, considering population changes, deficit spending, etc.
 - Sustainable Federal Debt to GDP Ratio
 - Sustainable Deficit to Change in GDP Ratio
- **Purpose of government:** The purpose of the government and therefore each elected representative within government. Compare and contrast our current partisan, polarized political system with an open, honest, truthful, and transparent political system.

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

- **Government:** Accurate and meaningful information and guidelines for the following categories that would facilitate achieving the goal of a government that represents all citizens and maximizes social and economic benefits in both the short-term and long-term for all citizens
 - Effective Campaign Finance
 - Effective Primary Elections
 - Effective General Elections
 - Fair Voting Districts
 - Political Truth and Transparency
 - Candidate Reporting Information
 - Effective Campaign Advertising
 - Ease of Voting
 - High Voter Participation
 - Popular Vote for President
 - Voter representation in Senate
 - Legislative Operations
- **Education and healthcare:** Actions that would result in affordable quality education and healthcare for all, balanced with appropriate economic impact.
- **Racial, legal, and criminal justice:** Legislative actions that address the realities of racism and other legal and criminal justice inequities without negative short-term impacts.
- **Environmental responsibility:** Legislative actions balanced for science and economic impact.
- **Physical and cyber security:** Cost effective actions in the public’s best interest.
- **Globalization and international affairs:** Actions that recognize the U.S. as the standard for democracy, free enterprise, and social justice, while maintaining relationships that result in worldwide economic development and security.

Information Access. Citizens Research Services would provide, and update as necessary, all required reporting in a summarized enough format to be useful for all citizens and in a detailed enough format for maximum benefit for the most sophisticated citizens. Both reporting formats would be made available on a Citizens Research Services maintained website that would both be available to all citizens.

* The Congressional Research Service is a public policy research institute of the United States Congress. Operating within the Library of Congress, it works primarily and directly for members of Congress and their committees and staff on a confidential, nonpartisan basis. It is referred to as America's think tank. Citizens Research Services would assume the responsibilities and staff of the Congressional Research Services agency and continue to provide research services for members of Congress, but no longer on a confidential basis. All research done for Congress and the Informed Citizens Commission would be available for public review on a Citizens Research Services website.

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Advisory Board

The responsibility of the Advisory Board would be to review all Employee Information Division, Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services recommendations and to provide the Commissioners with a collective rating or ratings on various aspects of the recommendations, at a minimum on the accuracy and adequacy of those recommendations relative to the Informed Citizens Commission Goals.

Volunteer and Selection Process. Each year all eligible voters meeting minimum criteria (e.g., college education and/or leadership or professional experience) would have the opportunity to volunteer to be a member of the Advisory Board of the Informed Citizens Commission. Eligible voters could volunteer via the Informed Citizens Commission website and provide an email address or by checking a box on their tax return and providing an email address. All volunteers would be emailed a questionnaire to be completed online requesting basic information, including with regard to education and professional experience, and confirmation of a belief in and commitment to the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission and the Commissioners and Advisory Board responsibilities. Questionnaires submitted would be screened electronically, with audits performed by an independent consulting firm selected by the interim CEO. A portion of those passing the initial screen would be selected randomly and contacted for video interviews and evaluations. The goal of the screening process and video evaluations would be to approve as close to all eligible voter volunteers with the minimum education or professional experience and a belief in and commitment to the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission and the Commissioner and Advisory Board responsibilities as possible. Of those passing the video evaluations, 900 would be randomly selected to serve as members of the Advisory Board in the first year. Advisory Board members would serve three-year terms, except that one-third of the initial group would serve for a one-year term and one-third of the initial group would serve for a two-year term. Each following year 300 new Advisory Board members would be selected using the same review process as the initial one. The Advisory Board members could vote to remove any member they determine not to have the minimum education or professional experience or to not be committed to the Advisory Board responsibilities. Advisory Board members would be expected to be available for two to ten days per month. Advisory Board member employers would be required to provide those days off as unpaid service days. Advisor Board members would be paid for their time worked at their current employer compensation rate by the Informed Citizens Commission.

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Commissioners

The responsibilities of the Commissioners would be to review regulations and reporting proposed by the Employee Information Division, the Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services, consider input from the Advisory Board on the proposals, consider whether they will accomplish the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission, and approve, disapprove, request revisions, or request further information on those regulations and reporting proposals. Sharing of information would be required to the extent and within a timeframe that achieves the best long-term economic, political, and social impact while moderating negative short-term impacts.

Volunteer, Screening, and Selection Process. Each year all eligible voters would have the opportunity to volunteer to be a Commissioner of the Informed Citizens Commission. Eligible voters could volunteer via the Informed Citizens Commission website by providing an email address or, if a taxpayer, by checking a box on their tax return and providing an email address. All volunteers would be emailed a high-level questionnaire to be completed online requesting basic information and confirmation of a belief in and commitment to the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission and the Commissioners’ responsibilities. Questionnaires submitted would be screened electronically, with audits performed by an independent consulting firm selected by the interim CEO. A portion of those passing the initial screen would be selected randomly and contacted for video interviews and evaluations. The goal of the screening process and video evaluations would be to approve as close to all eligible voter volunteers with a belief in and commitment to the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission and the Commissioner responsibilities as possible, even those with the most basic understanding of the responsibilities. Of those passing the video evaluations, 900 would be randomly selected to serve as Commissioners in the first year. Commissioners would serve three-year terms, except that one-third of the initial group would serve for a one-year term and one-third of the initial group would serve for a two-year term. Each following year 300 new Commissioners will be selected using the same review process as the initial one. The Commissioners could vote to remove any Commissioner they determine to be not committed to the Commissioner responsibilities. Commissioners would be expected to be available for one to five days per month. Commissioner employers would be required to provide those days off as unpaid service days. Commissioners would be paid for their time worked at their current employer compensation rate by the Informed Citizens Commission.

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Support Offices

The Support Offices would be responsible for providing support for the Commissioners, Advisory Board members, and staff of the Employee Information Division, Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

Organization. The Support Offices would include the offices of Regulations, Employee, Voter, and Citizen Education, Enforcement, Examination, General Counsel, Financial Management, Recruiting, Human Resources, and Information Technology. The Commissioners could approve additional offices, as necessary. The Commissioners with input from the Advisory Board would select an independent recruiting firm to identify Support Office CEO candidates, and the Commissioners with input from the Advisory Board would select a CEO from the candidates presented. The CEO would select a recruiting firm or firms to identify leader candidates for the Employee Information Division, the Voter Information Division, Citizens Research Services, and each Support Office, would select leaders from the candidates presented and present them to the Commissioners for approval.

Remote Operations. The Commissioners and Advisory Board members would work remotely with support, coordination, and controls provided by the Support Offices employees. Each Commissioner and Advisory Board member would be provided with a personal computer and secure access.

Informed Citizens Commission

“By the People, For the People”

Operations

Staff Research. The staff of the Employee Information Division, the Voter Information Division, and Citizens Research Services would research all sources of information and engage advisors to develop accurate and adequate information on each candidate and corporate reporting requirement to be recommended to the Advisory Board Members and Commissioners, considering an appropriate balance of the cost and benefit of each. The staff would utilize the Support Offices as necessary. The staff would also survey economists, sociologists, political scientists, business leaders, community leaders, etc., as necessary. The surveys would be inclusive of most, if not all, leading participants in the field being surveyed. The results of all surveys would be publicly available on the Informed Citizens Commission website. The staff would prepare draft reporting requirements and make them available for public comments. Comments would be considered when preparing the reporting recommendations.

Advisory Board Ratings. The reporting requirements recommendations would be presented to the Advisory Board members in two formats: sufficiently summarized to be useful for all Advisory Board members, as well as sufficiently detailed for maximum benefit for the most sophisticated members. The Advisory Board members would review the reporting requirement recommendations relative to the Informed Citizens Commission Goals and provide their opinion via a rating system.

Commission Approval Process. The reporting requirement recommendations and Advisory Board ratings would be presented to the Commissioners in two formats: sufficiently summarized to be useful for all Commissioners, as well as sufficiently detailed for maximum benefit for the most sophisticated Commissioners. The Commissioners would have the opportunity to approve, decline, request more information, or suggest changes. The process would continue until a majority of the Commissioners approve or decline the recommendation. The division staff and support offices would then implement the approved recommendations.

Use of Technology. The Staff would make maximum use of technology to ensure accomplishment of the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission: 1) collection of citizens information and perspectives via surveys, portal access points, and use of AI to analyze large quantities of citizen information and perspectives, and 2) distribution of citizen information and perspectives collected and analyzed, along with Informed Citizens Commission information, perspectives, and recommendations.

Annual Surveys. Annually the Commissioners, Advisory Board members, Division and Support Office staff, special interest groups, think tanks, and the public in general would be surveyed on current regulations, suggestions for new regulations, the ICC operating process, the participants, etc. The results of the surveys would be made public and would be considered by Informed Citizens Commission personnel for changes required.

Annual Report. The Support Offices personnel would prepare an Annual Report to the Commissioners and Advisory Board that would be available to the public. The Annual Report would include accomplishments relative to the Goals of the Informed Citizens Commission for the prior year; political, economic, and social trends; and goals and operating plan for the upcoming year.