



A Better Deal for Our Democracy:

Fixing Our Broken Political System and Returning to a Government Of, By and For the People

Too many Americans feel that Washington is hopelessly out of touch with their priorities. President Trump promised to fight for the forgotten American, yet Republican-controlled Washington continues business as usual, rewarding the wealthy, privileged and well-connected at the expense of middle class and working families. Look no further than Congressional Republicans' and President Trump's agenda: billions in tax cuts for the rich, massive giveaways to special interests and the full-frontal corporate assault on workers' rights and consumers' protections. All the while, Americans watch with increasing alarm the efforts to limit access to the ballot box, put rich donors first and degrade the integrity of our election system by forces both foreign and domestic. It's no wonder that Americans' trust in government is near an all-time low: over 80 percent say they can't trust those in Washington to do what is right.

As we move forward with our bold plan to deliver A Better Deal, with Better Jobs, Better Wages and a Better Future for all Americans, Democrats will take substantive steps to get rid of the corruption that's led to such a dysfunctional political system in Washington. We will take power back from the special interests and give it to the American people. That's what *A Better Deal for Our Democracy* does, advancing critical reforms to empower voters at the ballot box, bolster our nation's ethics laws and overhaul our broken campaign finance system.

The American people are sick of getting a raw deal from Washington and they're tired of broken promises to "drain the swamp." Democrats agree and we are committed to delivering real reforms that will restore a government of, by and for the people.

Specifically, the *Better Deal for Our Democracy* will:

- 1) **Empower the American Voter to Ensure Responsive Government.** We must protect every citizen's right to vote, safeguard our election infrastructure from hostile actors and put an end to partisan redistricting.
- 2) **Strengthen Our Nation's Ethics Laws to Fight Special Interests.** We must end the revolving-door in Washington and rein in the influence of high-powered Washington insiders, lobbyists and big-money donors – and the special interests that are driving Washington's agenda.

- 3) **Fix Our Broken Campaign Finance System to Combat Big Money Influence.** We must break the stranglehold on our democracy by wealthy and well-connected campaign donors by empowering everyday Americans and ending the scourge of unaccountable “dark money” unleashed by *Citizens United*.



Empower the American Voter

The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy and it must be protected for all Americans. In recent years, we have witnessed unprecedented, cynical and partisan efforts to turn back the clock and erect barriers to voting for members of the military, people with disabilities, minorities, first-time voters, students, the elderly and low-income Americans. To make things worse, the Supreme Court in *Shelby County v. Holder* struck down core provisions of the Voting Rights Act, undermining decades-long protections for historically disenfranchised communities. At the same time, partisan gerrymandering has intensified, leaving voters deeply cynical about the drawing of Congressional districts. To compound all of these challenges, in 2016, the United States experienced an unprecedented attack on our democracy and our election infrastructure by a foreign adversary. No wonder the public’s confidence in our elections is at an all-time low.

Congress must respond by modernizing the electoral system to improve access to and security of the ballot box. This includes bolstering the capacity of the Election Assistance Commission and providing states with the resources needed to protect our election infrastructure. At the same time, we must make it easier for Americans to vote by pursuing automatic voter registration. This will improve the registration files and the security of elections, all the while helping to build a more representative electorate. Congress must also restore voting protections for those voters in states with a recent history of discrimination. Finally, Congress can put an end to partisan gerrymandering by requiring all states to establish independent, multi-party citizen redistricting commissions to draw open and transparent statewide district maps after each decennial census. **As part of *A Better Deal*, Democrats will ensure every American’s vote is respected, protected and counted.**

Strengthen Our Nation’s Ethics Laws

The line between public service and private interests is too often blurred. Today, several Trump Administration officials are under federal investigation for corruption and waste of taxpayer money. Top posts have been handed out to former lobbyists and industry insiders who later use their government positions to land even more lucrative opportunities with the very same industries. It’s an endless cycle taken

to a completely unprecedented level under President Trump, demonstrating a blatant disregard for the laws and norms in place to prevent public corruption.

The public is rightly disgusted by this self-dealing. As stewards of the public trust, Democrats believe all government officials – including the President – should comply with a stringent set of ethical guidelines that ensure they are free from all conflicts of interest. At the same time, Washington lobbyists and high-powered influence peddlers need greater oversight and should be prohibited from attempting to trade campaign cash for access and influence. **As part of *A Better Deal*, Democrats will restore the ethical integrity of government service.**

Fix Our Broken Campaign Finance System

Big money in politics has corroded the public's trust in the political system. Too many politicians spend hours dialing for dollars, courting a narrow slice of the nation's elite, while high-powered lobbyists and special interests call the shots in Congress. Most recently, these backroom power brokers used their influence to demand billion-dollar hand-outs for the wealthiest 1 percent from the GOP tax scam. In this broken system, too many good candidates without access to big money are effectively barred from running altogether. And over the last decade, the Supreme Court's wrong-headed decision in *Citizens United* has made a bad system worse, fueling the rise of unaccountable, undisclosed secret money in our politics. More than ever, the wealthy and well-connected run the show in Washington while everyday Americans are left with a raw deal.

To combat the undue influence of big money in our politics, Democrats have proposed historic reforms to our campaign finance system to increase and multiply the power of small donors in America. A 21st century campaign finance system would also give a new and diverse set of candidates the resources they need to compete and win. At the same time, Congress must improve enforcement of campaign finance law, end the scourge of dark money and establish its authority to regulate the raising and spending of political money, by passing a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*. **As part of *A Better Deal*, Democrats will break the stranglehold big money has over our campaign finance system.**

