

# What I Believe

Russ Lesser



**The Settlement Project**

*Enduring freedom and peace are possible*

<http://sp12.org>



Settlement Books

<https://sp12.org/resources/books>

Copyright © 2022 Russel Lesser

All rights reserved.

# WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE?

## I BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING:

---

### ECONOMY

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN DELIBERATING ON FISCAL MATTERS.

I BELIEVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD RECOMMIT TO MAINTAINING A STABLE DOLLAR.

I BELIEVE IN FREE MARKET CAPITALISM, WITH APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT REGULATION FOR ECONOMIC EXTERNALITIES INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ANTITRUST LEGISLATION.

### EDUCATION

I BELIEVE QUALITY EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING ARE KEY TO LIFTING PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY.

### CULTURAL ISSUES

I BELIEVE IN EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN.

I BELIEVE AND HONOR OUR AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE GOALS OF OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONSTITUTION.

I RESPECT PEOPLE FOR WHO THEY ARE, NOT WHAT THEY ARE OR WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE. I BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF DIVERSITY. I BELIEVE IN TRUE EQUALITY.

I BELIEVE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY AND FAMILY VALUES.

## GOVERNMENT POLICY

I BELIEVE IN CONTROLLING OUR BORDERS IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH ANY SOVEREIGN COUNTRY.

I SUPPORT OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL AND BELIEVE LAWS SHOULD BE ENFORCED NON-SELECTIVELY AND CONSISTENTLY.

I BELIEVE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE ELECTIONS ARE CONDUCTED WITH INTEGRITY AND CITIZENS ARE CONFIDENT THE PROCESS AND RESULTS ARE FAIR.

## ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

I RESPECT THE CONSTITUTION, AND BELIEVE IN PARTICULAR THE NEED TO VIGOROUSLY SUPPORT THE RIGHTS OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH, FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, BEARING ARMS AND EXERCISING RELIGION WITH VERY MINIMAL GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE.

I BELIEVE IN A TRUE SEPARATION OF POWERS WITH NO BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT OVERSTEPPING ITS CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY.

I BELIEVE IN LIMITED GOVERNMENT THAT PROVIDES CERTAIN BASIC SERVICES THAT ARE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND I BELIEVE GOVERNMENT'S FOREMOST ROLES ARE TO PROTECT US PHYSICALLY AND DEFEND OUR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS.

I BELIEVE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AT ALL LEVELS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THEY WORK FOR US, THE PEOPLE.

## CLIMATE CHANGE

I BELIEVE IN A CAREFUL, MEASURED APPROACH TO CONSIDERING POLICY RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

## DEFENSE

I BELIEVE IN A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE, DEFENDING OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES ONLY WHEN NECESSARY.

***IF YOU AGREE WITH MOST OR ALL OF THESE BELIEFS, PLEASE  
CONTINUE READING!***



## I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN DELIBERATING ON FISCAL MATTERS.

---

I believe the Federal Government has grown uncontrollably and unaccountably and we the voters must demand a serious downsizing and rationalization of the size and scope of our government.

Sadly, the enormous profligacy supported by both of our major political parties is driving our country toward bankruptcy. We are now past World War II levels of debt during peacetime! and we are headed into unfamiliar territory. Our national debt has now reached \$30 trillion (about \$90,000 per U.S. citizen). Our debt has increased \$7 trillion in the past two years. The Social Security fund will become insolvent by 2033. Our unfunded Medicare liability over the next 75 years is \$48 trillion (\$150,000 per person) and Congress is considering more spending this fiscal year that we cannot afford.

In a time of great need, our Coronavirus relief bills contain an unprecedented level of special interest expenditures including large amounts intended for “infrastructure” that actually go to favored political groups, and bailouts for those states who are essentially broke because of poor management and dominant public sector unions. President Franklin D. Roosevelt said: “All government employees should realize that the process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be transplanted into the public service.” Unfortunately, his warning has not been heeded, and the power of some public employee unions to help elect people who then set their salaries has caused serious fiscal problems in some states.

In addition, the massive amount of increased government spending and other well-intended but ill-conceived programs (such as paying people more to stay home than they can make working) have caused inflation to rise to levels we have not seen in decades. This negatively affects the poor and people on fixed incomes the most.

Unless we take drastic action to reimagine the size and scope of the federal government, we are guaranteeing future generations a much lower quality of life than we have enjoyed, including inflation, recessions and possible Federal bankruptcy. For those of us who are grandparents, our current level of debt cannot possibly be repaid by our children, or even our grandchildren.

IMAGINE A HYPOTHETICAL CONVERSATION WITH YOUR GRANDCHILD: “SORRY WE BORROWED FROM YOUR FUTURE TO SUPPORT OUR PRESENT.”

## I BELIEVE THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD RECOMMIT TO MAINTAINING A STABLE DOLLAR

---

Starting in early 2022, the U.S. has begun a stretch of serious inflation, the depth and duration of which is unknown. We are already experiencing the highest inflation in 40 years. There are multiple causes for our current situation. First, as noted elsewhere in this document, our federal spending has been even more out of control than usual for the last two years. All that excess spending was borrowed, which means that a massive amount of cash was injected into our economy. Second, our Fed monetary policy has been accommodative since about 2008. Interest rates have been uncharacteristically low, and the Fed has overseen huge increases in the money supply even before the fiscal expenditures of the last two years. Third, supply chain issues limit the amount of supply of certain items, driving up prices for those items even further. And fourth, products dependent on petroleum have risen sharply due to our self-inflicted wound – reducing our own production of hydrocarbon products due to government policy. Wage push inflation is also present, because we have a shortage of people willing to work.

Inflation is known as “the cruelest tax of all”. It hurts the disadvantaged the most, and provides a strong disincentive to save for the future – which will impact our future prosperity in many ways. As said previously, our government needs to rein in spending – radically.

THE FEDERAL RESERVE MUST FOCUS ON THE STABILITY OF OUR CURRENCY ABOVE ALL ELSE.

I BELIEVE IN FREE MARKET CAPITALISM, WITH APPROPRIATE GOVERNMENT REGULATION FOR ECONOMIC EXTERNALITIES INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND ANTITRUST LEGISLATION.

---

We believe capitalism and free market policies have lifted more people out of poverty than any other system in the history of the world. To be successful in a capitalist society you must provide goods or services that improve people's lives, happiness and health. Capitalist societies and only capitalist societies reflect a commitment to democracy – we individually and collectively make millions of decisions every day through what we choose to buy, sell or work on; in doing so we have, together, created the wealthiest nation in history. People from all parts of the globe want to live in America so they can improve their own economic lives.

We believe in reasonable restraints on free market capitalism supported by careful analysis of costs and benefits: environmental protection, vigorous antitrust enforcement consumer protection and worker safety. Much other regulation, often driven by special interests, is coercive, usually counterproductive, and often produces serious unintended consequences.

For example, on the first day of the current administration, because of pressure from certain special interest groups, the Keystone pipeline was halted, and various regulations were put into place which resulted in a reduction of U.S. oil and gas production. This quickly ended the short period of time the U.S. was energy independent. Unfortunately, while supply was reduced, demand for petroleum products did not, resulting in major price increases for gasoline, natural gas and other petroleum products including plastic. These decisions have also had a negative impact on the environment, because to make up for the reduced supply, oil must be imported from the Middle East and other parts of the world, where the environmental requirements are not as strict as in the United States, and oil is transported around the world by ships that burn diesel oil instead of by pipeline. In addition, domestic oil now must be transported by truck or train instead of by pipeline, which also increases pollution.

ALL REGULATIONS NEED TO BE MADE WITH A THOUGHTFUL AND COMPLETE ANALYSIS OF ALL CONSEQUENCES.

## I BELIEVE QUALITY EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING ARE KEY TO LIFTING PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY

---

I believe the control of local schools should clearly rest with parents, and the Federal Government should play a minimal role in education. We believe parents (and guardians) are the customers of pre-K to grade 12 schools, and should have the ability, with public funding, to send their children to a school of their choice. This is especially important in lower income areas, where parents do not have the resources to send their children to private schools. A majority of lower income and disadvantaged individuals agree with this concept.

I believe parents should be allowed to have their voices heard at school board meeting, respectfully, but firmly, as advocates for their children, and should be able to review the curricula their children's school teaches. This will help them decide which school they want their children to attend.

With respect to higher education, the Federal government should exit the student loan program business that was nationalized in 2010. That action and other government subsidies and regulation have insulated institutions of higher learning from fiscal responsibility; resulted in skyrocketing tuition rates; produced large numbers of college graduates with degrees that are not marketable; and resulted in many loans that cannot be repaid. These loans therefore are either forgiven or go into default. In either case the taxpayers are subsidizing these institutions of higher learning whose curricula they may disagree with or have created little economic value.

WE MUST TAKE BACK CONTROL OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS, IMPLEMENT UNIVERSAL SCHOOL CHOICE AND ADDRESS THE CRISIS OF SPIRALING COLLEGE TUITION FEES.

## I BELIEVE IN EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

---

I support the original intent of Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, which eliminated sex-based discrimination to ensure all students – both male and female – have access to and equality in education. It requires equal athletic opportunities for women. Unfortunately, today the government is endorsing policies that allow transgender men to compete against biological women in various sports, including swimming and track and field.

It is a biological fact that men on the average are physically bigger, stronger and faster than women, even after hormone therapy and transition. Allowing biological men to compete against biological women will have the effect of destroying women's sports. Biological girls have been deprived of college scholarships because they lost to transgender girls in track meets. Another recent example cites a person who competed as a man on the college swim team for three years, then began to identify as a woman and is now setting records on the woman's swim team. One biological woman was quoted as saying, 'If there were two more like him, there would be no biological women on the women's swim team.'

I believe the policy allowing this is wrong and removes Title IX protections for biological women. This view is shared by Martina Navratilova, who is gay and says, "Transgender inclusion in sports is insane and it's cheating." Caitlyn Jenner, a transgender woman (who used to be Bruce Jenner, Olympic decathlon champion) agrees, saying "if you're a biological boy you shouldn't be in girls' sports."

In addition, biological men who identify as women have been allowed into women's locker rooms, jails and shelters for abused women. They have sexually assaulted biological women in all these settings. In California, where the Governor signed a law stating that prisoners should be sent to the prison of the gender with which they identify, over 200 biological men are now claiming they identify as women and asking to be transferred to women's prisons.

WE BELIEVE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE SHOULD BE PROTECTED FROM DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE AND OTHER AREAS, BUT WOMEN'S ATHLETICS MUST BE RESTRICTED TO BIOLOGICAL FEMALES, AND BIOLOGICAL FEMALES MUST BE PROTECTED FROM BIOLOGICAL MEN IN SETTINGS WHERE THEY WOULD OTHERWISE BE PLACED IN DANGER.

I BELIEVE AND HONOR OUR AMERICAN CULTURE AND THE GOALS OF OUR DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND CONSTITUTION.

---

I believe we live in a great country that was founded on aspirational ideals. We believe we have made mistakes but have accomplished much over the past 200 plus years. We do not believe we should ban or rewrite our history. We should learn from our past mistakes, and as Abraham Lincoln said, “to continue to strive for a more perfect union.” An example of changing history is the “1619 Project,” which attempts to rewrite our history claiming the country was really founded on the basis of slavery and continues to be the primary foundation of our American culture. Serious scholars have totally debunked this work, but it is still gaining prominence in some schools and universities.

WE ABASHEDLY BELIEVE IN AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM, AND OUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD REFLECT THAT BELIEF IN ITS ACTIONS AND WORDS.

I RESPECT PEOPLE FOR WHO THEY ARE, NOT WHAT THEY ARE OR WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE. WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF DIVERSITY. WE BELIEVE IN TRUE EQUALITY.

---

I believe in equal rights for all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin and sexual orientation. We reject the practice of “identity politics” as it is antithetical to equal rights, the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the dignity of all individuals. We are a diverse country and have benefited from people from many different cultures bringing new ideas and skills to America.

Martin Luther King Jr. said he prayed for the day when a person would be judged by the content of their character instead of the color of their skin. We believe people should be judged by the standards that were in place at the time they lived, not by today’s standards. We believe destroying statues of historical figures such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln is unacceptable.

I strongly reject efforts to enforce politically correct speech as corrosive. Recent action by the current majority in the House of Representatives banned the use of gender specific words such as father, mother, himself, herself, and replaced them with sibling, parent, themselves and so on. One congressman ended a prayer with the words, “amen and awomen.” This is patently absurd, as amen is from the Hebrew “so be it” and has nothing to do with gender. The word woman is also being replaced with “birthing person.” This ignores biological science. These are all examples of political correctness run amuck.

I BELIEVE IN DIVERSITY, INCLUDING DIVERSITY OF VIEWPOINT.

## I BELIEVE IN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY AND FAMILY VALUES

---

The decay of our inner cities and other pockets of poverty (regardless of race) can be chiefly attributed to the decline of the role of the nuclear family. Demonstrably, individuals growing up in households with two loving parents are on average more likely to become self-sufficient productive members of society than those who do not. What some now derisively call “bourgeois values” such as respect for others, self-reliance, honesty, patriotism, industriousness, helping others, getting a useful education, giving to charity, being family oriented and neighborliness are at the core of what our country is. Some groups are calling for the end of the traditional “western based nuclear family,” which is right out of the Marxist playbook. If these values continue to erode, we will become what? Feudal Europe? Venezuela? Communist China?

GOVERNMENT MUST NOT FUND OR SPONSOR ANY ACTIVITY WHICH REDUCES THE ROLE OF THE NUCLEAR FAMILY IN OUR SOCIETY.

I BELIEVE IN CONTROLLING OUR BORDERS IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH ANY SOVEREIGN COUNTRY.

---

We are a country of immigrants and need immigration if we want to thrive as a country. However, we need to control who enters and leaves the country and who becomes a citizen. If it is necessary to build a wall to ensure that, then so be it. We should admit people based on need, limiting asylum to only the clearest cases. Allowing unlimited immigration of low-skilled workers increases income inequality, keeps the incomes of our current low-income workers from rising, and is against current law. This has been shown to be true from 2016 to 2019, where a decreasing supply of low-wage immigrant workers has helped the lowest quartile of earners, especially minority workers, increase their wage growth for the first time in over a decade. We should consider increasing the quotas for STEM-capable immigrants (H1-B) as long as there are not sufficient young people in our current population to fill those needs. We should consider re-establishing a permanent version of the old Bracero program, which would greatly benefit people on both sides of the border. We should also carefully consider what benefits we bestow on non-citizens.

WE SHOULD FOCUS ON CONTROLLING OUR OWN BORDERS.

## I SUPPORT OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL AND BELIEVE LAWS SHOULD BE ENFORCED NONSELECTIVELY AND CONSISTENTLY

---

History has shown that “Defunding the Police” results in increased violence and other crime. We believe the vast majority of law enforcement personnel are dedicated, honest protectors of our civilized society. We also believe that any public safety person who abuses their authority should be held accountable for any inappropriate or unlawful behavior. We reject recent laws that decriminalize some crimes and prosecutors and liberal politicians who selectively disregard portions of the law. We believe all people should be treated equally under the law.

I believe all perpetrators of violence, looting, property destruction and other criminal activity should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. The attacks that occurred on the Capitol in January 2021 were rightly condemned by both political parties. However, many lawbreakers that have been engaging in rioting and looting in our cities since the summer of 2020 were not condemned by most in the current administration and have not been arrested, let alone prosecuted. All rioters should be prosecuted for their crimes non-selectively and consistently.

I believe prosecutors are elected to enforce the laws that are on the books and in many cases have been voted in by the people. The newly elected District Attorney of Los Angeles County has refused, from the day he took office, to enforce existing laws and appears often to be show more concern for the perpetrator than the victim. There are like-minded District Attorneys around the country. Crime rates in some locales have consequently skyrocketed.

THE NUMBER ONE OBJECTIVE OF OUR GOVERNMENT MUST BE TO PROTECT OUR CITIZENS FROM CRIME AND CRIMINALS.

I BELIEVE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE ELECTIONS ARE CONDUCTED WITH INTEGRITY AND CITIZENS ARE CONFIDENT THE PROCESS AND RESULTS ARE FAIR.

---

The Federal government should cease attempting to regulate state election processes, as the Constitution clearly reserves this authority to the states. States who allow ballot harvesting, outlaw presenting identification at the polls or when registering, allow outside parties to fund or manage parts of election processes, or do not keep voter registration rolls current should change their laws to ensure election integrity.

IF THE CHAIN OF CUSTODY OF BALLOTS IN AN ELECTION IS NOT CAREFULLY CONTROLLED, WE CANNOT BE CONFIDENT THAT THE REPORTED RESULTS REFLECT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE, BECAUSE WE WON'T KNOW WHO VOTED.

I RESPECT THE CONSTITUTION, AND BELIEVE IN PARTICULAR THE NEED TO VIGOROUSLY SUPPORT THE RIGHTS OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH, FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, BEARING ARMS AND EXERCISING RELIGION WITH VERY MINIMAL GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE.

---

The right to free speech is fundamental to democracy. We now see our First Amendment rights under attack by the federal government, the press and Big Tech. Laws are being proposed which would effectively end our Second Amendment rights to self-defense. Freedom of the Press is rapidly vanishing. Books are being censored and removed from schools. You can still purchase Hitler's "Mein Kampf" on Amazon, but certain books by Dr. Seuss have been removed. Calling for censoring "disinformation" is a means of governmental repression. This is the issue of our times.

THERE IS A NAME FOR THE FORM OF GOVERNMENT THAT DOES NOT RESPECT ITS CITIZENS' FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS: TOTALITARIANISM.

## I BELIEVE IN A TRUE SEPARATION OF POWERS WITH NO BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT OVERSTEPPING ITS CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

---

The Founding Fathers set up a system of checks and balances with the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches. Judges should not legislate; Legislatures should not avoid tough tradeoffs by enacting vague legislation and throwing the hard work to the Executive branch, and the Executive branch should not conduct wars without legislative approval, enforce treaties without the consent of the Senate, make decisions that are the purvey of the Legislature (such as through Executive Orders) and especially act outside the intent of the law, no matter how poorly written.

Our Federal Government has become incomprehensively large, impossible to manage, and therefore corrupt. Significant portions of recent Congressional spending bills favor special interests and favored political groups. The Federal government (including Congress) has lost the concept of federalism. Most expenditures for infrastructure, education, law enforcement, welfare, elections, housing and disaster relief constitutionally belong at the state level. In many cases these functions are duplicated, and in a spectacle of sheer lunacy the components of these two levels of government often sue one another.

In addition, I oppose the increasing trend of some state governments to take away the powers of local governments to pass laws and rules for their communities. For example, California has overridden city zoning regulation with state mandates. “Central Planning” is a concept more applicable to China and third world countries than the U.S.

WHERE PRACTICAL, WE MUST DOWNSIZE GOVERNMENT AND DEVOLVE FEDERAL AND STATE FUNCTIONS DOWNWARD TO THE LEVEL CLOSEST TO OUR CITIZENS IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE CONSTITUTION.

I BELIEVE IN LIMITED GOVERNMENT THAT PROVIDES CERTAIN BASIC SERVICES THAT ARE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AND WE BELIEVE GOVERNMENT'S FOREMOST ROLES ARE TO PROTECT US PHYSICALLY AND DEFEND OUR INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS.

---

Government should only engage in economic activities it is uniquely suited to perform, such as maintaining a strong national defense, law enforcement, unemployment assistance, income support for people unable to care for themselves, and the establishment and enforcement of reasonable laws and regulations.

Private industry is much more efficient and competent than government in most areas due to accountability and the entrepreneurial nature of American businesspeople. Also, government is a monopoly and does not have competitors. In the pursuit of running a profitable business it is in the private company's best interest to manage the business with excellent quality products or services and social and environmental responsibility. The cost of not doing that is failure. In government, when you are dealing with other people's money (taxes) the cost of failing is seldom felt personally and the government is certainly not accountable for failure.

WE MUST REAFFIRM OUR COMMITMENT TO LIMITED GOVERNMENT AT ALL LEVELS, ELIMINATING CURRENT GOVERNMENTAL ACTIVITIES THAT ARE NOT NEEDED OR ARE BETTER PERFORMED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

I BELIEVE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AT ALL LEVELS SHOULD UNDERSTAND THEY WORK FOR US, THE PEOPLE.

---

Government bureaucracies at all levels have expanded rapidly in recent years. These individuals are sometimes collectively known as the “deep state” or the “swamp”. Decisions made on our behalf often do not consider our views or input. Some rules are promulgated not only without public input or discussion, but with active suppression of citizens’ viewpoints if they are not consistent with the views of our unelected bureaucrats.

A sad example of this state of affairs is the government approach to the COVID pandemic. Our leaders were put in the position of making decisions they were not equipped to make. This is understandable. But at some point, government authorities began to make decisions based on politics; guidelines were frequently changed without explanation; credible scientific justifications were rarely provided; alternative views to their decisions at best ignored; and decisions became increasingly autocratic and oppressive.

Understandably, many mistakes were made. But few of those mistakes were ever acknowledged. The most common trait lacking among our bureaucrats during this whole time was: humility. For bureaucrats to serve us, they need the humility to understand that we, the people, usually know best. For many Americans, the credibility of many of our bureaucracies was lost and not just with respect to the pandemic.

There are many examples of this: the FBI actively intimidates “domestic terrorists” (i.e. those who disagree with some government policies); government officials now suggest that the private owned media censor opponents of the government; the EPA regulates standing water on rural land for no good legal or practical reason; the CIA is reputedly building a domestic database of people who may oppose government policies; Homeland Security is considering attaching bank funds of individuals they deem pose a threat to democracy; the Department of Justice has jailed January 2021 rioters for over a year (so far) while delaying their trials; and so forth.

AS PART OF THE ESSENTIAL NEED TO DOWNSIZE GOVERNMENT, WE NEED TO REGAIN CONTROL OF OUR GOVERNMENT AND HOLD BUREAUCRAIES ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

I BELIEVE IN A CAREFUL, MEASURED APPROACH TO CONSIDERING POLICY RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE.

---

The current public discourse around climate change is highly politicized, devoid of serious, well-defined or quantifiable visions, and lacks any consideration of overall costs and benefits. Proposals such as the “Green New Deal” and “carbon zero” have been proposed unaccompanied by any real analysis, and if implemented literally, would relegate the U.S. to third world status or worse.

No significant policy changes should be adapted without convening a panel of scientists and economists of diverse views to formulate and compare competing responses to planetary warming. Participants must not have received any government or energy industry funding. No politician, regardless of viewpoint, should be allowed to participate, and proceedings of the panel should be visible to the public. An example of political decisions made without a complete analysis of consequences was discussed above concerning the blocking of the Keystone pipeline and reducing drilling in the United States which resulted in skyrocketing prices and increased pollution at the same time.

WE MUST APPLY A THOROUGH COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS TO ANY CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY PROPOSAL.

I BELIEVE IN A STRONG, NATIONAL DEFENSE, DEFENDING OURSELVES AND OUR ALLIES ONLY WHEN NECESSARY.

---

Our allies should know they can count on us but should also be expected to pay their fair share of costs. We should attempt not to become involved in never-ending wars. We become dismayed when some politicians constantly bash Israel, a reliable ally, and the one true democracy in the Middle East. We need to reorient our foreign policy to focus more vigorously on the growing threat from China.

TEDDY ROOSEVELT ONCE SAID, “SPEAK SOFTLY BUT CARRY A BIG STICK.”

## SUMMARY

Why did I write the WHAT I BELIEVE Essay?

First, the ideas and beliefs expressed in the essay are solely my beliefs and are not the official beliefs or positions of any political party.

I also believe that some of what I believe is more aspirational in nature than present existing policies of the leadership of both major political parties, fiscal responsibility being at the top of that list.

I wrote this because I am concerned about the direction of the country. The long-range goal of some left leaning groups, which began in the 1960's, was to divide us by race, gender and class and then rebuilt the country into a much more socialist society. The fact is that socialism and Marxism has not succeeded anywhere it has been tried. I believe many of the progressive members of the Democratic Party share this goal and despise capitalism and the basic tenants, beliefs and freedoms of our country.

I believe the beliefs expressed in my essay are shared by many people of both political parties and people not affiliated with either of the two main parties.

It is my hope that people will read the summary page with an open mind, and then if they agree with most or all of the "beliefs," will read the details and realize that many of the actions taken by the current administration do not support these beliefs, and we need a change of direction and leadership. We must remember that elections have consequences, and we are paying for some of them right now.

Ronald Reagan said, "I did not leave the Democratic Party, it left me." He also said, "if you agree with someone 80% of the time, they are a friend you can work with."

John Kennedy said, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." He would not recognize today's Democratic Party.

My hope is that we can find people who, after reading the essay, find that there are a lot of people that they "agree with 80% of the time" and they can start working together to help unify our country and move forward in a positive direction.

If we continue in this polarizing direction, the country our grandchildren will grow up in will have no resemblance to the country we did, and we will have lost all the progress we have made "toward a more perfect union" in the past fifty years. Let's find a way to work together.

Russ Lesser



# The Settlement Project

*Enduring freedom and peace are possible*

<http://sp12.org>