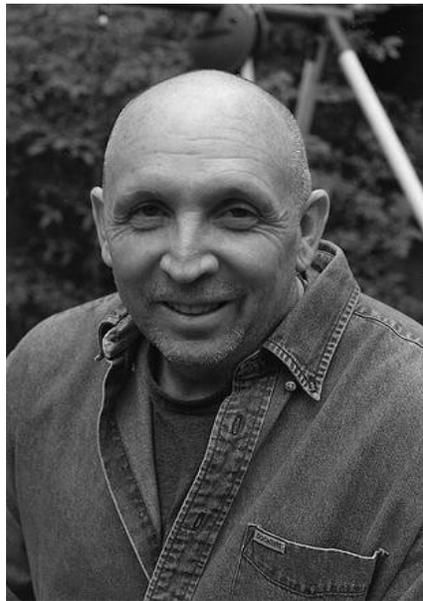


“IT’S (JOE) TIME!”

...a *can't miss* common sense plan for America

by (who else?) Joe



back cover...

Imperial Valley (CA) Press photo (Campaign 2000)



Joe

You know how a lot of average people in a fit of exasperation sometimes say: *"I should run for president!"*? Well there's an "average Joe," if you will, from the small town of Bluffton, Ohio (pop. 3,875), who not only said that – he then set out to do it. He has spent a phenomenal 25 years now crisscrossing the country looking for other "average Joe" (and "average Jane") creative, common sense answers to the issues of our day. And he found them. With those answers he crafted a platform and then set out to actually run for president. Of the United States. Of America. *Really!*

Joe has run in four successive election cycles. He and his family, traveling in a late-model motor home, have logged a phenomenal 125,000 campaign miles. He has been interviewed by hundreds and hundreds of news media outlets. He has talked at the University of Notre Dame, Xavier University, the University of Dayton... As he has stumped on street corners, at Little League games (between innings of course), at small town diners...

What's his platform? Pull up a seat in the diner, this book will let you know. And unlike other voluminous politicians' books, this one will only take, at best, one or two cups of coffee to read.

What they are saying about Joe in general:

"A lot of what Joe says really would come across as good, common sense to many Americans. They would gladly have someone like him leading the country." – Editor David Green, *The Observer* newspaper, Morenci, Michigan.

"[Schriener] has a populist faith in the American people to fix the problems of federal government with decency and common sense." –*Athens News*, Athens, Ohio

"Schriener seems to make a lot more sense than most politicians I try not to listen to. An independent candidate, Schriener has an interesting mixture of conservative and liberal viewpoints. That, in my opinion, makes him an average Joe." –Editor Steve Zender, *The Progressor-Times* newspaper, Carey, Ohio

"The students were most impressed by the fact that Mr. Schriener seemed to be living out his very challenging campaign rhetoric. All of them seemed to agree that Mr. Schriener's voice is one that needs to be heard in our country, and world." –John Cooper, Theology Instructor, Xavier University.

"Common Sense. Noun. 1) The unreflective opinions of ordinary people. Sound and prudent (Merriam-Webster). Joe Schriener. Noun. The presidential candidate who sees the future of America with a common sense philosophy." –reporter Nathan Eagle, *The Daily Advocate*, Greenville, Ohio.

"...a message of common sense and an aura as ordinary as his (Schriener's) khaki pants and brown and blue plaid shirt." –reporter Chuck Frederick, *Duluth News*, Duluth, Minnesota.

Dedication: "This is dedicated to all the "average Joe's" and "average Jane's" out there working to make it a better world for their kids, and everyone's kids." --Joe



WTOV News, Steubenville, Ohio

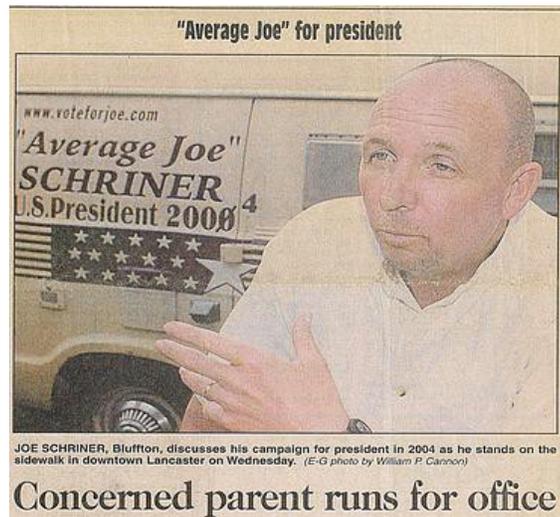


photo by Jamestown Sun newspaper (NY)

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Introduction

Hi, I'm Joe.

I'm a relatively average, Midwestern family guy who, like so many other middle-class Americans these days, sweats paying the bills each month on the money I make painting houses. I barbeque. I play basketball out back with my kids. And I cut my own grass.

The grass in the front, by the way, is along Main Street (literally) in the small town of Bluffton, Ohio (pop. 3,875). How is *that* for "populist?"

And taking the populist thing even further, when I'm not doing all the other stuff, I'm also: running for president. That's right, of the *country*.

Well, someone had to do this. I mean, how many average people like me of late have said: "*I can run the country better than this!*"

And I was one of those people. It's just that, well, I've taken it a step(s) further.

I have run for president four times so far. Traveling in a small camper with my family, we have traveled some 125,000 miles campaigning over the past 12 years.

We have stumped in most states in the "lower 48" at least three times.

There has been no big money.

There has been no special interest backing.

But there has been a platform.

It is a platform that's been developed over 24 years and 250,000 miles of extensive cross-country research. I took *a lot* of notes. (I'm also a part-time, small town journalist.)

In this expansive research trip, I was looking for people with creative, common sense approaches to the issues of our time. And I found them.

I listened to their thoughts. I studied the projects they'd developed.

After crafting a platform based on much of this, I headed out to run for president.

At every turn during the campaigns, I've talked about these peoples' ideas, their projects... with the hopes of planting seeds.

I've shared parts of the message with people one-on-one in small town diners. I've talked in hundreds and hundreds of TV, radio and newspaper interviews. I've talked at schools such as the University of Notre Dame, Xavier University, the University of Dayton, LaGrange College...

Our journeys, like to LaGrange, Georgia, have primarily taken us down America's back roads.

And it is on those back roads that we have found, not only creative common sense, but a good measure of acceptance.

"A lot of what Joe says would make good, common sense to many Americans," wrote Editor David Green of the *Morenci Observer* newspaper in Michigan. "They would gladly have someone like him leading the country."

Actually I'd welcome the chance to lead the country.

I mean I'm planting seeds, sure.

And I'm getting people to think, sure.

But, ultimately, I want to win.

The reason I want to win is because our country, and our world at large, is going awry – and I know with these peoples' ideas that I can fix it.

How awry is our country going?

Kids are regularly being shot in our schools now. Babies are being dismembered in their mothers' wombs every day here. (We're at the 55 million abortion mark.) America is literally, and

lethally, “gassing” the world with our exorbitant carbon dioxide output. Our nuclear proliferation (we spend \$50 billion a year now on nuclear weapons) is fueling a worldwide nuclear arms race that puts us one push of a button away from mass annihilation. Our inner cities in America are now war zones. Millions of Americans are out of work. We have a whopping \$17 *trillion* National Debt, and growing. Crime continues to increase and American prisons are bursting at their seams...

Meanwhile, worldwide some 24,000 people starve to death every day. More than one billion people live in deplorable slum conditions. More than one billion people don’t have access to clean drinking water. Thousands in the Third World die of preventable disease every day...

Is this the kind of world, the kind of country (U.S.), any of us *really* want to leave to our kids?

Of course it isn’t.

Yet, that’s exactly what we’re doing.

Now there has been, among other things, a particularly glaring constant in all this – at least for the past 20 years. For the past 20 years, the people leading our country (whether Democrat or Republican) have all graduated from either: Harvard or Yale.

Common sense says that apparently whatever they teach you at Harvard or Yale doesn’t necessarily equip you for dealing with all these problems effectively. Or, well, all these problems would have diminished considerably in scope by now.

They haven’t.

In fact, most of them have gotten worse.

So...

What about an average guy from Ohio with some common sense giving it a crack? And what about an average guy from Ohio bringing along with him to D.C. some “down-home,” common sense people to help him give it a crack?

I mean, it’s America.

It would work.

And how I propose it would work can be found in the following brief essays about answers to a vast array of current problem areas.

Note: There’s a tried old saying that goes: **“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you always got.”** A consistent, and quite fateful, version of this has been playing itself out in America for quite some time now. And it needs to change, quick!

Going with my plan will, indeed, represent: **“...doing something we haven’t always done”**

Actually, as you will read, I’m not sure if we’ve *ever* done it, period.

***Author's (politician's) note:**

What you are about to read is a "cliff note," if you will, of *some* of my platform. While I don't cover *all* societal issues for this book, nor do I go into the issues I do cite in an in-depth fashion, the book will, indeed, give you a good feel for the type of person I am, some of the extent of my research, and how I would generally approach things as president.

For instance in the "Foreign Affairs" section, I use a broad brush to look at issues (world hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, lack of clean drinking water, malaria, etc.) that effect a wide swath of Third World countries. What's more, I talk about *some* ways America could significantly step up its help to the world in these areas. (There wasn't room to discuss all 192 countries.)

Likewise in this section, I just pick four foreign countries and describe, in brief, how I would approach a few things with each of those countries. Again, this will simply indicate the type of general "lens" I'd use in looking at foreign policy.

Although I will say the lens I look through is, oh, a bit different (as I allude to in the Introduction). And it is a lens that will seem *considerably* different in a lot of cases, than your typical mainstream politician, whether Republican, Democrat, Libertarian... is looking through.

What I describe is in the book, for brevity and readability sake, is, again, in no way comprehensive.

However, there are lengthy position papers at our website: www.voteforjoe.com for those wishing to take a much deeper, more expansive look at my research and take on things.

Abortion (overarching)

With abortion, we are living in a modern day Holocaust almost unparalleled in the history of the world. America, for instance, has just crossed the 55 million abortion mark.

At conception, a full genetic code is put in place and an immortal soul is infused. Author Francis Beckwith, associate professor at Baylor University, writes: "From this point (conception) until death, no new genetic information is needed to make the unborn entity a unique individual human."

To terminate a pregnancy (no matter what the stage of development) is: murder. The laws allowing abortion are "dead" wrong.

On a stop in Ocala, Florida, our family stood in solidarity with a group protesting in front of an abortion clinic there. One man said he'd been coming to protest here every week for: *the past 19 years*. He said during this time he'd heard a lot of compelling reasons for abortion – yet none justified the killing of an innocent little baby, he lamented.

For more than 40 years now (since "Roe vs. Wade," 1973), pro-life people have waited for the next pro-life president, the next pro-life Supreme Court justice nominee, and so on.

For abortion to end, pro-life people need to pray and fast like there is no tomorrow. They need to absolutely *flood* local newspapers, and local legislators, with pro-life letters. They need to sacrifice until it hurts to fund crisis pregnancy centers.

And this is a *big* one: Pro-life people need to go to the streets, en masse, day in and day out (with protest signs, and so on...) to create a climate similar to what was created in the South to end Segregation! And those "streets" shouldn't be just in front of abortion clinics. Those protests should also regularly be on *our* streets in our neighborhoods – in front of *our* neighbors!

A lot of people in the South didn't want Segregation to end, but they wanted those protests to end more. And it was those vocal, persistent protests that finally drove the legislation to end that evil.

And it would be the same with abortion.

Yet so many of us busy ourselves with work, entertainment, extra-curricular activity... *while the Holocaust rages all around us!* Think the German populace during Hitler, only with an exponent.

Note: So, what's the part on this issue about a president doing something "different"? As president, as I do now, I'd be on the streets regularly protesting abortion – with the intent of sparking a massive, grassroots nationwide abortion protest movement that goes to the streets regularly.

No president in the last 40 years has regularly gone to the streets. None.

Would my going to the streets, as president, be a nightmare for the Secret Service? Maybe.

But it would be much less of a 'nightmare' than the one these little aborted babies face each day in America. That is, being violently slaughtered in their mothers' wombs.

On a stop in Mansfield, Ohio, I noticed the following bumper sticker: **"Call me an extremist, but I think dismembering babies in their mothers' wombs is wrong."**

Abortion – the roots

It's also essential to look at the systemic causes of abortion. Or abortion won't end, whether laws are in place or not.

One of the most obvious causes is that we are a society of people who are becoming more and more promiscuous. We now watch a steady diet of sexual imagery on television, on computer screens, on our smart phones... Following suit, women and men, both, are dressing more and more immodestly.

This is all, simple enough, a recipe for acting out sexually – often, now, outside of marriage. (More than 50% of women under the age of 30 in the U.S. are currently getting pregnant outside of wedlock. This has recently been referred to as: “the new normal.”)

This increased sexual acting out, simply leads to a lot of what are referred to as: “unwanted pregnancies.” (And these are pregnancies that, under current law, can be terminated.)

Adding to this sexual acting out mix is often one's background. (I'm a former licensed addictions counselor as well.) If someone is raised in a dysfunctional home, they often have varying degrees of emotional holes from parental absence. That is physical or emotional absence by parents who are workaholics, or TV addicts, or alcoholics, or drug addicts, or compulsive gamblers, or sex addicts, or plagued with mental illness, or...

So to fill these holes in, people coming out of homes like these repeat the cycle by turning to their own: overeating, alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling, television, materialism...

And that's another reason for terminating pregnancies, materialism. People want (or sometimes emotionally need) to maintain certain materialistic lifestyles. And another child coming along might crimp that. So yet another pregnancy is terminated.

On the other end of the socio-economic spectrum, some people living in abject poverty think there is absolutely no way they can afford another child, period.

And what are the answers to all this?

Accepted social mores around media entertainment, around dress, and so on, have to go back to a much more wholesome orientation. Think a president's family that dresses, say, '50s.

And think of a president who will ardently lobby the FCC to reestablish media entertainment decency standards, like they had in, again, the '50s. No president has done this.

Also, people from dysfunctional backgrounds need various forms of counseling, 12 Step groups, and so on, to systemically heal past wounds – so they don't repeat the addictive patterns – and effectively break the cycle for the next generation.

On a stop on the Monterey Peninsula in California, for example, I extensively researched a grassroots model called “Take A Stand for Kids” (TASK) that combines public education, in-home meetings, and so on, to significantly raise awareness about these issues in a community.

And, programs to end poverty should ramp up exponentially.

Abortion – “crisis pregnancy” safety nets

There will always be some “crisis pregnancy.”

In turn, our administration would promote an extensive set of grassroots social safety nets for those faced with this. As some examples:

In Newport, Rhode Island, we learned about “Women-to Women,” which is an ecumenical outreach that provides free food, clothing, diapers, and places to stay for women in crisis pregnancy.

Ocala, Florida’s The Maria Goretti House is run by a non-profit. It, too, provides a home for women in crisis pregnancy. Volunteers help the pregnant moms there by providing food, rides, money. In addition, volunteers do house maintenance, landscaping, etc.

On a stop in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, we learned about “Mom’s House.” This organization provides free day care for pregnant moms wanting to finish their schooling. Community senior citizens volunteer to watch the children. Mom’s House also provides some education scholarship money for these women.

Garfield Heights, Ohio’s Womankind is a non-profit Maternal and Prenatal Care Center. Some 100 volunteer doctors, nurses and midwives provide a full scope of medical care for free. It also offers such supplemental services as: childbirth classes, breast feeding information, support services for fathers, nutrition counseling, parenting classes...

In addition, we would also tout adoption. In tandem, we’d lobby for shorter waiting periods and reduced fees for non-private adoptions. And our administration would lobby for a tremendous expansion of foster care.

While we couldn’t necessarily legislate all this, we would use the presidency as a bully pulpit to get the message out about each of these programs (and others) that could be “adopted” from town-to-town around the country.

Black amends – history

A good deal of our country was built initially on the backs of Black slaves. They were abducted from Africa, primarily, brought to this country (those who survived the trip), and sold as slaves.

Families were often ripped apart, forever.

While Whites, for instance, have continued on an upward learning track all these years, Blacks had access to no education until the mid-1800s – and there wasn't so-called "equal education" until 1964. (And for many Blacks this remained dubious at best, as they often remained stuck in poorer quality schools, and so on.)

Common sense on this one is that many Blacks are still at a disadvantage, with generation after generation being stuck ("Enslaved?") in inner city and rural poverty loops – while many more Whites, percentage wise, continue to be upwardly mobile from generation to generation.

(Our family moved to a hardscrabble area of Cleveland, Ohio, to do outreach work. And we saw, first hand, scores of Blacks stuck in these dead-end poverty loops – with few ways out. We also toured the "Black Belt" region of rural Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas... where these Black poverty loops are just as pronounced.)

It, in many incidences, hasn't been a level playing field.

That simple.

It's time to change that *way* more.

It's time to make that right.

Black amends – template

On the front end, our administration would suggest every Black family in America receive \$25,000 as tangible reparations. If a Black individual was single, out of the house, and over 18, they would receive, say, \$10,000. (Arbitrary figures at this point.)

These financial amends could give many people a leg up on finally getting out of poverty. Among many uses, for instance, some of the money could go toward a down payment on a house. (So many people stay stuck in these poverty loops, as an example, because they never have enough for a down payment on a house. So, in turn, they never develop any equity.)

(Incidentally, this type of monetary amends is not without precedence. The U.S. Government paid \$20,000 in reparations to each Japanese family who were interned in camps in America during World War II.)

And while every Black in America would receive this reparation payment, for Blacks who are currently well off – they would have the option of taking the money and seeding federal, and local, funds to help with other forms of tangible amends to the Black community.

In addition, we'd significantly down size the federal government (military, space program, and so on...), and take some of the savings to help with this amends process as well.

One of these major amends projects would be a version of the "Marshall Plan" to rebuild our inner cities (as America helped rebuild cities in Europe after World War II under the original "Marshall Plan"). Making cities more attractive, safer and vibrant places to live, will inevitably help change the atmosphere – and attract others to move back into our cities.

The synergy of all this will change the quality of life for everyone involved.

And there's more...

Crime – some issues

To significantly curb crime, you have to significantly curb societal factors that lead to crime. That simple.

For instance, on a stop in Fostoria, Ohio, we talked with Mark West. West, who started an award winning prison rehab program, told us statistics show some 80% of those in prison have committed crimes under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Or they were committing the crime to get money for alcohol or drugs.

So common sense says our society needs a lot more quality and extensive alcohol and drug treatment programs.

What's more, as mentioned in an earlier essay, coming from dysfunctional homes sets up emotional problems that often lead to alcohol and drug addiction (compulsive eating disorders, compulsive gambling, domestic violence...).

So healing the family in America would go a long way in curbing the crime in America.

Crime – rich and poor

Going beyond such factors as broken families and alcohol and drug addiction, another significant precipitating factor in crime in America is the growing disparity between the poor and those much more well off.

The top 20% of society (primarily living out in the suburbs), owns 84% of the wealth in America. The bottom 20% of society owns 0.001% (you read that right) of the wealth – primarily in inner cities and rural poverty pockets.

And it is in these latter areas that crime is tremendously more prolific.

Go figure.

So to help curb crime in this regard, common sense says we, indeed, have to close the income inequality gap.

But that's not just about raising the minimum wage.

It's about a sweeping paradigm shift.



Crime... stemming a lot on the streets

In tandem with dealing with the systemic roots of crime, building solid, effective, crime fighting teams would be key. And there're some good models out there that, if mobilized from town to town, would go a lot further in curbing crime as well.

For instance, "old school" Community Oriented Policing works. Police using this have gone back to walking and bicycling the beat, shooting hoops with neighborhood kids, having coffee with the residents... Newport, Rhode Island's officer Marc Santi told us in two years of using C.O.P., crime is down 40% in his neighborhoods.

What's more, C.O.P. in a city like Detroit includes officers who mentor six youth for three years. The officers take the kids to Tigers games, just hang out with them, coach their rec. center teams...

Police in these cities, to some, are now no longer "enemies."

And crime diminishes in kind.

Note: Another common sense way to improve the quality of policing and numbers on the police force is: reasonable hours, better pay, and more benefits. For this to happen, citizens need to prioritize this and pony up more tax money for it.

And in the cities, because there's often less of a tax base because of poverty – suburbanites should pony up to add to the tax mix to help the cities.

Our administration would suggest various creative funds be set up for this.

Note 2: And there should be a move to enlist some of the peace time military to work in some of the tougher inner city neighborhoods.

Note 3: What's more, citizens should mobilize more to help with crime prevention. At a stop in Indio, California, we learned citizens there get special training, a squad car – but no gun. These citizens drive about deterring crime by their very presence, and they also call in infractions and suspicious behavior. Likewise, in the small town of Tipp City, Ohio, I researched a "Crime Alert Program." There are "block captains" and neighbors meet regularly to strategize about how to keep streets there as safe as possible.

These kinds of programs would work in most every community in the country.

Death penalty – opposed

Our administration would work to abolish the death penalty.

The rhetorical question often posed in anti-death penalty circles is this: *“Why do we kill people who kill people to show that killing is wrong?”*

Good question.

Several years ago, I spoke with anti-death penalty advocate, and author, Annette Bosco.

“Only God has a right to take a life,” she said. “I don’t believe we should rob robbers, rape rapists, burn arsonists, or kill a killer.”

I don’t either.

The late Pope John Paul II once said that in this modern day and age, where it is virtually impossible to escape from most maximum security prisons, there is no justification for killing people – using the reasoning it will keep society “safe” from that person.

Death penalty – rehabilitation

And we can't give up on someone who has committed first degree murder either, once they've gotten a life sentence, or whatever the sentence.

In fact, our administration would lobby hard for "Restorative Justice" with these prisoners. That is, working exhaustively to help the person with every resource (mental health counseling, education, life-skills, spiritual counseling...) available. And we would lobby that this person has every avenue possible to express the new way of life they're trying to develop.

For instance, at a prison in New Jersey there is a murderer who is now working in a prison hospice. While he can't bring back the person he killed, he is sincerely trying to help others now. (This kind of thing is extremely redemptive.)

On a stop in Ocala, Florida, we came across another tremendously redemptive story.

Ray Geisil, who has a prison ministry in Ocala, told us there is a first degree murderer here who is now out – after 17 years in prison. His story, as with so many murderers' stories, has a lot of mitigating circumstances.

The man, who is Black, grew up in the inner city of Miami, Florida, surrounded by drugs, gangs and poverty. He grew up angry, dropped out of school, became addicted to drugs, and shot his wife one night when he caught her cheating on him.

In prison, this man found God and found recovery in the 12-Step Movement. He also went back to school while in prison, and got a degree in Forestry.

He got paroled, got married, got a job in forestry, and now volunteers to help other recovering addicts and alcoholics.

Incidentally, 17 years is the longest prison sentence anyone gets in the country of Denmark – no matter what they've done. They are heavy into "Restorative Justice" there, bringing everything possible to bear to help those in prison restore their lives.

Here's a thought: If we take a life before that person has gotten right with God, we are sentencing them – eternally. And how will that bode, ultimately, for us?

Note: What's more, maybe it's time to "get tougher" on the upper 20% of Americans (who have 84% of the wealth) who are often collectively turning their backs on places like the inner city of Miami, forcing kids to grow up in virtual "war zones" these days.

Drones

We have 10,000 drones that are fitted with weapons in the U.S.

And the drone strikes are often like launching attacks in video games. This makes war too easy, and cheap. What's more, the drone strikes are becoming, in a sense, a "...war without borders."

The U.S. is, at best, flirting with International Law on this. What's more, innocent civilians are being killed by these drone strikes. (What we so cavalierly refer to as "inevitable collateral damage" is really moms, dads, little kids...)

Domestically, 10 states are considering legislation against drones to be used for law enforcement. The states are worried about, among other things, an evolving "police state."

Our administration would nix drone strikes to fight terrorism. In fact, we would be adverse to using drones during war in general.

And domestically, we would lobby to put a halt to their use in police work. In fact, instead of going ultra-high-tech with drones, robots, and such...), we'd try to move the country back to good old-fashion Community Oriented Policing (C.O.P.), where police officers have gone back to walking or bicycling a beat. (This was described previously in the Crime section.)

There are a number of these C.O.P. programs already in existence – and they are proving quite successful.

Drugs – “war on...”

Our administration would pursue the “War on Drugs” with gusto.

For one, the expanding nexus of terrorism worldwide is often tied to drugs. What’s more, U.S. illegal drug use is huge and has tremendous global repercussions.

They grow coca plants for cocaine in South America; opium poppies in Afghanistan; marijuana in Mexico... With all this come drug cartels, crime, and violence in these countries – long before the drugs get here.

So common sense says that if you want to decrease these drug related problems in other countries, and if you want to cut down on the flow of drugs into our country: **WE HAVE TO DECREASE THE DEMAND FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS ON *OUR* SIDE OF THE FENCE!**

This means much more of a focus on developing healthy families, much less dead-end poverty (like in our inner cities), more rehab options, more prevention programs like DARE. This is how to deal with the problem at its roots, that simple.

Note: Our administration would also put more teeth in the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, which currently has 87 offices in 63 countries. We’d lobby for more offices in order to be as helpful as possible to these other countries, especially because America has been creating some of the huge demand for these drugs.

On the home front, figures indicate marijuana has been the most profitable crop in the U.S. the last several years. This is a crop that averages \$35.8 billion annually.

Corn is second at about \$24.4 billion annually.

This dynamic is hardly something to be “agriculturally proud” of. What’s more, in states like Washington and Colorado, where they have legalized recreational marijuana, this demand will increase even more.

Economy

America's economy should be jacked down, simplified and ideologically revamped.

For instance, big box stores like Wal-Mart and corporate mega-farms should be labeled as monopolies under revamped anti-trust laws – and broken up.

Then there should be a major return of the small Mom & Pop shops from town to town, and a return to the small family farm model in a primarily agrarian based society – like it used to be.

Dehumanizing, and mind-numbing assembly line work needs to be replaced with quality craftsmanship in these local shops.

The current "Wall Street" dominated economy needs to give way to a "Main Street" dominated economy.

And in the face of a looming global warming catastrophe, we need to switch from predominately being a "Society of Consumers" to being a "Society of Conservers."

On a stop in Bangor, Maine, my wife Liz told a reporter there that we have become a society transfixed on gaining material wealth at the expense of social health.

She's right.

Education – overview

Our education system is top heavy with: “reading, writing and arithmetic.” And to “get ahead” we push that students need to be more and more proficient at these. Because the better you are at these, the better chance you have at getting higher paying jobs in our current economy. In other words, our youth are being primarily oriented toward materialistic ascent.

This is way too myopic. (See last essay on the “economy.”)

We would do well to cut some time on the core stuff, and focus on a student being a lot more well-rounded.

Our administration would push for at least one-third of curriculum to be “service learning work (volunteer work) out in the community – from an early age. We would want youth learning as much about helping others, as they do about: reading, writing and arithmetic.

What’s more, this would unleash a tremendous amount of help to societal areas that, well, needed the help.

We would also push for way more classes on the dynamics of healthy families; multi-cultural courses, farming classes, more physical education classes...

And we would work exhaustively to even things out, so that kids in the inner cities and rural poverty zones had the same access to quality education as the kids in the suburbs.

This means exponentially improving the schools in these poorer neighborhoods. And, this means rejuvenating these poorer neighborhoods.

Education – college

We are a society replete with information overload, and that includes at a collegiate level. It is our contention that a significant amount of what we learn at college is extraneous. Yet we hold up the “four year degree” as a: *gold standard*.

Not only will a lot of this information never be used by the student later in life, but we’re wasting thousands of dollars learning it.

We would do well to shift to two year degrees, with a focus on classes primarily in one’s major. And we would do well to do most of this learning at nearby community colleges.

Families and communities have become so fractured of late – with youth continually going off farther and farther away to colleges, farther and farther away to jobs... as opposed to staying in one’s community of origin and all the continuity of solid community that comes with that.

And for those with financial means, they could take the savings from just doing a two-year degree – to help others who don’t have the financial means undertake two year degrees as well, both in our inner cities and for youth in the Third World.

This would tremendously level the playing field in a social justice sense. And, well, just be the right thing to do in helping others.

Embryonic stem cell research

Our administration would be opposed to federal funds for embryonic stem cell research – even to existing lines. What’s more, we’d exhaustively work to make this against the law – because it is merely another form of: abortion.

Life begins at conception, period.

According to Gerard Magill, Ph.D., who is the Executive Director for the Center for Health Care Ethics at St. Louis University: “Embryonic stem cell research that involves the creation and destruction of human embryos is unacceptable in a nation with a social conscience.”

And Magill adds that no intended harm to a human being can be justified as help for another.

We agree.

During a talk to a senior assembly at Lords Town High School in Ohio, I told the students our stance on embryonic stem cell research. Pronounced mumblings of disapproval started up.

“Okay,” I said. “Let me see a show of hands. How many of you have been... embryos?”

The mumbling stopped.

Note: Our administration would not be opposed to federal funding for adult stem cell research, which appears to hold a lot of promise. Currently, adult stem cells are being used with varying levels of success with such conditions as Parkinson’s Disease, Leukemia, Multiple Sclerosis, Cerebral Palsy... For instance, some 10,000 newborn babies are afflicted with Cerebral Palsy every year, according to the Center for Disease Control. According to the website stemcellresearchfacts.org, an experimental procedure at Duke University in North Carolina is being used with great success to treat this condition. Children with cerebral palsy are being infused with their cord blood stem cells to heal and repair damaged brain tissue.

Energy – global warming is here (**BIG TIME!**)

Global warming, according to a host of scientists now, is accelerating at an alarming pace.

What's amazing in the face of this is: How we could even consider leaving a planet of "climate chaos" to the world's children is beyond me? How?

But that seems to be exactly what we're doing!

What's more, the U.S. is the leading culprit.

Per capita, America leads the world in carbon dioxide emissions. So in a very real sense, we are the leading perpetrator in: "gassing" the world. And this is in a very literal sense.

That is, scientists say global warming is already causing increased drought and famine in more arid countries. And scientists also say global warming is generating conditions for massive floods and super-charged hurricanes and typhoons.

People are dying now.

The metaphor being: It's as if Americans, because of their tremendously energy gluttonous lifestyles, are taking guns, aiming them all over the world – and firing deadly, slow-motion bullets.

This has to stop, *now!*

Energy – gluttony, to the extreme

We, as a society, are addicted to fossil fuels – and the comfort that brings.

A majority of Americans now use central heat in the winter and central air conditioning in the summer (three-fourths of American households now have central air-conditioning).

Think about that.

We are heating and cooling some rooms 24 hours a day that are never, or seldom, used. How crazy, and unconscionable, is that?

The average U.S. house now emits 150 lbs. of carbon dioxide a year. That is five times the global average!

This is extremely gluttonous.

What's more, besides the tremendous amount of global warming gasses this energy gluttony generates, it's causing other major problems as well.

For instance, the 2010 Deep Water Horizon blow out in the Gulf of Mexico was the largest accidental oil spill in history. A huge amount of oil (there was one oil plume the size of Manhattan) leading into the Gulf, decimating the eco-system there – for years to come.

But instead of America hitting an off-shore drilling bottom with this, so to speak, the Obama administration (to a lot of bi-partisan support), is proposing a large expansion of off-shore drilling.

What's more, as we incrementally put in a few "green" environmental measures in the U.S. now, we've also allowed for a tremendous ramping up of coal and oil exports from here to countries like China and India – where there is much less controls on carbon dioxide emissions.

Do we think global warming gases stop at the borders?

Energy – the plan

What global warming has become, in a very real sense, is a “war on the environment.” [And a recent *National Geographic* special noted we are on a rapid course to a “point of no return.”]

During World War II, Americans sacrificed a lot (food rationing, gasoline rationing, et al.) for the “war effort.” Our administration would ask America to sacrifice with the same spirit to stop global warming.

On the front end, our administration would propose tremendously significant rationing of energy to start. (As a corollary: in the midst of crisis, drought situations in California, strict water rationing was imposed by the state.)

This rationing would necessitate many people cut back dramatically on air conditioning (often the biggest energy drain, by far, in a house). We forget. Before the 1950s, *everyone* lived without air-conditioning.

Likewise, the rationing would cause people to cut back the thermostat significantly in the winter, including, say, closing off rooms and so on. The rationing would also get people considering such strategies as “house sharing” as a way of “sharing” heat, cooling, lights, furniture, appliances, vehicles...

In regard to the latter, often people don’t connect the dots that it takes the burning of fossil fuels to make furniture, appliances, vehicles...

In tandem with the energy sacrifices, we’d promote a tremendously dramatic shift to clean, “green” energy in the form of wind, solar, geothermal... energy.

We, for instance, researched a geothermal home in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. It cost \$17 to heat it, in January. In Mandan, North Dakota, we looked at several small roof-top wind turbines that provided power for half the barn and home. In Manchester, Michigan, we looked at the designs for an award winning “Zero-Energy Solar Home.”

It’s essential at this point that we switch from being a leading “Society of Consumers” to being a leading “Society of Conservers.” Nothing less.

And to help with this transition, we would highly recommend people attend local “Transition Town Meetings,” which are, in essence, support groups for people trying to break their fossil fuel addiction. These groups not only offer support, but a tremendous array of creative ideas for breaking the fossil fuel habit.

My wife and I attended one of these meetings in Cleveland, Ohio.

Note: This plan will generate monetary savings. Our administration would ask the American public to take some of these savings to subsidize a fund for developing countries to develop their own green energy technology, and so on. Again, global warming gases don’t stop at borders.

Euthanasia, assisted suicide, etc...

Our administration would be unequivocally opposed to any type of euthanasia or assisted suicide. Euthanasia is killing by act of omission. And assisted suicide is physician assisted murder.

In essence, doctors, and others, are being recruited as executioners.

This is also man playing God.

As an example of why this is wrong: End-of-life suffering may well be necessary to help the person discover, or draw closer, to God. And for the relatives, friends and other caregivers, this can become a time of extending themselves to help the dying person. And in that, they too often grow spiritually.

On a stop in Stephens Point, Wisconsin, we met with Susan Kraft, who helped start the "Community Coalition of End of Life Care" in that area. This non-profit group provides "death education" to schools, work places and churches.

The education revolves around "...all stages of death becoming much more meaningful and enriching parts of life," said Ms. Kraft.

Farming – small farms (and forests) again

At the front end, we would break up big corporate farms under expanded anti-trust regulations. These big farms would be subdivided into small plots and sold off for small farms.

What's more, we would spearhead a drive to inspire local governments to set up rural zoning that allowed for, say, a maximum of 60 acres.

And to curb the cancer of urban sprawl, there should be a moratorium, across the board, on selling any more farmland for urban or suburban development. Period.

Likewise, some of the redistributed farmland should be purchased by the federal government and local governments. Then, forests should be replanted, more fish reintroduced to rivers, and animals should be protected until there is an adequate build-up of their populations.

At a stop at the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota, we learned the Ojibwe Tribe there is successfully undertaking such a project with their lands. And it could serve as an excellent model for these initiatives nationwide.

And speaking of Native Americans... Native Americans should be given back a significant share of these forests, prairies, and so on. At the outset of this country, we stole the land from the Native Americans. That simple. And it's time to finally make that right.

It's also high time we learned from a good deal of their cultural ways – the way God probably intended from the start.

Farming – agrarian based society again

Our administration would promote a major shift back to a small farm, agrarian based society – like it was in the “old days” of America.

And amidst this patchwork of small farms, we would also reintroduce much more forest land. (We swept through America at the start, clear cutting almost everything. This was a big environmental mistake, driven primarily by greed.)

This not only destroyed God’s nature in wholesale fashion, it also destroyed most of the Native American habitat. This was a big mistake, too.

The Native Americans were living as environmentally sensitive hunter/gatherers in the forest lands. And as mentioned in the last essay, we should have learned a good deal from their ways.

And we still could.

And the small, organic family farm was once the backbone of America. It was an extremely healthy and wholesome environment to raise, not only animals and crops, but children.

To move away from this was wrong as well.

Note: On a stop in Lisbon, Ohio, we met with the Miller family. The parents intentionally moved their five children to a small farm there so they could be “...raised on the land.” What’s more, they practice “Apostolic Farming.” This is a movement of farmers who believe in good “environmental stewardship,” in line with how they believe God would have them farm. Like the Amish, they don’t use any artificial, toxic herbicides, pesticides, and so on. They rotate crops regularly to replenish the soil. They do everything organically...

Farming – smaller is better

Another big mistake in farming is the ever increasing size of the technology.

For instance, tractors kept getting bigger and bigger, allowing farmers to do more and more in a shorter period of time.

This is the same for the larger and larger combines used for planting, fertilizing, harvesting... (Some are now a quarter of a million dollars, or more.)

The synergy of all this bigness has led to bigger and bigger farms, an anathema to sane, measured agricultural practices.

We would do well to take another page from Amish farming, which often relies on draft horses, and so on. This is truly farming at “nature’s pace.” What’s more, these animals don’t pollute like tractors and combines do.

And they allow for smaller farms simply because, well, you can only do so much with them because they must rest, and so on.

As an interim step, in the shift back to this farming with plow horses, and such, author/farmer Gene Logsdon proposes farmers use “small technology”: small tractors, small plows, and so on... to farm at a slower more measured pace.

I met with Logsdon near his home in Upper Sandusky, Ohio. He said this slower, more measured pace could well be considered more of: “nature’s pace.”

Farming – growing organically

Our administration would lobby the Department of Agriculture to outlaw toxic farm chemicals (many artificial herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers).

I met with Oberlin College Environmental Science professor David Orr. He said he believes, as do many others, that when these things are ingested they are creating “chemical cocktails” that are like time bombs in our systems – exploding into things like cancer.

One in three people now in America get cancer during their lifetime.

These chemicals also cause massive degeneration of the soil, which, in turn, depletes the nutritional content of the food.

Growing organically replenishes the soil and the purer form of food better replenishes the body’s cells.

Growing organically is just the right thing to do.

Farming – transporting food

Another thing in the agricultural world that has gotten way out of control is the long distance moving (trucks, freighters, planes...) of most food.

We currently have a food system where the “average morsel” travels 1,500 miles from farm to plate. This burns tremendous amounts of fossil fuels and creates tremendous amounts of global warming gases.

Our administration would push for local farmers growing for the local populace, as much as possible – as it was in the “old days.” And people would do well to eat “seasonally.” That is, again, like in the “old days,” when blueberries were in season locally, local people ate blueberries.

And to supplement the local farm crops, we would all do well to have as extensive of home gardens, community gardens (perma-cultures, etc...) as possible.

What’s more, the savings from all this could be pooled to help scores of people in “food crisis” all over the world. In the short term, the transportation of this food by modern transportation (military transport planes, as an example) would be an option.

But for the long term, our administration would send a lot of Peace Corps volunteers, and the like, to help people in the Third World become agriculturally as sustainable as possible in their own countries.

Farm workers – issues and answers

At the National Chavez Center in Keene, California, we met with Douglas Blaylock. He said migrant farm workers are consistently plagued with low wages, poor benefits (if any), and harsh working conditions. What's more, there is a marked lack of much in the way of education for the farm workers' children.

This all is nothing short of a social justice travesty that needs to change, quickly.

Part of the "harsh working conditions" includes farm workers regularly being exposed to dangerous artificial farm chemicals (toxic herbicides, pesticides...). Research out of Fresno State College in California showed "cancer clusters" in farm workers throughout the San Joaquin Valley.

Our administration, on the front end, would push for America to go back to organic growing, period. This would eliminate exposure to toxic chemicals, period. We would also lobby for all farm workers and their families to be covered by a United Farm Workers Medical Plan, or a similar plan.

And we would push for a "living wage" and much better working conditions for migrant farm workers, as we would push for better living conditions.

Right now, migrant farm workers – and their families – often live in tiny trailers, or shacks. On stops in Dade City, Florida, and Arvin, California, we learned two to three families will often share one small trailer, or shack.

The government, churches and other non-profits should be working in concert – in a major way – to shift all this. And we have researched a variety of model programs that, if multiplied across the country, could change this tremendously.

See next essay.

Farm workers – grassroots help

There needs to be a multi-dimensional approach to helping migrant farm workers. And in our travels, we have come across a good number of grassroots programs that should be replicated all over the country to help with this.

For instance, in Eunice, New Mexico (near the border), they have developed the “Hispanic Council.” Leon Navarette told us this is a grassroots group of citizens who help find new arrivals places to stay. They connect the migrants with social services. They act as educational tutors for migrant farm worker children. And they have lobbied for bilingual teachers in the local school system. These Hispanic Council volunteers also do local fundraising to help with tuition, and the like.

In Ottawa, Ohio, we looked at a bilingual summer school program for migrant farm worker children who are in the area for growing seasons. More than 120 local volunteers work as tutors in this program.

A step beyond this, we learned that in Bigelow, Minnesota, new Hispanic students learn English, and established American students learn Spanish. Teacher Paul Neufeld Weaver explained to us that there are also classes for both groups of students to learn about the other’s culture.

Note: As there is current lobbying going on to raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour, our administration would lobby for this to happen for farm workers as well. What’s more, as stated earlier, our administration would support United Farm Worker demands for optimal working conditions, benefits, and adequate housing.

And the farm workers who are currently here illegally (except those with criminal records, for instance), should receive, not only amnesty, but family reunification if necessary.

I told the *Hobbs Sun* newspaper in New Mexico that we shouldn’t look at new Hispanic arrivals as burdens, but rather as tremendous opportunities: to help those less fortunate.

Foreign policy – overview

Our administration would work toward the “common good,” for everyone in the world. How that translates is we’d work exhaustively to try to make sure everyone had enough food, medicine, shelter, cleaning drinking water...

Instead of being locked into trying to “out-compete the world,” our administration’s policy is that we should stand in solidarity with the world, while trying to help as much as possible.

That simple.

An example:

I attended a seminar on global economics by Bluffton University Professor Jim Harder. He said American corporate farming has become so big and efficient that it can now undercut a subsistence farmer in Guatemala selling to a local market up the road.

And regularly does.

This is a tremendous social justice travesty.

Instead of undercutting these poor farmers (and their families), our administration would put trade barriers on the export of this kind of food out of America, and mobilize a Peace Corp initiative into rural Guatemala to help these farmers become more sustainable.

How could we do anything less?

Note: During a stop at the University of Dayton in Ohio, we met a student who was part of the “Chaminade Program” there. (This is a program designed to get students thinking about career, not just in terms of a “job,” but rather a “vocation.”)

This student had decided to forgo a lucrative summer job one year to volunteer in Guatemala with Ethos Engineering, putting in rudimentary ceramic ovens to replace open fires in the home: fires where young children regularly burned themselves, fires that caused all kinds of respiratory problems...

Our administration would work vigorously to get way more Americans thinking about how they could help more in the Third World, as this young man has.

Foreign policy – global water crisis

There is a tremendous global water crisis.

More than one billion people don't have access to clean drinking water. And as a result, many people are dying from diseases related to this every year.

Meanwhile, many in the First World have access to all the clean water they need, and much more. The average American uses 120 gallons of water a day: flushing toilets, watering lawns, drinking, bathing...

What's more, billions of dollars are wasted on non-nutritional junk beverages (like soda pop) in the First World.

Our administration would work exhaustively to get water sanitation stations, clean drinking water wells, and so on, to as many parts of the developing world as possible.

And the other part of this global water crisis is that we are running out of fresh water in general.

At a stop in Stephens Point, Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Environmental Professor George Kraft told us that we are running out fresh water because mankind is polluting it, depleting it and diverting it at startling rates now.

Our administration would work stridently to reverse this, starting with inspiring Americans to get on a massive "water conservation kick," while taking the savings to fund a variety of creative water projects to clean up the earth's water in general, and again, to get clean drinking water to as many people as possible worldwide.

Foreign policy – malaria

Some 3,000 children die of malaria each day in Africa. That's one every 30 seconds.

Malaria has been called: "The plague of the poor."

It strikes a half a billion people a year.

By 1950 in the First World country of America, malaria was halted. A massive effort to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds proved tremendously effective. As did, anti-malarial drugs, improved medical facilities...

The World Health Organization is spearheading a "Roll Back Malaria Campaign," with the goal being: "A malaria free world."

Our administration would get behind this effort with gusto. And, among other things, we would try to spark a grassroots effort for Americans to, say, turn off their air-conditioners and take the savings to fund this Roll Back Malaria initiative.

This would do three things.

It would generate a tremendous amount of money for the Roll Back Malaria Campaign.

It would help significantly cut back on global warming. (Air conditioners are, by far, the biggest energy drain in a house.)

And it would afford those sacrificing for others – tremendous spiritual benefit.

Note: We in America, air-conditioners notwithstanding, have fans and screens (to keep mosquitoes and the like out). Many in the developing countries don't have screens, much less: electricity.

And little kids are dying as a result.

Where's the justice in this?

Foreign policy – Third World housing crisis

Hundreds of thousands of people worldwide are homeless.

More than one billion people live in slums across the globe. In most of these slums, people live in cobbled together shacks with no running water, with no electricity, and children play amidst raw sewage in the streets.

This is all leading to a growing silent tsunami of illness and death.

In our travels, we toured the slums of Juarez, Mexico. There were some 200,000 people living in abject poverty, amidst the conditions described above.

Our administration would tackle this pressing worldwide slum problem with vigor.

And we would line up, in spirit, with the organization “Habitat for Humanity” on this one. That is, Habitat’s goal is: “To provide adequate housing for – *everyone in the world.*”

We visited Habitat’s headquarters in Americus, Georgia. Volunteers have built a Third World Slum Replica Village there. Just adjacent to this, are models of some of the homes Habitat has built in Third World countries like Kenya, Uganda, Guatemala...

The homes, which are modest by U.S. standards, but extremely nice in comparison to slum dwellings, can be built for between \$2,000 and \$4,000 in most of these countries.

Given this metric, our administration would try to inspire a number of creative approaches to get more money for these Third World international builds.

For instance...

During a stop in Winona, Minnesota, we learned this town does a “House Share Program.” Families share homes. Individuals and families also, say, rent out a room(s) to borders. Garages have been turned into apartments.

This generates significant monetary savings. Savings that could be put into, say, a Sister-City Fund to help those in a Third World town get out of the slums.

And, again, this is just one of many ideas to bring more equity and justice to the world.

Foreign policy – world hunger

Our administration would tackle world hunger with vigor.

According to the U.N., 24,000 people starve to death worldwide every day. What's more, over one billion people are chronically hungry every day.

Meanwhile, 66% of Americans are now considered over-weight and 33% of those are classified as "obese." In addition, at a seminar in Wilmington, Ohio, I learned that Americans waste (spoilage, simply throwing food away, etc...) some 30% of its food. Mixed in with all this, Americans also spend billions of dollars a year on non-nutritional junk food.

Our administration would build on the "Eating is a Moral Act Campaign," which is already in existence. The heart of this would be asking Americans to sacrifice in food areas – as Americans sacrificed during World War II for the "war effort."

This, indeed, is a "war" of another sort. It is a "war" on the poor. When you draw a basic corollary, 24,000 people starving to death every day is like a limited nuclear bomb going off in the Third World every day.

There is enough food to go around.

Besides cutting back on food intake and the wasting of food to save money to help in the Third World, we would also point to creative food programs already in existence to help in the Third World.

For instance, during a stop in Nappanee, Indiana, we learned about a group of farmers there who carved out a field that they farm jointly – with all the profits going to the hungry in the Third World.

Likewise, during a stop in Elm Mott, Texas, we learned World Hunger Relief, Inc. there trains volunteers to go into the Third World to help farmers become as sustainable as possible. (This organization could use all kinds of funding.)

And there are hundreds of other model projects to impact World Hunger that could be replicated in other places all over the country.

Foreign policy – China

There's a lot that's been made of our relationship with China. That country, for instance, has been allowed to buy a lot of our bonds as investments. And they were granted "Favored Nation Trading Status" with us during the Clinton Administration years.

Yet China has a record of extensive, and flagrant, human rights abuses.

They've killed 130 million babies through forced abortions tied to China's "One-Child Policy." Scores of so-called "Christian dissidents" are regularly jailed, tortured and killed there.

And other "dissidents," advocating for political democracy, are regularly jailed, tortured and killed there as well. [Liu Xiaobo, a professor and activist for political reform, was imprisoned. He, subsequently, won the Nobel Peace Prize – while he was still in prison.]

Bottom line: We're helping prop up their economy (bond buying, trade imports...), as they are torturing and killing people daily in this *massive* genocide.

Uh?

Foreign policy – North and South Korea

There has been continual tension of late between North Korea and South Korea, including several missile salvos from the North into the South.

Part of this conflict is around a disputed sea boundary, which was hastily imposed by the UN after the Korean Conflict. This has given South Korea better fishing grounds.

The U.S. actually has the authority to redraw this line based on a 1950 UN Security Council Resolution. And as president, I would consult with both Seoul and Pyongyangon to reset the boundary based on a negotiated mutual agreement.

In addition while in Comers, Georgia, I met with Don Mosley who had gone with Jimmy Carter several years ago to set up “Habitat for Humanity” builds in North Korea. Their paradigm was based on the Gospel message about doing good to those who would do you harm.

Sound spiritual philosophy.

Mosley told me some of the people in poverty stricken North Korea were genuinely touched with his group’s efforts to provide better housing, and so on.

And our administration would back a series of similar projects – including things like sending Peace Corps volunteers into North Korea to help emulate the same kind of spirit Mosley and Carter were displaying.

And we would propose a “Korea Project,” which would be based on the “Ulster Project.” The Ulster Project was an “International Peace Project” that brought together Catholic and Protestant youth who lived with host families in America, and elsewhere, for a year – in order to break down barriers and prejudices in the next generation of Irish.

The same could be done with North and South Korean youth. And our administration would try to promote this, and similar peace-building projects.

Foreign policy – Saudi Arabia

We have a strong, and “strategic,” economic and military alliance with Saudi Arabia. Yet Saudi Arabia is a monarchy replete with human rights abuses.

For instance, the “UN Committee against Torture” condemned Saudi Arabia for amputations and tremendously excessive whippings for various civil crimes.

Saudi women make up 5% of the work force, the lowest percentage of any country in the world. And Saudi women are not allowed to drive, vote or hold public office.

The country doesn’t allow religious freedom. Anything other than the Muslim religion is banned. And freedom of speech and the press are severely limited.

Yet in 2010, the U.S. approved a deal to sell \$60 billion in military jets and other military hardware to Saudi Arabia so it can, among other things, defend against threats to its oil infrastructure – which is critical to “U.S. interests.” And so that Saudi Arabia in general can continue to protect against threats to a kingdom saturated with human rights abuses.

Our foreign policy often spins around “our interests,” not necessarily doing what’s right. And what’s more, our use of Saudi oil is contributing to the evolving dangers of global warming.

Our administration would nix arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Our administration would move to put a moratorium on Saudi oil. And in tandem, we would decry the human rights abuses going on in Saudi Arabia.

Gun violence – hitting bottom

More than 100,000 people are now killed or injured by guns in America every year. Our country has become a literal “war zone.”

For instance, eight youth are killed every day by gun violence in our cities. Not that many American soldiers were killed every day at the height of the Iraq War.

What’s more, the gun violence is ramping up tremendously in schools. It used to be that my wife and I were concerned about how well our kids did in history class. Now we’re more concerned about whether they’re going to be shot to death in history class.

The “tipping point” for Americans on this gun violence thing should have come on Oct. 2, 2006. A gunman entered a one-room school house in rural Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, lined 10 young (ages 6 to 13) Amish girls up – and systematically shot each one in the head.

If that wasn’t us hitting a bottom in this nation, I don’t know what is.

But it turns out, it wasn’t.

Gun violence – Why is this happening?

We have to see the cause of gun violence for what it is. That is, it is tremendously multi-dimensional.

Some of the core causes of this are:

Dysfunctional family systems in America are now rampant, sending the next generation(s) out tremendously angry. So things like violence in the streets increases and domestic violence increases.

Then people, as a whole, have been abandoned in the inner cities of our country, amidst dead end poverty and already violent streets.

And if all this isn't bad enough, our youth are raised with a glut of media violence (TV shows, video games, the news...).

The synergy of all this is, well, at times: explosive.

And to change it, each one of these areas needs to be significantly addressed.

Gun violence – community solutions

To head off as much gun violence as possible, we have to be tremendously proactive in dealing with the causes in a “preventative fashion.”

A lot of gun violence happens in our decaying cities – that are replete with dead-end poverty. Our administration would back a version of the “Marshall Plan” to rebuild and rejuvenate our cities.

And we would look to models like Wichita’s “Go Zones” to supplement this. These “zones” are sectioned off into 15 block neighborhoods (creating small towns in the city). Besides having zone councils, and such, churches in each zone are twinned with suburban churches to get as much help to these areas as possible.

This church to church helping is also supplemented with Americorps volunteers, etc.

Overlaid on this would be versions of Glendive, Montana’s “Healthy Community Project.” This includes a wide variety of community education programs, parenting classes, drug and alcohol addiction prevention programs, mentoring programs...

We were told while in Glendive that the “Healthy Community Project” started in this small town (pop. 5,000) after a teen shooting where drug addiction was involved. Parents and community leaders started to brainstorm about how to head off any more such incidence.

And at this point, America, at large, should be getting on board with versions of this Glendive project from town, to town, to city, to “zone” ...

That is, if we’re serious about changing things.

Gun violence – more restrictions, more creativity

If we're serious about quelling gun violence in America, besides what was mentioned in the previous essay, we must also approach the dilemma with other robust, multi-pronged approaches.

On the front end, our administration would work ardently to prohibit gun possession by felons, the mentally ill, those with drug and alcohol addictions...

And in line with the "Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence," we'd also push for longer waiting periods, age restrictions and mandatory gun training sessions.

And we would work for a ban on assault weapons for the general populace. Weapons meant for theatres of war, should not be in the hands of people on our streets.

What's more, we would propose stiffer penalties for gun violence. Conversely, once someone is incarcerated, our administration would be strong on promoting "Restorative Justice."

That is, we would promote in-depth psychological-sociological assessments of the prisoner to determine addiction problems, mental health issues, education level, job skill level, and so on. Restorative justice principles would then revolve around getting the person as much help as possible in each applicable area.

My Christian faith calls us to: "Visit those in prison..." And it's my belief, besides physically visiting them, that we should "visit" them with as many creative, and comprehensive, types of help in general. Doing all this with the hope that, not only doesn't the person repeat the crime, but that they become: highly involved, and valued, citizens.

Healthcare – cancer

With much of healthcare in America, we're "stuck on stupid."

As an example: One in three people now get cancer in a lifetime.

Part of this, a *big* part of this, is that we're pumping all kinds of carcinogens into our world now. Our food is now laden with all kinds of toxic pesticides and herbicides. Tail pipe emissions have known carcinogens. Our cleaning products have carcinogens. Cosmetics have toxic chemicals that then circulate, and circulate (often without breaking down), in the water system...

As mentioned in a previous essay, Oberlin College Environmental Science Professor, and author, David Orr told us that these carcinogens are creating, in effect, "chemical cocktails" in our systems. These are "cocktails" that are exploding regularly into things like cancer.

That simple.

We are forever "...racing for the cure" these days, which is fine. But common sense says we also need to: **STOP USING THE STUFF THAT CAUSES CANCER IN THE FIRST PLACE!**

And our administration would work to get all known carcinogens: banned.

That simple.

Healthcare – bad diets, too much stress...

Other things that are contributing to poor health in America are: bad diets, too much stress, not enough exercise.

In a word: DUH!

For one, many people are sugar addicts. We drink way too much soda pop. We eat way too many candy bars and ice cream cones. These are now billion dollar industries.

Concurrently, we have an ever increasing problem with diabetes in this country. We have an ever increasing obesity issue in the country. We have ever increasing heart problems in this country...

(What's more, as we're wasting billions of dollars on self-indulgent, non-nutritional junk food and drink here, thousands are dying every day elsewhere from starvation and no access to clean drinking water.)

Common sense says that we cut back on things like sugar, eat and drink better, and send the savings to the poor in other countries.

Healthcare – exercise

Our administration would place a *huge* emphasis on “prevention.”

For instance, a proven key to good health is regular exercise. And in this vein (and for other reasons mentioned earlier), we’d promote for instance: a return to a small town, agrarian based society.

On a stop in Thorp, Wisconsin, high school Phys. Ed. instructor Bernie Stuttgens said to me that when a majority of American kids were growing up on farms, they were exercising daily with the “work of the farm.”

Childhood obesity wasn’t even an issue.

With a major lack of this now, Stuttgens said he believes there should be more Phys. Ed. periods at school each day to make up for it. And some of these Phys. Ed. periods should focus on teaching kids all the dynamics of “life time sports,” he also believes.

That is, things like distance walking, bicycling, canoeing...

We’d agree.

And what’s more, our administration would promote way more walking and bicycling as “modes of transportation,” period. This would be to not only promote better health, but to also cut down on global warming gases.

Healthcare – exercise venues

It only stands to reason that if you're promoting more exercise nationwide, there should be more venues to exercise nationwide.

Common sense.

And in our travels, we've come across a variety of models for this that could be replicated in communities all over the country.

For instance:

In Gallup, New Mexico, we looked at two excellent indoor recreation facilities – both free to the public. A local tax pays for these. (In Cleveland, Ohio, there are similar free Rec. Centers throughout the city.)

In Bluffton, Ohio, an ad hoc citizens committee formed the non-profit Bluffton Family Recreation Organization. They did local fundraising and local volunteers helped with the building of a quite nice exercise facility. There are membership dues, but they are quite reasonable and on a sliding fee scale.

In Maryville, Tennessee, the town put in a 12-mile asphalt trail (with green-belt) that winds through most of the town. With easy access to the trail from almost anywhere, a greater percentage of the town uses the trail.

And in the workplace, some companies are offering employees various fitness opportunities on-site. For instance, in an interview with Jess Bell, president of Bonnie Bell Cosmetics headquartered in Westlake, Ohio, he told me he has instituted a number of exercise options.

For instance, he had a \$2 million, long winding track built on company property. And he pays employees 25 cents a mile for walking and 50 cents a mile for running. And, if you opt to do this during working hours, he also provides a two-hour lunch break. He has also put tennis courts on the property and pays employees, say, a \$500 bonus to quit smoking.

He said, not only does all this help improve the health of his employees, but, in turn, they are often more energetic and effective employees as a result.

While maybe not as extensive as Bonnie Bell, companies could adopt all sorts of versions of this.

Healthcare – regional system

We don't believe the answer to healthcare is creating another huge, federal bureaucratic leviathan in D.C., like what has happened with so called "Obamacare."

Our administration would push for the establishment of "Regional Healthcare Systems." The intent of this would be to make healthcare as "local" as possible.

And while those who are well off could afford health insurance, others couldn't.

So some local taxes would go into a pool to cover local versions of Medicare and Medicaid for low income people. (This would be administered by regional governments.)

We realize in poorer areas, the regional tax base might not stretch far enough to cover everyone who needs healthcare. So as a supplement, we propose a series of community initiatives, from county to county, that would include various grassroots healthcare safety nets.

See next essay...

Healthcare – grassroots help for those in need

Each local region would have a series of grassroots “safety net” healthcare programs to help those less fortunate.

And not only do the people who need the healthcare get it, but those volunteering to help the programs benefit spiritually as well. It’s a win/win.

In our travels, we came across the “Community Pharmacy” in Monroe, Louisiana. This is a non-profit effort coordinated by the local chapter of the St. Vincent De Paul Society. It provides affordable medication to low income people.

The pharmacy gets financial donations from the community. It also receives donations of sample medications from area doctors and left over medication, often from area nursing homes after someone has died. And others in the community donate extra prescription and over the counter medication as well.

On another level, we researched the Marillac Hospital in Grand Junction, Colorado. On a stop there we learned volunteer doctors, nurses, and other community members donate their time to run this two-story full-service hospital. Some of the general citizens do in-take work, janitorial work, insurance paper work... What’s more, regular local fundraising events, etc., help keep the hospital afloat. Patient fees are based on an extremely low sliding fee scale.

And for those low income people who don’t necessarily need a hospital, but need a doctor’s office visit, we went to Michigan to look at the Medical Access Coalition in Marquette. A network of private practice doctors here put aside various free hours every week for people without healthcare insurance.

These are just a few examples of the kind of local help that could be mobilized to help neighbors in need.

Note: On a stop in Minnesota, we met with Caribou Coffee representative Paul Turek. He told us his company has started to fund the building of medical clinics in some of their growers’ villages in Latin America. People in these impoverished Third World villages have virtually no access to healthcare, and it would be our administration’s goal to increase their access to quality healthcare exponentially. And we would point to projects like Caribou’s as models. Likewise, we would point to the Jimmy Carter Center projects. On a stop at the Carter Center in Atlanta, we learned the Center has a number of programs to eradicate certain types of diseases in the Third World, and so on.

Hispanic immigration 101

Our administration would work stridently to considerably streamline and quicken the immigration process here, so that people who need to get in here, could.

The waiting period for this process currently lasts approximately six years.

Many people can't wait that long.

Scores of people are in dire straits worldwide. And some need safe refuge for any number of reasons. In some Latin American countries, for instance, people live in constant terror as paramilitary groups, and the like, rape and kill indiscriminately.

An American Catholic nun in Tiffin, Ohio, told me she had gone to Nicaragua as part of a "Witness for Peace Program." She heard a story of one of these paramilitary (Contra) village raids. One mother, cradling her young child, tried to run. A bullet pierced her back and then lodged in the baby boy's leg.

She barely survived. The baby lost his leg.

Then there are all those living in small, cobbled together slum dwellings with no electricity, no running water, little food...

And we're turning these people away? Or we're telling them to "...get at the back of the (immigration) line?"

How spiritually crazy is all that?

The Holy Family was a refugee family in Egypt early on. What if people hadn't let them in?

Oh, and it's not just about helping *them*. God is allowing this situation to – help us work out our own salvation.

Or not.

Hispanic immigration 202

Our administration would not only push for a quick, easy immigration process. We'd push for amnesty and family reunification for most illegal immigrants who are already here.

At an Immigration Rally in Arizona, I said we'd advocate for a living wage, good benefits, adequate housing and good, solid education options for immigrant youth.

We believe it is in no way acceptable to treat these people as "second class citizens." That would be nothing less than discrimination.

What's more, a Hispanic immigrant advocate once said to me in Eunice, New Mexico, that many Hispanics who cross the border have way more talent than just putting "...foot to shovel," so to speak.

And we would lobby for an extensive set of programs to help assess talents, and needs, of these new arrivals, including comprehensive conduits to help these people connect with the right jobs, and the right education.

Life Issues – overview

I believe in a “Consistent Life Ethic.”

That is, as has been stated earlier, I don’t believe in abortion, the death penalty or euthanasia. And there’s more.

As president, I would also stridently work to curb poverty, pollution, war, dangerous modes of transportation... and any other societal factors that contribute to ending life prematurely.

I personally believe God pre-destines the life span of someone. And in that span, the person has a set of opportunities to impact the world for good.

However, for reasons of: convenience (abortion); for reasons of revenge (the death penalty); for reasons of selfishness (unequal distribution of food, access to health care, adequate shelter... between the advantaged and the disadvantaged); for reasons of undue expedience (there is now a motor vehicle fatality in America – *every 13 minutes*); for reasons of energy gluttony and comfort (global warming)... God’s design for a person’s lifespan, and their impact on the world – often gets cut short.

The combination of “anti-Life” factors in America currently would indicate, fairly conclusively, that we are, indeed, living amidst a: “Culture of Death.”

I believe we should be building a: “Culture of Life.”

Military – a spiritual overview

The U.S. Defense Budget is 43% of the world's *total* military spending. YOU HEARD THAT RIGHT! Or put another way: It is more than the next 17 countries *combined* (including Russia and China). The phrase that comes to mind is: OVERKILL!

Another phrase that comes to mind is: SPIRITUAL IDIOCY!

Jesus said that the highest spiritual thing someone can do is: "...lay down one's life for another."

So what about a collective group of people (read: Americans) who are spending billions of dollars to be hyper-protected (\$50 billion alone on nuclear weapons each year) – while tens of thousands of people die every day of starvation and preventable disease?

How does that square with the Gospel message?

It doesn't.

Military – general policy overview

Our administration would significantly cut back on military spending. What's more, we would lobby to turn some of our "military hardware" (aircraft carriers, transport planes, trucks...) into humanitarian aid conveyances. (Granted, this already happens periodically. With us, it would happen much more.)

We would also move toward unilateral nuclear disarmament. (See next section.)

Our administration would also only consider going to war if the potential conflict matched up with "Just War Principles."

In adhering to precepts of the Geneva Convention, our administration would allow no torture (including so-called "water-boarding"), as we would allow no overseas "secret prisons."

We would immediately stop the use of depleted uranium munitions that leave everything they penetrate radioactive. (These were used by the U.S. military in Afghanistan and Iraq, spiking the incidence of cancer in those countries exponentially.)

And we would stop the use of nuclear power to generate weapons (or power).

We would tremendously lessen and reform dealings with the international arms trade, which has become an unregulated transnational monolith – primarily about profit.

We would call for more base realignments and closings.

We would heighten the focus on long-term stability in Afghanistan and Iraq. While neither war was necessarily a "just war," we destabilized both countries and owe it to the citizenry there to establish a "just (and lasting) peace."

We would, again, nix the "Lethal Drone Program."

Our administration would significantly ramp up more help to military veterans.

And we would propose taking the savings from this new type of military paradigm, to help way more people get out of poverty in other countries. This, in turn, would also cut back on internal, and external, military strife in many countries.

Note on the "Crisis in Ukraine": In regard to the **Ukraine**, I would subscribe to the theory that Russia is, indeed, experiencing a "phantom limb" syndrome after the Soviet Union break up. The Obama administration, with a number of European countries, have imposed harsher and harsher sanctions on Russia to get them to back off from supporting the separatists, and as punishment for the annexation of Crimea. In addition, the U.S. and NATO forces have sent troops to Eastern Europe to match the strength of the Russians. In combination with some of these geopolitical chess moves, as I mentioned earlier, we would still send more humanitarian aid help to Russia.

With their transition to a free market economy (or at least a beginning semblance of one at this point), many of the "average Russians" are hurting economically. So as a response, our administration would try to marshal a massive U.S. / Russian "Sister City Project," matching towns of like size and demographics – to generate financial aid, cultural exchange, and such. This would go a long way toward dismantling residual cold war tension between our countries.

What's more, in turning to the Ukraine, we would look closely at a suggestion columnist David Ignatius suggested: "Every element of American power should be focused in the Ukraine building a stable, prosperous country [in regard to] free markets and open political systems."

In this, hopefully, everybody wins.

Military – nuclear weapons

Dr. Herbert York was a nuclear physicist who helped develop the atomic bomb. Years later, he wrote a book titled: *Race to Oblivion*. He thinks the whole thing has gotten, oh, a little out of hand.

For instance, the U.S. currently has 2,750 deployable nuclear weapons, each with 1,000 times the fire power of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

My daughter Sarah is a bit confused about the whole thing. Sarah, at the time age 10, once posed to me: “Dad, we have enough nuclear weapons to blow the world up 100 times over. Why don’t we have just enough to blow it up once?”

Good question.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops issued a statement saying nuclear proliferation, in the face of crushing worldwide poverty, is a social justice travesty.

We’d agree.

Dr. York writes in his book that it was America’s “unilateral” actions that primarily made our nuclear arsenal as over-sized as it is. And our administration would propose a new kind of unilateral action to disarm all our nuclear weapons – taking the savings to help those in desperate straits all over the Third World.

In other words: We’d do the right thing – then trust God.

Footnote: I attended a talk by retired General William Burns at the University of Notre Dame a few years back. His career was spent on strategizing and diplomacy around nuclear weapons. I asked him if we’d be attacked if we disarmed all our nuclear missiles.

He said no.

A footnote on Iran: As I write this, the Obama Administration nuclear deal with Iran has just gained enough momentum in the Senate for it to pass. Yet the geopolitical issues around it all are tremendously complex and don’t seem like they’re going away anytime soon. Author Shahir Shahidsaless, who is from Iran but did his post-doctoral work at Princeton University, writes that Iranians initially lost trust in the U.S. after it’s “admitted” role in the 1953 coup d’etat which overthrew Iran’s popular, democratically elected prime minister. For the following 25 years, the U.S. supported the Shah and later also supported Iraq’s invasion of Iran --1980 to ’88. That would be a good reason for mistrust. And while some in America are calling Iran part of the “axis of evil,” what was our actions? Reciprocally, the U.S. lost trust in Iran with the seizure of their embassy there by radical students in 1979, followed by 52 Americans being held hostage for 444 days.

Shahidsaless writes: “The mutual mistrust has reached the level of dogma. And this has elevated the entangled narrative...” Our administration would start to untangle the narrative, through a clear and candid look at “our side of the street (and there are a number of issues),” mixed with a number of tangible goodwill gestures toward Iran.

*In addition, there are a couple things that haven’t been talked about at all during these negotiations. 1) We are telling Iran they can’t have a nuclear weapon, but we have over 2,000 deployable nuclear missiles aimed all over the world – including at Iran. (Hegemony with an exponent.) 2) America has 61 nuclear power plants with 90 reactors. All ticking time bombs. Clean energy? Tell that to the people who were downwind from Fukushima and Chernobyl. In fact, the amount of radiation released after Chernobyl was greater than all the detonations of all the atomic/nuclear bombs ever detonated! As Germany is doing, we should take all our nuclear plants off-line, exponentially ramp up the use of green renewable energy – and help Iran, in a major way, to transition more to this as well.

National debt

The National Debt is \$17 trillion.

That means each of us in America, men, women, children... *owe \$40,000 apiece, currently!*

So what am I going to tell our 10-year-old?

“Uh Jonathan, you might want to hold off on buying the new bicycle buddy because you owe...”

What sane parents would leave this kind of debt to the next generation?

So what do we do?

We pay it off.

How?

David Stockman, who was the Treasury Secretary under Ronald Reagan, recommends we raise taxes and cut government spending.

Common sense.

To pay off a rather large debt after World War II, Congress imposed a 5% “Victory Tax” for people across the board. It worked.

And as far as cutting government spending, well, there’s definitely room for that.

For instance, as mentioned earlier, statistics show that the U.S. Defense Budget accounts for a whopping 43% of the world’s *total* military spending – more than the next 17 nations combined. This includes Russia and China. I’m sorry, but that’s way too much.

We’d cut the Defense Budget in half, saving many trillions of dollars.

Another big driver of the debt is Social Security. We’d turn this into an insurance – just like people have car insurance, health insurance and home insurance. That is, if you *needed* this in retirement because of poverty, or you *needed* it in your lifetime because of disability, you could draw from it.

This would save trillions of dollars, too.

In short order, the National Debt would be paid off – and Jonathan could get the bicycle.

Oh, and after we balanced the budget, we would propose having someone in D.C. – *with a calculator that worked!* Then each year, this person would use the calculator to add up the taxes, and other revenue, the government took in that year and say: “This is how much we have to spend this next year guys, no more.”

Simple, huh?

Native Americans – overview

I told the *Lewiston (ID) Journal* that the country was built on ethnic cleansing (of the Native Americans), and we've never *really* owned up to it. Nor have we made it right.

Some 20 million Native Americans were killed.

We extensively crisscrossed the country looking, in depth, at Native American issues. We have been to South Dakota's Rosebud Reservation, Minnesota's White Earth Reservation, the Osage Reservation in Oklahoma, the Hopi and Hualapai Reservations in Arizona...

At the country's inception, not only did we slaughter the Native Americans in a wholesale fashion, but we took their land by force or by deceitful treaties – that were all (every one) broken.

What's more, Native American children were taken from their parents, put in boarding schools, and forced to abandon their language and culture – so they could be "civilized."

This was all wrong.

Period.

Our administration would propose we make it right.

And not just with an apology.

[I'm Catholic. So I go to Confession one day and say: "Father I have sinned. I stole 20 bucks from Harry." Consequently if the priest senses that I'm sorry, he will say my sin is forgiven. And then for the penance he'll say: "Give Harry back the 20 bucks."]

In this spirit, there should be monetary amends to the ancestors of the Native Americans who were killed, abused, swindled.... Secondly, through creative land trusts, and other strategies, some of the land should be given back to the Native Americans.

And our administration would help spark a "Native American Renaissance" to help Native Americans recapture their Native American ways of old. And then, as should have happened from the beginning, we would try to inspire Americans to learn from some of these ways.

It's our belief that God had brought these two cultures together to learn the "best of," so to speak, from each other. And as an example, we would do well to learn from Native American environmental stewardship, strong sense of family, strong sense of community...

In fact, we might learn more of the right stuff from them – than they'd learn from us.

It's not too late.

Peace Department – overview

We are awash in violence and strife these days.

Countries encroach on other countries for land and natural resources. There is tremendous religious strife in many sectors of the world, including in the U.S. now. And our “war” at home also includes: ever increasing inner city violence, school shootings, racism, bullying, domestic violence...

Because of all this, our administration would push for a Cabinet level U.S. Dept. of Peace to address these issues. This would include, for instance, study panels to assess: the causes of war, terrorism, racial tension, inner city violence, domestic violence...

[Incidentally, the non-profit organization the “Peace Alliance” has already proposed a fairly extensive U.S. Department of Peace.]

This Dept. of Peace we propose, would spin around the ethos of working toward worldwide social justice, public health, environmental sustainability, gender equity and the eradication of poverty.

And this would come about through a tremendously extensive, and creative, series of programs – many of them already in existence in a limited way now.

Peace Department – environmental wars

As mentioned earlier, there's an "environmental war" raging currently, with the U.S. being one of the biggest protagonists. We, again, emit more carbon dioxide, per capita, than any other country in the world. Meanwhile more arid countries are already experiencing increased droughts and famine tied to global warming. People are dying. As they are dying in floods, super charged hurricanes, super charged typhoons... also caused by global warming.

So, in a very real sense, the U.S. is significantly helping to: lethally "gas" the world.

A U.S. Dept. of Peace would tackle this issue, in part, by pushing for a massive effort (education programs, energy rationing and so on...) to cut down on home energy use, driving, factory energy use...

In tandem, a U.S. Dept. of Peace would mobilize, say, more Peace Corps volunteers, and the like, to travel to developing countries to help them to become as "green" as possible as well. And a fund would be developed in the U.S. specifically to help finance the use of these green technologies (wind, solar, geothermal...) in these other countries as well.

Peace Department – food wars

As mentioned earlier, some 24,000 people starve to death every day in the world (UN figure). Meanwhile, as mentioned earlier, 66% of Americans are overweight and 33% of those are considered “obese.”

Americans also waste (spoilage, simply just throwing away...) 33% of its food.

At a stop in Vermont, we came across Fr. James Noonan who was home to visit family. He is a Maryknoll missionary priest in Cambodia, one of the poorest countries in the world. There is a good deal of hunger and starvation there.

Fr. Noonan said, given the statistics (overweight Americans, throwing food away, spending billions of dollars every year on non-nutritional junk food...), we are nothing less than “food terrorists.”

Fr. Noonan noted that 3,000 people died in the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York. That same day, again, 24,000 people starved to death – partly because Americans are simply hoarding and wasting food.

A U.S. Dept. of Peace would mobilize versions of “Eating is a Moral Act” educational campaigns to raise Americans’ collective awareness about how food choices here are tremendously impacting the world at large. And more, under our administration, the U.S. Aid Programs would expand exponentially to help farmers worldwide become as sustainable as possible.

In these initial phases, the U.S. would provide food, seeds, and so on. As it would provide better farming technologies, clean drinking water technologies, green technologies... in helping people on a path toward sustainability.

The more peoples’ needs are provided for worldwide, the less tension. And the less tension, the less conflict, whether between countries, or inside countries through civil war, and such.

Peace Department – other aid programs

As mentioned in the last essay, more equitable distribution of food, goods and natural resources worldwide would help considerably in cutting down tension and conflict worldwide. So, well, our administration would push to have America help more worldwide.

A lot more.

And we have researched a variety of models that, if replicated around the country, would go a long way toward bringing a lot more equity and justice worldwide.

For instance, Cortland, Ohio's CHOW (Cortland Humanitarian Outreach Worldwide) includes seven local churches that collect money and goods for those less fortunate in the world. On a stop there, we learned CHOW has sent winter clothes and money to Kosovo, medical equipment to the Honduras, school desks to El Salvador...

As another example, Piqua, Ohio's Ellen and Dudley Johns have made sacrifices in their middle class lifestyles to financially adopt 11 children, in various Third World countries.

Bluffton University's Cross Cultural Program sends students to work in Soup Kitchens in Canada, a Conflict Resolution Center in Northern Ireland, Hispanic immigrant work camps in southern Texas... One student told us the plight of these Hispanic immigrants is "wrenching."

Peace Department – yet other programs

In trying to be a better “international neighbor,” so to speak, our administration would push to incrementally expand some of the following programs as well...

Through the American Field Service Program (AFS), families host international students. In Allen County, Ohio, we talked with Kay Bauman who had hosted students from Denmark, Belgium and Brazil.

In the same county, we talked with the Nisly family that adopted a baby from China, and the Wessner family that adopted two children from Vietnam.

Our administration would work to make international adoption easier and less expensive.

A U.S. Dept. of Peace would get behind, say, Yellow Springs, Ohio’s STARFISH Program. On a stop there, we learned that STARFISH recruits American farmers, doctors, merchants, and so on, to travel to developing countries to team up with their counterparts.

And, again, these are just a few of the programs.

Peace Department – school tension

Our schools are increasingly fraught with tension and violence, including regular shootings now. This absolutely has to stop.

And a major step in that direction is to infuse every school with “Project Trust,” and similar school peace building initiatives.

The Peace Resource Center at Wilmington College in Ohio has developed Project Trust. On a stop there, I interviewed Peace Resource Center Director Jim Bolan about a “Mediation Training Series” they’ve developed, with Project Trust as one of the programs in this series.

This is a two and a half day retreat, bringing “opinion leaders” from various groups (cliques) in the school together.

Trained adults then help students work on team building and problem solving. There are also trainings on the effects of: bullying, put downs, prejudice, and the like.

“There are some 15,000 hours of schooling from K thru 12, with a focus on math, English, social studies... When do we teach this (peace building)?” Bolan asked.

Good point.

In addition, “Peer Mediation Teams” are starting up in schools all over the country to help students work through conflicts and potential conflicts. (Our daughter Sarah was on the newly formed Peer Mediation Team at Bluffton High School in Ohio.)

Our administration would try to inspire similar teams in every school in the country.

Poverty – in America

Our administration would tackle American poverty with vigor.

We would, for instance, institute a sweeping version of the “Marshall Plan” for inner cities across America. (As stated earlier, the Marshall Plan was used to help rebuild cities in Europe after World War II.)

We would step up the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) work exponentially, so that everyone had adequate shelter. And we would ramp up Community Oriented Policing efforts, neighborhood block clubs, Crime Alert programs... in these cities to make the streets as safe as possible.

We would also promote “Go Zone” models, like what’s worked so successfully in the inner city of Wichita, Kansas. On a stop there we learned that the Wichita Ecumenical Church Council has turned this city into a series of 15 block radius “small towns,” with neighborhood councils, and so on. They then twinned suburban churches with city churches to get much more help to each area.

On the education front, and this is key in the cities, every school should be of a safe, highly innovative charter school quality.

How does that happen?

State and Federal government money increases to these schools. Mixed income neighborhoods, like what they did in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, start-up drawing those with more means back into the city. This will raise the tax base, which will in turn benefit the schools. And community involvement in the schools increases exponentially.

Versions of this could be the same for poor rural areas as well.

It is unconscionable how we’ve abandoned the poor in the inner city and rural areas of this country.

Poverty – in the Third World

A *huge* priority for our administration, as has already been alluded to in various ways in other parts of this book, would be tackling Third World poverty with much more vigor.

Our administration would mobilize programs to inspire Americans to sacrifice exponentially, and we would try to inspire them to, just as exponentially, help *way* more in the Third World.

Major problems in the Third World include: lack of food, lack of safe drinking water, lack of adequate access to health care, lack of adequate shelter...

As an overarching paradigm to all this, our administration would work to get Americans to shift from being predominately a “Society of Consumers” to being a “Society of Conservers.”

As an example, more than one billion people in the Third World live in deplorable slum conditions. Meanwhile, Americans from the lower middle-class and up live extremely well off by comparison.

So our administration would provide education, and incentives, to move way more people in America into things like: “house-sharing.”

At a stop in Winona, Minnesota, we looked at that town’s House Share Program. The program connects people with various living needs. For instance, some families look to rent out a room or, say, a converted garage apartment at their place.

This generates so much rent a month.

Some of this savings could go to a fund for more Third World housing.

For instance, a year’s worth of rent at \$300 a month for a room would generate \$3,600. Meanwhile, Habitat for Humanity builds quite adequate homes in the Third World for \$2,000.

A homeowner renting a room in Winona could provide for one of these homes, and still have an additional \$1,600 a year. And, of course, this could repeat year, after year, after year... providing adequate shelter for many families in the Third World.

Space exploration – NOT!

Man has been to the moon. Now we're aiming at Mars – and spending *billions* of dollars in the process. We've just retired the Shuttle and now we're focusing all kinds of money and manpower on the Ares I Series Rocket.

All to go to places where there is: *no gravity, no food, no air to breathe...* That all might be, oh, a little hint God doesn't want us going to these places. Meanwhile on *this* planet, as I've mentioned more than once in this book – 24,000 people starve to death worldwide each day and one billion people live in slums and don't have access to clean drinking water.

And we're spending billions to find out if Mars has water? I mean, *c'mon...* Wouldn't this money be better spent helping those in the Third World?

NASA has spent more than \$526 billion from its inception in 1958 to now. What's more, because the Ares I rockets are still under development, 46 of our astronauts will have to hitch rides to the International Space Station in a Russian space vehicle until 2016.

The cost of this per seat? \$63 million.

If you do the math on this one: 46 seats at 63 million a seat is: \$2,898 million.

Under our administration, the budget for NASA wouldn't be all these millions, or billions, of dollars. It would be: 0.

That is until we get things straightened out on *this* planet, it seems left of ludicrous to be going: ***"Where no man has ever gone before..."***

Especially when we could be going to Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria... or even a gang war zone in Cleveland – and fixing things.

Terrorism

Our administration would continue with strategic Homeland Security initiatives against bio-terrorism, dirty bombs, cyber terrorism... However, there would be no physical or mental torture of terrorist suspects, no unauthorized NSA phone wire-tapping (including of world leaders), and no National ID card and/or biochip implant of citizens for tracking purposes and so on.

After 9/11, we went into Afghanistan in a war mode, the “collateral damage” being scores of innocent men, women and children. Our mode would be to use advanced intelligence gathering to pinpoint guilty terrorists, then send in special operation forces.

But having said this, our administration would also realize that terrorism toward the U.S. isn’t happening in a vacuum. Some of our actions are creating rising anger in the Muslim World, for instance. Some Arab people are extremely angry about our huge amount of support for Israel’s military – while watching what they perceive is tremendous persecution toward the Palestinians. They are also angry at the western capitalist consumerism that, through modern media, has invaded their lives and undermined their traditional values. And they are just as angry at our media/entertainment industry for regularly beaming a steady fare of sexually explicit and violent imagery into their countries, which is also undermining traditional cultural values.

I interviewed a woman from that part of the world several years ago during a trip she had taken to America. She said within two generations of all this, the youth in her country (India) had become tremendously materialistic, now dressed quite immodestly and demonstrated little respect for the adults in society.

Does that sound familiar all you American parents?

What’s more, half of Arabs live on less than \$2 a day. And when they see American lifestyles, through various media, their resentment toward us grows even more.

In tandem, the resentment grows among them about us being one of the biggest contributors to global warming – which is now starting to tremendously affect them. The U.S., again, is using “bi-terrorism” in the form of emitting massive amounts of carbon dioxide that is helping wreak environmental havoc on the rest of the world.

***An addendum:** As I write this, the so called “**ISIS** caliphate” reaches significantly into Syria and Iraq. By destabilizing Iraq, and in the midst of civil war in Syria, a vacuum was created to allow for the rise of ISIS. People are regularly being tortured and killed. Suicide bombers multiply. Boys are forced to become jihadists and girls sex slaves.

Currently, there is a multi-pronged attack against ISIS. The U.S. is currently marshalling the tribal forces of Syrian Kurds, Arabs and Turkman to clear northeast Syria. They are also bombing strategic locations in the area and threatening a “no fly zone” if there’s interference from the Assad regime. In addition, our administration would also work to bolster **Iraqi** security forces in the fight against ISIS, as we would put U.S. troop boots back on the ground in Iraq to fight this threat and help stabilize that country in general. We have a responsibility there.

What’s more, part of the strategy alluded to above in regard to curtailing U.S. forms of terrorism while ramping up humanitarian aid to the region should, indeed, help to diffuse more of the ISIS juggernaut.

Transportation – motorized vehicles

We have accepted, almost unquestioningly, the high-tech, fossil fuel driven mobilization of our society. But should we have?

Cars running on gasoline pump a whopping 19.6 lbs of carbon dioxide into the air for each gallon used. With the alarming evolution of global warming now, this is almost unconscionable.

And what sane parent would want to leave a world of climate chaos to their children?

In fact, what sane parent would knowingly put children in harm's way? But we do every day with motorized vehicles.

One Sunday morning on a residential street in suburban Atlanta, a car crossed the yellow line and hit another car head on. A father, mother and two young children were in the car that was struck. Rescuers were pulling a five-year-old boy out of the back seat, and they asked him how his sister was doing next to him.

The boy already knew she was dead. He looked up and managed through the shock: "I guess I now have an angel in heaven."

When the judge heard this repeated months later in the courtroom, she started to cry.

We should *all* be crying.

This is a scenario (fatal car accidents) that plays out over, and over, and... often with children.

In Loudonville, Ohio, I interviewed Brad Porter who runs a Driving School there. He said current U.S. statistics show approximately 33,000 people are killed on American highways each year. (By comparison, over a five year period in the second Iraq War, 5,000 U.S. soldiers were killed.) Our highways have become a literal war zone.

(And I allude to just the fatalities. The numbers for vehicle accident maiming, and so on, are even higher.)

Porter continued that someone is killed every 13 minutes on our highways. That adds up to about 114 people being killed every day this way. This would be the equivalent of a half-full airliner going down in the country every day!

If that were the case with airliners, there would be a tremendous public outcry. And guaranteed, no one would be flying.

Yet because we've become an auto-addicted society, our collective denial about this issue is almost off the charts.

Transportation – motorized vehicles cont.

Motorized vehicles have also tremendously accelerated the environmental cancer of urban sprawl. And they have fueled the phenomenon of “centralism.”

Centralism started to evolve with the popularity of the Model T car, the first affordable car for the “average Joe” in America. Prior to this, each community, more or less, was self-sustaining and highly interdependent. Each town had a set of small merchants who provided for most of the material needs of the town, as the local farmers and gardeners, etc., provided food.

With everyone dependent on each other, community camaraderie was naturally strong.

However with the car and more mobilization, bigger stores started going up with cheaper prices at “central” locations between several towns. Some of the smaller stores started to die, and with them a significant amount of community interdependency started to die as well.

On a stop in Sea Level, North Carolina, we saw the apex of this. James Styron, 61, told us the downtown in this small coastal town used to have a grocery store, restaurants, a clothing store, a general store.... Town people were regularly “up town” shopping and interacting with each other. Now, that’s all gone. And, Stryon said, most of the community closeness is gone as well.

Also, with this increased motorized mobilization (faster cars, trucks, trains...), like the bigger stores, corporate mega-farms started up in the Northwest, for example. They could grow at such volume (and transport the food cheap enough) that those corporate farms could now undercut the local family farmer in, say, Ohio – who was selling to the local groceries.

And in turn, more and more small family farms died, and yet more and more of that camaraderie and interdependence died as well in this newer “centralized” society. In essence, what we did was trade all this rich family and community life, so we could go: farther and faster.

Common sense would say this was a bad trade off.

Transportation – a new plan...

As with practically every other solution I've proposed in this book, our "Transportation Plan" would encompass a quick, radical shift.

According to a host of worldwide scientists, we are quickly reaching a "point of no return" with global warming. And our response needs to be nothing short of rapid and dramatic.

In High Springs, Florida, we met with Dan Burden. *Time Magazine* called him one of the top environmentalists in the country because of his "Walkable Community Model." He travels the country showing towns how to become much more walking and bicycle friendly with a series of common sense strategies.

Our administration would also push for considerably lower speed limits to cut down, not only on global warming gas emission, but to cut down on vehicle fatalities and maiming. (Advocates in Brooklyn, New York, for instance, are now pushing to change residential speed limits from 35 and 25 mph, respectively, to 20 mph. The slogan: "20 is plenty!")

Our administration would also push to ramp up development on alternative (solar, electric...) vehicles. And we would push for electrical charging outlets in downtown areas.

On a stop in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, we interviewed Walter O'Dell. He said he'd driven 800 miles at a charge of only \$11 in electricity in his new, electric pick-up truck.

Our administration would also propose high tolls on federal highways to encourage people to stay closer to home. And the money for the tolls that were collected would go to "Carbon Offset Projects" (planting trees, funding alternative vehicle research, etc.).

We would also create incentives to get way more people to ride public transportation, car pool, and so on.

America stands at a "crossroads" with all this. And it's time now to take the right road – which might mean not necessarily taking a "road" (rather a sidewalk, bike path...) much at all.

Conclusion

As I said at the outset of the book, what you just read will take us in a *very* different direction than the one we've been heading. And where we have been heading, of late, is on a collision course with, metaphorically, a *very* big iceberg.

Think the one that sunk the Titanic.

And for too long now, it's as if we've been "rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic" – as the boat steams directly toward the iceberg!

Common sense says: It's time now to steer the boat away from the iceberg, altogether – *before it's too late*.

That's what my platform does.

A *Time Magazine* op-ed writer wrote during one of the last presidential campaigns that it may well be time for a politician to step forward and cut through "...all the political blather." And that it may well be time for this politician to tell the electorate, finally, some unavoidable: "inconvenient truths," across the board with everything.

That time is now.

That politician is me.

It's time to: "**WAKE UP AMERICA!**"

THE SHIP IS JUST ABOUT TO HIT THE ICEBERG!

That is, ironically enough, if the iceberg doesn't melt first – from the effects of global warming.

Our kids' futures hang in the balance.

All our eternities hang in the balance.



about the author:

Joe Schriener, from the small town of Bluffton, Ohio (pop. 3,875), has run for U.S. President in four successive election cycles. Traveling in a late model motor home, he and his family have logged a phenomenal 125,000 campaign miles. (He has also spent 25 years doing *extensive* cross country research for his “*American Peoples’ Platform.*”) His story has been featured in some 1,000 newspapers and hundreds and hundreds of regional network TV and radio news spots.

Oh yeah, and he will soon be coming to a town near you – on yet his next run.

Joe is also the author of: ***Back Road to the White House; Back Road to the White House 2; America’s Best Town; America’s Best Town 2; America’s Best Urban Neighborhood...***



