A GOVERNMENT THAT WORKS FOR THE PEOPLE
A POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND GOVERNING PLAN

READER'S COMPANION

Objections *and Answers*

The strongest arguments against the plan, the author's responses, and the questions the book leaves open.

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Companion edition

HOW TO READ THIS COMPANION

The book argues with itself on purpose.

This companion does not add a new policy platform. It condenses a method already built into *A Government That Works for the People*: state the strongest case against a proposal, answer it without softening the objection, and identify what remains uncertain.

OBJECTION

Restates the concern as the book presents it, rather than weakening it for an easier response.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

Summarizes the response given in the book and the safeguards built into the proposal.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

Identifies a concession, unresolved tradeoff, or condition the book itself acknowledges.

> The entries are a reader's companion, not an independent legal, economic, or actuarial review. For the complete argument, evidence, citations, implementation details, and fiscal assumptions, consult the book itself.

Contents

Four domains. Fourteen objections. Each entry separates the concern, the response, and the uncertainty that remains.

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DOMAIN I

Democracy and Governing Rules

The book's institutional reforms try to make democratic government more decisive without removing safeguards. The objections in this section ask whether those reforms trade too much stability, federalism, or restraint for action.

01 The Electoral College protects federalism, contains recount disputes, and encourages broad coalitions.

OBJECTION

The book presents the strongest case for the Electoral College as a federalism argument: the United States is a union of states, and the presidency should require support across regions rather than a single national total. Defenders also argue that the present system contains close-election disputes within a few states, protects small-state and rural interests, and supports broad two-party coalitions.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The response is that the present system does not actually reward broad geographic support; it rewards narrow margins in a small number of competitive states. Most small states and most rural voters outside battlegrounds are ignored. The dispute-containment argument is treated as the strongest practical objection and is not dismissed. The book's case is that equal political citizenship should ultimately outweigh the current winner-take-all distortions.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The book accepts that a national popular vote changes the geography of campaigning and the administration of very close elections. Those operational questions require national recount and election-administration rules rather than an assumption that the transition is costless.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 6, “An Equal Vote in a Federal Republic,” especially “The Case for the Electoral College.”

02 Automatic continuing appropriations could make Congress less likely to pass a budget.

OBJECTION

The most serious objection is that if a missed appropriations deadline automatically keeps government operating, Congress may simply allow the fallback to continue. Critics also argue that automatic funding locks in the status quo, reduces bargaining leverage, and may fit badly when emergencies or priorities change.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The proposed fallback is deliberately uncomfortable rather than neutral: it uses the lowest available funding level, steps discretionary accounts down over time, restricts congressional recess during a lapse, and leaves Congress free to enact new appropriations or emergency supplementals. The book argues that shutdown leverage should be removed because it threatens lawful operations and people who are not parties to the dispute.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

No procedural design can force legislators to compromise. The proposal changes the consequence of failure; it does not guarantee timely appropriations.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 9, “No More Government by Fiscal Crisis,” “The Objections.”

03 The debt limit is one of the few moments when Congress is forced to confront the debt.

OBJECTION

Defenders point to episodes in which debt-limit negotiations produced spending restraints, including the Budget Control Act of 2011 and the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2023. Without that moment of leverage, they argue, deficits could grow faster.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The response is that the debt limit acts after Congress has already enacted the tax and spending laws that create the obligations. The book proposes moving discipline to the decision point through debt-to-GDP targets, symmetrical pay-as-you-go rules, a public tax-expenditure budget, and long-term cost statements.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

Replacing a recurring crisis does not by itself stabilize the debt. The separate baseline-repair framework in Chapter 22 still requires sustained fiscal choices.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 9, “The Objection: Isn’t the Debt Limit Our Only Brake?”

04 A fixed expiration for emergency power could end necessary authority in the middle of a genuine crisis.

OBJECTION

A thirty-day clock creates a political deadline that adversaries can see in advance. A divided Congress could allow an authority to expire for reasons unrelated to the emergency. Critics also worry that Congress may routinely rubber-stamp renewals or that judicial review could pull courts into national-security decisions.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The book's answer is institutional rather than absolute: thirty days is substantial initial authority; Congress would convene automatically; renewal votes would receive privileged procedure; and judicial review would focus on the legal predicate rather than second-guessing every factual judgment.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The book explicitly concedes that this objection cannot be fully answered. A rule that lets Congress end an emergency by declining to act also lets Congress do so for bad reasons. The tradeoff is between that risk and emergency authority that becomes effectively permanent.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 13, “Emergency Power Without Emergency Government,” “The Best Case Against This.”

05 A second route to constitutional amendment could make fundamental law too easy to change.

OBJECTION

Critics fear transient majorities, referendum campaigns dominated by money or misinformation, reduced state-legislature influence, and the unfamiliarity of a national referendum.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The proposed route still requires a three-fifths national vote and majority support in at least three-fifths of the states. The book argues that this remains a demanding threshold and that direct state-level constitutional voting already has deep American precedent.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The amendment itself would first have to survive the existing Article V process. The book acknowledges that institutions that benefit from the current gatekeeping structure may resist that change.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 14, “Making Constitutional Change Possible,” “Objections.”

DOMAIN II

Rights and Constitutional Reform

The constitutional proposals aim to settle recurring disputes through text rather than changing judicial majorities. The central objections concern legitimacy, judicial power, and the consequences of entrenchment.

06 An equal-citizenship and personal-liberty amendment would constitutionalize contested moral questions.

OBJECTION

The book calls this the strongest objection. Writing protections for equality, marriage, contraception, pregnancy, conscience, and religious neutrality into the Constitution would move contested questions beyond ordinary legislative politics and would give courts additional text to enforce.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The response is that these disputes are already constitutional disputes under the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses. The choice is therefore not between constitutionalization and ordinary politics, but between open-ended judicial interpretation and more specific text adopted through democratic amendment.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The book acknowledges that ratification of the entire amendment is unlikely in the near term and notes that its sections could be proposed separately.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 11, “Rights We Should Stop Re-Litigating,” “Objections.”

07 Regular Supreme Court appointments could make the Court track presidential elections too predictably.

OBJECTION

Under eighteen-year active-service terms with a regular appointment every two years, a two-term President would predictably appoint four Justices. Critics argue that random vacancies under life tenure can insulate the Court from direct electoral cycles. A second objection is that senior Justices serving temporarily could create a perceived two-tier Court.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The book argues that predictability is part of the reform's purpose: it reduces the political importance of the timing of death or retirement and gives each presidential term a regular share of appointments. Senior service is assigned through a neutral rotation fixed in advance rather than case-specific selection.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The book does not claim that eighteen years is uniquely correct. The term length, transition details, and public perception of senior service remain design questions.

BOOK SOURCE Appendix A, Amendment Four, “Best Case Against Amendment Four.”

DOMAIN III

Affordability and Economic Security

The economic chapters make large interventions in housing, health care, labor markets, and income security. Their objections are primarily about transition costs, supply constraints, incentives, and administrative capacity.

08 Building more housing can displace residents, strain infrastructure, and override local control.

OBJECTION

The housing chapter treats displacement, infrastructure, environmental risk, property rights, neighborhood stability, construction capacity, and demand-side subsidies as real objections. In particular, residents of lower-income neighborhoods may reasonably fear that new investment will accelerate local displacement even if regional supply lowers rents over time.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The response is to pair supply expansion with tenant protections, preservation of existing affordable housing, right-of-return rules where redevelopment occurs, infrastructure funding, environmental safeguards, and incremental forms of density. The book also argues that local control should not become an unlimited power to exclude new residents when the costs spill across a region.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

Localized gentrification effects are more complicated than regional supply effects, and construction labor, materials, financing, and infrastructure constrain how fast added zoning capacity becomes actual homes.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 16, “Housing Is Infrastructure,” “The Objections to Building More.”

09 A national health insurer requires large public revenues and could produce provider losses, waiting times, and transition disruption.

OBJECTION

The health chapter states the case against a single national insurer on specific grounds: a major shift from premiums to taxes, lower provider payments, higher utilization, possible waiting times, effects on pharmaceutical innovation, disruption of employer coverage, limits on duplicative private insurance, and reduced state autonomy.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The book answers that premiums are also a charge on employment, that payment changes would be phased rather than imposed overnight, that essential hospitals would receive global budgets, and that workforce capacity and waiting times would be measured directly. It treats supplementary private coverage as a design choice that could be revisited if persistent access problems emerge.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The book explicitly calls waiting-time risk genuine, especially early in the transition. Much of the savings case also depends on provider payment and national health-spending assumptions, so the distributional result for some middle-income households is conditional rather than guaranteed.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 17, “Health Care Without Financial Fear,” “The Objections,” and Appendix E.

10 Stronger labor standards may reduce flexibility, accelerate automation, and raise costs for small firms.

OBJECTION

Critics argue that unions can impede productivity, higher wages can accelerate automation, internationally exposed industries may become less competitive, labor-market flexibility may decline, and small employers may lack the margins or administrative capacity to absorb new rules.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The book does not deny those effects. It proposes phased standards, public administration of portable benefits and paid leave, simplified rules for small employers, and training and wage-insurance responses to automation. The minimum-wage design is deliberately tied to the median wage rather than a fixed political target.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The employment effects of wage floors depend on the size and timing of the increase and vary across regions and sectors. The book treats those effects as a measurable tradeoff rather than assuming they are zero.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 18, “Work Should Produce Security,” “The Objections” and “Who Bears the Transition.”

11 An income floor could reduce work, cost too much, and create fraud or error.

OBJECTION

The chapter identifies work incentives as the most serious objection. It also addresses the cost of a child allowance, improper payments, arguments for conditioning assistance on work or other behavior, and the loss of some state variation under a federal floor.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The proposed Work and Security Credit phases out gradually and is designed to reward earnings. The adult floor would be tested before broad expansion. Simpler eligibility and data verification are intended to reduce error, while the child allowance remains unconditional on the ground that children should not bear the consequences of parental choices.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The book sets an explicit failure trigger: if parental employment falls materially relative to trend or improper payments exceed the stated threshold, the design should be reconsidered.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 19, “An Income Floor Without a Poverty Trap,” “The Objections.”

12 The rural agenda spends more without confronting every structural problem in agriculture.

OBJECTION

The chapter presents criticism from several directions: farm support may be a legacy program that should be reduced further; the plan may underestimate the damage of trade conflict to export-dependent agriculture; and restoring competition law may be too mild in already-consolidated meatpacking markets.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The book defends a capped form of crop insurance because agricultural risk is difficult to insure privately at reasonable cost, while redirecting support within the program. It favors predictable trade policy and stronger Packers and Stockyards enforcement but stops short of structural separation where evidence is mixed.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The book explicitly says it does not have a satisfying answer to the trade problem and acknowledges that the evidence on some structural remedies in meatpacking is genuinely mixed.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 21, “Food, Farms, and Rural America,” “The Best Case Against This Chapter.”

DOMAIN IV

Government Capacity and Federalism

Making government easier to use can also centralize information and authority. The book's administrative proposals therefore raise questions about surveillance, cybersecurity, federalism, and jurisdiction.

13 A single Public Services Account could become a security and surveillance risk.

OBJECTION

A consolidated account is an attractive target for attack. Combining information across agencies can also create new surveillance capacity, and a federal platform may fit poorly with benefits administered by states. Digital systems can also exclude people who cannot or do not use them.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The book proposes strong authentication, continuous monitoring, statutory purpose limits, access logs, audit requirements, revocable consent, and an optional rather than mandatory account. Non-digital channels would remain permanent, and the federal system would hand off to state systems rather than abolish them.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

Consolidation creates both efficiency and new concentration risk. The design depends on technical security and legal limits working together; neither is treated as sufficient by itself.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 27, “One Door Into Government,” “The Objections.”

14 Expanded tribal jurisdiction and consent rules could create legal patchworks and block nationally important projects.

OBJECTION

The chapter's strongest practical objection is jurisdictional complexity in checkerboard areas where land status changes parcel by parcel. It also accepts that a tribal consent standard can stop infrastructure and energy projects and that mandatory funding removes some annual appropriations discretion.

AUTHOR'S ANSWER

The response is that the jurisdictional patchwork already exists and currently includes gaps. The book pairs expanded jurisdiction with due-process conditions and federal habeas review, and it prefers clear congressional allocation to case-by-case litigation. On consent, the author accepts the cost rather than pretending it can be eliminated.

WHAT REMAINS UNCERTAIN

The book says it does not know whether the plenary-power doctrine can be meaningfully limited without another constitutional amendment. Statutory commitments remain legally revocable by a later Congress.

BOOK SOURCE Chapter 29, “Tribal Nations and the Duties the United States Owes Them,” “The Best Case Against This Chapter.”

THE POINT OF THE EXERCISE

A serious plan should make its weaknesses visible.

The purpose of an objections-and-answers companion is not to make every proposal look invulnerable. Several of the book's objections identify real costs, and some responses are explicitly conditional or incomplete.

The method is to expose those weaknesses before policy becomes law, connect them to measurable safeguards, and preserve a reason to change course when evidence goes against the proposal.

A political philosophy that cannot recognize its own failures is not a philosophy.

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