

CONTRACT WITH AMERICA

THE BOLD PLAN BY
REP. NEWT GINGRICH, REP. DICK ARMEY,
AND THE HOUSE REPUBLICANS
TO CHANGE THE NATION



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and the House Republicans
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EDITED BY ED GILLESPIE AND BOB SCHELLHAS



R A N D O M H O U S E

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Acknowledgments

Contract with America was the final product of the work of a great many talented people. The 367 Republican candidates who signed their names on the dotted line to help change the nation, should be recognized for accepting the responsibility of putting forward a bold agenda.

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CONTRACT
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Contract with America

ELECTION DAY, November 8, 1994, was a turning point. America's voters dismantled the forty-year lock the Democrats had on Congress, giving Republicans control of the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives. For the first time in more than 130 years, a sitting Speaker of the House was defeated for reelection. And despite their ability to wield influence inside the Washington Beltway, two of the most powerful committee chairmen in the House were dethroned by the voters back home.

Voters sent a clear, undeniable message. It wasn't just about throwing out incumbents, it was about throwing out Democrats. Incredibly, not a single incumbent Republican congressman, senator, or governor was defeated. For the first time in more than twenty years, Republicans gained a majority of the nation's governorships and picked up control of seventeen more state legislative chambers. Obviously the voters believed there was a difference between the way the two parties envisioned the role of government in their lives, and the difference mattered.

Nothing written before or after the election better defines the difference between the two parties than the document you now hold in your hands—the *Contract with America*. Rarely has such a meaningful mandate for change been delivered by voters. That mandate is articulated in the common-sense agenda of the *Con-*

tract, the essence of which was presented by Republican candidates six weeks before voters went to the polls and has been much discussed ever since. For the first time in memory, American citizens have a document they can refer to as a means of holding Congress accountable. Returning accountability, and the faith and trust that come with it, was the very reason for creating this *Contract*.

The notion for such a contract was born on a snowy weekend in February 1994, if not by a word then by deed. At a conference of House Republicans in Salisbury, Maryland, a direction was set for making sure citizens could clearly understand what the Republican Party stood for and meant to deliver if ever given a chance to control the federal legislative process. It was clear to us that after a year in the White House, President Bill Clinton did not intend to govern on the agenda which people elected him to lead the country. At the Salisbury conference, House Republicans talked about governing the country with the will of the people in the U.S. House of Representatives. They understood the need to articulate a clear vision of what they stood for and what direction they would take the country. From these discussions, they agreed upon five principles to describe their basic philosophy of American civilization:

- individual liberty
- economic opportunity
- limited government
- personal responsibility
- security at home and abroad.

Based upon these principles House Republicans outlined a vision for America's future and the role of government. That vision seeks to renew the American Dream by promoting individual liberty, economic opportunity, and personal responsibility, through limited and effective government, high standards of performance, and an America strong enough to defend all her citizens against violence at home or abroad.

The principles and vision developed by House Republicans determined our mission—a mission of working together to offer representative governance, and to communicate our vision of America through clearly defined themes, programs and legislative initiatives to earn us the honor of becoming the majority party in 1995.

Contract with America evolved from the Salisbury conference and was an effort to accomplish the mission as defined by House Republicans. They recognized the need to restore the fabric of trust between the American people and their officeholders. Public confidence in Congress and other institutions had reached its lowest point in twenty years. The feeling among voters that elected officials are not accountable to the same rules as everyone else and do not understand their frustration with a political process that doesn't work for them had to be addressed. *Contract with America* was an instrument to help repair a fundamental disconnection between citizens and their elected officials.

Since the early spring of 1994, House Republican members and candidates worked together, listening to citizens, in developing the legislative proposals that

would form the foundation of the *Contract*. The result was a bold agenda that offers real change. It forces the House of Representatives to operate under the same rules and budget constraints as businesses and households do. It proposes ten specific pieces of legislation to limit and hold government accountable; to promote economic opportunity and individual responsibility for families and businesses; and to maintain security both at home and abroad.

The *Contract* was unveiled to the public on September 27, 1994, when more than 300 Republican candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives stood on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol under an unusually warm, sun-filled sky to make history. They made the journey to Washington, D.C., from as far as Hawaii and from as near as Northern Virginia on the opposite bank of the Potomac River. All told, 367 candidates signed the *Contract with America* to bring fundamental change to the way business is done in the people's House of Representatives, and to give rebirth to an open political process that provides substantive debates and votes upon issues of common agreement among the vast majority of Americans.

The candidates who signed on the dotted line carry a responsibility to do what they can to make the principles of the *Contract* a reality. *Contract with America* is an agreement and a covenant between our now elected representatives and the American people with whom we sought a common bond. As the newly elected majority in the House of Representatives, Republicans have a blueprint for action.

On January 4, 1995, as the 104th Congress is sworn in to support and defend the Constitution, the new Republican House majority will begin to deliver on the *Contract* they signed and sealed with the American people.

Here is the pact that was signed on September 27, 1994, and which we pledge to honor:

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As Republican Members of the House of Representatives and as citizens seeking to join that body we propose not just to change its policies, but even more important, to restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected representatives. That is why, in this era of official evasion and posturing, we offer instead a detailed agenda for national renewal, a written commitment with no fine print.

This year's election offers the chance, after four decades of one-party control, to bring to the House a new majority that will transform the way Congress works. That historic change would be the end of government that is too big, too intrusive, and too easy with the public's money. It can be the beginning of a Congress that respects the values and shares the faith of the American family.

Like Lincoln, our first Republican president, we intend to act "with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right." To restore accountability to Congress. To end its cycle of scandal and disgrace. To

make us all proud again of the way free people govern themselves.

On the first day of the 104th Congress, the new Republican majority will immediately pass the following major reforms, aimed at restoring the faith and trust of the American people in their government:

First, require all laws that apply to the rest of the country also apply equally to the Congress;

Second, select a major independent auditing firm to conduct a comprehensive audit of Congress for waste, fraud, or abuse;

Third, cut the number of House committees, and cut committee staff by one-third;

Fourth, limit the terms of all committee chairs;

Fifth, ban the casting of proxy votes in committee;

Sixth, require committee meetings to be open to the public;

Seventh, require a three-fifths majority vote to pass a tax increase;

Eighth, guarantee an honest accounting of our federal budget by implementing zero baseline budgeting.

Thereafter, within the first hundred days of the 104th Congress, we shall bring to the House Floor the following bills, each to be given full and open debate, each to be given a clear and fair vote, and each to be immediately available this day for public inspection and scrutiny.

The Fiscal Responsibility Act

- A balanced budget/tax limitation amendment and a legislative line-item veto to restore fiscal responsibility to an out-of-control Congress, requiring them to live under the same budget constraints as families and businesses.

The Taking Back Our Streets Act

- An anti-crime package including stronger truth in sentencing, “good faith” exclusionary rule exemptions, effective death penalty provisions, and cuts in social spending from this summer’s crime bill to fund prison construction and additional law enforcement to keep people secure in their neighborhoods and kids safe in their schools.

The Personal Responsibility Act

- Discourage illegitimacy and teen pregnancy by prohibiting welfare to minor mothers and denying increased AFDC for additional children while on welfare, cut spending for welfare programs, and enact a