



AMERICAN SOLON

4 Steps for a Better America

These days, it's all too easy to look at our world and retreat into a kind of cynicism or despair. Our problems present as intractable. Our leaders seem either inept or corrupt or both. And nothing ever seems to change for the better. Look, I completely understand the feeling here. Our democracy appears to be crumbling before our eyes. How else should we feel?

At the same time though, I'm an optimist at heart and still believe in the destiny of America as the defender of freedom in the world. If not us, then who? Imagine what the world could look like without America. I hesitate to even think of the possibilities. I simply have to believe in the future of America.

The other morning, as I was walking home from the gym after a particularly devastating workout—by the way, I cannot emphasize enough the fertile grounds of creativity that come from extreme exertion—I was inspired a thought experiment:

What would I do if I were given power over America like Solon in Athens or Cincinnatus in Rome? If I had the power to make and enforce laws, what practical, tangible things would I do to make things better?

Lest my mind stray too far afield into the dangerous psychological territory of absolute power, I gave myself some constraints.

I would be in charge for 4 years and could never run for or hold any public office again. I would have the power to make and enforce new laws but couldn't engage in war or do anything overtly

unconstitutional. To ensure that I would be immune from the temptation of self-interest, no one in my immediate family could ever own property again of any kind but would be taken care of with a very nice lifestyle by the government for life.

So, with this in mind, I set out to seriously answer the question. Here's what I came up with:

1. Massive disinflationary infrastructure program

The first thing I would do is launch a massive disinflationary infrastructure spending program—something like \$2T-3T. I say “disinflationary” because in this environment I don't think you can engage in regular old infrastructure projects like roads and bridges. There's just too much inflationary pressure out there so those will have to wait for now.

What would disinflationary infrastructure spending look like? Well, anything that can improve efficiency in production or expand productive capacity. The idea is to fund projects and research that, if successful, will have the effect of reducing prices for key inputs to the economy. In other words, research and development. The program would focus on investments and incentives in advanced robotics, clean energy production, science and medical technology. The idea would be to try to get R&D spending as a percentage of GDP to maybe 5% versus the 3% we have today. And this spending wouldn't be government lead. I would structure incentivize based programs and subsidies for the private sector. Imagine what might happen if the US government announced a \$200B prize for the companies that can produce commercially viable fusion-based energy.

2. Complete overhaul of immigration policy

The other thing I would do right away is completely overhaul our immigration policy. This one might ignite some public relations problems for me but it's absolutely the right thing to do. The rest of the developed world has a serious population problem already and without immigration, we aren't too far behind. Look, the GDP formula is fairly straight forward—GDP growth is a product of the change in productivity plus the change in population. In other words, growth is basically impossible in the face of a declining population.

I'd implement a massive incentive program for high-skilled and highly educated immigrants. This program would be an incredibly valuable strategic weapon in the race for global talent and the biggest no-brainer policy move in the world right now. Why in the world would we not want these people to be Americans? I'm astounded that no one is talking about this, especially given how many of these candidates are already being educated in American schools. Lest you think I'm elitist,

my program would also include incentives for agricultural, manufacturing and construction workers. As someone who's worked in the trenches of the real estate industry the last decade, I can tell you this: we are in desperate need of an influx of high-skilled construction workers.

At the same time, I would dramatically expand our refugee program. Isn't this the original fountainhead for American greatness? For quite some time now we've been letting in less than 100,000 refugees per year. That's just not right, especially when you consider the size of our country and, more importantly, our unique position in the world.

I would also create a clear pathway to citizenship for all the 11M+ undocumented individuals living here now. This wouldn't be a free-for-all. Not at all. There would be rules and requirements and they would absolutely have to be followed. For the life of me, I cannot understand why people are afraid of this. These people are already living and working here and making meaningful, invaluable contributions to the fabric of American society. During the COVID lockdowns, an estimated 50% of these individuals were working as essential workers. So, No, “sending everyone home” makes zero sense. It's not feasible, first of all, but also and more to the point, it wouldn't be good policy for the country. We simply have to stop being afraid of the false narratives of the anti-immigration camp. Do we really believe that immigrants are “stealing” jobs from American citizens?

3. Term Limits

In case it's not already abundantly clear to you: we have a serious talent problem in Congress. This might be the ultimate threat to the American experiment. A democracy is only as good as its elected leaders and ours are well...just watch C-Span for an hour and let me know how that makes you feel.

To address this systemic problem, I would do two things: 1. I would introduce term limits for both the House and the Senate and 2. I would dramatically increase the pay rates for elected officials. The idea here is to provide a real incentive for our best and brightest to actually want to run for office. What we have today is just untenable. We've seen what it produces—career politicians, many of which serve for decades, who make way more money from their side gigs than they do from their government salaries (how can that be a good thing!?). My idea here is to introduce some real competition to the system. Let's give bright Americans a reason to consider sacrificing their lucrative private sector careers for public service. Let's bring back honor and prestige to government and get rid of the incentives to corruption that have infected our democracy.

It's no secret as well that we have a massive civic engagement problem. To address this existential problem, I would intro-

duce a requirement for every citizen to do one year of service to the community. This year of service could be in everything from the military to the peace corps to working for local community-based non-profits. The idea is simple: to teach people how to accept the immense responsibilities of citizenship. For a democracy to work, we cannot just go through life concerned with our “rights.” We have to be willing to accept the responsibilities as well. I think a year of service could serve as an effective catalyst for the rebirth of the true American moral fiber.

4. Benevolent, Pro-Freedom Foreign Policy with Extra Focus on Western Hemisphere

Finally, from day one in office, I would pursue a benevolent, pro-freedom foreign policy agenda with a special emphasis on the Western Hemisphere. One of the things we’ve lost sight of in America is our unique historical responsibility for freedom. We are a world superpower—quite literally, the most powerful nation in recorded human history. And with a position like that comes immense responsibility. In the comforts of modern prosperity, it’s easy to take things for granted and forget what a world without America could look like. But that’s a big mistake.

I believe it is our destiny to preserve freedom in the world and our foreign policy should be a reflection of that. I’m not an advocate for military adventurism but I think America should generously support countries committed to preserving and promoting freedom in the world and shouldn’t be afraid to use the threat of our military might in support of global peace and justice. We should also start paying more attention to our closest neighbors. We have an incredible opportunity to develop a Western Hemisphere based coalition that could easily be the most powerful economic force in the global economy. □

There are other issues that I would try to address in my four years but I would take my time to ensure I implement the right policies.

Here are the issues on my radar:

Tax Reform—some kind of switch from an income to a consumption tax regime seems to make the most sense

Education Reform—we need to dramatically increase the financial incentives and prestige for teachers

Gun Control—it’s so obvious that it should be much more difficult to purchase a weapon in this country

Mandatory Carbon Credits—to make any progress on climate change we have to start taxing carbon and incentivizing people and companies away from carbon producing activities

Mental Health Reform—we need a large, permanent funding stream coupled with some kind of reasonable ability for government to take action against people who engage in self-destructive behavior

Regulations Against Psychologically Manipulative Technologies—this is already a growing problem and looks like it could get worse as technology evolves

Reproductive Rights—codifying the framework of Roe v Wade

