



7 CORE PRINCIPLES

In May, I was asked by several colleagues to articulate in a few short paragraphs the foundational beliefs and timeless ideals that should guide our actions and policy positions. While volumes can, and have been, written on each of the subpoints below, this is my summary of seven core principles that help define who we are and where we stand as conservatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. The Republican Study Committee is in the best position to preserve and advance these simple truths.

1. Individual Liberty

The birth of our great nation was inspired by the bold declaration that our individual, God-given liberties should be preserved against government intrusion. That same conviction informs our conservative policy decisions still today. In America, we proclaim the self-evident truths that all of us are created equal and granted by God the same inherent freedoms, such as the natural and unalienable rights to life, liberty, conscience, free speech and the free exercise of religion, and the ability to pursue happiness, own property, build wealth and defend ourselves and our families. The purpose of government is to secure these rights, and the ideas we advance should always aim to maintain and increase the liberty of the American people.

2. Limited Government

For individual liberty to be championed, government must be reduced. We believe, as our Founders did, that legitimate government operates only by the consent

of the governed, and is more efficient and less corrupt when it is limited in its size and scope. When applied as written, our incomparable Constitution provides important safeguards against government encroachment, a vital separation of powers, and a necessary system of checks and balances. Federalism decentralizes authority, and the elimination of unnecessary regulations and bureaucracy helps ensure that government serves the people, and not the other way around. The best protection against government largesse is an engaged and informed electorate.

3. The Rule of Law

America is “a government of laws and not of men,” and the rule of law is our foundation. To maintain ordered liberty and a civilized society, public and private virtue should be encouraged and justice must be administered equally and impartially to all. Each branch of government must adhere to the Constitution, and the judicial branch must not be allowed to assume or exercise legislative or executive powers. Transparency and accountability are keys to good government, and Congress must faithfully perform its constitutional responsibility of oversight.

4. Fiscal Responsibility

Because government has refused to live within its means, America is facing an unprecedented debt and spending crisis. Federal debt now exceeds \$20 trillion, and our current fiscal path is unsustainable and dangerous, jeopardizing our nation’s economic growth, stability and the security of future generations. Congress has a moral and constitutional duty to resolve the crisis, bring spending under control, balance the federal budget, reform and modernize entitlement programs, eliminate fraud, waste and abuse, pursue continued pro-growth tax reforms and permanent tax reductions, and restore regular order and accountability in the budget and appropriations processes.

5. Peace through Strength

The first obligation of the federal government is to provide for the “common defense” of the United States by protecting our homeland and our strategic interests abroad. Because America serves in a natural role of moral leadership in an increasingly dangerous world, and weakness invites aggression, we must remain the strongest military power on earth—fully prepared and capable of defeating any adversaries, tyrants or

terrorists, under any circumstances, at any time. Adequate investment is necessary to maintain the air, land, sea, nuclear and cyber warfare superiority of our Armed Forces, and to properly train, equip and support our troops and their families. Among the essential responsibilities and first priorities of the federal government must be the honor and proper care of our veterans and wounded warriors, the security of our national borders, and the faithful enforcement of our immigration laws.

6. Free Markets

Government often stands as the greatest obstacle to the progress and prosperity of free people. Free markets and free and fair trade agreements allow for innovation, improvement and economic expansion as risk-takers, entrepreneurs and business owners are given the liberty to pursue the American dream and create more jobs and upward mobility for more people. We believe competition should be encouraged, and government intervention and regulation should be limited. The people are better qualified to make decisions about their own lives and finances than bureaucrats, and the private sector will outperform the public sector in virtually every scenario. The free enterprise system rewards hard work and self-sacrifice, and is the basis and genius of the American economy.

7. Human Dignity

Because all men are created equal and in the image of God, every human life has inestimable dignity and value, and every person should be measured only by the content of their character. A just government protects life, honors marriage and family as the primary institutions of a healthy society, and embraces the vital cultural influences of religion and morality. Public policy should always encourage education and emphasize the virtue of hard work as a pathway out of poverty, while public assistance programs should be reserved only for those who are truly in need. In America, everyone who plays by the rules should get a fair shot. By preserving these ideals, we will maintain the goodness of America that has been the secret to our greatness.

““ Our people look for a cause to believe in. Is it a third party we need, or is it a new and revitalized second party, raising a banner of no pale pastels, but bold colors which make it unmistakably clear where we stand on all of the issues troubling the people? . . . I do not believe I have proposed anything that is contrary to what has been considered Republican principle. It is at the same time the very basis of conservatism. It is time to reassert that principle and raise it to full view. ”” - RONALD REAGAN, SPEECH TO CPAC, 1975