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Progressive Thinking: Summary and Highlights

Introduction to Progressive Thinking

For generations, progressive thinking has driven citizen action and legislation that have transformed the quality of life in the United States and made it a model of human and individual rights, freedoms and opportunities. No group has done more to elevate individual achievement and advance the quality of life for the average American family - in all its forms - than progressives.

Consider some of the major progressive accomplishments over the last century:

- The right to vote for women and minorities
- Federal insurance of bank deposits
- The eight-hour day and 40-hour workweek
- Prohibitions against child labor and workplace exploitations
- Antimonopoly and anticompetitive regulations for corporations
- Protections for our wilderness, waterways, and national parks
- Social Security and Medicare

Progressive thinking has been important in our history - and it's important to our future.

The American Values Project has released ***Progressive Thinking: A Synthesis of American Progressive Values, Beliefs and Positions*** in the belief that a better and more synthesized understanding of progressive thinking will lead to greater success in driving changes that improve the lives of all Americans.

Informed by the views and experiences of more than 300 leading progressive thinkers, ***Progressive Thinking*** builds upon the ideas of generations of progressives from Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Barack Obama. Its central message: Everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules. As the handbook states:

“As progressives, we believe everyone deserves a fair shot at a decent, fulfilling and economically secure life. We believe everyone should do his or her fair share to build this life through education, personal responsibility, hard work and active participation in public life. And we believe everyone should play by the same set of rules, with no special privileges for the well-connected or wealthy.”

True to its title, *Progressive Thinking* is a synthesis of American progressive values, beliefs and positions - not a consensus statement or a collection of talking points and political messages. It's designed to help focus the views and hopes of a growing majority of Americans committed to progressive principles and policies.

Telling the Progressive Story

Progressives have employed different stories at different times in history to advance their causes, whether fighting for the 40-hour work week or a woman's right to vote. *Progressive Thinking* prepares readers to tell a compelling story for progressivism in America today by highlighting key elements:

- **The Quest:** A society in which everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules.
- **The Challenge:** We face real challenges in rebuilding an America that works for all of us -economic, environmental, political and civic engagement
- **The Progressive Solution:** Progressives offer clear and achievable priorities:
 - *Build an economy that works for everyone, not just the few.*
 - *Reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and move to cleaner, more innovative ways to produce and consume energy.*
 - *Ensure our political system is 'of, by and for' the people and not rigged in favor of big corporations and the privileged.*
 - *Cooperate more with one another, in our politics and our economy, to help solve our most pressing problems, from a lack of good jobs and rising poverty to struggling schools and burgeoning environmental problems.*
 - *Reform government to work more effectively and eliminate waste.*
 - *Encourage citizens to participate more in political discourse and governing.*

Finding our Common Ground: Communicating About Progressive Values, Beliefs and Issues

To effectively communicate a progressive story and vision, progressives need to be able to speak persuasively about their values and beliefs as a way to highlight our broad, common ground. The core elements of a progressive worldview - our common values, beliefs, and approach to key contemporary issues - are a framework within which individual candidates, organizers and others can construct their own heartfelt progressive view of our world.

A concise, coherent and compelling progressive vision for America rests on three, fundamental building blocks outlined in detail in *Progressive Thinking*. These elements are progressive values, beliefs and positions on key issues. Together, these provide the foundation for the central progressive message: Everyone gets a fair shot, everyone does his or her fair share, and everyone plays by the same rules.

Values

Core progressive values - *freedom, opportunity, responsibility and cooperation* - form the most important level of communications, with political beliefs and issue positions building on this values foundation.

Beliefs

Progressive beliefs provide the philosophical framework for progressive positions. Progressives advance a public philosophy that is pragmatic and grounded in empirical evidence, not dogma that is unchanging regardless of the facts and situation at hand. Progressive beliefs are focused on interpreting problems and creating solutions.

Progressive Thinking highlights core progressive beliefs:

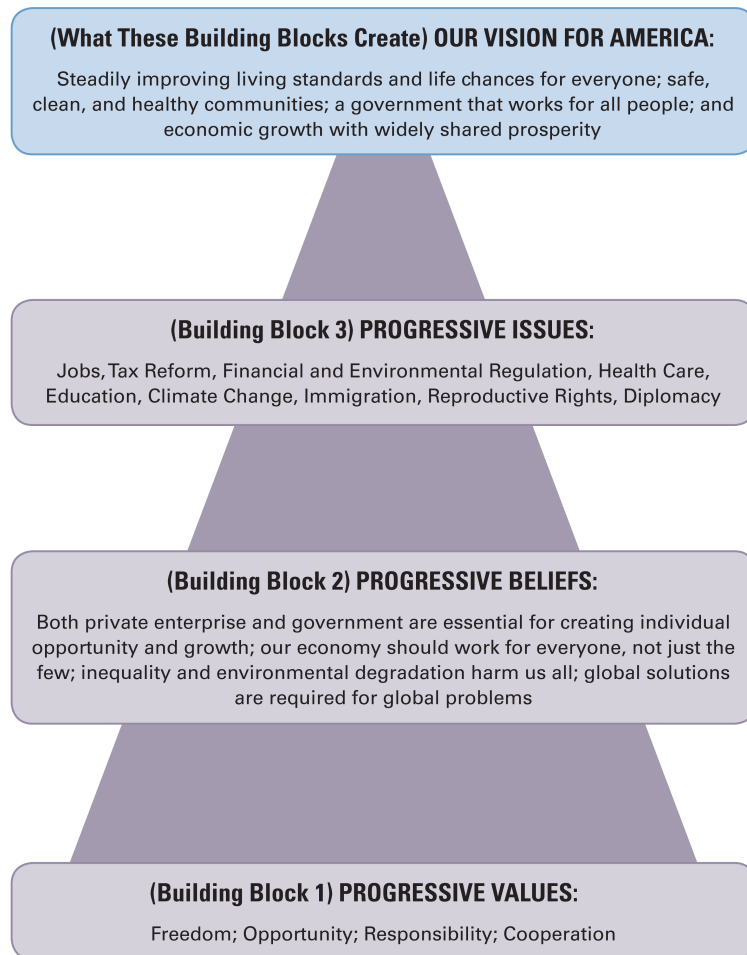
- We believe in freedom with opportunity for all, responsibility from all and cooperation among all.
- We believe the purpose of government is to advance the common good, to secure and protect our rights, and to help to create a high quality of life and community well-being.
- We want decent paying jobs and benefits for workers and sustainable economic growth.
- We want cleaner, more innovative ways to produce and consume energy.

- We want growing businesses producing the world's best products and services.
- We want an economy that works for everyone, not just the few.
- We want all nations to uphold universal human rights, to cherish human dignity and to work together to solve common challenges.
- We want a country that fosters and celebrates individual achievement while investing in the common good that makes all success possible.

Positions

Progressive Thinking looks at how these values and beliefs inform progressive positions on major issues including:

- Jobs and the Economy
- Taxes and Deficits
- Health care
- Social Security and Medicare
- Education
- Immigration
- Environment, Climate, and Energy
- Reproductive Rights and Health
- Money in Politics
- Gay Rights and Marriage Equality



The underlying assertion of this handbook is that progressive thinking is a positive, moral force in American life, grounded in values that are core to our nation's character and evolving directly from the founding documents on which we've built this country. Whether leading the nation out of the Great Depression and helping to win World War II - or championing civil rights and ensuring all Americans have access to affordable health care - progressives have always believed the true strength of these United States lies in our commitment to doing right by all people.

It is time progressives begin to assert their positions clearly and in unflinching terms because progressive thinking is important to the health and future of this country.

The full text of *Progressive Thinking* is now available through a secure website and a limited hardcopy edition. We want to invite you to make full use of this resource in your planning, communications, and training efforts. To apply for access to the website, please email eliilyonglee@gmail.com.

About the American Values Project

The American Values Project formed in 2011 as an effort of progressive thinkers and leaders to create a credible and durable national story that defines a progressive worldview and its values. *Progressive Thinking* is a publication of the AVP, supported by the invaluable insights and contributions many Americans -representing many different causes, organizations, and viewpoints - who are engaged in advancing the progressive perspective.