



7 Core Principles of Conservatism

In 2018, Congressman Johnson drafted this short summary of the central beliefs of American conservatives to help anchor the work of the Republican Study Committee in the timeless principles that made our nation the freest, strongest, and most prosperous in human history. Since that time, many other conservative organizations and lawmaking bodies nationwide have adopted this list as their own.

1. Individual Freedom

The birth of our great nation was inspired by the bold declaration that our individual, God-given liberties should be preserved against government intrusion. That same conviction informs our conservative policy decisions still today. In America, we proclaim the self-evident truths that all of us are created equal and granted by God the same inherent freedoms, such as the natural and unalienable rights to life, liberty, conscience, free speech and the free exercise of religion, and the ability to pursue happiness, own property, build wealth and defend ourselves and our families. The purpose of government is to secure these rights, and the ideas we advance should always aim to maintain and increase the liberty of the American people.

2. Limited Government

For individual liberty to be championed, government must be reduced. We believe, as our founders did, that legitimate government operates only by the consent of the governed, and is more efficient and less corrupt when it is limited in its size and scope. When applied as written, our incomparable Constitution





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Our is a government of laws and not of men, and the rule of law is our foundation. To maintain ordered liberty and a civilized society, public and private virtue should be encouraged and justice must be administered equally and impartially to all. Each branch of government must adhere to the Constitution, and the judicial branch must not be allowed to assume or exercise legislative or executive powers. Transparency and accountability are keys to good government, and Congress must faithfully perform its constitutional responsibility of oversight.

4. Peace through Strength

The first obligation of the federal government is to provide for the “common defense” of the United States by securing our borders and protecting our homeland and our strategic interests abroad. We are not “the world’s police force,” but because America serves in a natural role of moral leadership in an increasingly dangerous world, and weakness invites aggression, we must remain the strongest military power on earth—fully prepared and capable of defeating any adversaries, tyrants or terrorists, under any circumstances, at any time. This requires maintaining sufficient investments in our air, land, sea, nuclear, and cyber capabilities to deter foreign aggression, and properly training, equipping, and supporting our troops and their families, as well as our veterans and wounded warriors.





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accountability in the budget and appropriations processes.

6. Free Markets

Government often stands as the greatest obstacle to the progress and prosperity of free people. Free markets and free trade agreements allow for innovation, improvement and economic expansion as risk-takers, entrepreneurs and business owners are given the liberty to pursue the American dream and create more jobs and upward mobility for more people. We believe competition should be encouraged, and government intervention and regulation should be limited. The people are better qualified to make decisions about their own lives and finances than bureaucrats, and the private sector will outperform the public sector in virtually every scenario. The free enterprise system rewards hard work and self-sacrifice, and is the basis and genius of the American economy.

7. Human Dignity

Because all men are created equal and in the image of God, every human life has inestimable dignity and value, and every person should be measured only by the





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