

## True North: The Principles of Conservatism

### A GUIDE TO BUILDING AN AMERICA WHERE FREEDOM, OPPORTUNITY, PROSPERITY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY FLOURISH.

*The Heritage Foundation formulates policies that promote free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defense. Heritage does not support policies that deviate from these principles, nor are our recommendations ever influenced by donations or outside political pressure.*

- 1 The federal government exists to preserve life, liberty, and property, and it is instituted to protect the rights of individuals according to natural law. Among these rights are the sanctity of life; the freedom of speech, religion, the press, and assembly; the right to bear arms; the right to be treated equally and justly under the law; and the right to enjoy the fruits of one's labor.
- 2 The federal government's powers are limited to those named in the Constitution and should be exercised solely to protect the rights of its citizens. As Thomas Jefferson said, "The government closest to the people serves the people best." Powers not delegated to the federal government, nor prohibited by the Constitution, are reserved to the states or to the people.
- 3 Judges should interpret and apply our laws and the Constitution based on their original meaning, not upon judges' personal and political predispositions.
- 4 Individuals and families—not government—make the best decisions regarding their and their children's health, education, jobs, and welfare.
- 5 The family is the essential foundation of civil society, and traditional marriage serves as the cornerstone of the family.
- 6 The federal deficit and debt must not place unreasonable financial burdens on future generations.
- 7 Tax policies should raise only the minimum revenue necessary to fund constitutionally appropriate functions of government.
- 8 America's economy and the prosperity of individual citizens are best served by a system of free enterprise, with special emphasis on economic freedom, private property rights, and the rule of law. This system is best sustained by policies promoting free trade and deregulation, and opposing government interventions in the economy that distort markets and impair innovation.
- 9 Regulations must not breach constitutional principles of limited government and the separation of powers.
- 10 America must be a welcoming nation—one that promotes patriotic assimilation and is governed by laws that are fair, humane, and enforced to protect its citizens.
- 11 Justice requires an efficient, fair, and effective criminal justice system—one that gives defendants adequate due process and requires an appropriate degree of criminal intent to merit punishment.
- 12 International agreements and international organizations should not infringe on Americans' constitutional rights, nor should they diminish American sovereignty.
- 13 America is strongest when our policies protect our national interests, preserve our alliances of free peoples, vigorously counter threats to our security, and advance prosperity through economic freedom at home and abroad.
- 14 The best way to ensure peace is through a strong national defense.