

# **CONSERVATIVE**

ACTION PROJECT

## MISSION STATEMENT

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The vision of CAP was eloquently communicated in the Mount Vernon Statement which was released in 2010 and reads, in part:

At this important time, we need a restatement of Constitutional conservatism grounded in the priceless principle of ordered liberty articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution...

...A Constitutional conservatism unites all conservatives through the natural fusion provided by American principles. It reminds economic conservatives that morality is essential to limited government, social conservatives that unlimited government is a threat to moral self-government, and national security conservatives that energetic but responsible government is the key to America's safety and leadership role in the world.

A Constitutional conservatism based on first principles provides the framework for a consistent and meaningful policy agenda.

- It applies the principle of limited government based on the rule of law to every proposal.
- It honors the central place of individual liberty in American politics and life.
- It encourages free enterprise, the individual entrepreneur, and economic reforms grounded in market solutions.
- It supports America's national interest in advancing freedom and opposing tyranny in the world and prudently considers what we can and should do to that end beginning with an adequate defense for our nation.
- It informs conservatism's firm defense of family, neighborhood, community, and faith.

# CONSERVATIVE

## ACTION PROJECT

The Conservative Action Project hosted a one day leadership summit of conservative leaders from across America. They concluded that these are the 12 highest priorities for the first 180 of a new administration.

Perfect as a study guide or a quick reference, these Conservative Action Project Pocket Cards contain policy proposals, facts, and messaging tips on pressing policy challenges facing this country. Armed with these Pocket Cards, you will be better equipped to articulate a conservative vision for America.

### CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES AND THE JUDICIARY

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- Restore Fidelity to the Constitution
- Rescind Unconstitutional Executive Actions
- End Cronyism and Government Preferences

### PRESERVING AND PROTECTING OUR CULTURE

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- Restore Religious Freedom
- Advance School Choice
- End Taxpayer Funding of Planned Parenthood

### FREEING OUR ECONOMY SO EVERYONE CAN WIN

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- Repeal Obamacare
- Sunset the Tax Code and Enact Broad-based Tax Reform
- Reform the Regulatory State

### DEFENDING OUR FREEDOMS

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- Restore National Defense
- Secure the Homeland
- Revive a Pro-American Foreign Policy

# CONSERVATIVE

ACTION PROJECT

# Restore Fidelity to the Constitution

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President should appoint judges at all levels of the Judiciary who have a record of fidelity to the Constitution.
2. Senators should vigorously question judicial nominees about their intent to remain faithful to the original meaning of the Constitution and laws. Their role is not to rubber stamp a Presidential nomination but to fulfill their own role in the process.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. The next President will likely have three Supreme Court vacancies to fill and countless lower court seats.
2. The US Senate has a Constitutional “advise and consent” role to play in Supreme Court nominations which includes deciding if and when to hold hearings on nominees.
3. The most recent decision upholding the 2nd Amendment was won by a narrow 5-4 margin.

# Restore Fidelity to the Constitution

## MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

### SEPARATION OF POWERS

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- America is a great country because its government is carefully balanced so that no one person or group has too much power.

### ROLE OF THE COURTS

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- A judge's responsibility is to interpret the written law, not to create laws that align with his or her policy preferences.
- Judges should not have the power to redefine laws and traditions Americans have known for more than two hundred years.

### ROLE OF THE SENATE

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- Senators should ensure that nominees will not misuse their power as judges. The Senate should never rush through confirmation of a nominee for the sake of political expediency.

# Rescind Unconstitutional Executive Actions

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. Immediately rescind all Obama Executive Actions that are unconstitutional, go beyond legislative authority, or are in conflict with the best interests of the American citizenry.
2. Immediately rescind all Obama Executive Orders consistent with recommendations by Constitutional and trusted advisors such as The Federalist Society, The Heritage Foundation, and other conservative advisors and transition committees.
3. Terminate all executive branch individuals still within their probationary period and freeze hiring for all regulatory positions.

# Rescind Unconstitutional Executive Actions

MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

## TRUE TO THE CONSTITUTION

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- All elected and appointed officials, at all levels of government, swear an oath to uphold the Constitution and are bound to remain true to the Constitution.

## BALANCED GOVERNMENT

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- Restoring constitutional government will not happen overnight, nor will it result from a single election, judicial decision, executive order, or piece of legislation. It requires targeted reforms that focus the federal government on its primary obligations and restore accountability to voters.

## DOLLARS AND DECISIONS CLOSE TO HOME

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- For decades now, the U.S. has tried putting more power and money into Washington to solve local problems. Things have only worsened. It is time to return power and responsibility for these local issues to the states and allow them to craft policies tailored to the needs of their own citizens.



# End Cronyism and Government Preferences

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. Submit legislation to repeal big government programs, such as Obamacare, Dodd-Frank, and the Davis-Bacon Act, which are reducing job opportunities and hurting hard working Americans.
2. Immediately suspend all government preferences which fall within the authority of the Executive.
3. The President should deliver a major address to the nation condemning discrimination, favoritism for some, and cronyism, and issue an Executive Order stating that the policy of the new administration is not to use the government's power to discriminate, to play favorites, or to show preferences.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. The CBO estimates that Obamacare will cause 2 million workers to leave the labor force.
2. In the fourth quarter of 2007, employers created 7.7 million gross new jobs. In the first quarter of 2015, they created 6.9 million new jobs—10 percent below pre-recession levels.
3. Infrastructure spending does not create new jobs since it is capital, rather than labor, intensive.

# End Cronyism and Government Preferences

MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

## ECONOMIC FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY

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- Freedom and opportunity encourage innovation, hard work, and prosperity. When people thrive, families, communities, and the nation thrive and the quality of life for everyone is lifted.

## ACHIEVING THE AMERICAN DREAM

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- The government should stop hindering workers who are trying to achieve the American Dream by reducing legal barriers to increasing their skills and productivity.
- Government policies have diminished the reward for hard work. The typical American worker loses more than half of each dollar he or she earns to higher taxes and reduced government benefits. This discourages work and should be reversed.
- An ever-increasing burden of regulation impedes small businesses and entrepreneurship, innovation, job creation, and economic growth.

# Restore Religious Freedom

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President should take all appropriate steps to ensure passage of the First Amendment Defense Act to restore religious freedom.
2. The President should issue an Executive Order requiring that the Executive branch respect the 1st Amendment and provisions of the First Amendment Defense Act.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. Three in five adults say they have no doubt that God exists.
2. Those attending religious services once a week or more were 25 percent more likely to give to charitable causes.
3. Volunteerism is greater among individuals who attend religious services each week.

# Restore Religious Freedom

MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

## BENEFITS OF RELIGION

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- Americans should be free to earn a living, care for the poor, heal the sick, and serve their communities in accordance with their faith without unnecessary government interference.

## FREEDOM TO BELIEVE AND ACT

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- All Americans should remain free to believe and act in the public square based on their beliefs without fear of government penalty.

## TRUE TOLERANCE

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- All people do not have to hold the same beliefs to recognize that people should have the freedom to run their businesses in accordance with their values.
- All people have differences, but being able to still live harmoniously with each other, despite those differences, is what true tolerance is all about.

# Advance School Choice

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President should appoint a Secretary of Education who is a movement conservative and is committed to returning educational choice to parents.
2. The President should take immediate executive action to eliminate any federal Common Core mandates, inducements; support the right of States to fully exit the program with no adverse federal repercussions, and seek legislative authority to return educational authority to the States.
3. The President should champion the policy of dollars following the children.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. The U.S. spends about \$12,000 per pupil every year in public schools.
2. Since the 1970s, math and reading achievement have been flat; graduation rates for disadvantaged students have not improved.

# Advance School Choice

## MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

### LOCAL DECISION MAKING

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- Every child deserves the chance to choose the education that best fits his or her unique learning needs.
- Decisions about education and spending are best made at the most local level possible, by states, school leaders, and parents.

### EXPAND OPPORTUNITY

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- For most families in the U.S., the odds of attending a good school depend entirely on where they live. Parents should have the opportunity to send their children to the school that best fits their needs.

### ACCREDITATION

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- The current college accreditation system serves the special interests of the higher education industry.
- Breaking the accreditation cartel would allow students to escape expensive, full-degree programs to chart their own path.

# End Taxpayer Funding of Planned Parenthood

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President should eliminate taxpayer funding of Planned Parenthood using executive action and seek a permanent legislative solution.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. In 2013, Planned Parenthood received over half a billion dollars in taxpayer funding and performed 327,653 abortions.

# End Taxpayer Funding of Planned Parenthood

## MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

### EMPHASIZE EQUAL RIGHTS

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- All human beings, from the moment of conception to natural death, are persons of intrinsic worth and possess the fundamental right to life.

### REDIRECT PLANNED PARENTHOOD FUNDING

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- Women should have access to the best care possible, but taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize organizations accused of selling body parts of aborted children. Congress should redirect funding for Planned Parenthood to the 13,000 other local health centers providing more comprehensive women's care.



# Repeal Obamacare

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. Submit legislation to repeal Obamacare in its entirety.
2. Take all executive action possible to open up other health care options for individuals and to halt bureaucratic advancement of Obamacare policies.
3. Promote a free market for health care by removing regulatory and policy obstacles that discourage choice and competition.
4. Encourage personal ownership of healthcare by reforming the tax treatment of healthcare.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. Obamacare adds nearly \$2 trillion in new spending, over \$1 trillion in new taxes, and more than \$800 billion in Medicare cuts.
2. Enrollment projections have fallen far short of the original CBO projections of 21 million. In 2016, only 10 million individuals are expected to obtain coverage through the Obamacare exchanges.

# Repeal Obamacare

## MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

### REPEAL OBAMACARE

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- Obamacare is unfair, unaffordable, and unworkable. It is time to repeal Obamacare.
- Most of the “gains” in coverage that Obamacare has seen have been from a vast expansion of the Medicaid program, not from previously uninsured families being able to afford quality coverage.

### PATIENT-CENTERED SOLUTIONS

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- Empowering individuals to control their health care dollars and decisions is a far better prescription for health care reform.
- Americans should have access to a wide variety of plans and insurers who compete freely, with the freedom to choose a plan and doctors that best suit their needs.

# Sunset the Tax Code and Support Broad-based Tax Reform

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President should embrace “Sunset the tax code” and propose policies that advance tax reform, reassure seniors that their Social Security is protected and engage in public advocacy of a permanent solution.
2. The President should publicly commit to submitting to the Congress a replacement tax code that is simpler, fairer, flatter, and stimulates growth with the effective date of December 31, 2018.
3. All tax reform should lower individual and business tax rates, particularly the top marginal rates, to encourage saving and investing.
4. All tax reform should eliminate tax preferences to avoid picking winners and losers.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. Combined federal and state corporate income tax rates average over 39 percent compared to 25 percent in other developed nations.
2. The existing US Tax Code is over 74,000 pages long and incomprehensible to the average individual or small business taxpayer. A tax code that most people cannot understand is inherently unfair.
3. Growth oriented tax reform is essential if the economy is to return to historic levels of expansion in the range of 4 percent annually, rather than the anemic two percent growth of the Obama years.
4. Economic growth, rather than income redistribution, is the most effective and equitable way to revitalize working families.

# Sunset the Tax Code and Support Broad-based Tax Reform

MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

## UPDATING THE TAX SYSTEM

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- The U.S. needs an updated tax system that is simple and fair, with low rates, that rewards hard work and savings and eliminates special privileges.

## COMPLEX AND CORRUPT

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- The current tax system is too complex. It is hard to understand and more expensive than it needs to be to comply.
- The tax system is corrupt, encouraging cronyism and favoritism, and allowing government and special interests too much influence in picking winners and losers.

# Reform the Regulatory State

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President and Congress should require congressional approval of new major regulations promulgated by agencies.
2. The President and Congress should establish sunset dates for federal regulations.
3. The President should establish a regulatory reform agenda that immediately tackles destructive laws such as Dodd-Frank.
4. The President and Congress should implement the intent of the REINS Act by Executive Action and legislation.
5. The President should freeze and withdraw all regulatory activity on the Obama energy and climate agenda.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. More than \$80 billion in new annual regulatory burdens was imposed during the first term of the Obama Administration.
2. Dodd-Frank requires 400 rulemakings by 11 different agencies.
3. There are currently 2,142 new rules in the pipeline, 144 of which are considered “major.”

# Reform the Regulatory State

## MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

### A FOCUS ON SAVINGS

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- A typical American household could save thousands each year with fewer, simpler regulations.

### PERSONALIZE SAVINGS

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- Simple solutions to complicated government regulations could save Americans money on everything from housing and gas to food and clothes.

### COST OF REGULATION

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- Not all regulations are unwarranted, but volumes of vaguely worded regulations lack rational justification and cost hundreds of billions per year.

### CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL

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- No regulation should be adopted if the American people and their representatives in Congress do not agree that it is properly designed and necessary.
- Regulations should be approved by Congress, not created unilaterally by unelected officials.

# Restore National Defense

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President should conduct an immediate review of the entire structure of the military to restore the nation's defenses as quickly as possible.
2. The review should further consider the impact on the military of social experimentation and refocus the goal to one of defending the American citizenry.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. The Active Army has been reduced from 45 BCTs to 32 BCTs since 2012.
2. The Navy only has 272 of the 350 ships it needs.
3. The average age of USAF aircraft is 27 years; these planes are nearing the end of their expected life cycles.

# Restore National Defense

MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

## A DANGEROUS WORLD

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- Rising global threats to U.S. national security now outbalance our armed forces' ability to prevail against them as U.S. adversaries continue to develop far-reaching military capabilities.
- President Obama's mismanagement of defense has caused a drastic decline in military readiness and capabilities.
- Weakness invites aggression. The U.S. must modernize and sustain its forces.

## A STRATEGY OF STRENGTH

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- There is an alternative to the U.S.'s current half-hearted strategy that does not mean putting America on a perpetual war footing. But the focus needs to be on an unashamed projection of American strength aimed at deterring threats before they materialize.



# Secure the Homeland

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President should restore to the Border Patrol and other agencies the authority to administer the laws dealing with border security.
2. The President should support the rule of law and reject amnesty proposals and fully enforce and strengthen interior enforcement measures in the United States.
3. The President should free Governors to protect their borders, enforce federal and state laws and be confident that federal agencies will consider them equal partners.

## QUICK FACTS

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1. The number of illegal immigrants inside the U.S. has leveled off at just under 12 million.
2. Amnesty for illegal immigrants could cost the U.S. \$ 6.3 trillion as the average illegal immigrant household receives more in benefits than they pay in taxes, which will only worsen with amnesty.
3. Interior enforcement has plummeted, with total removals and returns falling to their lowest level since 1973. Even removals of criminal aliens are falling.

# Secure the Homeland

## MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

### INCREASE BORDER SECURITY AND ENFORCEMENT

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- We have a responsibility to secure the border and enforce our existing laws.

### AMNESTY

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- Amnesty does not address or fix the problem. It only piles unaffordable costs on already failing entitlement programs.
- The problem with amnesty is clear—it only encourages more unlawful immigration by unfairly favoring those who came to this country illegally over those who wait in the legal immigration system.

### REFORM CURRENT SYSTEM

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- Real immigration reform does not require new laws, just serious attention and commitment from the executive branch to implementing current laws.

# Revive a Pro-American Foreign Policy

## POLICY PROPOSALS

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1. The President should establish, through personnel appointments, budgetary priorities and public statements, a renewed pro-America foreign policy.
2. The President should rebuild our relationships with allies, assuring them that the US is once more reliable.
3. The President should revive Public Diplomacy.

# Revive a Pro-American Foreign Policy

## MARKET TESTED MESSAGES

### IMPORTANCE OF ALLIES

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- We must have a strong network of like-minded allies to meet security challenges to U.S. interests, such as the threat of terrorism and the rise of rogue states.
- Those who share our values of freedom, democracy, and open markets are invaluable partners and allies on the road to a safer, freer world.

### INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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- We want to be wise with our dollars and reputation. Ratifying treaties and supporting international organizations that do not align with our interests or values is a poor use of America's resources.
- The U.S. should closely evaluate international organizations to ensure that they advance U.S. values and interests and effectively pursue and fulfill their original intent and scope.