

PROMISE #2: DISMANTLE THE ADMINISTRATIVE STATE AND RETURN SELF-GOVERNANCE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

Of course, the surest way to put the federal government back to work for the American people is to reduce its size and scope back to something resembling the original constitutional intent. Conservatives desire a smaller government not for its own sake, but for the sake of human flourishing. But the Washington Establishment doesn't *want* a constitutionally limited government because it means they lose power and are held more accountable by the people who put them in power.

Like restoring popular sovereignty, the task of reattaching the federal government's constitutional and democratic tethers calls to mind Ronald Reagan's observation that "there are no easy answers, but there are simple answers."

In the case of making the federal government smaller, more effective, and accountable, the simple answer is the Constitution itself. The surest proof of this is how strenuously and creatively generations of progressives and many Republican insiders have worked to cut themselves free from the strictures of the 1789 Constitution and subsequent amendments.

Consider the federal budget. Under current law, Congress is required to pass a budget—and 12 issue-specific spending bills comporting with it—every single year. The last time Congress did so was in 1996. Congress no longer meaningfully budgets, authorizes, or categorizes spending. Instead, party leaders negotiate one multitrillion-dollar spending bill—several thousand pages long—and then vote on it before anyone, literally, has had a chance to read it. Debate time is restricted. Amendments are prohibited. And all of this is backed up against a midnight deadline when the *previous* "omnibus" spending bill will run out and the federal government "shuts down."

This process is not designed to empower 330 million American citizens and their elected representatives, but rather to empower the party elites secretly negotiating without any public scrutiny or oversight.

In the end, congressional leaders' behavior and incentives here are no different from those of global elites insulating policy decisions—over the climate, trade, public health, you name it—from the sovereignty of national electorates. Public scrutiny and democratic accountability make life harder for policymakers—so they skirt it. It's not dysfunction; it's corruption.

And despite its gaudy price tag, the federal budget is not even close to the worst example of this corruption. That distinction belongs to the "Administrative State," the dismantling of which must a top priority for the next conservative President.

The term Administrative State refers to the policymaking work done by the bureaucracies of all the federal government's departments, agencies, and millions of employees. Under Article I of the Constitution, "*All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the*

United States, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.” That is, federal law is enacted only by elected legislators in both houses of Congress.

This exclusive authority was part of the Framers’ doctrine of “separated powers.” They not only split the federal government’s legislative, executive, and judicial powers into different branches. They also gave each branch checks over the others. Under our Constitution, the legislative branch—Congress—is far and away the most powerful and, correspondingly, the most accountable to the people.

In recent decades, members of the House and Senate discovered that if they give away that power to the Article II branch of government, they can also deny responsibility for its actions. So today in Washington, most policy is no longer set by Congress at all, but by the Administrative State. Given the choice between being powerful but vulnerable or irrelevant but famous, most Members of Congress have chosen the latter.

Congress passes intentionally vague laws that delegate decision-making over a given issue to a federal agency. That agency’s bureaucrats—not just unelected but seemingly un-fireable—then leap at the chance to fill the vacuum created by Congress’s preening cowardice. The federal government is growing larger and less constitutionally accountable—even to the President—every year.

I A combination of elected and unelected bureaucrats at the Environmental Protection Agency quietly strangles domestic energy production through difficult-to-understand rulemaking processes;

I Bureaucrats at the Department of Homeland Security, following the lead of a feckless Administration, order border and immigration enforcement agencies to help migrants criminally enter our country with impunity;

I Bureaucrats at the Department of Education inject racist, anti-American, ahistorical propaganda into America’s classrooms;

I Bureaucrats at the Department of Justice force school districts to undermine girls’ sports and parents’ rights to satisfy transgender extremists;

I Woke bureaucrats at the Pentagon force troops to attend “training” seminars about “white privilege”; and

I Bureaucrats at the State Department infuse U.S. foreign aid programs with woke extremism about “intersectionality” and abortion.³

Unaccountable federal spending is the secret lifeblood of the Great Awakening. Nearly every power center held by the Left is funded or supported, one way or another, through the bureaucracy by Congress. Colleges and school districts are funded by tax dollars. The

Administrative State holds 100 percent of its power at the sufferance of Congress, and its insulation from presidential discipline is an unconstitutional fairy tale spun by the Washington Establishment to protect its turf. Members of Congress shield themselves from constitutional accountability often when the White House allows them to get away with it. Cultural institutions like public libraries and public health agencies are only as “independent” from public accountability as elected officials and voters permit.

Let’s be clear: The most egregious regulations promulgated by the current Administration come from one place: the Oval Office. The President cannot hide behind the agencies; as his many executive orders make clear, his is the responsibility for the regulations that threaten American communities, schools, and families. A conservative President must move swiftly to do away with these vast abuses of presidential power and remove the career and political bureaucrats who fuel it.

Properly considered, restoring fiscal limits and constitutional accountability to the federal government is a continuation of restoring national sovereignty to the American people. In foreign affairs, global strategy, federal budgeting and policymaking, the same pattern emerges again and again. Ruling elites slash and tear at restrictions and accountability placed on them. They centralize power up and away from the American people: to supra-national treaties and organizations, to left-wing “experts,” to sight-unseen all-or-nothing legislating, to the unelected career bureaucrats of the Administrative State.

As monolithic as the Left’s institutional power appears to be, it originates with appropriations from Congress and is made complete by a feckless President. A conservative President must look to the legislative branch for decisive action. The Administrative State is not going anywhere until Congress acts to retrieve its own power from bureaucrats and the White House. But in the meantime, there are many executive tools a courageous conservative President can use to handcuff the bureaucracy, push Congress to return to its constitutional responsibility, restore power over Washington to the American people, bring the Administrative State to heel, and in the process defang and defund the woke culture warriors who have infiltrated every last institution in America.

The Conservative Promise lays out how to use many of these tools including: how to fire supposedly “un-fireable” federal bureaucrats; how to shutter wasteful and corrupt bureaus and offices; how to muzzle woke propaganda at every level of government; how to restore the American people’s constitutional authority over the Administrative State; and how to save untold taxpayer dollars in the process.

Finally, the President can restore public confidence and accountability to our most important government function of all: national defense. The American people desire a military full of highly skilled servicemen and women who can protect the homeland and our interests overseas. The next conservative President must end the Left’s social experimentation with the military, restore *warfighting* as its sole mission, and set defeating the threat of the Chinese Communist Party as its highest priority.

The next conservative President must possess the courage to relentlessly put the interests of the everyday American over the desires of the ruling elite. Their outrage cannot be prevented; it must simply be ignored. And it can be. The Left derives its power from the institutions they control. But those institutions are only powerful to the extent that constitutional officers surrender their own legitimate authority to them. A President who refuses to do so and uses his or her office to reimpose constitutional authority over federal policymaking can begin to correct decades of corruption and remove thousands of bureaucrats from the positions of public trust they have so long abused.