FIX THE SYSTEM

Elevator Pitch

A two-to-three-minute explanation, and the message structure for the website homepage

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Nearly nine in ten Americans, across both parties, believe members of Congress should not trade stock in the companies they regulate. On July 22, 2026, the House finally voted on it. The bill that eventually passed still let members keep and sell their existing holdings, and it arrived tied to an unrelated voter-identification fight. It passed 232 to 198, with every Republican in favor and nearly every Democrat opposed.

An 86 percent consensus went into the machine. What came out was compromised, partisan, and left the main problem standing: members still holding assets their votes affect.

That is the American problem in miniature. The country is not failing because citizens disagree about everything. We disagree about plenty, and no reform will dissolve real differences over abortion, guns, or the size of government. The failure is that our political system routinely converts opportunities for broad, effective compromise into delay, theater, or watered-down action.

Start with a standard anyone can apply: what would common sense require of a functioning country?

1. Politicians should not choose their voters, and every eligible voter should be able to participate in the election that actually decides representation.
2. Public officials should not use public office for private financial advantage, and Congress should face consequences when it fails at its most basic duties.
3. The government should keep honest books, and ordinary Americans should be able to build wealth that funds a real retirement, with protection against poverty.
4. A peaceful resident who has lived and worked here for years is not the same case as a recent unlawful entrant or someone convicted of serious violence, and lawful immigration should help the country grow while keeping families together.

Measured against that standard, today's rules deliver nearly the opposite, for one simple reason: our system rewards keeping a useful conflict alive more than closing a deal that lets the other side win too.

Two rules manufacture that failure. First, most voters are shut out of the election that matters. Roughly eight in ten House seats are safe, so the low-turnout party primary decides who governs, and candidates answer to the narrow slice most likely to punish compromise. Second, the rules make self-protection legal. Members may hold assets their votes affect, leaders can bury a broadly supported bill without a recorded vote, and Congress can miss its budget deadlines while the public absorbs the cost. None of this requires a villain; ordinary people are responding rationally to the rules, which is why the rules must change.

Three repairs follow.

Repair One changes political selection, ethics, and accountability. A public formula draws districts from Census data instead of politicians. One open primary lets every voter mark every candidate they would accept, with the top two advancing to a head-to-head general election. Members of Congress and their immediate families hold only index funds and similar assets while in office. Bills with meaningful bipartisan support get a recorded vote. A missed budget never shuts down the government, and the chamber responsible faces a special election, a deliberately severe consequence that would require a constitutional amendment.

Repair Two settles immigration as one bargain. Real control of the border and who enters next, expanded lawful immigration, targeted enforcement against serious threats, and a rigorous earned path to legal status for established residents all begin in the same law, because each side's justified fear is that its half will never arrive.

Repair Three pairs honest books with broad ownership. Outside defined emergencies, federal debt stops growing faster than the economy. A dollar earned by owning is taxed like a dollar earned by working. Every child starts life with a funded investment account, insurance fills the gap if markets or a working life fall short, everyone 45 and older keeps full scheduled Social Security, and nobody's promised retirement goes down.

The package holds together. Repair One rebuilds the machinery for closing deals. Repairs Two and Three prove the machinery works on the two fears most likely to destroy any new settlement: an uncontrolled border and an unaffordable old age.

Common sense can state these principles. It cannot prove that a particular voting method or budget formula is correct, and reasonable people will contest the details. So every mechanism here is offered as the best current answer, tested against one question: would I still want this rule if the politician I trust least were the one holding it? The costs, evidence, and open questions live in *Fix the System — Policy Design and Implementation*.

If this is worth fifteen more minutes, read *Common Sense Again — 15-Minute Edition*.