

FIRST AMENDMENT TELEVISION

POSITION PAPER

THE PROMISE, THE PROMOTION, AND THE RECORD

America at 250 — What Was Pledged, What Is Sold, and What the Record Shows

PART TWO OF TWO: THE RECORD AND THE RECKONING

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“The record is the resistance.”

Part One of this paper set out the evidentiary record across four issue areas: health care, defense spending and the treatment of veterans, student debt and housing, and incarceration. This second part addresses what in that record holds up under scrutiny, what requires care in its presentation, and what was deliberately excluded. It closes with the FATV institutional statement on the work of the gap.

III. What Holds Up Under Scrutiny — and What Doesn’t

Holds up:

- Every figure in Part One traces to a primary federal source (Census, CDC/NCHS, CBO, GAO, VA, HUD, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York) or to a recognized international research body (SIPRI, the Institute for Crime & Justice Policy Research) or a peer-institution synthesis of those primary sources (the Commonwealth Fund’s cross-national health comparison).
- Where a figure is a projection rather than a recorded fact — the CBO’s uninsured projections, for example — this paper labels it as a projection.
- Where the record shows genuine improvement — veteran housing placements, the declining (though still high) incarceration rate — this paper states that plainly rather than omitting it for effect.

Requires care:

- Defense spending comparisons (“more than the next six countries combined”) shift year to year as allied spending rises; the 2025 SIPRI figure is “next six,” not “next ten” as in some earlier years — this paper uses the current, sourced figure rather than a remembered one.
- The claim that wages have been “flat” is true in real terms but not in nominal terms; this paper specifies “real, inflation-adjusted terms” throughout to avoid a charge of imprecision.
- The student-debt delinquency spike (0.70% to 16.19% in one year) is driven primarily by the resumption of federal reporting after a pandemic-era pause, not by a sixteen-fold increase in actual missed payments in twelve months; this paper presents the figure as a reporting-driven data point, which the underlying Fed report itself notes.

Deliberately excluded:

Claims that cannot currently be sourced to a specific primary dataset — e.g., broad assertions about

“trust in America” globally, or direct dollar comparisons between military spending and the cost of ending homelessness — have been left out of this version. They are rhetorically powerful but would expose the paper to a single successful rebuttal undermining the rest. They can be added in a future revision if FATV identifies a defensible primary source for each.

IV. The Work Is the Gap

Reasonable people can disagree about causes and solutions. This paper is not an argument that every problem documented above has a single cause or a single remedy. It is simply an argument that the documented record — produced by the government’s own agencies and auditors — should be part of any honest discussion about the nation’s condition at 250 years. A country that cannot look at its own numbers cannot improve on them.

None of the figures in this paper are secret. Each is published by an agency or institution whose findings are part of the public record. The gap this paper documents is not a gap in information — it is a gap between what the country says about itself and what its own institutions report about itself.

FATV’s founding position is that the record is the resistance. This paper is an application of that principle: not an argument from outrage, but an argument from documentation. The ideals articulated in 1776 were specific. The promotion of 2026 is confident. The reality, as recorded by the government’s own agencies, is available to anyone willing to read it.

The work, as always, is the gap between those three things — and closing it.

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Sources

All figures in this paper trace to a primary government or internationally recognized research source. Sources are listed in order of appearance.

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