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TALES FROM 2040

#001

JULY
2011



HOW APPLE HELPED THE TEA PARTY AND OCCUPY MOVEMENTS FIX POLITICS

A SHORT STORY FROM A BRIGHTER FUTURE
BY CHRISTOPHER CARDINAL

TALES FROM 2040

**TALE #001: HOW APPLE HELPED THE TEA PARTY
AND OCCUPY MOVEMENTS FIX POLITICS**



CHRISTOPHER CARDINAL



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*To my parents,
thank you for loving this scoundrel*

*I can never repay the kindness you have shown me;
I can only pay it forward*

AUTHOR'S NOTE: PAY IT FORWARD

Neither Facebook, nor Apple, nor Lady Gaga asked me to spend seven years writing these books, and the decision to give them away for free was my own. No one owes me anything.

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HOW APPLE HELPED THE TEA PARTY AND OCCUPY MOVEMENTS FIX POLITICS

Tim Cook. The name alone evokes awe and respect, and is synonymous with American triumph. Since 2011, Cook has run Apple Inc., the world's most valuable company,¹ through three decades of innovation and profit. To the business world, he is the pinnacle of success, a leader to follow on the path to fame and fortune. To the rest of the world, he is revered as something far more important: a champion of democracy.

In fact, despite reigning as the world's richest person since 2026, Cook is widely regarded as a hero for the common citizen. Of all his accomplishments, his greatest was not developing a new product, but rather using technology to help improve the political process. He forever changed the way we discuss issues and find our leaders, but to understand how and why he did it, we must first look at Cook's predecessor: Steve Jobs.

A TOUGH ACT TO FOLLOW

Many have said that the life of Steve Jobs was the stuff of legend, and with good reason. To begin, his work history reads more like the origin story of some fictional corporate superhero than a typical résumé.²

In 1976, when Jobs was barely 21, he and two partners founded Apple Computer in his parents' garage. Just four years later, the company went public with the largest IPO in a quarter of century, minting more new millionaires than any other company had ever produced.³ Soon thereafter, Apple made history by introducing the *Macintosh* with its famous "1984" commercial, which was aired only once during the Super Bowl⁴ and was later named the greatest ad of all time.⁵ The next year, just as the dawn of the personal computer was rising, Jobs found himself on the losing end of a management power struggle and was asked to resign.

He immediately founded another company, NeXT Computer, and the following year he bought a computer graphics group which would later become Pixar Animation Studios. A decade later, these investments paid off. In 1995, Pixar released *Toy Story*, the world's first feature-length computer generated movie. Historians mark this as the beginning of the end of live action Hollywood filmmaking and the start of the modern, all-digital era. (Pixar also went on to create Lisa Newton, the first computer-generated actor to win an Academy Award.) The next year, Apple bought NeXT Computer, which, in a twist rarely seen in the corporate world, returned Jobs to the first company he had helped found. Within a few months, the current CEO was removed and Jobs was back in charge of the entire enterprise.⁶

During his remaining time there, Apple released a steady stream of wildly popular products that redefined the market. After Apple started making them, nobody called anything a “portable digital music player” – everyone just called them *iPods*. The company soon saw similar success in the smartphone and tablet computer categories with the *iPhone* and the *iPad*, respectively.

Jobs led Apple to heights that other CEOs only dream of. When he took over again, the company was the joke of the tech industry.⁷ Under his leadership, Apple came back from the brink of obsolescence to become the world’s most valuable company⁸ with the world’s most valuable brand.⁹ While rivals sold competing products at a loss,¹⁰ the *iPad 2* sold for over twice what it cost to make.¹¹ Apple grew to earn three-quarters of the profit made by the entire worldwide mobile phone market – more than three times that of Samsung, Nokia, Research in Motion, HTC, Motorola, LG, and Sony combined – within just four years of releasing the first *iPhone*.¹² During that same period, *Fortune* named Apple the world’s most admired company every single year.¹³ When Jobs took over in 1997, AAPL shares were trading at record lows; when he resigned in 2011, the stock was worth around 450 times more.¹⁴

When Jobs died of pancreatic cancer six weeks later, it touched off the largest outpouring of sentiment in recent history, one that overshadowed the deaths of well-known celebrities and victims of natural disasters alike. It seemed the world was mourning an international hero, not the CEO of a tech company. Just seven weeks of sales made his biography Amazon’s bestselling book of the year.¹⁵ His death created the largest reaction on Twitter at the time¹⁶ and made headline news around the globe, eliciting

commentary and elegies from world leaders.¹⁷ In the coming days, major magazines published commemorative issues dedicated to his life¹⁸ as crowds of fans gathered at Apple Stores to pay tribute to their fallen idol.¹⁹

A CHIPPED PEDESTAL

The media had long been very kind to Jobs. He was a charismatic man who lived a comeback story of victory and died at the peak of his career. He also had millions of evangelical followers, and to speak poorly of him was tantamount to blasphemy. However, one of the harsh truths of journalism is that the industry constantly demands a new angle. The same publicity machine that builds people up into demigods takes equal pleasure in cutting them down to size.

After his death, another picture of Jobs began to come to the forefront, one of a vicious, mean-spirited tyrant. A selfish egomaniac who took too much credit for others' accomplishments. A man who not only could do wrong, but had, and who perhaps did not deserve such unmitigated adoration.²⁰ Many of the negative details were limited to Jobs as an individual, but others, those about his business practices, started to form blemishes on Apple's polished image.

One of the largest scandals to gain attention after Jobs' death concerned Foxconn, the Taiwanese manufacturer that made Apple products. Reports said their factories were military-style labor camps where workers, frequently children, were treated like machines and forced to work long hours, often seven days a week, then crammed into crowded dormitories between shifts. In the factory, some faced public humiliation for poor performance; others,

deadly chemicals and explosions, all for about a dollar an hour. Worker suicide was so common that Foxconn installed nets around their buildings to catch those who jumped from the roof.²¹

Furthermore, activists called out Apple for supporting rape, torture, and genocide by using “conflict minerals.”²² Many raw materials used in high-tech devices came from places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the world’s poorest people²³ lived on top of mineral deposits worth more than the GDP of the United States and Europe combined.²⁴ Congo was also home to an ongoing civil war, the deadliest conflict since World War II.²⁵ Critics pointed out that money we spent on our favorite electronic devices ended up funding African militias,²⁶ which United Nations representatives said were responsible for the worst acts of violence and rape in the world.²⁷

Consumers were horrified to discover that their shiny iGadgets had come at a terrible human cost. Thought leaders called for Apple boycotts,²⁸ senators demanded answers,²⁹ and activists signed petitions³⁰ as the sleek devices once embraced by the cultural elite began turning into symbols of exploitation. However, those who dug a little deeper found that the unpleasant realities of the global economy were nothing new – nor were they unique to Apple.

The conflict in Congo had started long before Apple came to power, and most companies worldwide purchased their raw materials from the same war-torn sources.³¹ Further complicating the issue, Foxconn did not only make *iPhones* and *iPads*. It also made computers for Dell, Hewlett-Packard, and IBM, mobile phones for Motorola, Nokia, and Samsung, and video game consoles for Microsoft,

Nintendo, and Sony. In fact, that single corporation assembled about 40 percent of all consumer electronics in the entire world.³²

Apple could have easily afforded to pay Americans to make their products, but manufacturing had moved out of the country decades earlier – to Japan in the 1960s and later to Mexico in the 1980s – and it never returned. Part of the reason Foxconn got the job was that no company in the US could have handled it.³³

Even liberal economists would explain that low-paying jobs overseas actually benefit poor workers more than the rich multinational companies who employ them,³⁴ and that wage rates had nothing to do with the cost of an *iPhone* and everything to do with the relative cost of labor throughout Asia and the rest of the world.³⁵ Plus, the wages Foxconn paid its workers were high for China,³⁶ and far higher than in other Asian countries like Vietnam, where the women who assembled the world's most popular digital cameras were paid about 80 percent less than workers in Foxconn factories.³⁷

Furthermore, the working conditions at Foxconn were not as bad as first reported. An episode of NPR's *This American Life* that described the wretched lives of Foxconn workers became its most popular broadcast ever³⁸ and sparked a widely-publicized protest against Apple.³⁹ However, the story was later retracted after another journalist investigated and found that many of the details were fabricated to make the story more dramatic.⁴⁰ (In fact, Foxconn's injury rate was far lower than that of American manufacturing workers.)⁴¹

As far as workers killing themselves, this too was exaggerated, as stories about suicide often are. For example, halfway through 2012, it was widely reported that more American troops had taken their own lives that year than had been killed in the war in Afghanistan.⁴² However, this story juxtaposed death counts between the 87,000 troops in Afghanistan⁴³ and the nearly 1.5 million total active-duty military personnel.⁴⁴ While it was a clever way to make sensational headlines, comparing apples and oranges in this manner was nearly meaningless. The way it was presented, however, suggested the suicide rate was extraordinarily high, when in reality it was nearly identical to the rate among all American men of military age, a detail the media failed to mention.⁴⁵ Such was the case with the coverage of the Foxconn worker suicides. Considering the company employed close to a million people, the overall suicide rate of its workers was actually remarkably low – lower than the rest of China, and lower than America for that matter.⁴⁶

The truth was hard to look at, but it was just as hard to blame it all on one corporation. Nevertheless, Apple's position at the top of the market made it a lightning rod, and the company took a turn serving as the whipping boy for the entire tech industry.⁴⁷ For example, one headline read, "Mass Suicide' Protest at Apple Manufacturer Foxconn Factory," yet the story failed to mention that the factory actually produced *Xbox 360* game consoles for Microsoft.⁴⁸

However, once people learned that nearly every electronic product they owned was made the same way, the issue didn't seem so simple anymore. The typical supercenter carried over 100,000 different items, each made up of

parts and ingredients from all around the world.⁴⁹ Feeling guilty over electronics meant having to feel guilty over almost every product imaginable, from cars to clothing, even fresh produce.⁵⁰ When forced to choose between a life of modern comfort and the moral high ground, most people meekly clutched their mobile phones and moved on to the next social cause.

When it came to manufacturing, Apple turned out to be the same as every other company. However, when it came to charity, Apple did indeed “think different,” and not in a good way. When these facts came to light, the ensuing scandal couldn’t be swept away quite so easily.

Virtually every large company in America donated some of its profits, but Apple did not, on orders that came straight from the top. Upon returning in 1997, Steve Jobs cut every single philanthropic program across the company, saying that costs needed to be reduced until the business was profitable again.⁵¹ However, during his tenure, even after making some of the largest profits in history,⁵² those programs were never restored.⁵³

Historically, the Apple faithful worshipped Jobs and vilified his rival Bill Gates,⁵⁴ even though Gates created the largest charitable organization ever⁵⁵ and devoted his life to fighting global poverty and disease, saving millions of lives.⁵⁶ Whereas Jobs took funding away from charities, Gates did the opposite. Gates led by example, pledging to donate most of his vast fortune,⁵⁷ and he helped convince over 80 more of the superwealthy to do so as well.⁵⁸

Jobs, on the other hand, chose not to share any of his personal \$8.3 billion fortune,⁵⁹ a decision that many didn’t understand, but with which few could argue. After all, it

was his money. He earned it; he could spend it as he pleased. However, Jobs didn't earn every dollar Apple made as a company, yet he made sure none of them went to charitable causes. Many other people worked at Apple, and they did not all feel the same way toward helping the less fortunate. Jobs had imposed his will on the entire company, keeping the fruits of everyone's labor locked away from doing good.

When Jobs died, Apple was worth more than all the banks in the European Zone combined.⁶⁰ In fact, it was worth more than the entire economies of most European countries.⁶¹ At the end of 2011, Apple had more money sitting in the bank than the United States Treasury had⁶² – over \$100 billion in cash, just waiting to be put to work.⁶³ Yet despite all that wealth, Jobs had adamantly refused to donate any of it, leaving even the most zealous Apple fans questioning why the company was so stingy.

A BITTERSWEET INHERITANCE

When Cook took over in late 2011, tablet sales had just quadrupled over the previous year and Apple had two-thirds of the market share.⁶⁴ Then came an astounding holiday season, during which the company broke even more sales records. As a result, Apple became the world's leading smartphone manufacturer⁶⁵ and gained a solid edge over ExxonMobil to become world's most valuable company.⁶⁶

Cook inherited an incredibly profitable global corporation; however, he also inherited some public relations nightmares at home. The US economy was still in a slump, and Jobs had said Apple's manufacturing jobs would never return from Taiwan.⁶⁷ Even worse, the revelations that

Apple had made a fortune off exploited workers while giving nothing to charity seemed downright un-American, and reeked of corporate greed at its worst.

To Cook's credit, he addressed the Foxconn controversy head on, publishing for the first time a list of all its main suppliers⁶⁸ and allowing a watchdog organization to inspect the working conditions at their factories.⁶⁹ He also lifted the ban on charitable giving within days of assuming the role of CEO, instituting a generous program through which Apple would match employee contributions to the non-profits of their choice.⁷⁰ But the whispers of this good news were drowned out by fanfare surrounding Jobs and his death.

Tim Cook may not have his predecessor's showmanship. Then again, no one does. Jobs had such a strong personality that it was often said to distort reality around him,⁷¹ and some predicted Apple would falter without it.⁷² However, although Cook's style is more reserved, he has shown he certainly knows how to lead the company to design award-winning products. Over the years, he has exceeded even Jobs' ability to make Apple successful.⁷³

Whereas history remembers Jobs as a selfish tyrant, though, Cook is seen worldwide as a benevolent king, and back at home, an American hero. This is because shortly after he became CEO of Apple, Cook helped revolutionize politics in the United States. To do this, he didn't run for office, or fund a campaign, or even lobby to change any laws. Instead, he did what all the greatest minds in technology have always done best: He took a good idea and tweaked it to make it work better.⁷⁴

POLITICS, DISASTROUS AND UNPALATABLE

We are lucky that Cook turned his attention to problems outside the field of technology, because the state of American politics only a few decades ago was a disgrace. Some readers may be too young to have seen it firsthand, but the rest of us remember it all too well.

By the early 2010s, only one out of ten Americans thought Congress was doing its job properly.⁷⁵ The public had almost no voice in its government, which was a dark shadow of what its founders had envisioned. For example, the Senate, with its fixed size and long terms, was meant to look after the interests of states, and to balance this, the House of Representatives was supposed to reflect the views of the common citizen. To ensure that public opinion was heard, the framers of the Constitution intended for Representatives to be elected by and speak for relatively small communities. To accomplish this, they designed the House to add seats as necessary, which it did for well over a century.

But in what may have been the most drastic move of gerrymandering, in the 1920s, the ruling party in Congress refused to reapportion its districts as expected and arbitrarily capped the size of the House in order to avoid losing power.⁷⁶ As the population exploded, each Representative came to speak for more and more constituents – about 20 times as many as in the time of the Founding Fathers,⁷⁷ who had decided against such limitations.⁷⁸ Eventually, this concentration of power turned the House into a second Senate, similarly controlled by special interests and out-of-touch with the average American.

The political machine gave politicians in Washington little reason to listen to their constituents back home. Despite their abysmal approval ratings, incumbents could almost always get re-elected.⁷⁹ Or they could walk right into high-paying lobbying jobs, jobs promised to them while they were still in office, from the very people they were supposed to be regulating.⁸⁰ For example, while former Representative W. J. “Billy” Tauzin was the chairman of the House committee that oversees the pharmaceutical industry, he co-sponsored a bill that required the government to buy a huge amount of prescription drugs.⁸¹ Then, almost immediately after it passed, he angered Republicans and Democrats alike by leaving Congress to become the head of PhRMA, the largest drug industry lobbying group.⁸² There he brokered a deal forbidding the government from negotiating the prices for the drugs it had just agreed to buy, meaning that taxpayers would end up giving pharmaceutical companies even more, much more than they needed to,⁸³ adding trillions to the deficit with no plan to pay for it.⁸⁴ That year, Tauzin was paid over \$11 million by PhRMA.⁸⁵

We told our children that anyone could run for public office, even the presidency, but beneath this thin veneer of democracy lived an ugly truth: Not just anyone could get elected. Over 90 percent of Congressional races went to the candidate with the most money,⁸⁶ and running a campaign was absurdly expensive. In 2010, it cost an average of nearly \$10 million to win a Senate seat.⁸⁷ For those without their own personal fortunes, this meant accepting huge amounts of money from large corporations and political action groups. These dollars came, of course, with strings attached, and expectations that their benefactors’ special interests be protected. In addition, donors would only give

money to candidates with a realistic chance of success, which at that time meant being part of an established party.

The political scene was dominated completely by two groups: the Republican Party of the United States and the United States Democratic Party. Even though Independents had long been the largest group of voters,⁸⁸ just mentioning a third party was political suicide.⁸⁹ Gaining recognition as a serious candidate required joining one of these two factions, which, in turn, meant subscribing wholesale to its position on every major issue. It was all-or-nothing: Supporting corporate tax cuts also meant being pro-life and opposing environmental regulations. There were only two clearly defined sets of viewpoints, leaving no room for independent thought.⁹⁰ The actual candidates barely mattered. Every election became a competition between these two parties.

Exacerbating these problems were the media. After all, having two, and only two, diametrically opposed perspectives turned every issue into a fight, which made for good television. Students of pop culture will remember that during the beginning of this century, a genre of entertainment known as “reality television” was extremely popular. Although heavily scripted,⁹¹ these programs pretended to be authentic by using untrained people in place of professional actors. Many reality shows were made with the same formula: Gather a group of flamboyantly narcissistic people, create some artificial conflict, film the chaos that ensues, then edit it to make it look like everyone hates everybody else. This was the process used to make the programs that defined the reality genre, like *The Real World*, *Survivor*, and *The Apprentice*. However, the cable

news networks also used this exact model to make dozens of “news” shows featuring nothing but belligerent pundits, and the more they screamed at each other, the more people tuned in.

Legitimate journalists were forced to abandon their principles to survive in a harmful race for ratings, and the bar kept getting lower. Traditional news shows sensationalized topics by reporting only the most radical opinions, leaving any nuance, as well as the perspectives of the vast majority of the population, absent. They delivered apocalyptic dread on a daily basis, then forgot each crisis as soon as a new story arose. Newspapers, facing continually shrinking readership and staff, abandoned fact-checking altogether and just reprinted talking points from special interest groups. Talk radio and activist websites spewed false information, comforting likeminded audiences by parroting baseless rumors and misguided beliefs.⁹² More than ever before, the public felt the media was inaccurate and partisan, controlled by special interests.⁹³

The vacuum created by this perversion of journalism left no one to believe. Shortly after Walter Cronkite’s death, *Time* conducted a poll asking Americans to name the country’s most trusted television newscaster.⁹⁴ The winner by a landslide: Jon Stewart, a comedian performing on what he called a “fake news” program.⁹⁵ Despite *The Daily Show* winning numerous awards, including two Peabody Awards for Excellence in Broadcasting on top of the longest winning streak in Emmy history,⁹⁶ Stewart himself chalked the poll results up to the lack of quality in mainstream news rather than any excellence on his part.⁹⁷ The next year, another poll showed that only 12 percent of

Americans knew that their taxes had been lowered, and twice as many thought the administration had actually raised them.⁹⁸ Considering the state of the media, it was hard to blame anyone for not knowing the truth.

What passed for political debates were really just shouting matches between crackpot extremists. We didn't vote for the candidates we thought would do the best job; instead, we voted against the ones the media convinced us to hate. The noise from the fringes drowned out everyone in the middle. While Democrats and Republicans quibbled dramatically over millions, the largest corporations in the world, who donated generously to both sides, quietly received tax breaks and bailouts worth trillions.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE TEA PARTY

One group that noticed was the Tea Party, a political movement started in 2009 to protest wasteful and irresponsible fiscal policies.⁹⁹ And the nation started to notice the Tea Party, but hardly for the right reasons.

In the beginning, most mainstream media outlets were disrespectful toward the Tea Party.¹⁰⁰ They painted them as a group of lunatics: fanatically conservative old white men who shouted racist slurs while wearing colonial costumes and wielding misspelled signs. While a few people like this existed, they were a vocal minority who were hardly representative of the movement as a whole. In reality, apart from skewing conservative, members of the Tea Party were not that different from the rest of America.¹⁰¹ In fact, the person who organized what many Tea Party leaders consider to be the movement's first protest was an intelligent, articulate woman in her twenties named Keli

Carender. Describing her, Jenny Beth Martin, co-founder of the Tea Party Patriots, said:

*She's not your typical conservative ... She's an actress. She's got a nose ring. I think it's the thing that's so amazing about our movement.*¹⁰²

The media not only misrepresented who they were, but also what they wanted. The original priority of the Tea Party was to restore financial stability by reducing spending, taxes, and the deficit. However, rational arguments about fiscal policy do not make interesting television. What the media showed instead were an outspoken few howling in fury about how the president was secretly Muslim or how same-sex marriage would destroy civilization, despite the fact that virtually no one within the organization thought these were the most pressing issues.¹⁰³

Adding to the confusion, the term “Tea Party” was widely misappropriated. It was borrowed by billionaires astroturfing for corporate interests as well as by a caucus of House Republicans, who both individually and collectively cast several votes that contradicted the ideals they supposedly represented. From lazy journalists to politicians riding the coattails of a nationwide movement, the actions of a few high-profile individuals tarnished the Tea Party name. All this misrepresentation only added to the frustration of its members, who above all else felt their voices were not being heard. Despite varying opinions on many topics, the main problem on which Tea Party members could agree was the status quo. Virtually everyone who was part of the Tea Party disapproved of the way Congress was handling its job and thought that most members should be replaced.¹⁰⁴

A BLEAK OUTLOOK

A poll taken the year the movement started showed that four in ten people held a favorable view of the Tea Party.¹⁰⁵ In the 2010 midterm elections a year later, a wave of first-time politicians defeated Democrats who used to be untouchable, and over 40 Tea Party-backed candidates won seats in the House, reclaiming it for the Republicans.¹⁰⁶ At the time, about seven out of ten people felt the movement had gotten people more politically involved¹⁰⁷ and thought that Congressional leaders should consider the Tea Party's positions when they made decisions.¹⁰⁸

The newcomers immediately found themselves at the center of an ugly fight.¹⁰⁹ Conservative lawmakers refused to raise the federal debt ceiling, a move that threatened to shut down government services and damage the country's perfect credit rating, and the Tea Party led the charge.¹¹⁰

Liberals blamed politicians for creating an artificial problem, pointing out that no other country even has a debt ceiling,¹¹¹ or that, in the previous 30 years, Congress had raised the debt limit 43 times, 37 of which were under a Republican president, with no real conflict.¹¹² However, conservatives had a different perspective. They agreed that raising the debt ceiling was routine... and that was the problem.¹¹³ After all, the government had borrowed more and more every year since 1970 (except during Bill Clinton's second term, due to budget surpluses).¹¹⁴ Conservatives said that the proper response to a budget shortfall should be to spend less, not go deeper into debt.

At first, the public overwhelmingly agreed with the Tea Party and opposed raising the debt limit, even if it meant

interest rates would rise.¹¹⁵ As the deadline drew close, though, and analysts predicted an economic meltdown,¹¹⁶ most Americans thought the budget negotiations had become ridiculous,¹¹⁷ and even most Republicans thought Congress should compromise.¹¹⁸ At the last minute, an agreement was reached, which the Tea Party adamantly opposed until the bitter end.¹¹⁹

America avoided defaulting on its debts, but the world's faith in its government was shaken.¹²⁰ A few days later, the US credit rating was downgraded for the first time in history.¹²¹ Nearly all Americans felt that the debate over raising the debt ceiling had been about petty politics rather than looking out for the country's best interests,¹²² and many blamed the entire crisis on the Tea Party.¹²³ Public approval of everyone involved took a nosedive. Support for Congress, Republicans in particular,¹²⁴ and the Tea Party movement hit all-time lows.¹²⁵

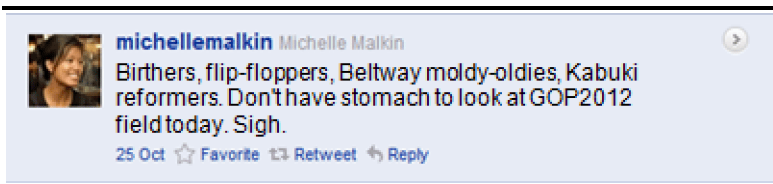
As the 2012 presidential election neared, the future looked grim for the Tea Party,¹²⁶ and they didn't know whom to support. While most members of the Tea Party were conservative, they were unhappy with both major parties. According to polls, about nine out of ten disapproved of then-president Barack Obama, a Democrat, but the same amount were dissatisfied with Republican leaders as well,¹²⁷ especially those who used the Tea Party name to gain political favor, then broke their promises.¹²⁸

No Republican candidate was a clear frontrunner. In fact, the race couldn't even get started. The situation was so bad that the first scheduled debate was pushed back due to a lack of candidates.¹²⁹ Then, the first GOP debate held was widely criticized because only one "top-tier" candidate participated,¹³⁰ and even he quit shortly thereafter.¹³¹

In an October 2010 poll, when asked which national figure best represented the Tea Party, the most popular answer was “no one.”¹³² A year later, American conservatives were still no closer to finding a leader to unite them. In an October 2011 poll, the most popular choice among Republican voters was “undecided.”¹³³

A cavalcade of disappointing presidential hopefuls paraded across the national stage: Mike Huckabee. Sarah Palin. Donald Trump. Michele Bachmann. Ron Paul. Rick Perry. Herman Cain. Newt Gingrich. Rick Santorum. Each stepped into the limelight, won a few polls, was declared the frontrunner, then promptly burned out or bowed out.¹³⁴ The process made everyone look bad.¹³⁵ Popular conservative journalist Michelle Malkin summed up the weak field of GOP candidates in a tweet:

Illustration: Tweet from Michelle Malkin¹³⁶



It looked like Mitt Romney would nab the nomination not by outshining the competition, but merely by outlasting them. Republicans were not enthusiastic about Romney,¹³⁷ but the sad truth was that who they nominated barely mattered, since they would not be voting for their candidate so much as voting against Obama.¹³⁸ As conservative talk radio host Rush Limbaugh later said:¹³⁹

[Romney] may as well be Elmer Fudd as far as we're concerned. We're voting against Obama. I don't care who they put on the ticket, we're voting against Obama.

Still, well before the primaries, analysts were already predicting that whomever was chosen would lose.¹⁴⁰

BUILDING A BETTER MOUSETRAP

“These are our choices? These are the best candidates we can come up with?” a young man lamented at a Tea Party meeting in Philadelphia. “There has to be a better way.”

His outburst caught the attention of another member, Otto Scholz, a retired inventor and optical engineer, who had made a lifelong career of finding better ways to do things.

Scholz recalls in his autobiography, *Changing the Game*:

It wasn't until that young man spoke up that I had ever really considered how we choose our presidents.

Throughout my whole life, whenever I have heard someone say, “There must be a better way,” I have tended to agree. I usually take it as a challenge to come up with one.

I have never been one to be shy. I walked up to him and I said, “Let's solve this. You and me. Right now. Let's come up with a better way to pick the president.”

From the way he looked at me, I knew he thought I was a crazy old man, but he was nice about it. He humored me. I bought us some hamburgers, we spent the next four hours talking, and by the end of the night, we had it.

The young man turned out to be Ethan Beaudreau, a 20-year-old computer science student attending the first political event of his life. “I was there maybe fifteen minutes and this old guy grabs my arm and pulls me off to solve the problems of the world,” Beaudreau fondly remembers. “I had no clue what I was in for.” As it turns

out, neither of them did, because the idea they came up with that night forever changed American politics.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE

Scholz and Beaudreau presented their idea two weeks later at the next meeting of the Philadelphia Metro Tea Party. The concept was simple: The year before each presidential election, citizens would meet locally in groups of twelve, discuss current political issues, then choose a leader from within their group. Those leaders would then meet in groups of twelve, choose a leader among them, and so on. Meeting just once a week, the entire country could be canvassed in two months with a minimum of effort: More than nine out of ten participants would attend just one meeting. This process, which they called “progressive selection,”¹⁴¹ could identify potential leaders who would otherwise go undiscovered by the entrenched party system.

“It’s like a cross between jury duty and *American Idol*,” Beaudreau recalls saying, drawing a comparison to a popular televised talent show that held open auditions and gave national attention to previously unknown singers.

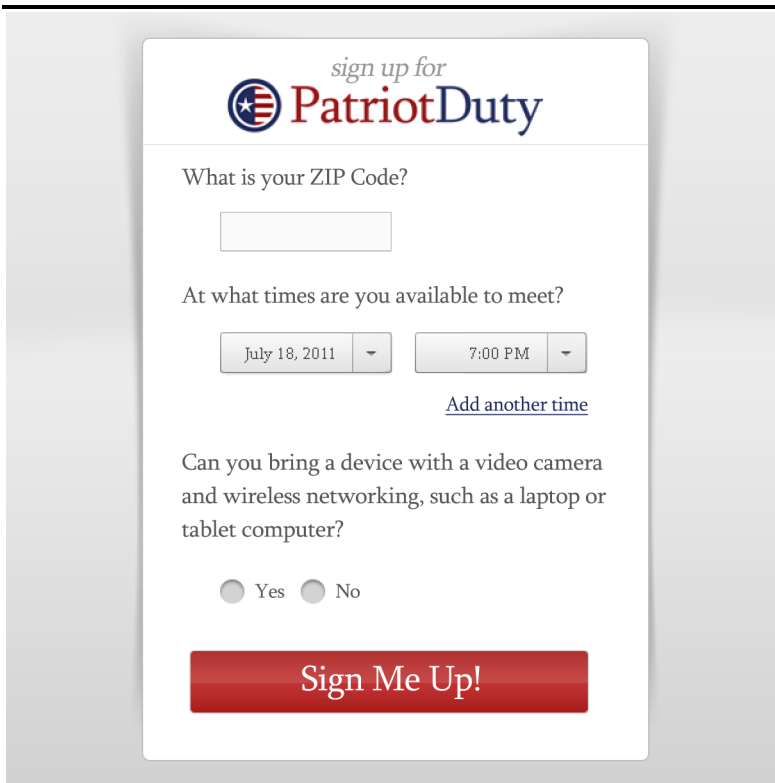
“With a touch of *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*,” quipped Scholz, referring to a movie produced 50 years before Beaudreau was even born, which told the story of a local hero who finds himself thrust into the political scene.

The group’s reaction was tepid. Other Tea Party members said the idea sounded great in theory, but it was impossible to execute. The logistics of scheduling and recording the results of millions of meetings between strangers were unfathomably difficult.

“It’s not as hard as you think,” replied Beaudreau, who went on to demonstrate an application he had been working on since the last meeting.

He showed that in order to participate, people needed simply to visit a website and provide their email address. When the time came, the system would email back a link to a page that asked three short questions:

Illustration: Registration screen



The illustration shows a registration screen for "PatriotDuty". At the top, it says "sign up for" in a small font, followed by the "PatriotDuty" logo, which features a stylized American flag icon. Below the logo, the first question is "What is your ZIP Code?" with a text input field. The second question is "At what times are you available to meet?" with two dropdown menus: one for the date (set to "July 18, 2011") and one for the time (set to "7:00 PM"). Below these is a link that says "Add another time". The third question is "Can you bring a device with a video camera and wireless networking, such as a laptop or tablet computer?" with two radio buttons labeled "Yes" and "No". At the bottom of the form is a large red button with the text "Sign Me Up!" in white.

Once enough participants had registered, the system formed groups of twelve based on location and schedule compatibility, while ensuring each group had at least two

people who agreed to bring an electronic device capable of recording the meeting.

The application then chose a local restaurant as the meeting place using information drawn from Yelp, a well-known business review website. It first checked for establishments that provided wireless internet, then looked for places with inexpensive menus, casual attire, low noise levels, convenient parking, and good reviews. The system then sent an email with the time and location of the meeting, along with links to directions. All participants had to do was show up with the confirmation code provided.

Once at the restaurant, anyone with a suitable device could click a link from the confirmation email to start a simple application designed to administer and record the meeting. First, it asked all participants to sign in using their confirmation codes while snapping a quick photo of themselves. The program then guided them through the meeting using text and voice prompts, along with the photos of the participants, to announce who should be talking and for how long.

Meetings would consist of three discussion periods, each about an important issue. The application selected a topic at random from a database, presented a few key facts, then posed a question. Each participant was then given up to two minutes to respond, with up to ten minutes for a group conversation after everyone had spoken. After all three topics, 20 minutes were allotted for the group to discuss who among them would make the best leader. Finally, a vote was taken, with each person getting a turn with the device to cast a secret ballot. Using the photos taken at the beginning, each participant could choose up to three people to move on to the next round.

Realistically, the entire meeting would probably take about an hour and a half. After the votes were cast, the meeting would be adjourned. The person with the most votes would be notified the next day and invited to proceed to the next round of meetings, repeating the process a week later. In addition, throughout the meeting, the program sent a stream of video to a central server to be saved on YouTube as a record of the meeting, which Beaudreau showed he had been doing the whole time he had been talking.

After the demonstration, the members of the Philadelphia Metro Tea Party were dumbfounded. The room was full of dropped jaws and bewilderment. No one knew quite what to say.

Scholz pressed on, saying, “I believe in the Constitution as much as anyone else here, and I think that if the Founding Fathers had the internet, this is how they would have used it. And the best part is that this idea requires no government involvement whatsoever. We can just do it on our own.”

Once the silence was broken, everyone spoke at once, trying to poke holes in the idea. Beaudreau calmly fielded the questions.

“You did this in two weeks? How do you know it works?” Beaudreau again downplayed the difficulty. He replied, “It’s a prototype, but it’s not like I built it from scratch. All the parts already existed. I just put them together.”

“What keeps people from cheating?” someone cried out. “Simple mathematics,” Beaudreau replied. He went on to explain that since the groups were chosen at random, it was nearly impossible to control who met with whom. Even if anyone did, it wouldn’t matter, he said, because the

later rounds would weed out people who did not deserve to be there. He then demonstrated how it would require almost 2,000 people to stage over 150 meetings, all on video, just to sneak one person past the third round.

“How can we get people to actually discuss the issues? Won’t people just start fighting?” asked another. Beaudreau answered that he felt that, in general, participants would go into these meetings expecting to meet people with a variety of differing viewpoints, and most would be respectful.

“But how can we make sure the one they choose supports the Tea Party platform?” Scholz took this question, answering, “We can’t. We cannot control who is picked or tell them what to think. We already have two parties that do that. What we can guarantee, though, is that we won’t get the same old candidates.”

All eyes moved to Beaudreau as he continued, saying, “Progressive selection puts the power in the hands of the people to find the best leaders among them.”

Ralph Snider, the group’s president, summed up the feelings of everyone sitting in reverent silence by saying, “Son, this is just about the most American idea I’ve ever heard, and we’re going to do everything we can to help you two make it happen.”

THE TEA PARTY PITCHES IN

And help they did. The Philadelphia Metro Tea Party kept finding new ways to support the effort. Some members began plans for fundraising, while others organized meetings with Tea Party groups in neighboring areas. The person who helped the most, according to Scholz, was Dr.

Rebecca Walsh, a member of another Philadelphia Tea Party group and a political science professor at Drexel University.

After Beaudreau and Scholz demonstrated the system to several of her classes, Walsh assigned each of her students to research and prepare summaries of modern political topics. Scholz used these to create a database of discussion questions for the meetings that covered a broad spectrum of subjects.

Meanwhile, Walsh drew support from other departments. Beaudreau received help from other computer technology students to finish developing the application, and a statistics professor consulted to ensure the randomization algorithms were sound. Walsh even got a group of marketing and public relations students to design promotional materials to help present the idea to new audiences.

While Scholz and Beaudreau polished the meeting system, Snider and the other leaders of the group worked diligently to gain the support of other Tea Party organizations. This was harder than it might sound. Despite its name, the Tea Party was not actually a party at all, but rather a collective of local groups with no central management. Nearly all Tea Party organizations determined their political activities and strategies at the local level.¹⁴² Fortunately, many fellow Tea Party members were just like Scholz and Beaudreau: concerned, politically active individuals who were eager to help however they could.

Most leaders of other local groups responded with enthusiasm, albeit along with a healthy dose of skepticism, and promised to help promote the idea if it proved to be

viable. One person who took a keen interest was Mark Meckler, co-founder of the Tea Party Patriots,¹⁴³ which loosely organized over 5,000 Tea Party groups nationwide, including several in Philadelphia. As soon as he heard about the idea, he flew out to meet Scholz and Beaudreau to discuss how he could help. After a demonstration of the system, Meckler offered to send an email to all members of his organization asking them to support it.

Meckler firmly believed that comparing the process to jury duty was the best way to communicate the idea, despite the potential for negative connotations. Scholz recalls him saying, “Patriots do not complain about jury duty. They celebrate the fact that our great country has it.” In fact, it was Meckler who suggested that the system of meetings be called “patriot duty.” Meckler leaned heavily on the jury duty metaphor in his email, which he sent to his mailing list of nearly half a million people. In it, he wrote: “Once every few years, citizens are called to gather in groups of twelve to determine the fate of one of their peers. Now we are called to do the same to determine the fate of our nation.”

THE DAM BREAKS

“As soon as he sent that email, all hell broke loose,” says Scholz. Meckler’s email was forwarded and re-forwarded countless times, and within two days, over a quarter of a million people had signed up for meetings at *PatriotDuty.org*, the website set up by Beaudreau. Two days later, the *Wall Street Journal* ran “Tea Party Has a New Way to Pick the President” as a front-page story, and similar headlines were run by all major news outlets.

Ethan Beaudreau became a celebrity overnight. Journalists clamored to get an interview with the young man who built this amazing new system. Although Beaudreau persistently pointed out that most of the ideas came from Scholz, the media glossed over the older man's role, constantly comparing Beaudreau to Mark Zuckerberg, who launched the first version of Facebook when he was 19.¹⁴⁴ Beaudreau tried to share the spotlight, but Scholz would have none of it. "Ethan called and told me he wouldn't do any interviews without me there," recalled Scholz. "I said, 'Why not? This is an idea for the new generation. Who are they going to put on TV, an old man like me or a wunderkind like you?' It was for the best. I was good at inventing. I was never good at selling."

A BUMPY START

By July 2011, when the system was ready to facilitate the first set of patriot duty meetings, almost a million had signed up, and of those, around half confirmed an appointment. In the end, over 400,000 people participated in the first round of meetings, far exceeding Beaudreau's expectations. Although he remained confident it would work, he was also the first to admit that the system he designed was hastily thrown together, and it showed. To his chagrin, this trial run was plagued with problems.

To begin, the meetings did not always go as smoothly as planned. Since the system scheduled them without notifying the restaurants, some groups showed up only to find their meeting place reserved for a private event, while others were packed beyond their capacity with several groups trying to meet at the same time. Most meetings also had at least one person arrive late or not at all, which the software did not handle gracefully. Other flaws in the

meeting application prevented some people from participating. Anyone who did not speak fluent English found the system difficult to use. Plus, since it relied on photos, it was impossible for visually impaired people to vote without assistance.

Then there were the hardware problems. Although the meeting application was designed for tablet computers, many people tried to run it on their mobile phones instead, which made it too small to see easily. Worse, only the most expensive phones were powerful enough to run it properly; the vast majority were not.¹⁴⁵ Mistakes were rampant. A few forgot to bring their computers, and others forgot to charge them fully and ran out of battery power in the middle of the meeting. Still others used their mobile service instead of the restaurant's Wi-Fi and found out the hard way that their service plans were not as "unlimited" as their titles suggested, and were hit with stiff data fees.

Even when participants did everything right, there were still glitches. The meeting software was demanding, so when too many people used it at once, the main servers were overwhelmed and the application became sluggish or stopped working altogether. Unfortunately, this happened frequently, since most groups across the nation agreed to meet in the early evening. Ultimately, this host of technical complications meant that video records of most meetings were choppy, incomplete or missing altogether. Even those that did make it to YouTube were of limited use. While YouTube provided free storage and broadcasting, its interface was not designed to organize tens of thousands of related videos. As a result, the footage of most meetings in the first three rounds were rarely seen by anyone other than the attendees themselves.

Finally, the logistics of the last few rounds of meetings were especially problematic. The first and second rounds were usually scheduled close to home, but after that, the most central location for the group to meet was sometimes two hours away, or even more for residents of Alaska and Hawaii. This did not affect that many participants – the fourth round consisted of just over a hundred – but it placed a costly imposition on the most important people in the process: politically active citizens chosen multiple times over by their peers as potential leaders.

SUCCESS

Despite all these problems, patriot duty was universally hailed as a success. For the most part, participants were understanding about hiccups in this new experiment, and several groups showed considerable resourcefulness in how they adapted. During the first rounds, even though the instructions said to wait only a few minutes for all participants to arrive, most groups waited for half an hour to make sure no stragglers were excluded. Those who arrived late enough to miss the check-in often stayed to take part in the discussion, even though they could not vote or be selected as a leader. One participant invited her group back to her house after they learned the designated restaurant was closed for the night. Another group held its meeting in a parking lot to include a man who could not enter the restaurant due to its lack of a wheelchair ramp.

During the later rounds, most people agreed that the allotted meeting time was insufficient and agreed to talk longer, coming up with their own discussion topics. Later analysis showed that participation actually increased as the rounds progressed, with over 80 percent of those selected in the second round or later making the time to continue

onward, despite the growing cost and inconvenience. To help, hundreds of local Tea Party groups donated funds to pay for travel expenses.

Politicos and psychologists pored over the video footage of the meetings, searching for conclusions to draw from this unprecedented insight into public opinion. Pleasantly absent were the uncivilized brawls predicted by detractors. On the contrary, in their place were intelligent, spirited debates that were far more polite than what appeared on cable news shows. The majority of participants were Tea Party supporters, so it came as no surprise that nearly everyone selected to progress to the second round was a Republican.¹⁴⁶ However, most Democrats who participated described patriot duty as a positive experience, saying they felt welcome and that the Tea Party was more reasonable than they had been led to believe.

The media loved the story. It had drama. It had suspense. It had David and Goliath, with a young entrepreneur standing up to the old guard of American politics. It had Cinderella, with previously low-profile citizens thrust into the limelight. And it came with a slice of apple pie for dessert, as the meetings brought diverse groups of people together while generating business for local restaurants.

Ultimately, through over 25,000 patriot duty meetings over the course of five weeks, participants narrowed a field of nearly half a million citizens down to nine individuals to represent them. In honor of the founders, the sixth and final round was held at Fitzgerald's, the pub that served as the regular meeting place of the Philadelphia Metro Tea Party, where Otto Scholz challenged Ethan Beaudreau to help him come up with a new way to find presidential candidates only a few months earlier.

A LEADER EMERGES

After two days of deliberation, the finalists unanimously selected Vincent Patros, a lawyer from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As the country learned more about him over the next few days, it became clear why he rose to the top.

A socially moderate, fiscally conservative Republican, Patros was a remarkable man and no stranger to politics. He had served two terms in the Cedar Rapids City Council and was an active member in several local political groups, including his regional Tea Party chapter. Over the years, he had given generously of both his time and money to his community. He had a loving family, a closet free of skeletons, a Navy Cross and a Purple Heart, and degrees in both economics and law from Northwestern. Even more impressive than his résumé, however, was his presence. A review of the patriot duty meetings he attended showed him taking command by leading discussions, brokering compromises, and mesmerizing his fellow participants with articulate insights on topics for which, having been chosen at random, he couldn't possibly have prepared.

Everyone marveled at how well patriot duty had worked. Everyone but Beaudreau, that is, who again chalked it up to “simple mathematics,” saying:

One process chooses from a small pool of career politicians. Patriot duty chooses from a large pool of concerned citizens. The latter producing a superior result is unremarkable.

Finding the best of anything depends on two variables: The selection method and the size of the sample. Have you read The Wisdom of Crowds? It explains this far better than I can, but in the right conditions, large groups of regular people make better decisions than

small groups of experts, and patriot duty meets all four criteria of a “wise crowd.”¹⁴⁷

We have a sound selection method. After that, it’s just a numbers game. The larger the haystack, the sharper the needle the crowd will find in it. People say Patros is “one in a million,” but he’s actually better than that, once you factor in all the people who did not care enough to participate.

Witnessing their handiwork select such a worthy candidate reinvigorated the Tea Party. Patros was a breath of fresh air in a stagnant political process that had long since left many members feeling frustrated and alienated. Previously, the Tea Party had been fragmented, with support divided between a dozen national figures throughout the previous year, including several minor politicians and two reality television stars. Patros’ keen understanding of economics provided a focal point around which the Tea Party could rally, despite the fact that he was not as conservative on social issues as other candidates were. Most importantly, he had a better chance of winning than the third- and fourth-string choices the Republicans were left with after so many strong frontrunners decided not to throw their hats into the ring.¹⁴⁸

The chaotic mix of weak GOP candidates helped Patros to stand out of the crowd due to his charismatic personality and the unique nature of his discovery through patriot duty. It also made him a popular target though, a latecomer to a fight that had already turned ugly before he showed up.¹⁴⁹ Patros had neither a personal fortune nor years of fundraising behind him, and he was up against experienced politicians backed by donors with deep pockets. Attack ads blanketed the airwaves, criticizing his lack of experience and his breaks from traditional

conservative views. Despite his meager war chest, though, no amount of paid advertising could have outshone the promotion the news media gave him free-of-charge.

His late entry was a godsend to the reporters stuck covering a stale race, who capitalized on his grassroots beginnings to tell a compelling narrative. He was Vince “Patriot” Patros, the people’s choice, an underdog competing against the political establishment. News outlets made daily headlines about him as well as the local Tea Party groups that had mobilized across the country to collect the signatures needed to get him on the ballot. He was a media darling, even among liberals. In fact, the adjective journalists used most often to describe him was “presidential.”

An article in the *Washington Times* reported:

In an impressive display of self-governance, the Tea Party discovered among their rank-and-file members the right’s best chance at winning the White House ... [Patros] is articulate and intelligent, confident without being cocky, passionate while keeping a level head, witty, charming ... a living model of a picture-perfect president.

An interviewer from *The New Yorker* wrote:

Larger than life, he seemed more like an actor in a screenplay than a lawyer from Iowa. I recognized his character from dozens of books and movies – he is the everyman hero, the ideal citizen, reluctantly stepping forward when the nation needs him most. If this were a film, he would be a method actor who has been preparing for the role of President his entire life. However, make no mistake: Vincent Patros is very real, much to the dismay of everyone else trying out for the part next November.

POLITICS, BUT NOT AS USUAL

Between support from the Tea Party and the media, as well as a boost from the influential caucus of his home state of Iowa, Vincent Patros, the populist Beltway outsider, narrowly secured the Republican nomination. Immediately, donations started pouring in. He was no longer limited by a shoestring budget, but lacking the early start and extensive fundraising network of more experienced candidates, he knew he could raise only a fraction of the amount his opponent could. Nevertheless, he pressed on, making the best of his position. In a stunning first move, Patros, a longtime proponent of campaign finance reform, used his acceptance speech to publicly challenge Barack Obama to join him in limiting their campaign spending:

President Obama, campaign spending is out of control, and it is hurting America. Campaign budgets have roughly doubled each election since 2000. In 2008, you spent over twice as much as John McCain. Together, you two spent over a billion dollars given to you by hardworking Americans.¹⁵⁰

I don't want to do that. I don't want to waste my supporters' hard-earned dollars slinging mud at you. It's a cold war arms race. You run one attack ad, so I have to run two, and the only people who win are the television networks.

So let's keep it civil. If neither of us runs negative ads, we can save the American people a lot of money. We don't need to waste a billion dollars. Clinton and Bush Sr. won with about \$100 million each, and that wasn't that long ago.¹⁵¹ You have more than that already. If we agree to cap our spending at \$100 million, you could stop fundraising right now and get back to running the country and campaigning.

President Obama, you say you want to clean up campaigns. I am offering you a chance to prove you mean it and a chance to show the taxpayers that you know how to manage a budget. Let's spend less time fundraising and more time meeting our constituents and talking about the issues. Let's make the winner of this election the best candidate, not the one who spent the most money. We can't wait for Congress to fix this, and we don't need a law passed to know this is the right thing to do. We can fix this, you and I, right here, right now. President Obama, are you up to the challenge?

Patros went on to point out that reducing advertising expenditures would benefit Obama more, since, as a sitting president, he was already world-famous and made news with every word he spoke, while Patros was still relatively unknown. In addition to limiting spending and avoiding negative advertising, he also asked Obama to join him in making the campaign process fully transparent by releasing publicly audited financial statements.

His heavy-handed gambit paid off. Obama was forced to either accept the challenge or else appear weak and hypocritical. A masterstroke, Patros' bold opening salvo simultaneously leveled the playing field and set the tone of the election, all while communicating his platform of using common sense to eliminate wasteful spending. Obama met with Patros the next day to iron out the details, ending with a handshake agreement that marked the start of the most pleasant election year anyone could remember.

The younger readers may not know this, but before 2012, elections were nasty, depressing affairs. Television and radio programming was cut short to make room for a deluge of political messages, with many commercial breaks

consisting of nothing but attack ads. Candidates would not even call each other by name, referring to them only as “my opponent.” These practices all but ended with Patros’ challenge to Obama. Throughout their campaigns, both candidates stood by their word. They maintained public financial records, and each spent just under the cap they agreed upon. Negative ads were almost unseen, with only a few run by independent organizations, which the candidates denounced.

Obama and Patros treated each other like respected opponents, not enemies. They were beyond civil to each other; they were polite, downright friendly at times, even while debating controversial issues. Patros hammered Obama for the sluggish American economy and his failure to balance the budget, while Obama criticized Patros for his lack of experience and knowledge of foreign affairs, but their arguments never became ugly or strayed from the issues. They even played golf together three times before the election, once the day after a debate. Their mutual respect confounded pundits, robbing them of their go-to tactic of demonizing political figures, forcing them to change the way they covered the election.

WALL STREET, OCCUPIED

While the Tea Party was busy redefining presidential politics, another completely separate revolution was already underway. In July 2011, the publishers of *Adbusters*, a non-profit anti-consumerism magazine, called for action against “the greatest corrupter of our democracy: Wall Street, the financial Gomorrah of America.” Specifically, they said:

On September 17, we want to see 20,000 people flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months. Once there, we shall incessantly repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices.¹⁵²

Twenty thousand people may not have shown up that first day,¹⁵³ but it was only the beginning of what became a worldwide movement. A month later, tens of thousands of Occupiers, as they became known, attended protests in over 900 cities across the globe.¹⁵⁴ Their primary complaint: unequal wealth distribution. Demonstrators everywhere united under the slogan “We Are the 99%,” a reference to the fact that the richest 1 percent own approximately 40 percent of the world’s wealth.¹⁵⁵

In the United States, Occupiers tended to be young, largely because when the Great Recession shrank the American labor market,¹⁵⁶ it hit workers under 25 hardest of all. In fact, summer employment among young people had just reached the lowest level in the country’s recorded history when the movement started.¹⁵⁷

A large portion of the protestors were recent college graduates who were upset because they took on massive student loans but couldn’t find jobs to pay them back.¹⁵⁸ Even after adjusting for inflation, they had paid three to four times as much for their degrees as their parents had.¹⁵⁹ Yet of those who were employed, only half could find a job that even required a college education.¹⁶⁰ At their side were young military veterans, who were unemployed at a rate four times higher than their older counterparts.¹⁶¹

These economic conditions fueled animosity toward the older generations, who had taught them all their lives that earning a college degree or joining the armed forces would

guarantee them a career in the private sector. Much of this anger was misdirected, though, because that idea had been more or less true up until the economic collapse. Furthermore, senior citizens were not taking their retail jobs¹⁶² to fulfill a lifelong dream of working at the mall, but rather because their retirement plans had gone up in smoke with the rest of the economy.

Not all supporters of the movement were young and unemployed, however. Some were previous homeowners who were furious at being foreclosed upon by banks who received billions in bailouts, while others were citizens concerned about the shutdown of social services due to budget cutbacks.¹⁶³ Still others were just regular folks who thought it was wrong that the nation's most profitable corporations were paying little or no income tax,¹⁶⁴ and that the middle class had to pay higher tax rates than the mega-rich.¹⁶⁵ Not everyone who felt this way were victims of the economic downturn, either. The downtrodden were joined by socially conscious millionaire and billionaire investors, seven out of ten of whom supported increasing taxes on people earning more than a million dollars a year.¹⁶⁶

The Occupy movement drew a diverse crowd from all walks of life, and while their frustration was clear, as a group their goals were not. *Adbusters* had compared their idea to the Tahrir Square protests, when a quarter million Egyptians gathered earlier that year to demand their president step down.¹⁶⁷ In the message that organized the first protest, they had asked supporters to help determine a single, unifying objective:

Tahrir succeeded in large part because the people of Egypt made a straightforward ultimatum – that

*Mubarak must go – over and over again until they won. Following this model, what is our equally uncomplicated demand?*¹⁶⁸

However, no such goal emerged, and the movement's lack of organization became a focal point of media coverage.¹⁶⁹ Advocates argued that this was because the Occupiers wanted dozens of changes, and not all of them would fit neatly into a five-second sound bite,¹⁷⁰ but this still left the movement without a clear, cohesive message. Furthermore, identifying a figurehead was all but impossible. When the mayor of Denver insisted that local protestors name a leader to represent them, they officially elected a border collie.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, most people who were familiar with the movement supported it, but about two out of three said they did not know enough to even form an opinion.¹⁷²

KINDRED SPIRITS

Neither group would admit it, but to outside observers, there were a startling number of similarities between Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party. To begin, both groups were born out of deep dissatisfaction with those in power, specifically for their fiscal irresponsibility. Furthermore, they were also both furious at the government for using taxpayer dollars to bail out bank executives, the very people they felt were responsible for causing the world's economic crisis.¹⁷³

Impartial coverage on either group was scarce, because both movements were supported by one arm of the media and ridiculed by the other. Whereas the Tea Party was pigeonholed as a group of cantankerous old coots by liberal media organizations, the conservative outlets painted the

Occupiers as a bunch of whiny young anarchists. Regardless, both groups felt they represented the “real” America and dismissed the other as a fringe element, although in reality they both had roughly the same level of public support.¹⁷⁴ Ultimately, both groups were upset over their lack of representation in policy decisions and were desperate for strong leaders.

This too ended up working to Patros’ advantage. Whereas most Republicans denounced the Occupy movement, Patros frequently broke ranks with his fellow conservatives to support the Occupiers during press conferences and debates. He raised the profile of their concerns, using his economic expertise to express them in clear, rational terms, and he discussed realistic solutions that appealed to both red and blue states. His continuing sympathy legitimized their cause, even as protests began to dwindle due to the difficulty of staging prolonged outdoor gatherings in the winter.

While Occupiers tended to be young and liberal, Patros nevertheless embodied many of the movement’s ideals. He was a political outsider, a regular citizen competing against the establishment. Plus, as his campaign was quick to point out, if elected, he would become one of the only people in Washington to have gotten there without taking donations from big banks. By operating outside the confines of normal two-party politics, Patros was able to gain the support of a rival group without alienating his base.

THE PEOPLE’S CHOICE

It was a perfect political storm. It included a charismatic dark horse candidate, an incumbent president presiding over an economy in shambles, and not one, but two large

populist movements clamoring for change. When Election Day came, most Democrats and Republicans voted along party lines, as would be expected, and votes among Independents were split. However, just as black voters turned out in record numbers in 2008 to help elect the first African American president,¹⁷⁵ so did Latino voters turn out in 2012 to help elect the first Mexican American president. In addition, an unusual number of younger voters turned out, and even more uncharacteristically, they voted Republican. Exit polls showed a large segment of people who typically supported Democrats had instead voted for Patros, effectively handing him the election.

It was not a bitter defeat for the Democratic Party, though, nor did it inspire the partisan anger of so many elections in the past. The two candidates' good-natured rivalry gave hope for collaboration and progress. Even Obama was in good spirits as he gave his concession speech, and he ended with kind words:

My fellow Americans, I have gotten to know Mr. Patros very well this year, and there is no Republican whom I would rather take my place in the White House. Although we have different perspectives on many issues, I will leave this office confident that the country will be in the hands of a capable leader who truly cares about people. Vincent Patros, I congratulate you on your victory, I salute you as an opponent and as an American, and I wish you the best of luck.

Patros was indeed capable. He was able to parlay the cooperative spirit of his campaign into the bipartisan support needed to break through decades of gridlock over financial reform in Congress. As such, he enjoyed high approval ratings while overseeing the beginning of two decades of economic recovery. However, his real legacy

was established before he even took office. With a single speech, Patros created the modern tradition of negotiated budget caps and effected massive campaign reform, all without changing a single law or ever holding an office beyond his local city council. Every presidential campaign since has begun with a handshake agreement to limit spending, keep discourse civil, and avoid negative ads, and each year more state and regional candidates follow suit. Patros did not just reform the way campaigns are financed, but fundamentally improved the manner in which they are conducted.

Perhaps most important, though, was Patros' impact on how we think about the presidency. The 2012 election marked the end of a dark and dangerous time in politics, as Americans started looking to extraordinarily qualified citizens instead of entrenched politicians and reality television stars to find their leaders.

POLISHING THE PROCESS

The Tea Party's first electoral experiment identified a supremely competent individual, one who was able to unseat an incumbent president. This alone was proof that their concept of progressive selection could not be ignored. However, the system had several shortcomings. Fortunately, the election of Vincent Patros brought together a wide variety of people, making them feel more connected to the political process and inspiring them to help solve patriot duty's many problems before the next election.

OCCUPIERS SQUASH THE BUGS

First, the software Ethan Beaudreau developed had a host of technical problems. Rather than attempt to fix them all himself, though, he released his source code to the public and invited volunteers to help improve it.

Fortunately, transparency was a concept held sacred not only in the open source development community,¹⁷⁶ but also in the Occupy movement. Occupiers had been searching for a common goal, and contributing to patriot duty gave them a meaningful way to participate by helping to make the political process more open. (The fact that they could participate without sitting outside in the cold was an added bonus.) Just as protestors across the country had coordinated via Twitter using the #OccupyWallStreet hashtag, so did a team of hundreds of skilled volunteers assemble rapidly around the #OccupyPatriotDuty project.¹⁷⁷ Many of them were the overeducated and underemployed students at the heart of the movement, who organized themselves into smaller subgroups that were typically led by more experienced professionals. Over the next few years, thousands of volunteers donated over a million hours of work, transforming the patriot duty applications from bare bones prototypes into industrial-strength powerhouses.

Security experts patched weaknesses, improving privacy and fraud prevention. Native speakers translated voice and text prompts into every major language in the world. Mobile application developers ensured everything worked on a wide range of devices, while accessibility experts ensured people with disabilities were able to participate in every step of the process.

The team also completely overhauled the way meetings are arranged. The old system sent groups to restaurants chosen by an algorithm without notifying the managers or even asking whether they wanted meetings to be held there. Under the new system, anyone who managed a business or public building could register their facility as a patriot duty meeting place by providing details such as amenities, hours, and capacity. A week before each meeting, participants received an email asking them to choose from a list of potential locations. Forty-eight hours later, the system sent a final email, confirming the meeting at the place picked by the most members of the group. The managers of those locations were also notified, and could view a calendar of all patriot duty meetings scheduled to take place at their establishments.

While restaurants still accounted for most of the initial registrations, any building with a dozen chairs and Wi-Fi internet could qualify. Bookstores, coffee shops, hotels, public libraries, community centers, schools, churches, country clubs, even bowling alleys and wineries and yoga studios signed up, eager to bring in new customers or simply to help out. The tire retailer Michelin even ran a national patriot duty promotional campaign, announcing it would set up meeting spaces in their showrooms after hours, serving free drinks and refreshments.

APPLE SUPPLIES THE FIREPOWER

No other company, however, did more to promote patriot duty than Apple.

To begin, vast amounts of raw computing power were required to make sure all the patriot duty meetings taking place at once ran smoothly. Maintaining a fleet of servers

would not only have been expensive, but also inefficient, since they would be needed for just two months every four years, and even then, most activity would be concentrated during the evening hours of the first week. However, the Tea Party's needs were a perfect fit for Apple's *iCloud* platform, which automatically scales to accommodate usage spikes without interruption. Apple had recently expanded *iCloud* to include computing as well as storage, making it similar to Amazon's *EC2* platform. Apple hosted the patriot duty applications on *iCloud* free of charge, completely eliminating the back end bottleneck.

However, they didn't stop there. Apple's development team also designed a custom video management system to organize the millions of hours of patriot duty meeting footage, a task which required massive amounts of storage and bandwidth. By comparison, at the time, this was as much video as was added to YouTube in three months, except in the case of patriot duty, most of it would be uploaded during the first week.¹⁷⁸ Apple's engineers rose to the challenge, however, and made a system that handled the strain without a hitch, and even included automatic audio transcription and indexing to allow people to search through the footage more easily. Furthermore, they made a user interface that allowed anyone to start by viewing their own meeting, then follow the winners of each successive round, putting every video within a few clicks of the final candidate. Altogether, Apple provided data services worth tens of millions.¹⁷⁹

As if that weren't enough, Tim Cook took a personal interest in the project and decided to take aim at some of the toughest problems. First, he wanted to convince a large number of businesses to open their doors for patriot duty

to ensure a wide range of convenient meeting places. At the same time, he also wanted to make it so no one tried to run a patriot duty meeting on an underpowered mobile phone ever again. Killing two birds with one giveaway, Cook personally offered to send two free *iPad 7* tablet computers to any business in America that registered to host patriot duty meetings, provided they supply wireless internet access and allow participants to use the tablets to conduct them. Nearly a quarter of a million businesses took Cook up on his generous offer, a move that cost him over \$150 million.¹⁸⁰

Apple's tablet quickly became the center of attention, largely because it ran the patriot duty application better than any other device on the market. The *iPad 7* worked directly with *iCloud*, offloading much of the work to the cloud computing network, making its speed seem like science fiction compared to the painfully slow experience that other handheld devices delivered.¹⁸¹ Between Occupiers and Apple improving the architecture and Cook ensuring a widespread availability of meeting places with high-powered mobile devices, essentially all major technical problems of the patriot duty process were eliminated.

THE TEA PARTY TACKLES LOGISTICS

Next came the problem of getting the winners of each round to their next meeting. It was not an issue of motivating people to want to go. Being chosen by one's peers to represent them was flattering and stirred a deep sense of responsibility. Plus, there was always a glimmer of a chance of becoming president. It was not even an issue of getting time off work. In 2011, one national retailer fired an employee for not showing up after she was denied time off

to attend the third round of meetings. She told her story to the press, inciting a consumer boycott and warning all employers of the public backlash they would face if they prevented citizens from performing their civic duty.

The real issue was travel expenses. The problem was inevitable: Each consecutive round would almost always require participants to meet farther and farther from home. At some point, the cost and inconvenience would prevent some from attending. Granted, this would affect only a tiny percentage – only about three out of every 100,000 participants would progress past the fourth round¹⁸² – but it was unfair. It penalized people chosen to represent their fellow citizens and disproportionately affected those living in sparsely populated or remote areas, particularly Alaska and Hawaii.

Beaudreau proposed building an internet videoconferencing system, but Scholz argued that no matter how good it was, nothing could compare with meeting in person. Meckler's solution was simpler: Ask Tea Party groups to raise funds to pay for local participants' travel expenses. Except for a couple of prominent organizations funded by billionaires, though, most of the thousands of Tea Party groups across America focused on grassroots activities and had very little money or fundraising experience. According to one poll, most groups had less than \$500 on hand in 2010, and virtually all their funding came from local individuals.¹⁸³

Nevertheless, the Tea Party admirably rose to the challenge. Volunteers turned out in force to solicit donations, whether over the phone, at community events, or from card tables outside grocery stores. To their surprise, raising funds turned out to be pleasantly easy. As

it turned out, many Americans had no qualms about giving a little to help improve their government; they had just been jaded by how political donations had been used in past election years. For instance, since all that mattered were electoral votes, presidential candidates would ignore most of the country in order to focus on battleground states. Money raised on the West Coast would be shipped off to finance a smear campaign in Florida, making the 5 million Republicans in California¹⁸⁴ feel as irrelevant as the 4 million Democrats in Texas.¹⁸⁵

But donating to support patriot duty was different. Money raised locally was spent locally. It didn't go toward advertising or even to promote a specific candidate. Instead, it helped people's neighbors represent them in a national political process – a grown-up version of sending the hometown high school football team to the state championships.

Donations poured in from ordinary citizens all over the country. Anyone asked to travel over 30 miles to attend a patriot duty meeting was put in contact with the closest participating Tea Party group to arrange for financial assistance. Since, again, there was no central management, each local group handled this differently. Some paid travel costs up front, some reimbursed afterward, some replaced lost wages and paid for childcare, and some simply gave a fixed stipend. As a whole, however, their efforts went a long way toward easing the financial burden of participating in the later rounds.

COOK LEADS THE DISCUSSION

For his part, Tim Cook did much more than donate half a million *iPad 7* tablets. He also turned his attention to the

difficult task of improving the database of patriot duty discussion questions. The hardest part, he said, was making sure they were balanced enough to promote useful discussion among random groups of strangers, which would get trickier as the pool of participants grew larger and more diverse.

While the topics prepared by students the first year provided a good start, Cook insisted that the only way the system could truly be fair would be to include input from everyone: Democrats, Republicans, corporations, individuals, political action groups – anyone who wanted to contribute. However, any discussion among that many different people was destined to be disorganized. Cook theorized that in order to be able to extract coherent information from the chaos, they needed to invent something that would perform three specific functions: It needed to define political positions, determine their popularity, and analyze their validity. To that end, Cook invited Otto Scholz to join him and Apple’s world-famous team of developers to help design a solution.

THE CONCEPTUAL PRISM

The first challenge was to create a system that clearly identified political positions and presented them in a logical, consistent format. Scholz recalls how he explained how it needed to differ from the status quo:

Unscrupulous people try to reduce every issue down to a black-and-white choice. “You’re either for us or against us,” they say. The media does this. The Democrats and the Republicans do this. But most issues are not that simple. Most people’s opinions are not pure black or white, or pure red or blue, but some other color altogether.

On TV, they only show two colors, and this is a problem. They show the red idea, which benefits the people who got the Republican elected, and the blue idea, which benefits the people who got the Democrat elected. Then they pretend that the only alternatives are the shades of purple between these two bad ideas. But that is a lie. Some of the best ideas are orange or green. Those ideas need to be seen too.

Borrowing a metaphor from Scholz' field of optics, Cook and his team set out to create a "conceptual prism:" a device that would separate and identify the rainbow of various ideas that exist between extreme positions on an issue. This invention needed to have the capacity to document everyone's perspective on every issue, yet still present this information in a useful manner. Using these goals as the foundation, the design geniuses at Apple did what they do best – namely, making the complex simple and the impossible possible – and brought this theoretical machine from imagination into reality.

In 2013, Apple handed the result of their labor over to a group of Occupy and Tea Party volunteers, headed by Ethan Beaudreau. With it, they established the Public Record of Political Positions (prpp.org), which to this day works in much the same manner as when it was first introduced.

At the heart of the PRPP system is a wiki: a website that encourages collaboration by allowing anyone to add or edit content. Like the most famous wiki, Wikipedia, the PRPP is a popular reference site that is free to use and has no advertising. However, while Wikipedia's goal is to document objective facts, the PRPP exists to document opinions. Whereas Wikipedia strives to maintain a neutral

point of view, the PRPP is a collection of millions of points of view, most of which are anything but neutral.

PRPP members can participate in three ways: writing positions, supporting or opposing other positions, and checking the accuracy of factual statements. First, people can participate by writing a position on any issue. All positions are presented in the site’s signature format, which contains the following three elements: Background, Position, and Support.

Illustration: PRPP slide format

The screenshot shows the website header for 'THE PUBLIC RECORD OF POLITICAL POSITIONS'. The navigation menu includes 'Positions', 'People', 'ACR Review', 'About', and 'Contact'. An 'Upcoming Event' banner invites users to a 'live debate' at 7:30 pm PST. A secondary navigation bar contains 'Recent Activity', 'Post a Position', 'Top Positions', 'My Positions', and 'Discussion'. The main content area shows a breadcrumb trail 'Home > About > Slide Format' followed by three sections: 'Background' (relevant facts), 'Position' (short statement), and 'Support' (logical basis).

THE
PUBLIC RECORD
OF POLITICAL POSITIONS

Positions People ACR Review About Contact

Upcoming Event: Join us at 7:30 pm PST for a [live debate](#) about the future role of entitlement programs.

Recent Activity Post a Position Top Positions My Positions Discussion

Home > About > Slide Format

Background
Relevant facts explaining the context of the position.

Position
A short, simple statement of opinion.

Support
Logical basis for the position.

Taking cues from popular presentation software, each discrete idea is presented as a bullet point, with the list of bullet points known colloquially as a “slide.” (As such, the PRPP is often called, tongue-in-cheek, the Public Repository of Power Points.)

Illustration: Example slide #1

THE
PUBLIC RECORD
OF POLITICAL POSITIONS

Positions People ACR Review About Contact

Upcoming Event: Join us at 7:30 pm PST for a [live debate](#) about the future role of entitlement programs.

Recent Activity Post a Position **Top Positions** My Positions Discussion

Topic: Education > K-12 > Practices > *Pledge of Allegiance*

Background

- Since 1954, the Pledge of Allegiance has included the phrase, “Under God.”
(Source: Congressional Records. Act of June 14, 1954, Pub.L. No. 83-396, 68 Stat. 249.) [details](#)

Position

The words “under God” should remain in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Support

- More than 9 in 10 Americans believe in God.
(Source: Gallup Poll, May 2011) [details](#)
- In 2010, the courts ruled that the phrase does not violate the Establishment Clause of the Constitution.
(Source: Freedom From Religion Found. v. Hanover School Dist., 626 F.3d 1, 262 Ed. Law Rep. 106) [details](#)

Author: Sen. Ron Busby (R-AR)

Illustration: Example slide #2

The screenshot shows a website with a header containing the title "THE PUBLIC RECORD OF POLITICAL POSITIONS" and navigation links: "Positions", "People", "ACR Review", "About", and "Contact". Below the header is a navigation bar with buttons for "Recent Activity", "Post a Position", "Top Positions", "My Positions", and "Discussion". The main content area features a breadcrumb trail: "Topic: Education > K-12 > Funding > Federal > Gifted Education". The content is organized into sections: "Background", "Position", and "Support", each with a list of bullet points and source citations. The "Position" section includes a bolded statement: "Congress should increase federal funding for gifted education." The "Support" section also includes a bolded statement: "A standard curriculum is as ineffective for gifted students as it is for special education students." The author's name, "Rep. Christine Hatchette (D-OR)", is listed at the bottom.

THE
PUBLIC RECORD
OF POLITICAL POSITIONS

Positions People ACR Review About Contact

Upcoming Event: Join us at 7:30 pm PST for a [live debate](#) about the future role of entitlement programs.

Recent Activity Post a Position **Top Positions** My Positions Discussion

Topic: Education > K-12 > Funding > Federal > *Gifted Education*

Background

- Federal funding for gifted education represents .01% of the education budget.
(Source: Federal Budget, FY 2014) [details](#)
- The US spends less on gifted education than any other industrialized country.
(Source: Dept. of Education Budget Overview, 2014) [details](#)

Position

Congress should increase federal funding for gifted education.

Support

- A standard curriculum is as ineffective for gifted students as it is for special education students.
(Source: N. Colangelo, G. Davis. (2003) Handbook of Gifted Education.) [details](#)
- Without a challenging curriculum, gifted students often perform poorly and get into trouble.
(Source: J. Renzulli, S. Park. (2000) "Gifted Dropouts: The Who and the Why." Gifted Child Quarterly. Vol. 44, No. 261.) [details](#)

Author: Rep. Christine Hatchette (D-OR)

THE PUBLIC'S OPINION

Alternatively, instead of creating their own slides, members can voice their support for, or opposition to, opinions written by others. At the bottom of each slide, members are invited to evaluate the position presented above.

Illustration: Position rating questions

Do you agree with this position statement?

YES I completely agree
 I mostly agree
 I somewhat agree
 I neither agree nor disagree
 I somewhat disagree
 I mostly disagree

NO I completely disagree

Please rate the presentation of this position:

Excellent (Clear and succinct)
 Good
 Fair (Average; could use improvement)
 Poor
 Bad (Incoherent; should be removed)

Comment:

(Limit 140 chars. If you wish to write more, consider writing your own position.)

The most popular and best-written opinions are turned into discussion questions for the patriot duty meetings, fulfilling the original purpose of the project. However, the ratings are also useful in a host of other ways. Each individual's answers collectively form a profile of his or her unique perspective. Many keep these profiles private, but

others use them to share their beliefs in an organized fashion. Essentially all elected officials, political candidates, political action groups, and socially conscious companies maintain public profiles to communicate and promote their points of view.

Also, thanks to the power of Apple's *iCloud* platform, anyone can perform complex analysis instantly. Individuals can compare their profiles to others, or compare any two public profiles, immediately highlighting where they agree and disagree. After people rate enough positions, the site can accurately predict new topics that would be of interest to them, as well as show them a list of political figures who most closely share their particular ideology. Instead of settling for politicians they don't really like, the PRPP can match voters with candidates who actually share their point of view on the topics that matter most.

Furthermore, when people see something they do not like on a slide, they can do more than just give it a low rating: They can challenge it. The PRPP community polices itself to maintain quality and consistency. Writers are encouraged to use clear, plain language, and members quickly flag any vague or excessively rhetorical wording for the writer to revise. If a slide gets too long or contains too many concepts, members can recommend it to be split into multiple slides. Through this process, complex opinions are broken down into simpler parts that are easy to share and analyze.

Subjective errors of style or clarity are typically remedied without incident. However, objectively false statements are a more serious offense. Background and support information is supposed to be limited to verifiable evidence

from authoritative, unbiased sources. Members can flag anything that looks questionable for review, and when enough people challenge a statement, it gets sent through “The Grinder.”

INSIDE THE DATA FACTORY

“The Grinder” is the nickname for the site’s crowdsourced fact-checking process. (It should be noted that it is not, nor ever has been, officially called “The Grinder.” Its actual title is the “ACR Review” – named for accuracy, credibility, and relevance – but no one ever calls it that.)

The number of people required to flag a statement in order to send it through this process depends upon the popularity of the topic and the past credibility of the author. A senator’s claim about a controversial issue might not be reviewed until thousands of people flag it, whereas facts put forth by a county commissioner about local zoning practices could get reviewed the first time a single person questions them. Once this threshold is met, the statement is colored gray and marked as “under review,” an innocuous term that masks the ferocity of the war raging a mere click away.

At the outset, the site notifies all interested parties that the statement has come under review. What happens next is brutal. Members dissect the statement and examine each word from every imaginable angle. They double-check every calculation, question every credential, and investigate every source. If they find anything to be false, they search for evidence that the writer knew it to be false.

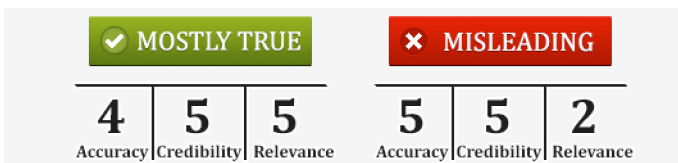
However, for all its ruthlessness, this battle is fought within a strict code of conduct. The Grinder is not a free-for-all chat room. Each review is a structured conversation

with a singular purpose: to determine the validity of a claim. Any statements that do not advance the discussion toward the goal of finding the truth are moderated down and hidden by other members, often within minutes. This includes off-topic comments, illogical arguments, vulgar or incendiary language, personal attacks, sarcastic remarks, jokes, discredited or unsubstantiated claims, and incoherent or poorly written statements.

This rigid structure results in a peculiar, emotionless conversation that one commentator described as “a room full of computers talking to each other.” Another noted, “It’s the only message board on the internet where, if you took out all the gay jokes, ‘n-words,’ and lines that just said ‘LOL,’ you wouldn’t be left with a blank page.” Indeed, all those distractions are absent in The Grinder, and what remains is an intensely focused debate.

During the review, the group evaluates the statement by assigning it separate scores between one and five for accuracy, credibility, and relevance.¹⁸⁶ When the community reaches consensus, the discussion is archived and the findings are summarized on the slide next to the statement, along with a color-coded badge that corresponds to that particular score combination. Only statements that receive a score of four or five across all criteria receive badges in shades of green; all other colors indicate that the statement is fundamentally flawed.

Illustration: Findings summaries



According to Otto Scholz, The Grinder turns the PRPP community into a “massive debunking machine.” In fact, he was the one to coin its nickname. Proud of his German heritage, he delightedly explained the origin in an interview:

All my life I have built machines that help people see more clearly. What we seek here is the truth. This wonderful machine finds it.

Another Otto, much more famous than me, once said, “Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made.”

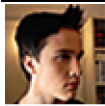
It is the same way with truth. Here, truth is a sausage made of words, and this is the grinder. The machine crushes ideas, splitting them up into tiny bits. If something is true, it passes through unchanged, but now everyone knows it is true. If not, we can separate out the good parts, get rid of the junk, and we end up with something useful. It is not a pretty process, but anyone can watch if they want to, and what comes out of the end is far better than what goes in.

THE PUBLIC RECORD

New ideas typically need to catch on quickly if they are to make any difference in the political arena. The year after it was founded, the Tea Party had gained the support of a third of the country¹⁸⁷ and made a huge impact on the 2010 midterm elections. Within a month of the first protest, the Occupy movement had spread to nearly a thousand cities around the world.¹⁸⁸ While both of these movements spread quickly, the growth of the Public Record of Political Positions can only be described as meteoric. Fortunately, Apple once again donated the use of its *iCloud* platform, allowing the PRPP to expand rapidly without interruption.

Within a year of its launch, *prpp.org* became one of the top 30 most visited websites in the world, thanks largely to social networking. The concise format of slides blended seamlessly with several applications. For people who liked to share their opinions, every rating they gave to a position could form a wall post on Facebook, and due to the 140-character limit, every comment they wrote fit perfectly in their Twitter feeds.

Illustration: Facebook wall post from the Public Record



Anthony Greenwald completely agrees with the position: "The words 'Under God' should remain in the Pledge of Allegiance." (Position written by **Sen. Ron Busby**.)

June 15 at 10:50 pm · Like · Comment ·

 19 people like this.



Lacey Pasqual Amen to that! Keep it the same.
45 minutes ago · Like

What do you think? Put your opinion on the Public Record.

Well-written positions spread virally, reaching millions. Eager to use this new tool to broadcast their opinions, the world's thought leaders flocked to the PRPP. Fortright politicians expressed their entire platforms in slide format, giving them an instant boost in credibility. When news stories broke, television pundits rushed to present extreme positions, capitalizing on the controversy with free publicity from both supporters and detractors. Editorial writers routinely ended their articles with a reference to a slide that summarized the piece, inviting readers to share their own perspectives. Special interest groups, like the National Rifle Association and the National Organization for Women, spread their values by getting supporters to share their official positions with friends. Corporations

seeking to whitewash their image pandered with uncontroversial positions like “No child should go hungry” and “We need to protect our environment,” and, of course, celebrities chimed in on their own causes *du jour*.

FACT-CHECKING AS A SPECTATOR SPORT

Along with all these positions came a myriad of claims that demanded investigation. Unfortunately, verifying facts was tedious labor and lacked the glory of writing popular positions, as most of the action occurred behind the scenes. Nevertheless, the PRPP’s review community also expanded rapidly. Established online fact-checking organizations PolitiFact and FactCheck.org led the charge, tackling the boldest claims of prominent politicians, just as they had for years. However, they could only handle a tiny fraction of the facts called into question. Luckily, a number of celebrity debunkers helped call attention to The Grinder through their participation.

Jamie Hyneman and Adam Savage, co-hosts of the Emmy-nominated series *MythBusters* on the Discovery Channel, discredited dubious scientific claims made by hundreds of politicians in support of their policies. Penn Jillette and Teller, co-hosts of another Discovery Channel show, *Tell a Lie* (as well as the 11-time Emmy-nominated *Bullsh-t!*), deflated popular beliefs, ranging from the supposed benefits of recycling and gay marriage bans to the overhyped dangers of global warming and genetic engineering. Well-known economists and journalists, like Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, co-authors of *Freakonomics*, as well as Malcolm Gladwell, author of *The Tipping Point*, showed how the truth is sometimes counterintuitive, and exposed sketchy factoids to illustrate how statistics are distorted to support false conclusions.

These intellectual superstars helped elevate fact-checking into a patriotic duty, serving in the war on misinformation. In an interview, Ronald Wasserstein,¹⁸⁹ Executive Director of the American Statistical Association, likened it to the effects Hollywood had on other previously unsung pursuits:

Before CSI came on the air, not many people cared about the nuts and bolts of forensic science. Now, some forensics jobs get over a thousand applications.¹⁹⁰

With The Grinder, we suddenly have a new generation of people interested in the fine details of statistics, and they can tell you exactly how regression analyses work or how non-contemporaneous control bias can taint a study sample. This is important, because we use statistics every day to shape our beliefs and our laws ... It is vital that we critically examine the procedures used to create statistics so we know when they are being used to inform and when they are being abused to mislead.

MEET THE GRINDERS

Between its rigid enforcement of civil discourse and its intolerance for even minor inaccuracies, The Grinder gave rise to a subculture that thrives in its harsh environment. Known amongst themselves as “grinders,” tens of thousands of volunteers spend upwards of 15 hours a week checking sources and debating conclusions with fellow grinders. In the very beginning, much of the fact-checking on the PRPP was done by out-of-work Occupiers and retired members of the Tea Party. However, today most grinders have no stake in the outcome of their work, and only a handful have any ties to political movements.

Who are these people who treat fact-checking like an unpaid second job? “Many of them are working

professionals who are not challenged enough by their careers,” says sociologist Marcia Eldredge in her book *The Cogs in the Machine*. “Fact-checking provides a healthy, socially beneficial outlet for their untapped intellectual capabilities.”

Zachary Gilding, one of the dozens of grinders Eldredge interviewed, described his fellow fact-checkers more bluntly:

We're nerds... and proud of it. The internet is full of know-it-alls like me. We love to point out when people are wrong. We're the guys you sat next to in high school who kept correcting the history teacher.

According to Gilding, fact-checking is second nature to them:

We argue like this all the time. We put in more work debating whether an episode of Doctor Who accurately portrayed the laws of physics. Only here, we know it makes a difference.

Gilding concluded with a warning:

We may be a big pack of geeks, but we're a big pack of geeks you don't want to mess with. If we know what you're saying is wrong, even just a little, there is nothing you can do to shut us up. You wave a study in our faces and think that means it's over? It's not. We'll dig up who paid for it and the shady methods they used to get the results they wanted.

We understand that sometimes it's hard to tell good data from bad, and that's why we're here to clear it up. After we do, though, if you can't make your case without using bad information, then you should stop talking. Better yet, change what you're saying because you're probably wrong.

But if we find out you knew what you were saying was false the whole time? We will bury you. We cannot and will not stand being lied to. We will never, ever, ever give up until you admit the truth.

Eldredge points out striking similarities with the way the term “grinder” is used in sports. According to Wikipedia:

In ice hockey, a grinder is a player better known for his hard work and checking than his scoring ... They are often fan favorites due to their work effort ... a style of defensive hockey which is within the rules of the game.¹⁹¹

“Many of them don’t even care much about politics,” explains Eldredge. “They just enjoy showing off how smart they are. It’s a game to them... and an ego stroke. They get to match wits with the world’s elite, and they often win.”

The grinders were indeed a force to be reckoned with, and soon embarrassed politicians had to revise positions when their supporting information was proven faulty. This filled a vital role in society, because what politicians say is easy to swallow, at least for members of the same party, and our human brains will perform great feats of mental gymnastics to keep believing what sounds good to us, regardless of whether it is true.

We start by favoring sources that share our ideology. If we are liberal, we tend to favor news from CNN and NPR a little, and if we are conservative, we prefer information from Fox News by a wide margin, even when the stories have nothing to do with politics.¹⁹² Once there, we can easily identify contradictions spoken by Democrats, unless we are a committed Democrat ourselves, in which case a part the brain responsible for rational reasoning literally shuts off so we can avoid the discomfort of being

intellectually threatened. (And the reverse holds true for Republicans, too.)¹⁹³

We accept arguments that fit our preconceptions about the world without question.¹⁹⁴ If we later find out that what we were told was false, we frequently don't change our minds, but rather believe it even more.¹⁹⁵ In fact, even when presented with scientific proof that we are wrong, sometimes we still don't doubt ourselves. Instead, we start doubting science itself.¹⁹⁶

Part of this is because we have irrationally positive views about people who are similar to us, and equally irrational negative views about groups outside our own.¹⁹⁷ Collectively, however, the grinders had no such problem. Outside the PRPP, it may have been the Democrats vs. the Republicans, but deep inside the guts of the PRPP, it was the grinders vs. misinformation, and the grinders scrutinized everything with equal fervor, regardless of who said what.

Over the next few years, driven by the grinders' insistence of absolute accuracy, the PRPP achieved an unprecedented reputation for credibility. By 2015, journalists and politicians had stopped calling the PRPP by its formal name, referring to it simply as "the Public Record," an appropriate title for the function in society it had grown to serve.

FINALLY, A REAL PUBLIC RECORD

The phrase fit naturally into political speech. Politicians sprinkled their rhetoric with phrases like "I said on the Public Record that I oppose this tax," and "over a million people have gone on the Public Record to say they agree with me." Actually, they had been saying these things for

ages. However, now it meant they had to tell the truth, because before the PRPP there was no real public record.

POLITICIANS HAD TO STAND BY THEIR POSITIONS

In fact, as hard as it is to imagine today, politicians used to say just about anything they wanted to with little fear of consequences. They would change their attitudes on issues as fast as they could read public opinion polls. Candidates did not even have to state their positions clearly when running for office. Most would hide behind vague terms and weasel words, and it was common practice to scrub campaign websites of controversial opinions when races heated up. If challenged, some would claim their words were taken out of context. Others would simply lie. With no centralized, well-organized, non-partisan archive of political statements, they would usually get away with it.

Today, it is different. Whether they like it or not, everything politicians say ends up on the Public Record. Every public figure's stance on every issue is on display, as well as a timeline that shows how their positions have changed and how they have voted, giving the political arena an organized history, which it previously lacked. The advent of the Public Record finally gave voters a clear picture of what candidates actually stood for, both in their words and in their actions.

This radically affected campaigning and fundraising. Previously, the most successful politicians were social chameleons, changing their colors to appeal to whomever they were with at the moment. They would say anything to win votes or donations, routinely advocating contradictory positions within hours of each other. The Public Record gave donors new leverage, allowing them to base their

contributions on the candidate's open support of their interests. No longer could lawmakers play both sides, giving lip service to labor unions in the morning before making promises to their corporate opponents in the evening. For better or worse, candidates had to establish a set of positions and stand by them.

EVERYONE HAD TO STICK TO THE FACTS

The Public Record also drastically improved the accuracy of the information put forth by public figures. Before there was an organized network of fact-checkers, politicians could cherry-pick research to support any position. Even when a hundred reputable studies refuted their ideas, they would cite the one obscure report that matched the narrative they wanted to tell. If they couldn't find that one study, many politicians would just make up statistics. Lazy journalists had long since abandoned the responsibility of investigating. Instead, they reported anything people said as long as it was interesting without worrying if it was true. Even members of Congress shamelessly brandished discredited research to defend their policies, yet there were no repercussions.

As we all know, things are very different now. Instead of regurgitating every sound bite they are fed, the press now questions new data, especially when so much established information is readily available. Apple's *iCloud* storage is essentially limitless and permanent, which means people have to watch what they say. Public figures are painfully aware that every single claim they make – every report they reference, every statistic they cite, every poll they mention – will end up going through The Grinder.

As a result, most political rhetoric relies on data from United Metrics: a non-partisan research firm that compiles information that has been scrutinized thoroughly on the Public Record. Inside the Beltway, this is known as “ground data,” that is, data that has been through The Grinder enough times to gain popular consensus. Similarly, when experienced politicians want to introduce new information, they now “pre-grind” it. This common tactic involves releasing support material well ahead of a major speech or campaign so they can reference a vetted version of the data from United Metrics. Otherwise, their message can become lost as attention shifts away from their arguments to the accuracy of their supporting information.

DEBATES HAD TO OCCUR IN REALITY

The Public Record changed not only how politicians talk to their constituents, but also how they talk to each other. Political analyst Meredith DeForest explained the way things used to be in the introduction to her 2012 bestseller *Monologues from Demagogues*:

Debate is dead. Everyone may as well be speaking different languages, because all politicians live in their own private worlds, which they build entirely out of their own “facts.”

Ask two politicians, one a Democrat and one a Republican, “Would lowering corporate taxes stimulate the economy?” You will get two different answers, but that is to be expected. You asked for a prediction, and different people are bound to have different opinions.

Now ask them, “How many jobs were created or lost in Q1?” You will still get two completely different

answers. This is a problem. When asking about a statement of fact, the answers should be the same.

It's hard enough to debate policy without having to debate reality. How can we talk about the way things should be if we can't even agree on the way they are?

Forcing politicians to support their arguments using only data that had gained broad acceptance elevated the nature of political discourse. Democrats and Republicans had to co-exist in the same real world made of actual facts, relying on the strength of their ideas to win their arguments, rather than how far they could twist statistics.¹⁹⁸

A BETTER BAROMETER

One of the most useful aspects of the Public Record was that it did not just let people broadcast their views, but it also collected feedback. This meant the PRPP was also a public opinion poll of unprecedented breadth, depth, and balance. Combing through these ratings led to some key insights, although not everyone liked what they learned.

SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER

A leading research firm conducted an analysis of the PRPP in 2015, finding that the two entities that published the most slides were the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. This was no shocking discovery, since representatives from both parties filled the Public Record with their official positions on every issue imaginable. More did not necessarily mean better, though, as further analysis of the data suggested that neither party made the most accurate portrayal of their own members' opinions.

The study found that, of the 200 most popular current political topics, self-described conservatives tended to say

they only “mostly agreed” with the official Republican positions, rather than “completely agreed” with them. The same held true with self-described liberals and the official Democratic positions. Alone, these findings would not have garnered much attention, but the study also revealed two unexpected sources of ideas that were far more popular.

Rather than the Republican Party’s stances on issues, more conservatives said they completely agreed with the positions written by Bill O’Reilly, host of the most popular cable news program, *The O’Reilly Factor* on Fox News Channel. O’Reilly was one of the earliest supporters of the Public Record. Just weeks after its release, he called it a “great advance in modern journalism” and pledged to create a slide with extensive support material for every major point he made on his show “to show the kind of homework that goes into an informed opinion.” (He went on to explain why others in the news industry would not follow him, saying, “They can’t. They don’t do the work.”) A prolific political commentator, O’Reilly often wrote dozens of opinions per week, with most gaining significant support from his viewers.

The Democratic Party was in even worse shape. Rather than their official positions, or even those written by any political figure, liberals agreed more with those of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, two comedians who hosted satirical news programs on Comedy Central. Stewart and Colbert took a different approach; rather than focusing on current headlines, they created humorous, yet factually accurate slides on a broad range of social issues, many of which they felt got too little attention from the news media. Stewart reacted to the report of his positions’ popularity in trademark form, saying on *The Daily Show* that he and his

writing staff were floored, since their goal had been to “entertain and inform, not out the Democratic Party as a bunch of out-of-touch cuckoo-birds that are too liberal even for us stoned slackers.”¹⁹⁹

REGAINING PERSPECTIVE

The fact that both conservatives and liberals agreed more with the views of television personalities – some of them comedians – than with the parties that were supposed to represent them was disquieting. A closer look revealed striking similarities between these media titans that gave clues to their popularity.

O’Reilly was clearly conservative whereas Stewart and Colbert were unmistakably liberal, but most members of their respective audiences regarded them as independent thinkers. Neither followed a blind agenda. O’Reilly regularly held Republican feet to the fire, and no one was safe from Stewart’s jokes, Democrat or not. In addition, while relentlessly criticizing one another, these two rivals remained civil – they even appeared on each other’s shows. However, while doing so, neither let the other off easy or compromised his values. Their mutual respect shined through in cynical, yet sincere compliments. In 2011, O’Reilly once referred to Stewart as the “smartest of the left-wingers on television” on his show,²⁰⁰ and Stewart told O’Reilly he was “the most reasonable voice on Fox.”²⁰¹

The mass appeal of O’Reilly, Stewart, and Colbert’s thoughtful balance led party leaders to recognize that years of isolation had resulted in tunnel vision. Their television shows, like the Public Record, reached a broad audience of regular people, whereas politicians only interacted with a narrow, biased slice of their constituency. After all, many

people considered themselves Republicans, but only those with the strongest opinions called in to talk radio shows. Likewise, only a handful of Democrats cared enough to attend rallies. On the other hand, politicians lived in a bubble filled with party faithful, which distorted their view of the world. Worst of all, however, was how much they relied on bad information.

CALLING WRONG NUMBERS

In the early 2000s, the world of politics lived and died with opinion polls. Elected officials based policy decisions on polls. Candidates crafted campaign strategies around polls. The media reported poll results with a reverence that suggested they were truths handed down from a higher power. However, there was a serious problem: All the polls were wrong.

Whether a news station was asking local residents about education bonds or a national research firm was measuring presidential approval, nearly every survey was conducted by telephone. However, the results of a poll can only predict the attitudes of a large group if the sample is representative of that group as a whole. As it was, research firms reached only a small, specific sliver of the population. It wasn't for their lack of trying. Many of us still remember receiving three calls a night from pollsters during election season. On the other hand, others do not remember this at all, and therein lay the first problem: They weren't calling everyone.

To save money, polls were increasingly conducted via automated telephone systems. While these "robo-polls" were just as accurate as live interviewers were,²⁰² it was illegal for automated systems to call mobile phones.²⁰³ This

was not a problem in 1997, when 95 percent of American homes had phone lines.²⁰⁴ However, as reliable mobile phone service spread, more and more people dropped their hardwired connections.

By 2009, one in four households had no landline. Just a year later, that figure increased to about one in three. Another 15 percent had a landline but essentially never answered it, choosing to receive their calls only on their mobile phones (largely to avoid unwanted calls).²⁰⁵ This meant that by 2011, about half of American households were left out.

The other problem was unavoidable: Polls could only include data from people who cared enough to answer them. This meant only certain people participated, namely, those with very strong opinions and those with a lot of time on their hands. After all, one would have to be either very bored or passionate about an issue to endure a 20-minute survey during dinnertime. Most reasonable people just hung up.

This made polls overemphasize the opinions of wealthy retirees, people living alone, the unemployed, and those with extreme political views, while underrepresenting the lower and middle classes, families, people with jobs, younger voters, and moderates.²⁰⁶ While statisticians can account for some sampling error, these problems resulted in two types of selection bias – coverage bias and non-response bias – that distorted the pollsters' view of America beyond repair.

Each year it got worse, as more people became unreachable and even fewer of those remaining chose to participate. These growing flaws were no secret within the industry. At

a 2009 statistics convention, Jay Leve, founder of one of America's largest public opinion polling firms, presented a litany of obstacles to phone polling that were the result of recent trends. Number portability meant that area codes no longer told pollsters where people lived. Caller ID allowed people to ignore calls from anyone they didn't recognize. Do-not-call lists put millions out of reach. Of the dwindling number of people who still had home phones, fewer answered them anymore, and even fewer still would talk to a stranger for 20 minutes to complete an interview. His conclusion:

*"If you look at where we are here in 2009, [phone polling is] over... this is the end. Something else has got to come along."*²⁰⁷

GETTING A CLEARER VIEW

He was right: Something else did come along. That something was the Public Record.

To start, the Public Record is trustworthy. Previously, most public opinion research was funded by organizations with a very specific agenda. This research was conducted privately and almost always returned results that benefited whomever paid for it. By contrast, the Public Record is free to use and completely transparent. It runs on open source software, which includes extensive fraud detection, and all results are publicly auditable. Its open design put to rest any questions of bias, finally producing information credible enough for political rivals to agree upon.

In addition, it is more accurate. Normal polls posed questions to thousands to predict the opinions of millions, which stopped working after pollsters could no longer select representative samples. The Public Record bypasses

this problem by simply collecting millions of opinions directly. In 2016, more people rated positions on the Public Record than voted in the presidential election; the sheer volume of participants eliminates sampling errors.

In traditional polling, collecting demographic information always created a trade-off: The more requested, the longer the survey, which meant in turn that fewer people would complete it. On the Public Record, participants only have to provide such information once, meaning every question they answer is automatically associated with a complete demographic profile. This depth of data is a pollster's dream, allowing statisticians to create virtual samples that represent any cross-section of the population while accurately filling in the gaps left by any groups underrepresented on the PRPP, such as the less affluent and the elderly.

Most important though, even more so than the number of participants, is the nature of their participation. Polls were interruptive and demanding. The Public Record, by contrast, is relaxed. People give their opinions on their own time, in a more thoughtful, less pressured manner. Everyone takes part, not just fanatics. Plus, gathering results over the course of years instead of during a single week makes results less subject to reactionary spikes from current headlines.

This approach allowed the Public Record to measure the nation's opinion more clearly, listening less to the squeakiest wheels and giving voice to the previously silent majority in the middle. As it turned out, that voice was significantly different than those used by the major parties and the media. Specifically, it was a voice of reasonable concern, not raving, hate-fueled shouting.

Fortunately, both sides were able to learn from these revelations. In the years following the introduction of the Public Record, there was a palpable shift in the official party positions. They did not change their stances so much as their tone, focusing on proving the merit of their own ideas rather than sowing hatred and fear of the opposition. For the most part, they removed the incendiary rhetoric that previously turned off everyone but extremists. This modest return to civility helped both the Democratic and Republican parties widen their tent pegs by realigning their core messages with the attitudes of their members.

MOVING MEDIA FORWARD

The two major parties were not the only ones who were out of touch with public sentiment. The mainstream news media had also run off-track over the previous few decades, eventually choosing stories solely based on their dramatic value rather than their significance to their audiences. For example, in late 2010 and early 2011, the American media reported incessantly about the marriage of Prince William to Kate Middleton, giving it over twice the attention than even the British media did,²⁰⁸ despite the fact that, a week before the wedding, less than 6 percent of Americans thought it was important enough to follow closely.²⁰⁹

The news media similarly reduced political coverage to tabloid journalism, mindlessly chasing celebrities and the smear campaigns that followed them, ignoring everyone else. In April 2011, 40 percent of news stories that featured any potential Republican presidential candidate were about Donald Trump, and a few months earlier, Sarah Palin received more coverage than all other potential candidates combined.²¹⁰ This attention was based on their superstar status rather than any relevance to national

politics. Trump had never held office, and Palin had only served two-and-a-half years as Alaska's governor. Most important, neither had said they were running for president, but merely that they were thinking about it.

Many said Trump never sincerely intended to run, and that his claims otherwise were a transparent ruse to boost the flagging ratings of his TV show, *The Apprentice*.²¹¹ This accusation was all but confirmed when he said he would announce whether he was running during the season finale, which was taped six months earlier, then announced he was not running a few days before it aired.²¹² Yet, during one six-week period, cable news still ran more stories on Trump and his conspiracy theories about the president's birthplace than the war in Afghanistan or the colossal budget deficit.²¹³ Although the idea the president was born outside of the US had already been widely debunked,²¹⁴ even by leading conservatives,²¹⁵ it remained persistently popular,²¹⁶ so at the very least there was some justification for covering the issue. But in the case of Palin, when no controversy existed, the media just invented one.

In one of the worst recent examples of yellow journalism, in June 2011, several news organizations launched a highly publicized investigation of Palin's email correspondence from 2006 to 2008. They were not even looking for anything specific; it was a desperate fishing expedition for dirt on someone who, again, was not seeking public office, but the media just loved to ridicule. It ultimately backfired, ending up as an embarrassing reenactment of opening Al Capone's vault,²¹⁷ but meanwhile real issues languished in relative obscurity. The same week, a debate was held between seven Republican candidates, only to be upstaged by around-the-clock live coverage of people reading Palin's

five-year-old emails, reporting excerpts about shopping lists or quiet parties at the governor's mansion.²¹⁸

Even when the press covered people who were actually running for office, they focused on the wrong things. In a study of press coverage leading up to the 2008 election, half of all news was nothing more than “horse race” stories, which ignored the issues to talk about who was winning. Most of the rest were about candidates' personal details, like their romantic relationships, or other barely relevant aspects of the political game. Only 1 percent of news stories were about the candidates' public records.²¹⁹

Just when it seemed the media had sunk too low to be saved, along came Apple and the Tea Party with their disruptive creation. The Public Record was an unprecedentedly clear window into the collective consciousness of American society. Not only did it describe what people thought about individual positions, but also how important they were in relation to each other. The Public Record's weekly and monthly lists of the most active topics accurately portrayed what was on people's minds.

At first, the media simply reported those lists, but soon the gap between the stories they chose to cover and the issues people actually cared about became inescapable. While network news coverage slowly began reflecting public interest, cable news hosts fully embraced the Public Record and integrated it into their programming. MSNBC's Chris Matthews regularly referenced position slides while sparring with guests on *Hardball*. On CNN, Wolf Blitzer added the Public Record to his stable of monitored news feeds on *The Situation Room*, and Anderson Cooper made frequent use of The Grinder in his “Keeping Them Honest” segment on *AC-360*.²²⁰ Fox News' Bill O'Reilly went

further, creating a regular segment called “On the Record,” in which he devoted half of each Friday’s broadcast of *The O’Reilly Factor* to discuss the week’s top trending topics on the Public Record. Other shows covered the most popular topics of the year and of all time, giving the 24-hour news cycle a sense of memory it had always lacked, ensuring that important issues were not forgotten forever as soon as the spotlight moved to the next headline story.²²¹

Finally, the talking heads were focusing on what mattered most to people, and that meant discussing money more than ever before. Integral to any conversation about whether we should, as a nation, take a particular course of action is how much that decision would cost. Costs consistently ranked as the most important concern across all topics: the cost of subsidizing education; the cost of waging war; the cost of cutting taxes; the cost of extending unemployment benefits; the cost of maintaining entitlement programs; the cost of reforming health care; the cost of servicing the deficit. To meet the demand for more financial information, media outlets, just like politicians, started relying heavily on data from United Metrics, which fundamentally changed the way they delivered political news.

In order to organize information in a manner that satisfied several opposing factions, United Metrics presented data in radically new ways, with an emphasis on making numbers relevant and easily understood. Similar to how the investment industry created EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization) to standardize the way companies calculate their cash earnings, United Metrics created several new measurements to standardize political calculations. For

instance, they created EUR-8020, more commonly known as the Effective Unemployment Rate, which combines the Pareto Principle with the Bureau of Labor Statistics' lesser-cited U5 measurement (which includes disillusioned workers and the underemployed) to give a more complete picture of the true unemployment rate.

Some other standard units we use today that United Metrics created are AT\$ (annual taxpayer dollars) and LT\$ (lifetime taxpayer dollars). Just as astronomers use the term "light year" to help convey the magnitude of unfathomably long distances in space,²²² United Metrics uses AT\$ and LT\$ to help make sense of the enormous sums spent by Congress by dividing them by the number of taxpayers responsible for footing the bill.

When the media started presenting information in this format, it clarified discussions about federal spending. Previously, reporters would only describe bills in the most sensational ways possible, using billions and trillions of dollars, despite the fact that humans have a very difficult time processing large numbers. Their attempts to add perspective used meaningless comparisons, like saying that a trillion-high stack of bills would reach one-third of the way to the moon.²²³

Of course, journalists do not condescend to their audiences anymore by relating large sums of money to football fields full of cash or dollar bills laid end-to-end around the Equator. Instead, they use AT\$ and LT\$, which reasonably approximate the tangible impact to an individual. Today, the \$50 million total of a farm aid bill still reminds us that it is, indeed, a great deal of money. However, its 48-cent cost per taxpayer puts it in perspective with, for example, \$21 billion in oil company tax breaks that cost each

taxpayer \$20 a year for ten years, or a \$1.5 trillion bank bailout and stimulus package that has a per-taxpayer price of over \$14,400.²²⁴ Using standard measurements makes it harder for pundits to make glib comparisons between the three merely because the words “million,” “billion,” and “trillion” all register in our brains as “really big numbers.”

More important, per-taxpayer measurements make it harder for politicians to mislead the public. A prime example of this occurred in 2011 when the US Congress congratulated itself for avoiding a government shutdown with a “historic compromise” on \$38 billion of spending cuts – or about \$365 per taxpayer.²²⁵ As it turned out, a review by the Congressional Budget Office a week later found that, ignoring accounting smoke and mirrors, the actual spending cuts amounted to less than four dollars per taxpayer.²²⁶ However, even if the higher figure had been true, it wouldn’t have put much of a dent in the ever-growing \$14 trillion national deficit, which amounted to over \$137,000 per taxpayer at the time.²²⁷

Facing a rekindled demand for fine details about issues of substance, news organizations could no longer afford to be sloppy. Over the years, they had steadily cut fact-checking positions with each round of layoffs. Quality suffered, but ratings did not; instead, the news industry and its audiences had just gotten used to poor journalism. However, after so many tiny details started passing under The Grinder’s microscope, media outlets scrambled to staff up their research departments again.

Ultimately, both the news and political industries learned the same lesson: They did not need to rely on contrived drama and fear. Accurately discussing issues relevant to their audiences was interesting enough to hold their

attention. Politicians toned down their rhetoric and the media slowly returned to reporting stories based on their newsworthiness rather than only their entertainment value.

PATRIOT DUTY RETURNS

Between restoring rationality to politicians and the press, as well as engaging individuals directly through the Public Record, Apple, the Occupy movement, and the Tea Party had raised political involvement to historic heights. As the 2016 election neared, the nation turned its attention to the original event that had started it all: patriot duty.

Beginning in October 2014, Occupy and the Tea Party teamed up again, piggybacking on the political high of the upcoming midterm elections to launch a campaign to register more people for patriot duty. Their methods varied, but they were all grassroots efforts. Occupiers used social networking tools and viral videos, while the Tea Party spent more time passing out flyers and spreading the message door-to-door in their neighborhoods. Fortunately, local news stations reported their work, removing the need for costly advertising, and since it required only an email address, signing up could not have been much easier.

PATRIOT DUTY MANIA

By July 2015, 80 million people had registered – over half the amount expected to vote in the upcoming election. From conservative twentysomethings who thought foreign aid should be cut to liberal senior citizens who wanted marijuana legalized, everyone signed up. By working with Occupiers and attracting such a diverse crowd, patriot duty

stopped being a Tea Party event and became a community-wide activity. Cognizant that up to a quarter of the country would take part, the media geared up to cover this massive story. Leading the way, as usual, was television.

The national networks have traditionally had trouble doing anything but copy what has already been done by others,²²⁸ and this was no exception. Patriot duty was still new and did not match any of their existing templates. It happened every four years, but it wasn't the Olympics. It selected one person out of many, but it wasn't a talent show. It thrust people with different lifestyles together, but it wasn't a reality show. In the end, the national news treated patriot duty as a human interest story, not hard news, leaving their local affiliates to interview participants and talk to business owners about the spike of business that hosting meetings had brought them.

The big networks may have dropped the ball, but cable was there to pick it up and run. Every major cable news show developed regular segments about patriot duty, like "Patriot Watch" on *CNN Newsroom* and "Progressive Selection" on MSNBC's *The Rachel Maddow Show*. Fox News Channel went further, creating *The Revolution with Glenn Beck*,²²⁹ a daily, hour-long show that ran for the duration of patriot duty. (You may recall its famous tagline, "The Revolution WILL Be Televised.") Each show combed through countless hours of video to find noteworthy clips of everyday citizens discussing issues, while pundits offered analysis of their opinions.

Patriot duty mania was not limited only to news channels. E! Entertainment Television's *E! News* dug through meetings in prestigious ZIP Codes for footage of celebrities, a move that drew some criticism, but nevertheless

promoted the movement by showing the Hollywood elite performing their civic duty. Even ESPN got in on the action, with *SportsCenter* delivering lighthearted coverage of the eight-week process in the style of the NCAA college basketball tournament, complete with a bracket of the nation divided into 64 zones. Because of Cook's giveaway, Apple was the de facto sponsor of the entire event, with the *iPad 7* appearing on every network.

After all the dust had settled, 42 million people, or about one in three voters, participated. With such an enormous size, the group's demographics no longer mirrored those of the Tea Party, but instead represented the country as a whole. As a result, this time the winner was a very different candidate, one whose ideology did not closely resemble that of the people who designed and facilitated the process that selected him.

Rising to the top of a pool of millions, Peter Lindgreen again proved patriot duty to be capable of selecting remarkably talented candidates. Just like Patros before him, Lindgreen also had an impressive background. A medical doctor who later became the CEO of a non-profit health insurance group, Lindgreen promised to use his expertise to bring about comprehensive healthcare reform, a feat Presidents Patros and Obama before him had been unable to accomplish. However, he was hardly an ideal Tea Party candidate.

While Lindgreen was a fiscal conservative who advocated smaller government and reduced spending, he also held many socially progressive views that clashed with the opinions held by the majority of the Tea Party. Furthermore, he was a Democrat, whereas the leaders of the Tea Party at the time were predominantly Republican.

Despite their differences, those leaders still gave Lindgreen their full support. Jenny Beth Martin, co-founder of the Tea Party Patriots, defended their endorsement in an interview:

Lindgreen is hardly the first Democrat we've backed – we supported eight in 2010 alone²³⁰ – and he's essentially a Libertarian, but that's not the point.

The Tea Party is a movement, not a political party. Patriot duty brings everyone together, everyone who is sick of the culture of corruption in our government and wants to make a difference. The people have spoken. They want Peter Lindgreen, and we stand by them and the process.

Lindgreen agrees with the Tea Party on the most important issues. He follows our platform of fiscal responsibility, and he would make an excellent president. Besides, if anyone can fix the healthcare crisis, he can.

In one of the strangest twists in American political history, the Tea Party was in the unusual position of endorsing a candidate to run against a president they helped put in the White House and still strongly supported. On the apparent dichotomy, Martin said, “Competition is good for the country. We support both Mr. Lindgreen and President Patros and wish them both the best of luck.”

That unlikely showdown never happened, though. For all the fanfare and attention from the media, Lindgreen proved to be too moderate to win the Democratic nomination. That honor went to the more liberal Senator Kay Hagan (D-NC), who ran a strong, but ultimately unsuccessful, campaign against Patros, who was re-elected to a second term.

THREE-CORNERED CONTESTS

Lindgreen's loss in the primaries was an anticlimactic end to one of the largest grassroots political events in history. Never again have as many people participated in patriot duty as in 2015. Political analysts liken this phenomenon to the youth turnout in 1972, the first time 18-year-olds could vote.²³¹ More young people voted that year than any other because it was new, they say, but once the novelty wore off, only those who actually cared made the effort.

The same held true for patriot duty. The next time, in 2019, the process had been around for almost a decade and was no longer a new concept. The media did not treat it as a once-in-a-lifetime event, but rather as what it had become: an established part of election season. That year, 25 million citizens met and ultimately selected Jay Woodson, a moderate who ran as an Independent to avoid Lindgreen's fate of not making it past the primaries.

Although Woodson carried no states, he received about 22 percent of the popular vote, the highest amount for a third-party candidate since Theodore Roosevelt tried to regain the presidency in 1912 under the banner of the Progressive Party.²³² When the Republican candidate won, the Democrats blamed Woodson and compared him to Ralph Nader, whom many blamed for Al Gore's defeat by splitting the liberal vote in 2000.²³³ While it is impossible to know if either claim is true, what is certain is that the Tea Party's contributions made the next few elections wildly unpredictable.

Because it forced consensus from such a large, diverse group, the progressive selection process always favored moderates. The next four candidates selected, Lee Cedeno,

Pat Whalen, Rita Isho, and Douglas Langley, also ran as Independents. None of them won, but each received over 15 percent of the popular vote. Each time, the defeated Democrat or Republican blamed the outcome on patriot duty and questioned the value of the process. To their opponents, these were just the grumblings of sore losers, but they contained a kernel of truth: Patriot duty candidates had fallen into an uncomfortable pattern of always disrupting elections, but never winning them.

Commentators warned that patriot duty's initial success was a fluke, made possible only by the Tea Party's close alignment with the Republicans at the time. The process still found talented people, but since it had grown it always selected centrists, and anyone who wasn't a political extremist had no real place in the entrenched two-party system. Without the support of a major party, critics said, they were doomed to failure. After all, they pointed out, the only true Independent president had been George Washington, and no president had been elected without the support of the Republican or Democratic Party since Millard Fillmore, nearly 200 years earlier.²³⁴

On the other hand, patriot duty consistently identified supremely qualified candidates. Woodson, Cedeno, and Isho all went on to win seats in the Senate after their failed presidential bids. In fact, making it to the last few rounds of patriot duty was enough of a springboard to launch dozens of successful political careers, but none of them made it to the White House.

Many suggested forming a third party,²³⁵ but Tea Party leaders insisted they intended to do no such thing. "Party mentality is how we got in this mess," said Mark Meckler in an interview. Then, showing remarkable humility and

foresight, he added, “If we turned the Tea Party into a political party, we would eventually become part of the problem. We couldn’t avoid it.”²³⁶

COLETTE SAWYER

Twenty-five years after its inception, patriot duty seemed cursed only to split votes and churn out senators, not presidents. However, all that changed when Colette Sawyer was selected in 2035.

Sawyer was independent in every sense of the word. Shortly after her daughter Lydia was born, Sawyer’s husband was shot and killed as a bystander to an armed robbery, leaving her a widow and single mother. After Lydia reached school age, Sawyer became dissatisfied with the quality of the education she was receiving. Many parents in the same situation would gripe, but do nothing; others might attend PTA meetings. But not Sawyer. Instead, she spent about a year researching the school system and developing a detailed plan to reform what she described as a “stifling bureaucracy.”

She shared her plan with school boards across the state, finding widespread support from teachers and administrators alike. Higher up in the department, she met resistance, as her plan crossed the desks of the people whose policies it criticized and careers it threatened. Their response: It couldn’t be done. Unfazed, she quit her job as a marriage therapist and ran for Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction. Even more incredibly, she won, a feat made all the more remarkable by the fact that the position normally went to career politicians and educators.

Sawyer wasted no time worrying about making friends at her new job. Within the first six months, she had fired a quarter of the staff and reassigned half the people remaining. For the next year and a half, she worked tirelessly to overhaul the entire department, eliminating ineffective programs and collaborating with teachers and specialists to develop better ones. Her methods ruffled feathers but no one could argue with the results: Teachers were happier, the department was no longer bankrupt, and test scores were already on the rise. The Indiana State Teachers Association begged her to run for re-election; however, she had accomplished all her goals and had already set her sights on another department in bad need of reform.

She spent the next two decades cutting a swath through the Indiana state government, leaving in her wake a trail of budget surpluses and successful initiatives. After the Department of Education, she made stops in the Departments of Transportation, Veterans' Affairs, Labor, Health, Commerce, and Natural Resources. At each, she spent exactly one term in office and followed the same strategy of cleaning house and replacing bad policies. Within the state government, she earned a reputation as a demanding but fair leader who listened to the soldiers in the trenches as much as the lieutenants. Among her constituents, she was more of a local hero, fixing the government one branch at a time. By the time she won the 2035 patriot duty selection, she had been elected to five different state positions and appointed to two more.

While she was a force to be reckoned with at the state level, Sawyer was hardly a typical presidential candidate. To put it delicately (not that she put anything delicately herself),

she lacked the natural charm of modern presidents. She avoided the flowery rhetoric universally used by politicians and was instead harsh and abrasive. Her sharp wit and short temper combined often to rip her foes to shreds with biting criticism. She never smiled, not even for photos. She ordered people around and cut them off while they were talking. She swore in public. She did not cooperate with the press; in fact, she was borderline hostile. Supporters called her “no-nonsense” and “tough as nails,” but “insensitive” and “mean” were some of the nicer words detractors used to describe her.

Then there was the unavoidable issue of her physical appearance. While an average-looking senior woman would not seem out of place in most European governments, Sawyer simply did not look like an American president. For decades, we elected tall, handsome men with perfect haircuts and winning smiles. (In fact, no president had been less than six feet tall since Jimmy Carter.) Sawyer, by contrast, was short and stocky with thinning hair and a permanent, wrinkled scowl. In addition, while the United States had never even come close to electing a woman before, Sawyer did not fit the mold of the ideal female candidate her predecessors had established, either. Every woman either major party had supported in the last 40 years had been younger, more physically attractive, and chic. Sawyer, on the other hand, was older and unapologetically unphotogenic, shunning stylists and wardrobe consultants as a waste of time. She once quipped to a reporter, “Allowing voters to choose only among beautiful people does the rest of us a disservice.”

THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Not only did Sawyer not look the part, but she also did not act as if she were running for president. Patriot duty concludes in September the year before each election, giving those selected a little over a year to build their campaigns. However, for the first eight months, Sawyer spent most of her time hidden from the public eye, hard at work on a plan to simplify the nation's tax code. Instead of giving stump speeches and attending fundraisers, she met privately with economic analysts, lawyers, and members of Congress.

On July 4, 2036, she shared the results of her labor on the Public Forum: a plan that would abolish federal income tax for individuals, replacing it with a federal consumption tax. The plan also removed about a million pages' worth of loopholes from the byzantine corporate tax code. It was not a brand new idea, but Sawyer had done the legwork to fine-tune the details and collect support for the plan from a broad spectrum of lawmakers and industry leaders. Only after her tax plan was ready did she step up her campaign activity. Even then, according to her staff, she treated the election like an annoying distraction. Her campaign manager, Ana Moreida, wrote of the experience:

She wanted to skip a major press event to have another meeting about the tax plan. I said, "Don't you think we should be there? They're both ahead by over 30 points."

She held my arm and told me, "Don't worry about them. They're just talking about the job. We're actually doing it. We'll catch up. Now come on, we have work to do."

She acted like she'd won already. I don't think she doubted for a second she would be elected. The rest of us, I hate to admit, were not so sure.

Moreida's skepticism was understandable. Sawyer's tax simplification plan ostracized her from much of the fundraising community, since virtually all industries enjoyed lucrative tax breaks her plan would eliminate. Moreover, she faced two of the strongest candidates to run in decades.

President Whitfield was ending his second term, leaving the race wide open for newcomers. Both of Sawyer's opponents were extremely qualified and admired by their respective parties. Gerald Brewer, the Republican candidate, had a solid military background and made improving national security his priority, a key topic in light of recent terrorist attacks. While the press sometimes likened Brewer to Ronald Reagan for his support of supply-side economics, Jim Levinston, the Democratic candidate, was constantly compared to John F. Kennedy, although the resemblance was based on his youth and personality more than his policy. Levinston built his platform on an expensive but popular plan to repair much of the aging infrastructure throughout the United States, an effort aimed at fostering growth and stimulating the economy.

Brewer had the support of the business community and much of the middle and upper classes, while Levinston was popular among labor unions, the working class, and minority voters. Meanwhile, Sawyer's tax simplification plan had earned her a loyal following among die-hard reformists, but apart from that she was practically unknown. She did not even break the double digits in most polls, and analysts on both sides predicted she would draw

most of her votes away from Brewer to hand the election to Levinston.

Making matters worse, her combative attitude toward the media had done her no favors, and what scarce publicity she received was not flattering. Regular news stories suggesting she was extraneous were bad enough, but a *Saturday Night Live* sketch parodying the upcoming debates was particularly damning. The cast lampooned Levinston as a smooth-talking ladies' man, Brewer as a bore, and Sawyer as a senile old woman who did not know where she was because she could not see over the podium. Unfortunately, none of these caricatures were far off the mark from public opinion.

THE 2036 PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES

To understand how a marginalized Independent transformed herself from the media's punching bag into a serious contender, one must look no further than the presidential debates. Heading into the first round, Sawyer had a lot of ground to make up, but it was the only forum where a third-party candidate could hope to receive equal time from the press. It began ordinarily enough, with Levinston and Brewer both delivering polished but predictable responses to a tame question about health insurance. When it was Sawyer's turn to speak, however, she came out swinging with her famous first words: "Wake up America. You are being lied to."

She then proceeded to dismantle both of her opponents' positions, providing a detailed description of how they would benefit the insurance companies, but not the people they insured. Caught off guard, their rebuttals were weak. Brewer stammered his way through rephrasing his original

statement, while Levinston launched into an emotional diatribe about America's lack of universal healthcare. Sawyer denounced them both, saying:

You're oversimplifying everything into sound bites, but the problem is more complicated. Not every good idea rhymes and fits on a bumper sticker, you know.

Jerry, your plan won't do much except shuffle papers around. Some people will see premiums reduced by a few percent, but at a cost of basic services worth ten times as much. Losing a lot to save a little is a bad deal.

Jim, your plan is more dangerous. Let's start with where you're right. Yes, the United States is the only industrialized country that does not have universal healthcare.²³⁷ The rest have all had it since at least the 1990s; some of them for 150 years.²³⁸

You keep bringing up Austria as an example. But America is not Austria. For starters, we spend 20 percent of our budget on our military, the finest in the world. We spend almost as much as everyone else in the world combined.²³⁹ And before you start saying we should spend less, think for one second what things would be like if we didn't.

Part of the reason Austria can afford to mandate universal coverage is that they spend less than 1 percent of their GDP on defense. In fact, how many countries outside the Middle East spend more than 5 percent of their GDP on their military? None.²⁴⁰ Yes, lots of other countries have universal healthcare, but they all rely on us to keep them safe. When terrorists attack us, what do we do? We hunt them down. When terrorists attack other first-world nations, what do they do? They call us.

That's just one difference. You can't just say, "Let's copy Austria," and pretend that everything else is the same. America is different. It always has been, and always will be.

Here's another way we are different: Healthcare is a lot more expensive here than anywhere else. That's the main problem, and your plan won't fix that.

Mandating coverage and subsidizing the poor would just transfer a ridiculous amount of taxpayer money to insurance companies.

Democrats have been trying to pass universal healthcare for 100 years, ever since FDR started Social Security. The plans all start out fine, but what actually gets passed after the lobbyists have their way? Some legislative abomination that you call "progress," but ends up only giving more power and money to the insurance companies.

Ninety percent of Congress is in healthcare's pocket. Which industry spends the most on lobbying? Pharmaceuticals. Which spends the second most? Insurance.²⁴¹ You know you don't have the votes to pass your plan without changes. What do you think the final bill would look like?

When you tell people your plan is going to help them, you're either naïve or you're lying. I don't know which is worse.

Here is the hard truth, America: It doesn't matter which one of us you elect. You're not going to get true healthcare reform any time soon.

There is no use sugarcoating it: Our healthcare system is so broken that it cannot be fixed. It needs to be replaced. But none of us up here can do that. Only you can. Unless you elect enough people to Congress who are not bought and paid for by the insurance industry, you're just going to get more of the same. Until that happens, every promise of reform is a lie. At our very best, we can only offer minor improvements.

Now, Mr. Brewer, we've heard your bad plan, and Senator Levinston, we've heard your bad plan. The problem is you both act like those are the only two options.

Now, when you attacked me, neither of you even mentioned the bill I support. It's the Larew-Arden Act, which would reduce total costs for working families in a way that won't hurt the insurance companies' bottom line, so it could actually pass as it is written.

It's all there on the Public Record. On my platform, under "Healthcare." Perhaps you boys should have read it.

With that pointed comment, she identified Levinston and Brewer's mistake: Neither had considered Sawyer a threat. Both men were adept speakers and had carefully crafted arguments against the opposing party line, but fighting for so long from their partisan bunkers had left them open to being blindsided by new ideas. They had underestimated her, and it cost them.

Question after question, Sawyer steamrolled over their answers, exposing errors and inconsistencies while presenting viable alternatives. Throughout the debate, she remained levelheaded as she gutted their arguments without remorse. Her opponents, on the other hand, were rattled, with Levinston uncharacteristically tripping over words and Brewer visibly sweating. Normally the number of people watching live coverage of presidential debates dwindles after the first half hour. This time, the audience actually grew as the internet buzzed with professional commentary and friends telling each other what they were missing.

The last portion of the debate revolved around gun control, which had become a hot-button issue again after the Democrats gained several House seats in 2034 and began pushing for stricter laws. After the moderator asked the candidates for their opinions on the proposed legislation,

the conversation took a turn that radically changed the course of the election:

[LEVINSTON]

...Gun violence is a national epidemic, and it's long overdue that we do something about it. Fifty-six percent of Americans agree with me. The police agree with me. Schoolteachers agree with me. Mrs. Sawyer here, of course, agrees with me, that handguns should not be so easy to obtain. To get these guns off the streets, we need stricter controls on ...

[SAWYER]

Excuse me? When did I say that?

[MODERATOR]

Mrs. Sawyer, it is not your turn to...

[SAWYER]

No, we need to clear this up. Deal with it. Skip me on the next question if you have to. Now Jim, when did I ever say we should restrict handguns? Who does your research?

[MODERATOR]

Mrs. Sawyer...

[LEVINSTON]

It's alright. I understand this is an emotional issue for you. I was, of course, referring to the tragedy of your husband being killed by a handgun and I was merely saying that...

[SAWYER]

Stop right there. My husband was killed by a man, not a gun. You need to stop blaming inanimate objects for what people choose to do with them.

If my husband had been stabbed, do you think I would try to outlaw knives? Would I tell everyone to cut their steaks with a spoon? Do you even hear how ridiculous that sounds?

[LEVINSTON]

No, I'm saying...

[SAWYER]

I'm not done.

Gun control laws are fine in theory, but criminals have an annoying habit of ignoring them. So until you can tell me there are no violent people left in the world, you need to stop trying to pass laws that would interfere with me defending myself or my family.

And you [points to Brewer], you need to stop trying to tell me that everything is fine and that firearms are perfectly safe. Guns are tools designed with a singular purpose: to kill. We have eight times as many homicides with guns here in America than in all other developed countries combined.²⁴² And gun safes are a joke.²⁴³ No, everything is not fine.

And both of you need to stop putting words in my mouth. It's dishonest and it's unproductive. Just stop it.

Now since you both seem to think I have a thing against guns, would you two gentlemen like to hear what I actually feel about gun control and discuss it?

[LEVINSTON]

But I was... yes. You can have my time.

[BREWER]

By all means, go right ahead.

[SAWYER]

Thank you. I think the Second Amendment is part of what makes America great and unique, and it's more

important than you give it credit. This country was created with guns. Guns are a permanent part of our society, so the question becomes: “How do we deal with their inherent danger?”

We have the most guns per capita, but Switzerland is number three and they also have one of the lowest murder rates in the world.²⁴⁴ One of our problems is that guns are everywhere, but hardly anyone knows how to use them anymore. I think a good start would be making gun safety courses mandatory, starting in high school. It would reduce gun-related accidents, help our military, and...

[LEVINSTON]

Wait. Let me get this straight. You want to bring guns... excuse me; make that even more guns into schools?

[SAWYER]

This isn't a new idea, Jim. Before the 1960s, high schools used to have firing ranges, you know. You also don't necessarily need to use live ammo to teach gun safety.

[LEVINSTON]

But I hardly think glorifying such a...

[SAWYER]

Glorifying? Glorifying? Are you kidding?

Find me a high school teacher who can glorify something to teenagers, Jim. I'll make him Secretary of Education.

No, trust me, it would have the opposite effect. The quickest way to make something “uncool” is to make it a required subject. We teach math, too. Do we have algebra gangs?

No, Hollywood glorifies guns, right alongside driving fast and having sex. Should we ban action movies? You want to take out the First Amendment too while you're at it?

[LEVINSTON]

No, no, that's not what I am saying at all. You said yourself that guns are dangerous...

[SAWYER]

Guns are dangerous, sure. So is not knowing how to use one. Ignorance is dangerous, Jim. You're promoting ignorance.

And you're no better, Jerry. He doesn't want to teach them about guns and you don't want to teach them about sex.

Young people always have and always will engage in risky behavior no matter what we do. We can at least teach them the dangers and how to protect themselves.

[LEVINSTON]

Mrs. Sawyer, if you would please just let me finish one sentence, you would see that I actually agree with most of...

[SAWYER]

No, we've heard your side, and you're wrong. You're missing the whole point.

Whether we teach gun safety in school or not, that's just one wild idea. I have dozens more. But you don't. You have one idea that won't do anything but erode the Constitution.

Your fundamental problem is that neither of you respect regular Americans. Both of you think you can write laws to run people's lives better than they can. Jim, you want to treat adults like children by taking away their freedom. And Jerry, you are just as bad.

You want to treat children like infants by not telling them about the dangers of the world.

My husband did not die because a man had a gun. He died because that man would rather shoot someone than get a job. Part of the reason so many people are like him is that we expect so little from them. They've had everything handed to them and have never been challenged in their entire lives.

Bottom line: I suggested education, you got scared and said they couldn't handle it. You're dead wrong, Jim.

We need to stop coddling our kids. Our youngest generation is an international embarrassment. We're the second richest country in the world,²⁴⁵ but our children are lazy, disrespectful, overmedicated, and undereducated. And these are the people who are supposed to take care of us when we're old? No. This changes now. Next topic.

The crowd erupted in applause despite rules against doing so, much to the chagrin of Levinston. Sawyer's tirade was the top story on the evening news and video clips spread virally. "Deal with it" and "Next topic" became instant catchphrases. *PoliticalMemes.com* created an application that allowed users to easily add their own text over photos of Sawyer, and witty campaign ads made by fans soon blanketed the internet.

The *Saturday Night Live* crew reprised their debate sketch a few nights later, only this time Sawyer pulled a medieval sword out of her oversized handbag and chopped her opponents to pieces before doing a backflip.

Illustration: Fan-made Sawyer campaign ads²⁴⁶



Meanwhile, commentators on every channel compared the evening to another historical media milestone. In 1960, Richard Nixon faced John F. Kennedy in the first presidential debate ever televised. Nixon, who was recovering from the flu and refused to wear makeup, looked pale and weak. Kennedy, on the other hand, with his natural good looks enhanced by makeup and a better suit color, looked well-rested and vital. Both men presented solid arguments. However, a study found that while people who listened to the debate on the radio thought the contest was a draw, those who watched the broadcast thought Kennedy had won, forever changing the way campaigns are run due to television's powerful effect on voters' perceptions.²⁴⁷

The press had already been comparing Levinston to Kennedy, which, in this analogy, meant Sawyer was Nixon. Only this time, the tables were turned when the untelegenic curmudgeon clobbered the handsome young

buck. The news media constantly discussed Sawyer, pushing Levinston and Brewer into the background. Apart from the Nixon reference, the media could not agree on how to classify her. One critic called her “a dangerously liberal British nanny without the accent.” Another responded by saying, “Based on her policy, she’s more of an arch-conservative without the Bible-thumping.” What they could agree on, though, was that the crowd loved her. Polls declared her the clear winner of the debates and showed her with a 12-point lift just two days later, gained mostly from undecided voters. Representatives from both major parties cried foul because Sawyer received slightly more speaking time, which backfired by making their candidates appear weak, or as one pundit put it, “unable to handle an old lady telling it like it is.”

THE SECOND DEBATE

All the attention resulted in over twice as many people watching the second debate. Those who tuned in hoping to see a repeat of Sawyer’s performance the previous week were not disappointed. Her two opponents were prepared this time, though, after her disarming exterior was revealed to contain a fierce competitor. Instead of focusing on each other, Levinston and Brewer went after Sawyer. Although no one descended to personal insults, their exchanges were nevertheless heated and vicious.

Levinston brought up her record of mass firings and deep budget cuts throughout her tenure in the Indiana state government. He claimed that similar policies enacted on a national level would result in a huge spike of joblessness. Sawyer countered with statistics that showed her pruning had no long-term effect on unemployment and left the economy healthier for everyone than it had been before.

Brewer criticized her for statements she made about President Whitfield's unpopular decision to order a military drone strike in Eritrea. In a recent interview, when asked what she would have done differently, Sawyer had answered, "I don't know. Next topic." In response, Brewer accused her of being unfit to lead, saying, "Presidents don't get to skip the tough questions."

Sawyer struck back hard:

I did not skip the question. I stand by my answer.

I'm all for open government, but in matters like this, the president is privy to information that you and I don't have.

The president sometimes has to make hard decisions that the public won't understand, and unpatriotic armchair quarterbacking like this doesn't make it any easier.

I'll go further and say I'd probably do exactly what President Whitfield did. If I were in his shoes, I would almost surely follow the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs, which I am betting he did. But since none of us here are members of the National Security Council, none of us could know what we would do. So again, I don't know.

The main thing I don't know is how you two can be so sure what you'd do when neither of you have all the information.

Reprimanded in what was normally his strongest area, Brewer still pressed on. Both of them attacked her tax plan: Brewer said it would force companies to outsource even more jobs to other countries and Levinston claimed the changes would push the lower middle class into poverty. Sawyer accused them both of cheap scare tactics to protect their "corporate masters," rattling off a list of each

opponent's largest donors and the tax loopholes it would close for them, then naming prominent members of their own parties who supported her plan.

To ease the tension and end on a high note, for decades debates had traditionally closed with softball questions about non-political topics. As the debate wound down, a few of these came up, but instead of playing along, Sawyer lashed out at the moderator:

[MODERATOR]

What is your favorite movie and why?

[SAWYER]

That's a stupid question. Next topic.

[MODERATOR]

Mrs. Sawyer, these questions may not seem serious, but they are designed to humanize you and the other candidates. It is important for voters to get to know...

[SAWYER]

No it isn't, and that entire concept is ridiculous.

[MODERATOR]

Mrs. Sawyer, you are saying that getting to know the candidates is not important? Would you like to clarify?

[SAWYER]

I am saying that irrelevant trivia about me is not important.

Asking me to name my favorite movie is worse than a stupid question. It's a harmful question. You hurt the political process by pretending that it's important. I thought Citizen Kane was boring. Who cares? Are you looking for a film critic or a good president?

You want to hear a real campaign promise? I promise you that we're not going to get to know each other and we're not going to be best friends. In fact, a year from now, you won't like me very much. I guarantee that I'll cut the budget of something important to you. I can promise this because money is being wasted at every single level of government, and I am going to stop it.

I promise that you'll get really mad at me at first. You might even hate me. We'll make some hard cuts, but that will give us the money to actually fix things. And I promise that by the end of my term, you'll see it was for the best.

This guy [pointing to Levinston] says he's got a plan that everyone will be happy with. I hate to ruin Christmas for you, but there's no such thing.

Stop waiting for some fairy tale prince to come and magically fix everything. It's time to grow up. Our country has been sick with "spendicitis" for a long time, and it's time for us to take our medicine.

The crowd ate it up, and when polls declared Sawyer the winner of the second debate as well, analysts concluded that the all-out offensive against her had been another mistake. Their string of unsuccessful attacks made Levinston and Brewer look bad enough. Worse, although neither allowed her to hijack the conversation as she had the first week, they made the debate all about Sawyer's ideas, many of which had previously received little attention. In particular, her tax plan painted a picture in which people no longer had to dread the 15th of April, a concept that resonated with the masses.

From then on, the two men were more cautious, but the damage was done. By most accounts, Sawyer also won the next two debates, although the victories were not as lopsided as the first two. Polls showed her steadily gaining

momentum among voters. The party faithful stayed true to Brewer and Levinston, but Sawyer won over Independents as well as moderate Democrats and Republicans in droves. Sawyer also opened up to the press, who, after almost a year of stale headlines about Brewer and Levinston, jumped at the chance to cover the election from a fresh angle.

THE FINAL DEBATE

Sawyer's support grew with each successive debate, as did the number of people watching. The Nixon-Kennedy debates achieved the highest television ratings of any presidential debates in history.²⁴⁸ The fifth and final debate did not topple that record, although it came close. Nearly half the households in the country watched it live, which was an accomplishment in an era of 5,000 channels instead of three. With polls placing Sawyer within striking distance of the presidency, even those with only a passing interest in politics watched, curious to meet the relative stranger who could be their next leader.

People tuning in for the first time saw a different Colette Sawyer than those who had been watching since the beginning. She was calmer, almost relaxed, and her remarks lacked the venom of the previous four debates. In fact, she was, compared to her normally severe demeanor, in what appeared to be a good mood. Instead of using her wit to tear into her opponents, she even deadpanned a few self-deprecating jokes about her age and her looks.

In the previous debates, when refuting an opponent's statement, Sawyer made point after point, only relenting when her time was up, and often not even then. This time, she quickly dismissed their arguments and went on to

describe the first actions she planned to take as president. She spoke with supreme confidence, never using the phrase, “If I am elected...” Instead, she matter-of-factly discussed the people she planned to appoint to her cabinet.

The most memorable moment occurred at the end of the evening while discussing a recent rash of terrorist attacks against the United States. Brewer answered first, giving a lengthy and detailed explanation of his plans to tighten national security. The following excerpt shows Sawyer’s response:

[MODERATOR]

Mrs. Sawyer, you have two minutes for your rebuttal.

[SAWYER]

What’s there to rebut? Anyone with half a brain can see he’s obviously right.

I’m going to use my time to take care of some important housekeeping instead. I’ve made a solid plan for my cabinet, but I have purposefully left two seats unfilled.

Mr. Brewer, Senator Levinston, I have been very hard on you both, but I want you and everyone watching to know how much I respect you.

Mr. Brewer, you are wrong about taxes, but you are a genius, especially in national security. You have great ideas, but you’ll never be elected because you just put half the nation to sleep explaining them. A sad state of affairs, maybe, but that’s just the way it is.

However, it is imperative that we do everything you just said. That’s why I’d like to appoint you as the Secretary of Homeland Security. I hope when this is all over you can look past our differences to do what’s right for the safety of the American people.

Senator Levinston, you, on the other hand, you have a shot. When people look at you, they see the face of the nation. If I had to pick your face or mine, well, I can't say I blame them. But unfortunately for you, this is no beauty contest.

You're too soft on spending. Your record shows you won't make the cuts we need and you couldn't balance a budget if your life depended on it. You'd be popular, sure, but we'd be bankrupt by the time you left office.

You're not the right man to be president, but you'd make a perfect Secretary of State. You embody the best of American exceptionalism and I can't think of anyone better to represent us to the rest of the world. Lord knows I shouldn't. We can't afford another war.

[LEVINSTON]

With all... [chuckles] Excuse me. With all due respect, don't you think it's a little premature to be appointing people?

[SAWYER]

Well, you don't have to worry about an answer until November. But if the latest polls are any indication, you should both give it some thought. We have a lot of work to do, and I want you both on my team.

Overconfidence normally turns people off, but coming from Sawyer, it was an endearing break from the veneer of false modesty worn by most politicians. Her presumptive job offers and gracious, albeit backhanded, compliments showed a sincere spirit of cooperation that no canned claims of bipartisanship could rival. Ultimately, the combination appealed to enough voters to push Sawyer over the top, as the United States went to the polls two weeks later and awarded her the presidency with over 40 percent of the popular vote.

ANALYSIS OF THE 2036 ELECTION

When congratulating her team, Sawyer said, “We won the same way I won my very first election: By being over-prepared and underestimated.” Analysts, however, offer differing explanations for her victory. Some argue that most voters are negatively motivated, that is, they cast votes to oppose candidates they do not like rather than to support the people for whom they actually vote.²⁴⁹ Under this assumption, Sawyer won by presenting better arguments against her opponents than they did against her.

Another popular theory suggests the outcome was more straightforward. Historically, Independents have been the largest group of voters for decades,²⁵⁰ yet most vote for a Republican or a Democrat even when they prefer a third-party candidate. Experts blame this behavior on modern polling practices. According to psychologists, when we cast a vote, we take the results personally.²⁵¹ Picking the winning side makes us feel victorious, and conversely, when we vote for someone who does not win, we feel a small sense of failure. When we want to support someone who we feel has no chance of winning, we avoid the future discomfort of picking a losing candidate by rationalizing our decision to go with our second choice, so we don’t “waste” our vote.²⁵²

When pollsters rank candidates, they do not ask, “Who would make the best president?” Instead they ask, “Which one will you likely vote for?” Many who prefer third-party candidates say they will realistically vote for someone else, and when other supporters see the dismal results, even more defect. The two major parties, with their pre-built base of voters, have never had to worry about this

phenomenon. However, low poll results create a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure for any candidate unable to achieve the critical mass required to escape this toxic spiral. As a result, the final tallies underrepresent the nation's true level of support for anyone who is not a Democrat or a Republican.

Political analysts say Sawyer's breakout performance in the debates led to a rare, sharp rise late in the election that bypassed the startup phase that kills most third-party candidates, and that once she accomplished that, the outcome was inevitable. In the 2036 election, over 80 percent of Democrats voted for Levinston, over 80 percent of Republicans voted for Brewer, and over 80 percent of Independents voted for Sawyer. In this light, the explanation is simple: Most people voted along party lines, including Independents behaving like an organized party, and there are more unaffiliated voters than there are Democrats or Republicans. In this case, Sawyer won by being the first third-party candidate in history to reach a position that made supporters feel their votes would not be wasted on her.

SAWYER'S PRESIDENCY

While experts continue to debate the reasons behind her victory to this day, no one can dispute the fact that Sawyer has continued to break new ground throughout her administration. Apart from becoming the first female American president, Sawyer is also the first Independent elected to the office, a change that has fundamentally altered Washington politics. All past presidents have filled the White House with their allies, appointing only a token member or two of the opposing party as a nod toward bipartisanship. Untethered by party ties, Sawyer has

instead assembled the most politically diverse cabinet in history. Her team consists of a nearly even mix of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, including her former opponents Jim Levinston and Gerald Brewer, who both accepted the posts Sawyer offered.

In 2037, Sawyer appointed Jared Lambreck, an Independent, to the Supreme Court. There he joined an even number of Republicans and Democrats, marking the first time in modern history that the nation's highest judicial body was not dominated by a major political party. This ended an era of predictable 5-4 rulings along party lines and ushered in a wave of cases previously held back to wait for more favorable conditions. Having nonaligned executive and judicial branches has been crucial to breaking through the gridlock between the uneven mix of Democrats and Republicans in the House and Senate. According to one pundit, the mingling of parties has led to the government "running more like a business, less like a high school ruled by cliques."

By her second year in office, Sawyer had passed a budget with deep spending cuts in all departments, which put the United States on track to eliminate its federal deficit by 2062. Along with the cuts, Sawyer's administration has also spearheaded several popular pieces of legislation, including those suggested by her former rivals. Brewer's plan to tighten national security passed essentially unchanged, and Sawyer's budget included funding for a handpicked list of the best of Levinston's public work projects.

Despite the cuts, Sawyer recently broke her one-term habit by being re-elected. Independent voters have historically tended to oppose whomever is in power,²⁵³ leading to a

constant back-and-forth between the two major parties. With that dynamic gone, the first candidates to run against an incumbent Independent president found her almost impossible to unseat. In the last election, Sawyer won over half the popular vote as well as the biggest landslide of electoral votes since Franklin D. Roosevelt carried all but two states in 1936.²⁵⁴

Today Sawyer enjoys an approval rating that only dipped below 60 percent for a few months after she made the spending cuts, and she is still working to achieve her initial goal of tax reform. Experts have agreed that the plan on which she based her campaign would work, but since so many of America's largest corporations pay little or no tax today,²⁵⁵ implementing it immediately would disrupt the world economy. Four years later, two similar tax simplification bills are making their way through both houses of Congress, both of which would gradually phase out personal income tax over the course of 20 years, replacing it with a consumption tax.

Under both bills, the length of the tax code would be ultimately reduced by over 90 percent, which would be a boon to small businesses and shrink the Internal Revenue Service by half. The shift in Washington toward bipartisan fiscal responsibility has finally allowed lawmakers to discuss eliminating tax loopholes without ending their careers. The extended timeframe has kept lobbyists from sinking the bill outright; however, only time will tell how many tax breaks are restored over the next two decades when the spotlight moves on to other topics. Nevertheless, Sawyer has set wheels turning that will remain in motion long after she leaves office.

Gone are the Nixon references; today people compare Sawyer to Abraham Lincoln, and not just because he also appointed several of his political opponents to his cabinet. More important, Lincoln unified a bitterly divided nation. Many historians mark 2001 as the beginning of a slow, bloodless civil war within the United States, when terrorist attacks left an indelible mark on Americans' attitudes. Sawyer likens the event to an unforeseen tragedy within a marriage, like the death of a child. The enormous strain creeps into every aspect of the relationship, heightening conflict and hampering reconciliation. Sawyer uses this marriage metaphor often. In fact, she credits her eight years working as a marriage therapist as more valuable to her role as president than her 22 years in state government. According to Sawyer, both jobs require tough love to find common ground between two parties with wildly different perspectives, both for their own mutual benefit as well as for the people who depend on them. In this case, the recovery has been unnecessarily difficult. For decades, those in power capitalized on the conflict by promoting an endless string of petty battles that divided the middle class against itself, distracting everyone while the world's largest corporations siphoned trillions out of the country's economy. Now, with a stable, growing market, a thriving middle class, and Republican and Democrat leaders who are genuinely working together, it appears we have finally put some of our worst years behind us.

Thanks to Apple, the Occupy movement, and the Tea Party, our future looks bright.

EPILOGUE

APPLE

Around the time Tim Cook took over, analysts predicted Apple would soon lose its early lead in tablet computing as more modestly priced competitors caught up.²⁵⁶ For example, a month after Amazon released the *Kindle Fire*, it shot up to become the second-most desired tablet.²⁵⁷ It was less than a quarter of the cost of a high-end *iPad 2*,²⁵⁸ making it a more affordable gift for the average consumer,²⁵⁹ and some predicted it would become the new standard.²⁶⁰ The next year, software behemoth Microsoft released *Windows 8*, an operating system that worked on tablets as well as PCs, a late entry in an already crowded race that cut further into a market once controlled solely by Apple's *iOS* and Google's *Android*.²⁶¹ Similarly, *iPhone* sales, while solid in the US and UK, were falling in most of the rest of the world, where most people could not afford them and *Android* phones had already taken over.²⁶² Google was activating 700,000 *Android* devices a day²⁶³ – and they were beating *iPhones* in key areas.²⁶⁴

On top of increased competition, mounting scandals threatened to drive consumers away from Apple's strongest markets. While Cook did a good job of addressing the issues, he was fighting an uphill battle against becoming a scapegoat for the entire tech industry, taking the blame for decades of controversial business practices. The watershed moment came when Cook decided to throw his and Apple's support behind patriot duty, which, without their help, may have never become a mainstream success. By donating such massive amounts of equipment and

technology services, though, they allowed a grassroots movement to expand rapidly to include the entire nation, and to transform the political process while remaining completely independent of taxpayer-funded grants or government assistance.

The difference they made did not go unrewarded. Although Apple made no profit directly from the venture, the investment paid off handsomely. As it happened, the timing of patriot duty in 2015 dovetailed perfectly with the release of Apple's newest tablet. Two months before Christmas, a patriot duty media frenzy was well underway, and the *iPad 7* was the star of the show. As the world tuned in to watch this grand political experiment unfold, the tablet was featured prominently in dozens of major shows covering the event. Even local channels broadcast tutorials on the evening news to let viewers know what to expect at patriot duty meetings. The buzz helped make the *iPad 7* the single most desired item of the holiday season,²⁶⁵ shattering Apple's already impressive sales records.

Cook's giveaway also helped increase awareness of Apple's new products and features. For example, the tablets sent to patriot duty participants came pre-installed with a one-year trial of *iLaCarte*, Apple's digital menu and restaurant management software. This helped Apple break into the retail management market, where it now enjoys roughly half of the market share. Also, patriot duty meetings put Apple's tablet into the hands of millions of consumers, showing them firsthand just how impressive the *iPad 7* was. It owed its newest improvements to *iCloud*, which Apple had recently expanded to deliver task execution in addition to the storage it had always provided. This upgrade allowed applications to tap into the raw

processing power of Apple's massive cloud computing network. Offloading the heavy lifting to Apple's servers dramatically extended the device's battery life while actually increasing performance. Raising the profile for *iCloud* helped Apple to compete with Amazon, the world's largest cloud computing provider, which was already making billions even though the market was only in its infancy.²⁶⁶

More than boosting short-term sales, though, Apple's foray into politics did long-term wonders for its brand. As the designers of the Public Record, Apple is still known today as the group of geniuses who did the impossible, who brought order to chaos, who got people to discuss politics in a reasonable manner, and by doing so breathed new life into the great experiment of democracy by giving ordinary citizens the power to right America's ship. Now that patriot duty has resulted in the election of the first Independent president, Apple has benefited yet again from a resurgent wave of publicity and gratitude.

As for Tim Cook, his giveaway cost him over \$150 million. This sum pales in comparison to his current fortune, but at the time it was almost half his net worth and required him to give up a substantial portion of the stock awarded to him when he became CEO.²⁶⁷ This not only garnered an incalculable amount of public goodwill, but also cemented his place in history as a savior of democracy. Through this bold move, Cook established himself as a leader who knows how to use money, influence, and technology to solve complex social problems, and he has been a permanent fixture on the global political stage ever since. Shortly after Colette Sawyer was elected, Cook talked about his decision to get involved in an interview:

...it's just that the way we were doing things was so primitive, I couldn't help but get involved.

Here we were, in the twenty-first century, still using a system over 200 years old. I mean, the fundamentals were sound, but if the Founding Fathers had iPads and the internet, do you honestly think they would have designed the government around the limitations of horseback travel?

Then, along came patriot duty.

Now, in this business, you hear a lot of ideas. The problem is, too many of them begin with, "Wouldn't it be great if..." or end with, "If we could just figure out a way..."

We have a saying around here: "Real artists ship."

Ideas are great, but execution is what changes the world. And at the end of the day, you have to make something that works.

Patriot duty, though, here was a solid idea, one that could actually make a big difference, because it pushed the limits but still played by the rules – it worked with the government we had, not some idealistic fantasy. It could succeed – all it needed was help getting started, and we were in a position to provide it. You really give me too much credit – we just gave it a little push – the American people did all the work.

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT

In the middle of a cold November night in 2011, hundreds of New York City police officers staged a surprise raid to remove all protestors from Zuccotti Park, where the original Occupy Wall Street protest had been located for two months. In a disturbing move, the police blocked the news media from covering the raid.²⁶⁸ However, plenty of

startling acts of police brutality were still caught on camera.²⁶⁹

Later that day, the gruesome image of an 84-year-old woman pepper-sprayed at a protest in Seattle went viral.²⁷⁰ Two days later, a police officer approached a group of UC Davis students sitting peacefully and casually doused their faces with an oversized tank of pepper spray.²⁷¹ Multiple onlookers recorded the event from different angles and published their videos on YouTube, which were seen by millions.²⁷² That same day, another video surfaced that showed a police officer in Oakland approaching an Iraq war veteran who was doing nothing more than walking by a protest, then beating him so hard that his spleen ruptured.²⁷³ And this came just a week after police at UC Berkeley were filmed savagely beating students with batons, again with no apparent provocation.²⁷⁴ Many said such heavy-handed action was uncalled for.²⁷⁵ However, what sympathy the movement received²⁷⁶ was lost with incidents of flag-burning²⁷⁷ and growing resentment over the mess left behind by occupation protests.²⁷⁸

At this time, the Tea Party had been going strong for years and had made deep inroads in Washington, but the Occupy movement had made little lasting impact and was already losing steam just months after it began. Supporters had plenty of reasons to be discouraged. Occupiers faced bitter cold, internal division, and violent clashes with the police that had already resulted in thousands being arrested and hundreds more injured.²⁷⁹ Yet for all their trouble, their protests were not changing public opinion or even raising awareness.²⁸⁰ Even their supporters said that the Occupiers' fatal weakness was the age-old criticism of

American liberals: They were too disorganized to be effective.²⁸¹

Whereas the Tea Party, on the other hand, had thrived with no central leadership, the Occupy movement was in danger of fizzling out into a forgotten historical footnote. Although the two movements started in similar ways,²⁸² their viewpoints couldn't have been more different on most social issues. However, they could agree on one thing: The status quo in Washington was unacceptable. Both groups felt that the election process was flawed, that the typical American was unrepresented in government, and that rich donors and lobbyists had too much influence on shaping policy.

Patriot duty unified these two movements under a common cause. Even though the idea originated with the Tea Party, it actually ended up helping the Occupy movement even more, because it let the Occupiers benefit from the Tea Party's organization. Patriot duty focused their fury into actions that were more productive than protests. Whether they were improving software, recruiting new participants, or checking facts on the Public Forum, Occupiers could contribute, confident that they were making a meaningful difference, and without fear of police action.

By 2015, public opinion of the movement had turned from disapproving apathy into glowing mainstream support, and not just in the United States, but around the world. In truth, the Occupy movement was never just an American phenomenon. The original Occupy Wall Street protest was planned by a Canadian advertising firm, was modeled after the Arab Spring protests, and was dwarfed by similar protests in other countries.²⁸³ Today, what began as #OWS

has become #OLM: Occupent le Monde, a network of affiliated groups around the world dedicated to solving the problems caused by financial inequality through non-violent actions. Back in the United States, though, the movement ended up walking hand-in-hand with capitalism down a very different path.

HARNESSING THE BEST OF INTENTIONS

In the upper ranks of the philanthropic community years ago, one sad fact was well-known, but rarely discussed above a whisper: Most common grassroots efforts were worthless. In fact, many misguided helping hands did more harm than good. Environmentalists campaigned to encourage people to buy local crops, even though it was actually more ecologically friendly to grow them in more ideal regions farther away.²⁸⁴ Animal rights activists circulated petitions for laws that left some poor creatures in worse shape than before.²⁸⁵ After an earthquake rocked Haiti in 2010, volunteers poured in who didn't know how to help in a disaster, didn't even speak the native language, and ended up becoming a burden themselves.²⁸⁶ Others held collection drives for supplies that no one needed. Bags of donated high heels were delivered to villages in the forest.²⁸⁷ Loads of winter coats were sent, even though the island nation never gets cold.²⁸⁸ Ten freight containers of donated refrigerators arrived, useless since they required a different voltage.²⁸⁹

Unfortunately, this was nothing out of the ordinary. Common donations hurt more than they helped, and could cost a hundred times their value to be transported.²⁹⁰ Ultimately, most donated food items and clothes were thrown away.²⁹¹ What made it through often made little difference other than putting local manufacturers and

farmers out of work.²⁹² Despite the best of intentions, due to bad planning, many humanitarians unknowingly damaged the causes they cared about the most.

This is precisely what held back the Occupiers in the very beginning. Their prolonged protests had almost no effect on the lawmakers and organizations they blamed for the economic meltdown, and they accomplished little more than to turn public opinion against them. After they shifted their attention to patriot duty and the Public Record, though, they made a real difference, as they saw populist representation in government increase as a direct result of their efforts.

GOING FORTH AND DOING GOOD

Inspired by how much the Occupiers were able to accomplish with better direction, in 2016 a group of philanthropic venture capitalists sought to make lightning strike again by founding Godo, Inc. Godo consists of two affiliated non-profit organizations, GlobalOccupation.org (GO) and DomesticOccupation.org (DO), which focus on international and local issues, respectively. Their goal: To make volunteer efforts more productive by solving the strategic problems that plague most grassroots efforts.

To accomplish this, Godo recruits seasoned professionals from all levels of business, from international bank managers to local auto dealership owners, to donate something more valuable than a check: expertise. Godo asks these executives to commit to a yearlong tour of duty as a GM (“Godo Mentor”), during which they will spend about eight hours a week serving as management consultants, providing much-needed guidance to humanitarian efforts.

Godo also maintains a worldwide suggestion forum, whereby any Occupier can propose an idea for a charitable endeavor, whether it is on a local, national, or international scale. Through community ranking, popular ideas bubble up to the top, where a mix of GMs in various fields analyze them. The majority of ideas have some fatal flaws and are sent back for revision along with suggestions for improvement. Ideas with more potential are handed off to other GMs, who help work out the finer details and draft an execution plan. When a good idea gains consensus from enough GMs, they award it the iconic “Godo Green Light,” then begin helping Occupier community leaders parcel out jobs to volunteers based on their individual abilities.

Illustration: The Godo Green Light



The Godo process challenges activists to think harder, to go back to the drawing board and plan carefully instead of marshaling overeager forces in the wrong direction. When Godo says, “Go forth and do good,” it is more than just a slogan; it is a public decree. Godo-Approved Projects, known as GAPS, gain an enormous boost in credibility. After all, the Green Light shows that a charitable venture has been carefully reviewed by a respected think tank. Grassroots organizations work hard to earn it, because Godo’s stamp of approval lets volunteers know that the

operation will run smoothly and gives potential donors confidence that their money won't be wasted. In fact, the first question most philanthropic organizations ask before giving to a cause is whether or not it has attained GAP status. Likewise, charitable crowdfunding efforts rarely succeed without first being reviewed by Godo experts.

Godo's structure is too transparent and diverse to allow any special interest to exert undue influence, which gives Occupiers an edge over slick corporate philanthropy programs that do more to boost a company's image than to help others. Plus, the experience gives enterprising altruists extraordinary networking opportunities with the powerful professionals who serve as mentors. The business world is always looking for people with good ideas, people who know how to solve difficult problems and get things done. By attracting these people, Godo has become a renowned talent pool. In addition to the satisfaction of a job well done, the Occupiers who lead successful programs can usually take their pick of job offers from socially conscious companies.

In an interview, one of Godo's founders said the name came from an altercation with an Occupier near his office:

Here's this guy who doesn't know the first thing about me or my business, but because I am wearing a suit he's blaming me for everything that's wrong in his life. I yelled right back at him, "What does 'occupy' even mean anyway? To take up space. That's all you're doing. You are accomplishing nothing. If you want things to change, go do something about it." This guy looked like he wanted to rip my head off, and when I saw that passion, that energy, I thought to myself, "What if he actually did go do something about it?" It was at that moment that I had the idea [for Godo].

Soon Godo was helping the Occupiers to channel their discontent into more constructive activities than staging protests that largely fell on deaf ears. By doing so, it has redefined what it means to “occupy,” changing the movement from one of protest to one of participation, an idea summed up by the quote painted on the wall behind the reception desk at Godo headquarters:

The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.

– William Arthur Ward

If you had told the first Occupiers who set up camp in Zuccotti Park that they would soon be cooperating with the Tea Party, they probably would have laughed. If you went on to say that soon thereafter they would start working with the largest corporations in the world, they probably would have called you crazy. The Occupy movement was nearly just a flash in the pan, yet by teaming up with two groups that they previously saw as enemies, together they were able to make a real difference. From protests to patriot duty to public service, the Occupy movement has evolved into one of the most respected groups for idealists who want to improve the world around them. As one commentator put it:

The richest were getting richer, and the rest weren't. Collectively, it was a problem, but individually, were we supposed to punish people for making good business decisions?

Finally, through the Occupy movement, we got a compromise: a way for the 1% to help the 99% help themselves ... and one of the only good things to come out of the Great Recession.

THE TEA PARTY

In the very beginning, the Tea Party was composed primarily of conservative Republicans,²⁹³ and as would be expected, they held conservative social views. Many of these opinions, though, had nothing to do with the goals of the movement, which were primarily to promote fiscal responsibility and limit the federal government to its constitutionally defined roles. However, the media associated the Tea Party with its members' social views, which turned off moderates and liberals, many of whom would have agreed with the fundamental tenets of the movement had they given the Tea Party a chance.

This changed abruptly when the Tea Party introduced patriot duty. The concept was the epitome of real grassroots activism and appealed to populists of all walks of life, particularly younger voters. This triggered a massive influx of new members, doubling the movement's size within 18 months. By the end of 2016, Republicans no longer made up the majority of the Tea Party. Alongside them, over a third were Independents and another fifth were Democrats.

The Tea Party we know today looks nothing like it did 30 years ago. In its infancy, the movement was perceived as a fringe group of right-wing extremists who were too conservative for even the Republican Party. In one 2010 poll, only 6 percent of registered Democrats said they agreed with the Tea Party movement.²⁹⁴ It was forgivable for outsiders to think the Tea Party was for Republicans only, considering they backed well over a hundred Republican candidates for Congress in the 2010 mid-term election, but essentially no Democrats.²⁹⁵

However, as the Democrats learned, the movement was neither that simple nor that shallow. Tea Party members had a wide variety of opinions, but they were all unified by a dissatisfaction of the current government.²⁹⁶ They were not anti-Democrat; they were against the fiscally irresponsible abuse of power. And it just so happened that when the movement formed, the Democratic Party controlled both houses of Congress as well as the White House. The Tea Party backed so many Republicans in 2010 in part because that was the only way to bring change.

However, a schism between the two groups began to form shortly thereafter when the Republicans the Tea Party supported did not vote according to the principles upheld by the people who helped get them elected – namely when they did not cut spending like they promised,²⁹⁷ when they failed to defund military action in Libya despite the lack of congressional approval,²⁹⁸ and especially when they voted to raise the federal deficit limit, a move opposed by virtually all Tea Party members, according to Meckler.²⁹⁹ When they started opposing Republicans, it got the message across to Democrats and Independents that the Tea Party was not an extension of the Republican Party, but something completely different. Also, by introducing patriot duty, the Tea Party attracted a much broader spectrum of people than it had in the past.

Today the Tea Party's demographics show it is close to being a cross-section of the country, as Independents outnumber Republicans and Democrats. For over 30 years, the Tea Party has mostly stayed out of social matters, sticking to its founding principles of economic responsibility and constitutionally limited government. The Tea Party promotes these ideals, but no longer

endorses specific candidates other than those selected through patriot duty – a practice many members disagreed with from the beginning.³⁰⁰

These days, the Tea Party is widely regarded as the largest, most legitimate grassroots political organization. Local Tea Party chapters hold a place in their community alongside other respected service organizations. Participating is regarded as patriotic, and is no more controversial than volunteering for the local Rotary or Lions Club. Chapter meetinghouses are known as places where anyone can engage in a civil conversation about politics. Members no longer ask for donations outside grocery stores. Instead, they hold pancake breakfasts and ice cream socials, where all are welcome and the proceeds go to fund the Public Forum and the travel expenses of patriot duty finalists. These events are popular ways to socialize while conspicuously displaying support for the vital functions the Tea Party provides to American society.

As steward of the Public Record, the Tea Party helps maintain the tool that facilitates our most important discussions as well as holds politicians accountable for their words and actions. The PRPP also serves as a collective consciousness for the nation. A glance at the top positions shows what is on the minds of the masses, which helps us keep perspective in this age of personalized news reports. Originally designed to balance talking points for discussions between twelve random people, the Public Record has evolved into an instrument that finds truth and consensus among the inhabitants of an incredibly diverse nation.

As the facilitator of patriot duty, the Tea Party serves as a bastion against the culture of corruption in Washington.

Ronald Reagan once said, “Concentrated power has always been the enemy of liberty.” He also said, “The best minds are not in government. If any were, business would hire them away.”³⁰¹ Patriot duty has proven there are amazing leaders among us. While some gravitate toward government, most never choose to go into national politics on their own. Patriot duty has a knack for finding these people and pressing them into service. Just as television talent shows have discovered mind-bogglingly gifted singers living otherwise ordinary lives, patriot duty regularly searches the nation to unearth presidential gems in the rough. It gives them the credibility and name recognition to be serious contenders against established politicians, providing an alternate track to political success that circumvents the major parties. Wise people had said an Independent president would never be elected, and even if it happened, it would be a disaster.³⁰² But patriot duty proved them wrong, paving the way to break the two-party system’s stranglehold on the political process.

The Democrats and Republicans are still the two dominant forces in American government, but the Tea Party continually pumps new blood into the system. Reaching the sixth round of patriot duty means a person has been chosen as the best of a quarter million local citizens, and has been the launchpad for many successful congressional campaigns. Due to the influx of Independents, neither major party has controlled more than half of the House or Senate since 2028. Although their numbers are few, these Independents play a critical role in the balance of power. No longer can Democrats act with *carte blanche* because they have two more Senators, nor are Republicans’ hands tied when they are a few seats behind. Either party can move legislation forward, but only by working with peers

outside their own groups, which has led to measured, lasting progress, replacing the pass-and-repeal pattern that repeated every time the government changed hands.

Patriot duty's steady output of impressive candidates has also forced the major parties to rethink their campaign strategies. Since the Tea Party made Independents viable, many Republicans and Democrats have toned down their extreme positions and now actively court the majority in the middle they used to ignore. They also pay more attention to their constituents than to their corporate sponsors, because if they don't, they know that now someone else will.

Founded in fiscal responsibility, the Tea Party serves as the champions of the common citizen, the watchdogs of the government, a counterweight to the political establishment. As one commentator put it, "The Public Record keeps politicians honest, and patriot duty keeps them on their toes."

ETHAN BEAUDREAU AND OTTO SCHOLZ

As for one of the original creators of patriot duty, Ethan Beaudreau has spent the better part of his life sharing what he learned building applications for the Tea Party. Since both *PatriotDuty.org* and *prpp.org* were developed as open source software, it was easy for others to create similar systems.

Most countries have their own version of the Public Record now, and Beaudreau helped set up over a dozen of them. He spent seven years working on his largest project, *EPIcentr.es*, a global version of the Public Record that the

United Nations uses for discussing international treaties and disputes.³⁰³

Beaudreau also helped create two other applications based on the concept of progressive selection. The first, *ProgressiveSelection.org*, allows any organization to set up its own, private version of patriot duty to select leaders. Selection, rather than election, is now the most popular method for choosing student government representatives at American colleges, and is being used increasingly by school boards, city councils, clubs, unions – practically any group that practices self-governance by its members.

Beaudreau designed the other application, *OpenElection.net*, to facilitate large-scale elections. Using this system, governments can create custom processes that blend elements of election and selection to match their own laws and customs. The platform is hardware-independent and enables voting from a wide range of devices, which is particularly important in developing nations where personal computers are still rare, but mobile phones are ubiquitous. *OpenElection.net* saves billions in infrastructure costs. In addition, since it is administered and monitored by an independent community of professionals around the world, it eliminates questions of vote-tampering, corruption, and fraud. Since American elections are governed at the state level, the US has been slow to adopt the system, but many countries now use it, the most recent being Egypt and Iceland.

In recent years, Beaudreau has taken a break from politics to find other uses for the software he helped create. He co-founded *Quaerere Verum* (Latin for “to seek truth”), a community for intellectuals that uses a version of the Public Forum, with an emphasis on The Grinder, to debate

scholarly matters. Instead of political topics, the application is divided up by fields of study. For example, philosophers use it to argue about abstract concepts, theologians use it to compare religious beliefs, and scientists use it to dissect competing theories and standardize experimental procedures. His latest project, *Roulettorama.com*, adapts the patriot duty process in its popular *Dating by the Dozen* app, which collects local singles into groups of twelve, coordinates a group blind date at a popular hangout, then uses the meeting software to lead them through icebreakers and social games.

Beaudreau also travels the globe, giving lectures and promoting the principles of these systems for people who wish to follow in his footsteps. The following is a transcript from one of his presentations:

Why did patriot duty work?

Number one: It was innovative.

I have to say again that many, in fact, most of the ideas behind patriot duty were not mine. I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time. Much like patriot duty was the right idea at the right time.

Politically, it was part of a confluence of events that have preceded revolutions throughout history. This included a leader with fading popularity, a non-united opposing party, a weak economy, hostile partisanship, and widespread dissatisfaction with and mistrust of the government.

But technologically, the idea was revolutionary at the time. The required elements had only been around a short while. Patriot duty combined unlimited video hosting, reliable local restaurant reviews, widespread wireless internet access (and data on where it was available), powerful mobile devices, and a massive political movement interested in bucking the system.

We did not invent much. All those pieces already existed; we just put them together in an innovative way.

Number two: It was local.

The closer you bring an issue to people's homes, the more interested they will be. It's hard to get more local than twelve people meeting at a nearby restaurant. People donated because they were sending their neighbors onward to represent them. But along with being local, you still have to be impactful. If you want to start a grassroots movement, it has to actually make a difference.

Anyone who participated in patriot duty this year can start with a video of their own first meeting, and within six taps, see a chain of meetings that leads to President Sawyer. Patriot duty empowered people to do something locally that had an impact on the nation they could see and feel.

Number three: It was easy.

Signing up is simple – all it takes is an email address. You get to pick a convenient time, and for most people, patriot duty takes only a couple of hours every four years.

Note that it isn't too easy: It takes more effort than voting. The extra time requirement filters out people who don't actually care, and the meeting beforehand puts people in a thoughtful frame of mind before asking them to make important decisions.

Number four: It was free.

Inconvenience is a huge barrier to participation, but cost is even bigger. Not that large systems can't generate a profit, but in order to catch on quickly, they have to allow people to participate in a meaningful way for free. You're not going to get hundreds of millions of people to walk through any door if there's a cover charge just to get in.

In this case, the goal was finding leaders, not making money, so no one tried to twist the process to turn a profit. Which leads me to the most important point.

Number five: Patriot duty worked because it was open.

It's open in two ways. First, it's open to everyone. We didn't restrict it to just members of the Tea Party. The whole process embodies the American dream. We had been told as kids that anyone could become president, but that wasn't actually true. Look who was elected before patriot duty – for hundreds of years it was an elitist oligarchy. Now, we can tell our kids that anyone can become president and mean it.

Finally, the entire system is open. We made the software open source. Anyone can watch any meeting. It's publicly audited. Every part of the process is completely transparent. There can be no backroom deals. No corporate influence. You can't stuff the ballot box with phony votes. This openness means there is no way to game the system.

It's also open in that it is self-managing and self-sustaining. For a system like this to last, it can't be directed by an outside source, because that force will always end up influencing the system according to its agenda. You need to build self-propelled perpetual motion machines and let them go where they will.

For patriot duty, the Tea Party just keeps the applications up and pays for travel expenses. If patriot duty is a car, then the Tea Party built it and keeps it full of gas, but the community decides where to go and steers it. You can start by pointing it in the right direction, but that's it. If you want a movement to go anywhere, you have to be willing to let go of the wheel.

As for Otto Scholz, patriot duty was the last invention of his career. After four years of working with Beaudreau, most of which he spent perfecting The Grinder, he retired again, this time for good.

Scholz wrote two books: *Changing the Game*, his autobiography, and *A Devil on Each Shoulder*, a political commentary about the weaknesses of the two-party system. The first words of the latter book explain his motivation for creating patriot duty:

When faced with two bad options, we should not choose the lesser of two evils. The proper course is to find a better option.

Since then he has been enjoying a well-deserved break. In an interview, he said:

I'm seeing the world, I'm learning to paint, I'm still getting to know my wife. We've been together for almost 70 years, but for most of that time, I was actually married to my job. Don't make the same mistake.

Scholz says he could not be prouder of the Tea Party for its accomplishments.

With the Public Record, they have created an environment in which falsehoods cannot survive. When you see the little "TM" by something, you know it is trademarked. When you see the little "UM" by something, you know it is true. [A reference to the symbol used to denote data from United Metrics.] That is wonderful. People don't remember what it used to be like before, when we never knew what to believe.

At 98, Scholz is pleased to have lived to see Colette Sawyer become president, although he downplays the significance of her gender:

People always focus on that. So we elected a woman. Big deal. That is not an accomplishment. Electing a woman was inevitable. Long overdue. Look at India. Brazil. Of course, Germany – much of Europe, in fact –

they all elected female presidents before we even started patriot duty. Well, in Germany, it is actually the chancellor that matters, but you get the idea. It was going to happen.

No, the real accomplishment was electing someone who was not a Republican or a Democrat. Someone who did not follow the party line. Someone who was not the product of years of corruption. Someone who was not a wholly owned subsidiary of the banks. That was the real accomplishment.

And for once, we didn't elect the guy who looked the best on the TV. We elected the leader we needed, and it never would have happened without the Tea Party, without the Occupiers, without Apple and Tim Cook and Ethan, without everyone finally putting their differences aside and doing what was right for the country.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: THANK YOU

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this book; I hope you enjoyed it. If you did, you may want to read other books in the *Tales from 2040* series:

Tales from 2040 #002: How Lady Gaga fought crime, AIDS, and abortion rates

<http://2040.net/002>

Tales from 2040 #003: How Facebook beat the banks and raised an army of new volunteers

<http://2040.net/003>

Also, if you feel the ideas in this book are worth sharing, here are some ways you can get involved:

SPREAD THE WORD

You can share this book with the following link:

<http://2040.net/001>

JOIN THE DISCUSSION

You are also invited to discuss your vision of a brighter future on the 2040 Network forum:

<http://2040.net/work>

There, the 2040 Network is forming to discuss these books and develop new strategies for charitable capitalism. I hope to see you there, and I welcome your questions, comments, criticism, and creative ideas.

FUTURE TALES FROM 2040

The working titles for the next books planned in the *Tales from 2040* series are:

How Google revolutionized the food industry

How Amazon made manufacturing greener

How Wal-Mart saved American health care

How Microsoft fought poverty and made us all smarter

If you feel the *Tales from 2040* series is socially beneficial, find out how you can contribute to new books and help us create a brighter future by visiting:

<http://2040.net>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in 1979, Christopher Cardinal grew up in rural Nevada and now lives in San Diego, where he works at a marketing and technology consulting firm he started in 1993.

ENDNOTES

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Lee Fang. (2012) “Analysis: When a Congressman Becomes a Lobbyist, He Gets a 1,452% Raise (on Average).” *Republic Report*. Mar. 14, 2012. [Link](#)

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82. Staff Reporter. (2004) “Tauzin Gives Up House Committee Chair.” *CNN*. Feb. 3, 2004. [Link](#)

William Welch. (2004) “Tauzin Switches Sides from Drug Industry Overseer to Lobbyist.” *USA Today*. Dec. 15, 2004. [Link](#)

Reuters. (2004) “Tauzin’s Lobbyist Bid Ends.” *Los Angeles Times*. Feb. 27, 2004. [Link](#)

Although an appointed position, parallels were drawn in 2011 when an FCC Commissioner was hired as a lobbyist for Comcast four months after she voted for a controversial merger between Comcast and NBC Universal.

Edward Wyatt. (2011) “F.C.C. Commissioner Leaving to Join Comcast.” *The New York Times*. May 11, 2011. [Link](#)

83. This article estimates the savings would have been anywhere from \$76 billion to \$220 billion over 10 years, depending on which negotiated rates were used.
Timothy Noah. (2009) “Obama’s Biggest Health Reform Blunder.” Slate. Aug. 6, 2009. [Link](#)
84. Bruce Bartlett. (2009) “Republican Deficit Hypocrisy.” Forbes. Nov. 20, 2009. [Link](#)
85. Alex Wayne, Drew Armstrong. (2011) “Tauzin’s \$11.6 Million Made Him Highest-Paid Health-Law Lobbyist.” Bloomberg. Nov. 29, 2011. [Link](#)
86. For both the Senate and the House of Representatives, in over 90% of races, the candidate who spent the most money won.
The Center for Responsive Politics. (2008) “Money Wins Presidency and 9 of 10 Congressional Races in Priciest U.S. Election Ever.” Press Release. Nov. 5, 2008. [Link](#)
87. The Center for Responsive Politics. (2012) “The Price of Admission.” OpenSecrets.org. [Link](#)
Dave Gilson. (2010) “The Price of Admission to the House and Senate.” Mother Jones. Sep./Oct. 2010. [Link](#)
88. Pew Research Center. (2010) “Independents Oppose Party in Power ... Again.” Pew Research Center. Washington, DC.
89. One of the more recent examples: Jon Huntsman was reportedly uninvited from a Republican fundraiser for his comments the previous week about how third-party candidates could be beneficial.
Zeke Miller. (2012) “Jon Huntsman Dropped from RNC Event for ‘Third Party’ Call.” BuzzFeed. Mar. 2, 2012. [Link](#)
90. This is, of course, a perennial complaint, but the situation is actually much worse now than at other times in the past. For an analytical look at just how polarized Congress has become, see:
John Aloysius Farrell. (2012) “Divided We Stand.” National Journal. Feb. 23, 2012. [Link](#)
91. William Booth. (2004) “Reality Is Only an Illusion, Writers Say: Hollywood Scribes Want a Cut of Not-So-Unscripted Series.” The Washington Post. Aug. 10, 2004. p. C01. [Link](#)
92. We tend to seek out information that agrees with our beliefs and avoid that which disagrees, particularly when we hold those beliefs with conviction.
William Hart, Dolores Albarracín, Alice Eagly, Inge Brechan, Matthew Lindberg, Lisa Merrill. (2009) “Feeling Validated Versus Being Correct: A Meta-Analysis of Selective Exposure to Information.” Psychological Bulletin. Vol. 135, No. 4, pp. 555-588.

93. Pew Research Center. (2011) “Press Widely Criticized, but Trusted More Than Other Information Sources.” Pew Research Center. Washington, DC. [Link](#)
 Pew Research Center. (2012) “Further Decline in Credibility Ratings for Most News Organizations.” Pew Research Center. Washington, DC. [Link](#)
94. Time. (2009) “Now That Walter Cronkite Has Passed On, Who Is America’s Most Trusted Newscaster?” Poll Results. Jul. 22, 2009. [Link](#)
 Note: This poll did not use random sampling, and therefore cannot be generalized to the population.
 Another poll named Stewart the most influential man in America.
 Elaine Lies. (2010) “TV Host Jon Stewart Named Most Influential Man of 2010.” Reuters. Oct. 26, 2010. [Link](#)
95. Terry Gross. (2010) “Jon Stewart: The Most Trusted Name in Fake News.” NPR. Oct. 4, 2010. [Link](#)
96. Comedy Central. (2011) “Comedy Central Wins Five Primetime Emmy Awards for ‘The Daily Show with Jon Stewart,’ ‘Futurama’ and ‘Thedailyshow.Com.’” Press Release. Sep. 19, 2011. [Link](#)
97. On his show, Stewart shrugged off the results by saying: “It was an Internet poll ... and I was the ‘none of the above’ answer.”
 Jon Stewart. (2009) Interview with Dara Torres. The Daily Show. Comedy Central. Aug. 9, 2009. [Link](#)
98. Robert Hendin. (2010) “Poll Reveals Most Americans Don’t Know They Got a Tax Cut.” CBS News. Feb. 12, 2010. [Link](#)
99. Judson Berger. (2009) “Modern-Day Tea Parties Give Taxpayers Chance to Scream for Better Representation.” Fox News. Apr. 9, 2009. [Link](#)
100. Susan Roesgen. (2009) Report from Chicago Tea Party protest. CNN. Broadcast Apr. 15, 2009, 2:09-2:10 pm ET.
 This segment was particularly dismissive, but was representative of the way most non-conservative news outlets covered the Tea Party protests at first.
101. USA Today/Gallup. (2010) “Tea Partiers Are Fairly Mainstream in Their Demographics.” Gallup. Apr. 5, 2010. [Link](#)
102. Kate Zernike. (2010) “Unlikely Activist Who Got to the Tea Party Early.” The New York Times. Feb. 27, 2010. [Link](#)
103. Staff Reporter. (2010) “An Up-Close Look at the Tea Party and Its Role in the Midterm Elections.” The Washington Post. Oct. 24, 2010. [Link](#)
104. 96% disapproved of the way Congress was handling its job, and 94% thought that most members of Congress should be replaced. This was even before the debt ceiling debate brought approval ratings to all-time lows.
 New York Times/CBS News. “National Survey of Tea Party Supporters.” The New York Times. Apr. 12, 2010. [Link](#)

105. NBC/Wall Street Journal. (2009) “Study #6099.” MSNBC. Dec. 15, 2009.
This survey was widely criticized, both because three-quarters of respondents who said they supported the Tea Party also said they got their news from Fox News, as well as because in the same survey, only 7 percent of respondents said they knew a great deal about the Tea Party. However, the fact remains that many people felt positively about the movement, even if they didn’t know a lot about it. For details of the fallout of this survey, see: PolitiFact. (2010) “Arney Says Tea Party Is More Popular Than Democrats, Republicans.” PolitiFact.com. Jan. 25, 2010. [Link](#)
106. Numbers are approximate, as lists of Tea Party candidates varied between sources.
Staff Reporter. (2010) “Tea Party Candidates of the 2010 Midterm Election.” Fox News. Oct. 31, 2010. [Link](#)
Alexandra Moe. (2010) “Just 32% of Tea Party Candidates Win.” MSNBC. Nov. 3, 2010. [Link](#)
Of those listed as “Undecided” when the previous article was published, Joe Walsh (IL-8), Ann Marie Buerkle (NY-25), and Blake Farenthold (TX-27) also won.
See also:
Wikipedia. (2011) “List of Tea Party Politicians.” Nov. 4, 2010. [Link](#)
Jeff Zeleny. (2010) “G.O.P. Captures House, but Not Senate.” New York Times. Nov. 2, 2010. [Link](#)
107. Jeffrey Jones. (2010) “Americans See Positive, Negative Effects of Tea Party Movement.” Gallup. Nov. 4, 2010. [Link](#)
108. Lydia Saad. (2011) “Americans Believe GOP Should Consider Tea Party Ideas.” Gallup. Jan. 31, 2011. [Link](#)
109. Andrea Stone. (2010) “Tea Party Freshmen in Congress Face Reality Check.” AOL News. Nov. 20, 2010. [Link](#)
110. Tom Brown. (2011) “Tea Party Shows Its Clout in Debt Debate.” Reuters. Jul. 29, 2011. [Link](#)
111. PolitiFact. (2011) “Arianna Huffington Says U.S. Debt Ceiling Rules Are Unusual Internationally.” PolitiFact.com. Jul. 25, 2011. [Link](#)
Caveat: Denmark has a debt ceiling, but it is kept so high that it makes little difference.
Fareed Zakaria. (2011) “Fareed Zakaria GPS.” CNN. Broadcast Jul. 31, 2011. [Link](#)
112. Office of Management and Budget. (2011) “Table 7.3—Statutory Limits on Federal Debt: 1940–Current.” OMB. Washington, DC.
113. Neil Cavuto. (2011) “Blaming the Tea Party for America’s Debt Dilemma? Better Get Your Facts Straight.” Fox News. Jul. 22, 2011. [Link](#)

114. “Since the late 1950s, the federal government increased its borrowing from the public in all years, except in FY1969 following imposition of a war surcharge and in the period FY1997-FY2001.” (Note: The fiscal year for the federal budget corresponds to the year in which it ends, and begins in October of the previous year.)
D. Andrew Austin, Mindy Levit. (2011) “The Debt Limit: History and Recent Increases.” Congressional Research Service. Washington, DC.
115. Brian Montopoli. (2011) “Poll: Most Americans Oppose Raising Debt Limit.” CBS News. Apr. 21, 2011. [Link](#)
116. Pedro Nicolaci da Costa. (2011) “Analysis: In Debt Row, Hints of Emerging-Economy Crises.” Reuters. Jul. 24, 2011. [Link](#)
Neel Kashkari. (2011) “Could a U.S. Debt Downgrade Trigger a Financial Crisis?” The Washington Post. Jul. 28, 2011. [Link](#)
117. Pew Research Center. (2011) “Public Sees Budget Negotiations as ‘Ridiculous’, ‘Disgusting’, ‘Stupid’.” Pew Research Center. Washington, DC.
118. Frank Newport. (2011) “Americans, Including Republicans, Want Debt Compromise.” Gallup. Jul. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
119. Frank Newport. (2011) “Tea Party Supporters Oppose Debt Agreement, 68% to 22%.” Gallup. Aug. 4, 2011. [Link](#)
120. John Cookon. (2011) “World Reacts to U.S. Debt Crisis.” CNN. Jul. 29, 2011. [Link](#)
121. Damian Paletta, Matt Phillips. (2011) “S&P Strips U.S. of Top Credit Rating.” The Wall Street Journal. Aug. 6, 2011. [Link](#)
122. Michael Cooper, Megan Thee-Brenan. (2011) “Disapproval Rate for Congress at Record 82% after Debt Talks.” New York Times. Aug. 4, 2011. [Link](#)
123. Ewen MacAskill. (2011) “US Debt Crisis: Tea Party Intransigence Takes America to the Brink.” The Observer. Jul. 30, 2011. [Link](#)
Robert Schlesinger. (2011) “Debt Ceiling Stalemate Illustrates the Tea Party’s Reality Gap.” U.S. News & World Report. Jul. 27, 2011. [Link](#)
Lucy Madison. (2011) “Axelrod: This is a ‘Tea Party downgrade.’” CBS News. Aug. 7, 2011. [Link](#)
Elspeth Reeve. (2011) “The Tea Party’s Brand Is Crisis.” The Atlantic. Aug. 8, 2011. [Link](#)
124. Michael Cooper, Megan Thee-Brenan. (2011) “Disapproval Rate for Congress at Record 82% after Debt Talks.” New York Times. Aug. 4, 2011. [Link](#)
CBS News. (2011) “The Debate over the Debt Ceiling.” Poll Results. Jul. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
125. Lydia Saad. (2011) “Tea Party Sparks More Antipathy Than Passion.” Gallup. Aug. 10, 2011. [Link](#)

126. Evidence of diminished support can be seen by the fact that no prime time speakers even mentioned the phrase “Tea Party” at the 2012 Republican National Convention.
- Tony Lee. (2012) “Tea Party to GOP: We Built Your Majority.” Breitbart. Aug. 29, 2012. [Link](#)
- Rosie Gray. (2012) “Major Republican Speakers Avoid Two Words: ‘Tea Party.’” BuzzFeed. Aug. 30, 2012. [Link](#)
127. 87% of respondents said that “dissatisfaction with mainstream Republican leaders” was an important factor in the support the Tea Party had received.
- Staff Reporter. (2010) “An Up-Close Look at the Tea Party and Its Role in the Midterm Elections.” The Washington Post. Oct. 24, 2010. [Link](#)
- 88% said they disapproved of the way Barack Obama was handling his job as president.
- New York Times/CBS News. (2010) “National Survey of Tea Party Supporters.” New York Times. Apr. 12, 2010. [Link](#)
128. Nick Carey. (2011) “Stuck Between the Tea Party and a Hard Place.” Reuters. May 17, 2011. [Link](#)
129. John Whitesides. (2011) “First Republican Presidential Debate Postponed.” Reuters. Mar 30, 2011. [Link](#)
130. Staff Reporter. (2011) “Key Contenders Missing from GOP Debate.” United Press International. May 5, 2011. [Link](#)
131. Staff Reporter. (2011) “Pawlenty Drops 2012 Presidential Bid.” Fox News. Aug. 14, 2011. [Link](#)
132. Staff Reporter. (2010) “An Up-Close Look at the Tea Party and Its Role in the Midterm Elections.” The Washington Post. Oct. 24, 2010. [Link](#)
133. 18% of respondents chose “Undecided/Don’t know,” making the choice more popular than any named candidate.
- CBS News. (2011) “The Republican Nomination Race: Romney, Cain Move to the Top.” Press Release. Oct. 4, 2011.
134. A good view of the wild swings between polls results for 2012 Republican presidential candidates can be seen at:
- RealClearPolitics. (2012) “2012 Republican Presidential Nomination.” RealClearPolitics.com. Feb 14, 2012. [Link](#)
135. NBC News/Wall Street Journal Survey. (2012) “Study #12202.” MSNBC. Mar. 5, 2012.
- Overview of results, including “when asked to describe the GOP nominating battle in a word or phrase, nearly 70 percent of respondents – including six in 10 independents and even more than half of Republicans – answered with a negative comment.”

Mark Murray. (2012) “NBC/WSJ Poll: Primary Season Takes ‘Corrosive’ Toll on GOP and Its Candidates.” MSNBC. Mar. 5, 2012. [Link](#)

136. Michelle Malkin. (2011) Twitter. Oct. 25, 2011. [Link](#)

Similar sentiments were widespread, including this story that referenced the tweet:

John Avlon. (2011) “Birthers, Smokers, Jokers – It’s Silly Season in GOP Politics.” CNN. Oct. 26, 2011. [Link](#)

137. In March 2012, Romney’s favorability hit a low of 29% overall; among Republicans it was still only 60%. In September 2012, his overall favorability was 45%, the first candidate to hold a generally unfavorable rating that close to the election since Pew began tracking such data in 1988.

Pew Research Center. (2011) “Obama Ahead with Stronger Support, Better Image and Lead on Most Issues.” Pew Research Center. Washington, DC. [Link](#)

138. For example, in a 2012 Republican primary exit poll, twice as many voters said the most important candidate quality was “Can Defeat Obama,” compared to “Right Experience.” Furthermore, Romney was overwhelmingly favored as being the most able to defeat Obama, but less than half strongly supported him. Most people who voted for him said they had reservations about him.

CNN. (2012) “Exit Polls: Illinois Republicans.” Mar. 16, 2012. [Link](#)

See also:

Patricia Zengerle. (2011) “Romney Has Clear Lead Among Republicans: Poll.” Reuters. Nov. 13, 2011. [Link](#)

Editorial Staff. (2011) “Bachmann-Perry Overdrive: GOP Voters Are Still Searching for a Unifying Candidate.” The Wall Street Journal. Aug. 15, 2011. [Link](#)

139. Ian Schwartz. (2012) “Rush Limbaugh: Media Running Campaign to Dispirit You.” RealClearPolitics. Sep. 10, 2012. [Link](#)

Note: This particular quote comes after the point of divergence in the story, but he had made similar statements in the past.

140. David Rothschild, Chris Wilson. (2012) “Obama Poised to Win 2012 Election with 303 Electoral Votes.” Yahoo! News. Feb. 16, 2012. [Link](#)
141. Author’s Note: “Progressive” here refers to the successive rounds of meetings, rather than the political connotation of the word. Alternatively, it could have been called “recursive selection,” but progressive is a more common term.
142. 51% of responding organizations determined their activity and strategy “entirely” at the local level; 36% “mainly” at the local level.

Staff Reporter. (2010) “An Up-Close Look at the Tea Party and Its Role in the Midterm Elections.” The Washington Post. Oct. 24, 2010. [Link](#)

143. To be clear, the Tea Party Patriots is a real organization, and Mark Meckler and Jenny Beth Martin are real; however, unless otherwise noted, all of their actions and quotes in this story are fictional.
144. Nicholas Carlson. (2010) “At Last -- The Full Story of How Facebook Was Founded.” Business Insider. Mar. 5, 2010. [Link](#)
145. The best phones at the time could run most applications designed for the iPad 2, just not as well.
Anand Lal Shimpi, Brian Klug. (2011) “iPhone 4S Preliminary Benchmarks: ~800MHz A5, Slightly Slower GPU than iPad 2, Still Very Fast.” AnandTech. Oct. 11, 2011. [Link](#)
146. Eight out of ten early Tea Party supporters identified as Republicans.
Frank Newport. (2010) “Tea Party Supporters Overlap Republican Base.” Gallup. Jul. 2, 2010. [Link](#)
147. Specifically, the author says that for a crowd to make a wise decision, it needs to be a decentralized group of independent people with diverse opinions, and that there needs to be a good mechanism in place to aggregate individual decisions.
James Surowiecki. (2004) “The Wisdom of Crowds.” Anchor Books. New York, NY.
148. Notably, Mike Huckabee, but others who polled well at various times but declined to run also included Sarah Palin, Donald Trump, Chris Christie, Mitch Daniels, Haley Barbour, and Rudy Giuliani.
Michael Memoli, Katherine Skiba. (2011) “Huckabee Announces He Will Not Run for President.” Los Angeles Times. May 15, 2011. [Link](#)
149. Staff Reporter. (2011) “Romney, Cain Under Fire at Feisty GOP Debate.” Fox News. Oct. 19, 2011. [Link](#)
150. John McCain raised \$368M and spent \$333M. Barack Obama raised \$745M and spent \$730M. Based on Federal Election Commission data released on Oct. 27, 2008.
The Center for Responsive Politics. (2008) “Banking on Becoming President.” OpenSecrets.org. [Link](#)
Note: The trend of roughly doubling continued in 2012, with total spending being estimated at around \$2 billion – without even including the hundreds of millions spent by some outside tax-exempt groups.
S.V. Date. (2012) “Both Obama, Romney on Track to Spend \$1 Billion by Election Day.” NPR. Oct. 21, 2012. [Link](#)
Associated Press. (2012) “Presidential Election to Pass \$2B Fundraising Mark.” CBS News. Oct. 25, 2012. [Link](#)
Staff Reporter. (2012) “The 2012 Money Race: Compare the Candidates.” The New York Times. Nov. 6, 2012. [Link](#)

151. The Center for Responsive Politics. (2008) “Presidential Fundraising and Spending, 1976-2008.” OpenSecrets.org. [Link](#)
152. Adbusters. (2011) “#OCCUPYWALLSTREET: A Shift In Revolutionary Tactics.” Adbusters. Jul. 13, 2011. [Link](#)
153. Staff Reporter. (2011) “Protesters in N.Y.C. Blast Money in Politics.” CBS News. Sep. 17, 2011. [Link](#)
154. Karla Adam. (2011) “Occupy Wall Street Protests Go Global.” The Washington Post. Oct. 15, 2011. [Link](#)
155. James Davies, Susanna Sandström, Anthony Shorrocks, Edward Wolff. (2008) “The World Distribution of Household Wealth.” Working Paper No. 2008/03. World Institute for Development Economics Research. Helsinki, Finland.
156. Andrew Sum, Joseph McLaughlin. (2010) “How the U.S. Economic Output Recession of 2007-2009 Led to the Great Recession in Labor Markets.” Center for Labor Market Studies. Northeastern University. Boston, MA.
157. “This year, the share of young people who were employed in July was 48.8 percent, the lowest July rate on record for the series, which began in 1948.” Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011) “Employment and Unemployment Among Youth Summary.” US Department of Labor. Washington, DC. Aug. 21, 2011. [Link](#)
158. Scott Cohn. (2011) “Occupy Wall Street Protesters Demand Student Loan Relief.” CNBC. Oct. 12, 2011. [Link](#)
159. In inflation-adjusted dollars, tuition at public, four-year institutions was 3.68 times higher in 2011 than in 1981.
Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma. (2011) “Trends in College Pricing.” The College Board. New York, NY.
160. Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, Allison Beard, Sheila Palma. (2010) “Labor Underutilization Problems of U.S. Workers Across Household Income Groups at the End of the Great Recession.” Center for Labor Market Studies. Northeastern University. Boston, MA.
Great overview of the situation:
William Symonds, Robert Schwartz, Ronald Ferguson. (2011) “Pathways to Prosperity: Meeting the Challenge of Preparing Young Americans for the 21st Century.” Harvard Graduate School of Education. Cambridge, MA.
161. Oct. 2011 unemployment rate for veterans under 25: 30.4%. Veterans 25 and over: 7.2%. All people 25 and over: 7.3%. All people 18 and over: 8.3%.
Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2011) “Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey: Employment Status of Persons by Veteran Status, Age, Race, Hispanic or Latino Ethnicity, and Sex, October 2011, Not Seasonally Adjusted.” US Department of Labor. Washington, DC.

- 162. Stephen Gandel. (2010) “In a Tough Job Market, Teens Are Suffering Most.” Time. Jan. 18, 2010. [Link](#)
 - 163. CNN Wire Staff. (2011) “Occupy Movement Fights Foreclosures, Protests Program Cuts.” CNN. Nov. 8, 2011. [Link](#)
 - 164. David Kocieniewski. (2011) “Biggest Public Firms Paid Little U.S. Tax, Study Says.” New York Times. Nov. 3, 2011. [Link](#)
- David Cay Johnston. (2011) “Benefiting from Taxes.” Reuters. Nov. 8, 2011. [Link](#)

See also:

Robert McIntyre, Matthew Gardner, Rebecca Wilkins, Richard Phillips. (2011) “Corporate Taxpayers & Corporate Tax Dodgers, 2008-10.” Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Citizens for Tax Justice. Washington, DC.

- 165. While there are thousands of articles exploring this point from many perspectives, this is one of the clearest analyses:
 PolitiFact. (2011) “Warren Buffett Says the Super-Rich Pay Lower Tax Rates Than Others.” PolitiFact. Aug. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
- 166. Adriana Reyneri. (2011) “Economic Situation Warrants Tax Hikes, Program Cuts, Say Millionaires.” The Spectrem Group. Oct. 24, 2011. [Link](#)

Reported in:

Robert Frank. (2011) “Millionaires Support Warren Buffett’s Tax on the Rich.” The Wall Street Journal. Oct. 27, 2011. [Link](#)

Brad Tuttle. (2011) “Maybe Millionaires Aren’t So Bad? Most Support Higher Taxes on the Rich.” Time. Oct. 28, 2011. [Link](#)

See also:

Adam Clark Estes. (2011) “Look at All the Rich People Supporting Occupy Wall Street.” The Atlantic. Oct. 13, 2011. [Link](#)

- 167. Margaret Coker, Charles Levinson, Jonathan Weisman. (2011) “Mubarak Promises to Step Down.” The Wall Street Journal. Feb. 2, 2011. [Link](#)
- 168. Adbusters. (2011) “#OCCUPYWALLSTREET: A Shift In Revolutionary Tactics.” Adbusters. Jul. 13, 2011. [Link](#)
- 169. In the beginning, one of the most common media assessments of the OWS movement was that it had no coherent message.
 N. R. Kleinfield, Cara Buckley. (2011) “Wall Street Occupiers, Protesting Till Whenever.” The New York Times. Sep. 30, 2011. [Link](#)
 Edward Hadas. (2011) “Breakingviews: Occupy Wall Street Still Lacks Lucid Message.” Reuters. Oct. 28, 2011. [Link](#)
 Jennifer Booton. (2011) “Occupy Wall Street’s Message? Try Checking Facebook.” Fox Business. Nov. 11, 2011. [Link](#)

170. This editorial is representative of the argument against the common criticism of the movement having no clear message.
Dahlia Lithwick. (2011) "Occupy the No-Spin Zone." Slate. Oct. 26, 2011. [Link](#)
171. Ashley Powers. (2011) "Occupy Denver's Search for a Leader Goes to the Dogs." Los Angeles Times. Nov. 9, 2011. [Link](#)
172. Jeffrey Jones. (2011) "Most Americans Uncertain about 'Occupy Wall Street' Goals." Gallup. Oct. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
173. Dunstan Prial. (2011) "Occupy Wall Street, Tea Party Movements Both Born of Bank Bailouts." Fox Business. [Link](#)
174. Jeffrey Jones. (2011) "Most Americans Uncertain about 'Occupy Wall Street' Goals." Gallup. Oct. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
175. Sam Roberts. (2009) "2008 Surge in Black Voters Nearly Erased Racial Gap." The New York Times. Jul. 20, 2009. [Link](#)
176. Kim Zetter. (2009) "Nation's First Open Source Election Software Released." Wired. Oct. 23, 2009. [Link](#)
- Dana Blankenhorn. (2007) "Open Source Values: Transparency." ZDNet Blogs. Nov. 6, 2007. [Link](#)

Also:

"Talk is cheap. Show me the code."

Linus Torvalds. (2000) Linux Kernel Mailing List. Aug. 25, 2000. [Link](#)

177. Shaull Oreg, Oded Nov. (2008) "Exploring Motivations for Contributing to Open Source Initiatives: The Roles of Contribution Context and Personal Values." Computers in Human Behavior. Vol. 24, No. 5, pp. 2055-2073.
178. About 70,000 hours of video per day were uploaded to YouTube in May 2011.
YouTube. (2011) "Thanks, YouTube Community, for Two BIG Gifts on Our Sixth Birthday!" Broadcasting Ourselves ;), The Official YouTube Blog. May 25, 2011. [Link](#)
179. This figure is a rough estimate for illustrative purposes only. Estimate based on 2011 costs on Amazon's EC2 platform and does not consider a wide variety of economic factors, such as inflation or continually falling data service costs. Furthermore, it does not include software development or cloud computing costs, as the largest cost would be storing and serving the video records of the meetings.

Calculations based on the following estimates:

624x352 video, 30fps, H.264 codec, 48kHz mono audio = 1100-1300 kbps = ~1 GB per 2-hour video file.

42 million participants in 2016, 10% of winners choose not to participate in the next round, two hour meetings = ~7.5 million hours of video = ~7.5 petabytes at full participation.

Prices for data services based on one year at \$0.10 per GB-mo. of storage, \$0.05 per GB of data transfer (lowest published rates). Ten full views for each video each year = \$2.50 per video, per year. (Note: Viewing rate is a completely arbitrary guess and would dramatically affect the final cost.)

Amazon Web Services. (2011) "Amazon EC2 Pricing." Amazon. [Link](#)

180. Total cost based on price of materials from:

Andrew Rassweiler. (2011) "iPad 2 Carries Bill of Materials of \$326.60, IHS iSuppli Teardown Analysis Shows." IHS iSuppli. El Segundo, CA. Press Release. Mar 13, 2011. [Link](#)

181. Similar to the experience promised by Silk on the Kindle Fire which many feel, unfortunately, fell short.

Jared Newman. (2011) "Amazon Announces \$199 Kindle Fire Tablet, Clutch of New Kindle E-Readers." PC World. Sep. 28, 2011. [Link](#)

The Amazon Silk Team. (2011) "Introducing Amazon Silk." Amazon Silk Blog. Sep. 28, 2011. [Link](#)

Eric Franklin. (2011) "Kindle Fire vs. iPad 2 vs. Tab 8.9: Performance Speeds." CNET. Nov. 15, 2011. [Link](#)

182. This calculation assumes 10% of winners of each round choose not to progress to the next round. At most, just under five out of 100,000 would progress past the fourth round.

183. Staff Reporter. (2010) "An Up-Close Look at the Tea Party and Its Role in the Midterm Elections." The Washington Post. Oct. 24, 2010. [Link](#)

Additional info: Median amount raised in 2010: \$800. Median amount of cash on hand: \$500. 95% of funding came from individuals. 95% of funding came from local sources.

184. Public Policy Institute of California. (2010) "California's Likely Voters." PPIC. San Francisco, CA. Aug. 1, 2010. [Link](#)

California has voted for Democrats in presidential elections since 1992.

David Leip. (2011) "Presidential General Election Results (1992-2008)." Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections. USElectionAtlas.org. [Link](#)

185. Texas has voted for Republicans in presidential elections since 1980.

David Leip. (2011) "Presidential General Election Results (1980-2008)." Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections. USElectionAtlas.org. [Link](#)

186. At the time of writing, the English version of Wikipedia did not have ratings, although a similar system had been described that rated articles on trustworthiness, objectivity, completeness, and quality of writing.

Marshall Kirkpatrick. (2011) "'Rate This Page' Is Coming to the English Wikipedia." Read Write Web. Jul. 18, 2011. [Link](#)

187. Jeffrey Jones. (2010) "Debt, Gov't. Power Among Tea Party Supporters' Top Concerns." Gallup. Jul. 5, 2010. [Link](#)

188. Karla Adam. (2011) “Occupy Wall Street Protests Go Global.” The Washington Post. Oct. 15, 2011. [Link](#)
189. Real person, fictional quote.
190. Lucy Tobin. (2011) “Axe Falls on Forensics Students.” The Guardian. Mar. 14, 2011. [Link](#)
191. Wikipedia. (2011) “Grinder (Ice Hockey).” Jun. 28, 2011. [Link](#)
192. Shanto Iyengar, Kyu Hahn. (2009) “Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use.” Journal of Communication. Vol. 59, No. 1, pp. 19-39.
- Shanto Iyengar , Kyu Hahn , Markus Prior. (2001) “Has Technology Made Attention to Political Campaigns More Selective? An Experimental Study of the 2000 Presidential Campaign.” Paper presented at a conference of the American Political Science Association, Aug. 2001. San Francisco, CA.
193. Subjects in this study were people who thought of themselves as “committed Republicans or Democrats.”
- Author’s Note: To clarify, portions of the brain do not physically “shut off,” but rather they are not activated in lieu of other portions. This phrasing should make sense to a general audience but will probably bother neuroscientists.
- Drew Westen, Pavel Blagov, Keith Harenski, Clint Kilts, Stephan Hamann. (2006) “Neural Bases of Motivated Reasoning: An fMRI Study of Emotional Constraints on Partisan Political Judgment in the 2004 U.S. Presidential Election.” Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience. Vol. 18, No. 11, pp. 1947-1958.
194. Charles Taber, Milton Lodge. (2006) “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs.” American Journal of Political Science. Vol. 50, No. 3, pp. 755-769.
195. Brendan Nyhan, Jason Reifler. (2010) “When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions.” Political Behavior. Vol. 32, No. 2, pp. 303-330.
196. Geoffrey Munro. (2010) “The Scientific Impotence Excuse: Discounting Belief-Threatening Scientific Abstracts.” Journal of Applied Social Psychology. Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 579-600.
197. Yechiel Klar, Eilath Giladi. (1997) “No One in My Group Can Be Below the Group’s Average: A Robust Positivity Bias in Favor of Anonymous Peers.” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Vol. 73, No. 5, pp. 885-901.
198. Although the previous paragraph contains a fictional quote from a fictional book, this phenomenon is explored in:
- Farhad Manjoo. (2008) “True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post-Fact Society.” John Wiley & Sons. Hoboken, NJ.
199. “Stoned slackers” is what Bill O’Reilly has called Jon Stewart’s audience on more than one occasion, notably first in 2004 and again in 2011.

200. Bill O'Reilly. (2011) The O'Reilly Factor. Broadcast Apr. 6, 2011.
201. To which Stewart added, "...which is like being the thinnest kid at fat camp." Jon Stewart. (2011) The O'Reilly Factor. Broadcast Feb. 3, 2011.
202. Mark Blumenthal. "The Case for Robo-Pollsters." National Journal. Sep. 14, 2009. (Updated Jan. 2, 2011.) [Link](#)
203. H.R. 3035, "The Mobile Informational Call Act of 2011," proposed Sep. 22, 2011, would make automated calls to mobile phones legal.
US Chamber of Commerce. (2011) "Coalition Letter in Support of H.R. 3035, the 'Mobile Informational Call Act of 2011.'" Sep. 23, 2011. [Link](#)
204. Frank Newport, Lydia Saad, David Moore. (1997) "How are Polls Conducted?" (Michael Golay, Ed.) In "Where America Stands." John Wiley & Sons. Hoboken, NJ.
205. Stephen Blumberg, Julian Luke. (2010) "Wireless Substitution: Early Release of Estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, July-December 2009." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Atlanta, GA.
206. For a good overview of the problems mobile phones cause in polling, see:
Scott Keeter, Michael Dimock, Leah Christian, Courtney Kennedy. (2008) "The Impact of 'Cell-Onlys' on Public Opinion Polls: Ways of Coping with a Growing Population Segment." Pew Research Center. Washington, DC. [Link](#)
Also:
Staff Reporter. (2008) "Cell Phones and Political Polls." FactCheck.org. Feb. 21, 2008. [Link](#)
207. Author's Note: In this article, Leve makes these points far better than I did. I would have included several paragraphs of direct quotes if doing so wouldn't have violated the tenets of fair use.
Mark Blumenthal. (2009) "Is Polling As We Know It Doomed?" National Journal. Aug. 10, 2009. [Link](#)
Note: There is some controversy over robo-polls and political polls in general. They can usually predict elections well, but anything more nuanced is less reliable. Many have participation levels of less than 10%, which makes critics question what is similar about those who answer. Specifically, these polls are indeed accurate in that they conform to a low margin of error – in that if the process were repeated it would get 95% of the same results 95% of the time. However, repeating a flawed process consistently merely gets consistently flawed data.
208. Staff Reporter. (2011) "American News Media Cover Royal Wedding More Frequently than UK Counterparts." The Nielsen Company. Apr. 25, 2011. [Link](#)
209. Ravi Somaiya. (2011) "In Media's Wedding Frenzy, Hints of Viewer Fatigue." The New York Times. Apr. 22, 2011. [Link](#)

210. Nate Silver. (2011) “Media’s Spotlight Shines Less Brightly on Palin.” The New York Times. Apr. 21, 2011. [Link](#)
- Nate Silver. (2010) “The 800-Pound Mama Grizzly Problem.” The New York Times. Nov. 19, 2010. [Link](#)
211. Adam Caparell. (2011) “Donald Trump Presidential Run a Stunt? NBC Exec Believes the Reality Star Is Bluffing for Ratings.” New York Daily News. Apr. 19, 2011. [Link](#)
- Jeremy Peters, Brian Stelter. (2011) “Trump for President in 2012? Maybe. Trump for Trump? Without Question.” The New York Times. Apr. 2, 2011. [Link](#)
212. Sara Forden. (2011) “Trump Says He’s Decided ‘In My Mind’ to Seek Presidency after ‘Apprentice.’” Bloomberg. May 2, 2011. [Link](#)
- Kathleen Foster. (2011) “Trump: Stay Tuned for Announcement?” Fox News. May 16, 2011. [Link](#)
- Staff Reporter. (2011) “Trump Declines to Run for President, Cites ‘Passion’ for Business.” Fox News. May 16, 2011. [Link](#)
- Lindsey Boerma. (2011) “Trump Stumped: No Big Announcement on Celebrity Apprentice Finale.” National Journal. May 10, 2011. [Link](#)
213. Colby Hall. “Trump Saturation Coverage Simply Reflects Classic Media Bias.” Mediaite. Apr. 28, 2011. [Link](#)
214. Staff Reporter. (2008) “Born in the U.S.A.” FactCheck.org. Apr. 27, 2011. [Link](#)
215. Bill O’Reilly. (2011) The O’Reilly Factor. Broadcast Apr. 13, 2011.
216. Lymari Morales. (2011) “Obama’s Birth Certificate Convinces Some, but Not All, Skeptics.” Gallup. May 13, 2011. [Link](#)
217. Bill Foster (Director). (1986) “The Mystery of Al Capone’s Vaults.” Documentary.
- David Bock. (1994) “Geraldo Rivera’s Failure Launches His Career.” Entertainment Weekly. No. 219. Apr. 22, 1994. [Link](#)
218. Derek Willis. (2011) “Help Us Review the Sarah Palin E-Mail Records.” The New York Times. Jun. 9, 2011. [Link](#)
- Staff Reporter. (2011) “The Sarah Palin Emails.” The Guardian. Jun. 10, 2011. [Link](#)
- Chris Matyszczyk. (2011) “Media Crowdsources, Live Blogs, Crosses Fingers Over Palin’s E-Mails.” CNET. Jun. 11, 2011. [Link](#)
219. Project for Excellence in Journalism. (2007) “The Invisible Primary—Invisible No Longer.” Pew Research Center. Washington, DC. [Link](#)
- Katharine Seelye. (2007) “Horse Race Prevails in Campaign Reporting.” The New York Times. Oct. 29, 2007. [Link](#)

220. The full titles of all shows listed have the host's name in them, i.e., *Anderson Cooper 360*; *Hardball with Chris Matthews*; *The Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer*.
221. Tricia Sartor. (2011) "Iraq Coverage Reaches a New Low in 2011." Pew Research Center. Washington, DC. [Link](#)
222. Astronomers only use light years to talk to non-astronomers. Amongst themselves, scientists use parsecs, not light years.
223. Christine Romans. (2009) "How Big is a Trillion Dollars?" CNN. Segment broadcast Feb. 4, 2009, 1:07 pm ET.
224. All calculations were performed using the latest statistics released by the IRS at the time of writing. In 2008, returns were filed for an estimated 196,188,690 people. (142,450,569 total, 53,738,121 were joint returns.) Of those, 103,980,006 (approx.. 53%) actually paid federal income taxes.
- Internal Revenue Service. (2011) "All Returns: Adjusted Gross Income, Exemptions, Deductions, and Tax Items – 2008." IRS. Washington, DC. [Link](#)
- The fictional numbers are loosely based on the initial CBO estimate of the 2008 bank bailout at \$700 billion and the 2009 stimulus at \$789 billion. The tax break was based on the Close Big Oil Tax Loopholes Act, which failed on May 17, 2011.
225. Carl Hulse. (2011) "Budget Deal to Cut \$38 Billion Averts Shutdown." The New York Times. Apr. 8, 2011. [Link](#)
226. David Fahrenthold. (2011) "Budget Deal: CBO Analysis Shows Initial Spending Cuts Less Than Expected." The Washington Post. Apr. 12, 2011. [Link](#)
- Bob Schieffer. (2011) "The Truth Behind the \$38 Billion Budget Cuts." CBS News. Apr. 17, 2011. [Link](#)
227. Total Public Debt Outstanding on Apr. 8, 2011: \$14,265,383,134,019.53.
- Bureau of the Public Debt. (2011) "The Debt to the Penny and Who Holds It." US Department of the Treasury. Washington, DC. [Link](#)
228. TV Tropes. (2011) "The Brady Bunch." TVTropes.org. [Link](#)
229. When Glenn Beck left Fox News, he said: "Paul Revere did not get up on the horse and say, 'I'm going to do this for the rest of my life.' He didn't do it. He got off his horse at some point and fought in the revolution, and then he went back to silver-smithing."
- Alex Ben Block. (2011) "Glenn Beck on Why His Fox News Show Is Ending." The Hollywood Reporter. Apr. 6, 2011. [Link](#)
230. Representative Mike McIntyre (North Carolina's Seventh District), Representative Walter Minnick (Idaho's First District), Michael Oliverio (West Virginia's First District), Joe Vodvarka (Pennsylvania Senate), Brian Kelly (Pennsylvania's Eleventh District), Tim Curtis (Florida's Eleventh

District), Mark Falzon(New Jersey's Sixth District), Warren Mosler (Connecticut Senate).

Tiffany Stanley. (2010) "Meet 2010's Tea Party Democrats." *The New Republic*. Oct. 27, 2010. [Link](#)

231. Youth turnout in 1972 was 55.4% and has never been equaled, although 2008 came close.

Emily Hoban Kirby, Kei Kawashima-Ginsberg. (2009) "The Youth Vote in 2008." *The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement*. Tufts University, Medford, MA.

232. Theodore Roosevelt received 27% of the popular vote in 1912 when he sought to regain the presidency under the banner of the Progressive Party.

David Leip. (2011) "1912 Presidential General Election Results." *Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections*. USElectionAtlas.org. [Link](#)

233. These researchers concluded that Nader did in fact cost Gore the election, but only because the race in Florida was so unpredictably close. Otherwise, he would not have made a difference. This is one of the few sources on this topic that isn't pure speculation.

Michael Herron, Jeffrey Lewis. (2006) "Did Ralph Nader Spoil a Gore Presidency? A Ballot-Level Study of Green and Reform Party Voters in the 2000 Presidential Election." Working paper. UCLA. Los Angeles, CA.

If the situation were reversed, this would compare instead to Ross Perot, who split the conservative vote in 1992, when Bill Clinton defeated George H. W. Bush.

234. Author's Note: History buffs could make arguments about Andrew Johnson and Abraham Lincoln.

235. The majority of Americans have long since desired a third major political party.

Jeffrey Jones. (2010) "Americans Renew Call for Third Party." *Gallup*. Sep. 17, 2010. [Link](#)

236. Real person, fictional quote.

237. Lawrence Brown. (2003) "Comparing Health Systems in Four Countries: Lessons for the United States." *American Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 93, No. 1, pp. 52-56.

Bruce Vladeck. (2003) "Universal Health Insurance in the United States: Reflections on the Past, the Present, and the Future." *American Journal of Public Health*. Vol. 93, No. 1, pp. 16-19.

238. Hajo Holborn. (1982) "A History of Modern Germany: 1840-1945." Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ.

239. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2010) "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database." SIPRI. Solna, Sweden.

240. Technically, there is one minor exception: The Republic of Chad in central Africa. The others are Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Jordan, Georgia, and Iraq.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. (2010) "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database." SIPRI. Solna, Sweden.

241. Between 1998-2011, Pharmaceuticals/Health Products spent \$2.2 billion on lobbying. Insurance spent \$1.6 billion.

The Center for Responsive Politics. (2011) "Lobbying: Top Industries." OpenSecrets.org. [Link](#)

242. E.G. Krug, K.E. Powell, L.L. Dahlberg. (1998) "Firearm-Related Deaths in the United States and 35 Other High- and Upper-Middle- Income Countries." International Journal of Epidemiology. Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 214-221.

The list of "high-income countries" this study used differs slightly from the more modern list of "advanced economies" defined by the IMF, but they are very similar:

International Monetary Fund. (2010) "World Economic and Financial Surveys: World Economic Outlook." International Monetary Fund. Washington, DC.

243. Marc Weber Tobias. (2012) "Unsafe Gun Safes Can Be Opened by a Three-Year Old." Forbes. Jul. 26, 2012. [Link](#)

244. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2012) "Intentional Homicide, Count and Rate per 100,000 Population (1995 - 2011)." United Nations. Geneva, Switzerland.

Small Arms Survey. (2007) "Small Arms Survey 2007: The Largest Civilian Firearms Arsenal for 178 Countries." Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. Geneva, Switzerland.

Emma June Kirby. (2013) "Switzerland Guns: Living with Firearms the Swiss Way." BBC News. Feb. 10, 2013. [Link](#)

Soraya Sarhaddi Nelson. (2013) "What's Worked, and What Hasn't, in Gun-Loving Switzerland." NPR. Mar 19, 2013. [Link](#)

245. Patrick Allen. (2011) "US Will Be the World's Third Largest Economy: Citi." CNBC. Feb 25, 2011. [Link](#)

David Barboza. (2010) "China Passes Japan as Second-Largest Economy." The New York Times. Aug. 15, 2010. [Link](#)

246. Photo © Jasmin Merdan - Fotolia.com.

247. Kurt Lang, Gladys Engle Lang. (1968) "Politics & Television." Quadrangle Books. Chicago, IL.

248. Staff Reporter. (2008) "Highest Rated Presidential Debates: 1960 to Present." Nielsen Media Research. Oct. 6, 2008. [Link](#)

249. This meta-analysis examines many popularly held ideas about negative campaigning.
Richard Lau, Lee Sigelman, Caroline Heldman, Paul Babbitt. (1999) "The Effects of Negative Political Advertisements: A Meta-Analytic Assessment." *The American Political Science Review*. Vol. 93, No. 4, pp. 851-875.
250. Pew Research Center. (2010) "Independents Oppose Party in Power ... Again." Pew Research Center. Washington, DC.
251. In fact, the very act of voting is egocentric and irrational, since we know each individual vote has such a miniscule effect.
Melissa Acevedo, Joachim Krueger. (2004) "Two Egocentric Sources of the Decision to Vote: The Voter's Illusion and the Belief in Personal Relevance." *Political Psychology*. Vol. 25, No. 1, pp. 115-134.
252. This study examines the differences between people's actual preferences and their rationalized choices for political candidates.
Wendy Rahn, Jon Krosnick, Marijke Breuning. (1994) "Rationalization and Derivation Processes in Survey Studies of Political Candidate Evaluation." *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 582-600.
253. Pew Research Center. (2010) "Independents Oppose Party in Power ... Again." Pew Research Center. Washington, DC.
254. David Leip. (2011) "Presidential General Election Results (1936)." Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections. USElectionAtlas.org. [Link](#)
255. David Kocieniewski. (2011) "Biggest Public Firms Paid Little U.S. Tax, Study Says." *New York Times*. Nov. 3, 2011. [Link](#)
David Cay Johnston. (2011) "Benefiting from Taxes." *Reuters*. Nov. 8, 2011. [Link](#)
See also:
Robert McIntyre, Matthew Gardner, Rebecca Wilkins, Richard Phillips. (2011) "Corporate Taxpayers & Corporate Tax Dodgers, 2008-10." Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Citizens for Tax Justice. Washington, DC.
256. Charles Arthur. (2011) "iPad to Dominate Tablet Sales until 2015 as Growth Explodes, Says Gartner." *The Guardian*. Sep. 22, 2011. [Link](#)
257. ChangeWave Research. (2011) "Amazon Fires at Apple as Consumer Tablet Demand Soars." *Bloomberg Market Research*. Nov. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
258. As of November 2011, the Amazon Kindle Fire cost \$199, compared to the iPad 2, which cost between \$499 for 16 GB, Wi-Fi only to \$829 for 64 GB, 3G.
Amazon. (2011) "Kindle Fire." Amazon.com. Nov. 22, 2011. [Link](#)
Apple Store. (2011) "Select an iPad 2." Apple.com. Nov. 22, 2011. [Link](#)
259. For the 2011 holiday season, consumers planned to spend \$246 on average on electronic gifts, putting the Kindle Fire, at \$199, in an advantageous

position compared to more expensive devices, such as the Apple iPad 2, which started at \$499.

Agustino Fontevecchia. (2011) “Amazon’s Kindle Fire Pre-Launch Demand Exceeds iPad’s, Survey Shows.” *Forbes*. Nov. 9, 2011. [Link](#)

Consumer Electronics Association. (2011) “CEA Projects ‘Digital Holiday Season’ with Increased Spending on Electronics, Gifts Overall: Tablets, Laptops, TVs Top Most Wanted Gift Lists.” Consumer Electronics Association. Arlington, VA. Press Release. Oct. 25, 2011.

260. For delivering decent quality at a low cost, a prominent blogger called it the “People’s Tablet,” likening it to the Volkswagen Beetle, the most mass-produced car of all time. (“Volkswagen” literally means “People’s Car.”)

Jason Perlow. (2011) “Amazon’s Kindle Fire: The Tablet’s Volkswagen Moment.” *ZDNet*. Nov. 17, 2011. [Link](#)

It also had very high production estimates:

Amazon. (2011) “Amazon.com Announces Third Quarter Sales up 44% to \$10.88 Billion; Introduced Four New Kindle Devices for the Holidays.” Amazon. Press Release. Oct. 25, 2011. [Link](#)

Sarah Jacobsson Purewal. (2011) “Amazon Boosts Kindle Fire Production.” *PC World*. Oct. 26, 2011. [Link](#)

261. Charles Arthur. (2011) “iPad to Dominate Tablet Sales until 2015 as Growth Explodes, Says Gartner.” *The Guardian*. Sep. 22, 2011. [Link](#)
262. Don Reisinger. (2011) “iPhone Sales Strong in U.S., U.K., but Declining Elsewhere.” *CNET*. Dec. 22, 2011. [Link](#)
263. Steven Musil. (2011) “Google Activating 700K Android Devices Every Day.” *CNET*. Dec. 20, 2011. [Link](#)
264. Steven Musil. (2011) “Android App Surpasses iPhone on Facebook.” *CNET*. Dec. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
265. For the 2011 holiday season, among adults, tablet computers were the most wanted consumer electronic item, and the second most wanted item overall behind clothes, rising from third the previous year. Prediction: This trend will continue for a few years until tablet computers are the most desired item overall (until market saturation occurs).
- Consumer Electronics Association. (2011) “CEA Projects ‘Digital Holiday Season’ with Increased Spending on Electronics, Gifts Overall: Tablets, Laptops, TVs Top Most Wanted Gift Lists.” Consumer Electronics Association. Arlington, VA. Press Release. Oct. 25, 2011.
266. Profit margins for AWS are up to four times higher than its retail arm, and a 2015 revenue of \$2.6 billion has been projected.

Alistair Barr. (2011) “Amazon’s Next Billion-Dollar Business Eyed.” *Reuters*. Jul. 21, 2011. [Link](#)

267. Rebecca Seales. (2012) “\$378 Million Apple Boss Tim Cook Poised to Become Best-Paid CEO in America.” Daily Mail. Jan. 11, 2012. [Link](#)
- Author’s Note: For skeptics who doubt Cook would bear this cost personally, consider that a sudden \$150 million expense with zero immediate income on the balance sheet may not be received well by short-term investors, and a dip in the stock price could cost him more than that much in the long run. However, a sizable personal bet by the company’s leader would show a remarkable amount of good faith in the product line as a source of future revenue.
268. Dominic Rushe. (2011) “Occupy Wall Street: NYPD Attempt Media Blackout at Zuccotti Park.” The Guardian. Nov. 15, 2011. [Link](#)
- Jonathan Dienst, Shimon Prokupez. (2011) “Media Pushed Back from Occupy Wall Street Raid.” NBC New York. Nov. 16, 2011. [Link](#)
269. Staff Reporter. (2011) “Occupy Movement: Police Reaction in Pictures.” The Guardian. Nov. 21, 2011. [Link](#)
270. Maura Judkis. (2011) “Occupy’s 84-Year-Old Pepper Spray Victim: Is This the Most Iconic Image of the Movement?” The Washington Post. Nov. 16, 2011. [Link](#)
271. Paul Pringle, Sam Quinones. (2011) “UC Davis Chief Launches Probe into Pepper-Spraying of Occupy Protesters.” Los Angeles Times. Nov. 20, 2011. [Link](#)
272. Within two weeks, two videos alone had over 4 million views on YouTube.
- Terrydatiger. (2011) “Police Pepper Spraying and Arresting Students at UC Davis.” YouTube. Nov. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
- AggieTV. (2011) “UC Davis Protestors Pepper Sprayed.” YouTube. Nov. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
273. Adam Gabbatt. (2011) “Occupy Oakland: Footage Shows Police Beating ‘Peaceful’ Iraq War Veteran.” The Guardian. Nov. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
- This incident happened two weeks earlier:
- Tihanna McCleese. (2011) “Second Veteran Injured in ‘Occupy Oakland’ Violence.” ABC News. Nov. 4, 2011. [Link](#)
- Another veteran had also been recently injured:
- The Associated Press. (2011) “Occupy Tensions High after Vet’s Skull Fracture.” CBS News. Oct. 27, 2011. [Link](#)
274. Justin Elliot. (2011) “Police Beat Occupy Protesters at UC Berkeley.” Salon. Nov. 10, 2011. [Link](#)
275. E.D. Kain. (2011) “Police Response to Occupy Wall Street is Absurd.” Forbes. Nov. 19, 2011. [Link](#)
276. Ted Mann. (2011) “The Occupy Movement Adds Volume to Police Brutality Complaints.” The Atlantic. Oct. 27, 2011. [Link](#)

277. Terry Collins. (2012) "Violence in Oakland Divides Occupy Movement." The Boston Globe. Jan. 31, 2012. [Link](#)
278. Staff Reporter. (2012) "Oakland's Mayor Says City Is Fed Up after Hundreds of Occupy Activists Arrested." CNN. Jan. 29, 2012. [Link](#)
- Lydia Saad. (2011) "Support for 'Occupy' Unchanged, but More Criticize Approach." Gallup. Nov. 21, 2011. [Link](#)
279. Olivia Katrandjian. (2011) "'Occupy Wall Street' Protests Turn Violent; Video Shows Police Macing Women." ABC News. Sep. 25, 2011. [Link](#)
- Sean Captain. (2011) "Occupy Goes to Washington, Finding Politics is Complicated." Wired. Dec. 16, 2011. [Link](#)
- Sean Captain. (2011) "Occupy DC Prepares for Its Valley Forge." Wired. Dec. 9, 2011. [Link](#)
- Staff Reporter. (2012) "Police in Nation's Capital Enforce Sleeping Ban for Occupy Protesters at Two Parks." Fox News. Jan. 30, 2012. [Link](#)
- Rick Hampson. (2012) "Occupy Movement at Crossroads." USA Today. Feb. 5, 2012. [Link](#)
- St. Pete for Peace. (2012) "Occupy Arrests – Sources." Feb. 1, 2012. [Link](#)
280. Lydia Saad. (2011) "Support for 'Occupy' Unchanged, but More Criticize Approach." Gallup. Nov. 21, 2011. [Link](#)
- Jeffrey Jones. (2011) "Most Americans Uncertain about 'Occupy Wall Street' Goals." Gallup. Oct. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
281. Karen McVeigh. (2011) "Wall Street Protesters Divided Over Occupy Movement's Demands." The Guardian. Oct. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
- Adam Hartung. (2011) "Occupy Wall Street Deserves More Attention Than the Tea Party." Forbes. Nov. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
- P. J. O'Brien, Lowell Thomas. (1935) "Will Rogers, Ambassador of Good Will, Prince of Wit and Wisdom." John C. Winston. Philadelphia, PA.
282. Alan Gomez. (2011) "Tea Party, Occupy Share Similar Beginnings." USA Today. Nov. 14, 2011. [Link](#)
283. Esther Addley. (2011) "Occupy Movement: From Local Action to a Global Howl of Protest." The Guardian. Oct. 17, 2011. [Link](#)
284. James McWilliams. (2009) "Just Food: Where Locavores Get It Wrong and How We Can Truly Eat Responsibly." Little, Brown and Co. New York, NY.
- Sarah DeWeerd. (2009) "Is Local Food Better?" World Watch. Vol. 22, No. 3.
- Christie Wilcox. (2011) "Mythbusting 101: Organic Farming > Conventional Agriculture." Scientific American. Jul. 18, 2011. [Link](#)
- Steve Sexton. (2011) "The Inefficiency of Local Food." Freakonomics.com. Nov. 14, 2011. [Link](#)

285. A. G. Sulzberger. (2011) “Slaughter of Horses Goes On, Just Not in U.S.” The New York Times. Oct. 23, 2011. [Link](#)
286. JoNel Aleccia. (2010) “Disaster Do-Gooders Can Actually Hinder Help.” MSNBC. Jan. 23, 2010. [Link](#)
287. Associated Press. (2011) “Volunteering in Haiti: Good Intentions Not Enough.” Carroll County Times. Aug. 12, 2011. [Link](#)
288. Katharine Gammon. (2011) “Sex Toys, Winter Coats, and Spanish Flags: The Uselessness of Post-Disaster Donations.” Fast Company. Jan. 23, 2012. [Link](#)
289. Jose Holguín-Veras, (2012) “Lessons from Haiti – The Science of Donated Stuff.” Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Jan. 9, 2012. [Link](#)
290. According to the leader of a group of disaster relief volunteer organizations, “If you buy a can of peas and it costs 59 cents, it’ll cost about \$80 to get it where it needs to go.”
JoNel Aleccia. (2010) “Disaster Do-Gooders Can Actually Hinder Help.” MSNBC. Jan. 23, 2010. [Link](#)
291. Katharine Gammon. (2011) “Sex Toys, Winter Coats, and Spanish Flags: The Uselessness of Post-Disaster Donations.” Fast Company. Jan. 23, 2012. [Link](#)
292. Charles Kenny. (2011) “Haiti Doesn’t Need Your Old T-Shirt.” Foreign Policy. Nov. 10, 2011. [Link](#)
- Similar impacts have been noted in Africa:
Garth Frazer. (2008) “Used-Clothing Donations and Apparel Production in Africa.” The Economic Journal. Vol. 118, No. 532, pp. 1764-1784.
293. Frank Newport. (2011) “Tea Party Supporters Overlap Republican Base.” Gallup. Jul. 2, 2010. [Link](#)
- Shannon Travis. (2010) “Disgruntled Democrats Join the Tea Party.” CNN. Apr. 02, 2010 . [Link](#)
294. Pew Research Center. Aug. 25 - Sep. 6, 2010 Poll.
295. Staff Reporter. (2010) “Tea Party Candidates of the 2010 Midterm Election.” Fox News. Oct. 31, 2010. [Link](#)
- Kate Zernike. (2010) “Tea Party Set to Win Enough Races for Wide Influence.” The New York Times. Oct. 14, 2010. [Link](#)
296. 87% of respondents said that “dissatisfaction with mainstream Republican leaders” was an important factor in the support the Tea Party had received.
Staff Reporter. (2010) “An Up-Close Look at the Tea Party and Its Role in the Midterm Elections.” The Washington Post. Oct. 24, 2010. [Link](#)
- 88% said they disapproved of the way Barack Obama was handling his job as president.
New York Times/CBS News. (2010) “National Survey of Tea Party Supporters.” The New York Times. Apr. 12, 2010. [Link](#)

- 297. Sam Stein. “Freshman Republicans Lobby Federal Agencies for Millions Amid Spending Critiques.” The Huffington Post. Jul. 5, 2011. [Link](#)
- 298. Staff Reporter. (2011) “Tea Party Republicans in House Split on War Funds for U.S. in Libya.” The Denver Post. Jun. 25, 2011. [Link](#)
- 299. Michael McAuliff. “Tea Party: GOP Will Be Held Accountable for Backing Business in Debt Ceiling Fight.” The Huffington Post. Jun. 1, 2011. [Link](#)

Further context:

David Brooks. (2011) “The Mother of All No-Brainers.” The New York Times. Jul. 4, 2011. [Link](#)

Paul Kane, Lori Montgomery. (2011) “President Obama, House Speaker Boehner Present Dueling Debt-Limit Plans to Nation.” The Washington Post. Jul. 25, 2011. [Link](#)

- 300. “One of our long time sayings at Tea Party Nation is that the Tea Party should not endorse candidates; candidates should endorse the Tea Party.” Judson Phillips. “A Tea Party Platform.” Tea Party Nation. Jun. 1, 2011. [Link](#)
- 301. Alton Pryor. (2005) “The Timeless Quotations of President Ronald Reagan.” Stagecoach Publishing. Roseville, CA.
- 302. Many throughout the last century have written that a third-party candidate could never win or make positive changes. The following is a recent, well-written opinion along those lines:
Seth Masket, Hans Noel. (2011) “Don’t Look to a Third-Party Candidate.” Los Angeles Times. Aug. 10, 2011. [Link](#)
- 303. “EPI” stands for “Enregistrement Public Internationale.” (A fictional entity.)

