WHY COMPETITION IN THE POLITICS INDUSTRY IS FAILING AMERICA: A strategy for reinvigorating our democracy

Our recommended strategy addresses the following four pillars:

- Restructure the election process
- Restructure the governing process
- Reform money in politics
- Open up near-term competition, without waiting for structural reform

Our political system will not be self-correcting. The problems are systemic and structural, involving multiple factors that are self-reinforcing. This means that the only way to reform the system is by taking a set of steps to change the industry structure and the rules that underpin it—shifting the very nature of political competition. Many well-meaning reform ideas—such as term limits, electing better candidates, promoting bipartisanship, instituting a national primary day, improving civics education, establishing bipartisan issue-advocacy groups, and others—won’t matter much absent changes in the underlying industry structure.

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Gehl Porter (GP)

Description:
In 2016, Katherine invited Michael to join her ongoing work on political innovation—as dysfunction in Washington continued to deliver poor results and high dissatisfaction with the U.S. political system. Together, they applied Michael’s tools for understanding industry competition for the first time to politics, to uncover the root cause of the dysfunction—the failed political competition the parties have created (captured in the “Gehl Porter Politics Industry Theory”). This new lens reveals the reforms that will be necessary to truly realign America’s political system with the public interest. In 2017, Katherine and Michael published their ground-breaking research and analysis on—and most importantly a prescription for—our political system in the Report Why Competition in the Politics Industry Is Failing America: A strategy for reinvigorating our democracy. Their work continues, and is informing, engaging and motivating businesspeople and leaders from across America in the reform movement.

Stakeholder(s):
Katherine M. Gehl:
CO-AUTHOR — Katherine M. Gehl is a business leader, author and speaker. Katherine was president and CEO of Gehl Foods, a $250 Million high-tech food manufacturing company in Wisconsin where she led a transformational growth strategy, receiving multiple awards, before selling the company in 2015—in part to dedicate more time to political reform. Her career includes roles in the private and public sectors including at Oracle Corporation, Bernstein Investment Research and Management, Mayor Richard M. Daley’s Office at the City of Chicago, and Chicago Public Schools. In 2011, Katherine was confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve on the Board of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation. Today, Katherine describes herself as a political innovation activist. Katherine graduated from the University of Notre Dame and holds an MA from Catholic University and an MBA from Kellogg.

Michael E. Porter:
CO-AUTHOR — Michael E. Porter is an economist, researcher, author, advisor, speaker and teacher. Throughout his lifetime career at Harvard Business School, he has brought economic theory and strategy concepts to bear on many of the most challenging problems facing corporations, economies and societies, including market competition and company strategy, economic development, the environment and health care. Michael’s approach is based on understanding the overall economics and structure of complex systems, in contrast to particular elements or parts. His extensive research is widely recognized in governments, corporations, NGOs, and academic circles around the globe and has received numerous awards. Michael is the author of nineteen books and over 130 articles is the most cited scholar today in economics and business. Michael graduated from Princeton University and holds an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a Ph.D. from Harvard’s Department of Economics.

Citizens:
Our Responsibility as Citizens — We can fix our political system, but it will require sustained citizens’ initiative and significant investment. A new kind of philanthropy, which might be called “political philanthropy,” is needed. Donors who support the collective interest in political reform, innovation, and solutions-oriented candidates will have a huge impact on America’s progress in addressing the many societal needs our nation faces. We can never forget that the political system we have today was designed by our own elected representatives—the people we voted into office. This system was corrupted over time, and most of us did not even notice. We have the power to reinvigorate our democracy, and we must. It is easy to become resigned that the system will never change, and that reform is hopeless. However, many of the steps we have described here are beginning to gain traction, as evidenced by the progress in moving to nonpartisan primaries, ranked-choice voting, gerrymandering reform, presidential debate litigation, and others we detail in this report. We can do this.
Vision
Politics and politicians serve the best interests of citizens

Mission
To reinvigorate American democracy

Values

- **Democracy**
- **Nonpartisanship**

**Competition:** In thinking about realigning competition, it is important to recognize that historically, transformational changes in the U.S. have often begun at the fringes—in decidedly non-moderate camps. Eventually, however, change must be enacted by a majority in democratically elected legislative bodies.

**Bipartisanship:** It is here that bipartisan, pro-problem solving, consensus-seeking moderates are crucial for delivering practical solutions, and it is precisely this genre of elected officials that our current political competition has rendered almost extinct.

**Problem Solving**
- **Consensus**
- **Moderation**

**Rationality:** From a strategy standpoint then, we believe that restructuring the election process, reducing barriers to entry, and reinvigorating electoral opportunities for the rational middle must be a central premise of political reform.

**Reform:** Fortunately, many reforms to change competition in politics have already been proposed, and numerous organizations are already involved in reform efforts. Our analysis highlights those reforms that will be the most powerful in addressing root causes and discusses how to combine them into an overall strategy.
1. Elections

RESTRICTURE THE ELECTION PROCESS

1.1. Primaries

*Establish nonpartisan top-four primaries.*

The current partisan primary system shifts both campaigns and governance toward the extremes.

**Stakeholder(s):**
- **States:**
  - States should move to a single primary ballot for all candidates, no matter what their affiliation, and open up primaries to all voters, not just registered party voters.
- **Voters**

1.2. Voting

*Institute ranked-choice voting.*

Institute ranked-choice voting with instant runoff in general elections. This system will ensure that no candidate is elected with less than majority support, resulting in the election of candidates with the broadest appeal to the most voters.

1.3. Redistricting

*Institute nonpartisan redistricting.*

Drawing legislative district boundaries must be non-partisan to eliminate artificial advantages for the party in control.

**Stakeholder(s):**
- **Political Parties**
- **Legislative Districts**

1.4. Presidential Debates

*Rewrite debate access rules for presidential elections.*

Current requirements for participation in presidential debates are unreasonable (for anyone except the Democratic and Republican nominees) and anticompetitive.

**Stakeholder(s):**
- **Presidential Candidates**
- **Democratic Party**
- **Republican Party**
2. Governance

RESTRICTURE THE GOVERNING PROCESS

2.1. Rules & Processes

Eliminate partisan control of House and Senate rules and processes.
Legislative and governance rules must align the process with the public interest and reduce the ability of parties to control Congressional deliberations and outcomes simply for partisan gain.

Stakeholder(s):
Congress
U.S. Senate
U.S. House of Representatives
3. Money

REFORM MONEY IN POLITICS

3.1. Influence

*Diminish big money’s influence.*

The influence of money is distorting competition and biasing elections. Reform is challenging due to the First Amendment, but experts have crafted practical steps to diminish big money’s influence (i.e., systems for citizen funding, 100% transparency in political spending, and eliminating loopholes favoring existing major parties in fundraising).

3.2. ROI

*Reduce the return on investment to donors.*

However, a focus on money alone will not transform our political system. The real answer is to reduce the attractive return on investment that donors currently enjoy.

**Stakeholder(s):**

- Political Campaign Donors
- Politicians:
  - *The systemic reforms detailed in this report will shift the incentives for politicians to respond to constituents, instead of responding to donors.*
- Constituents
4. Competition

**OPEN UP COMPETITION**

**Stakeholder(s):**

**Political Parties:**

_The top two parties should always be operating under a potential threat from competitors that better serve the public interest._

OPEN UP COMPETITION, WITHOUT WAITING FOR STRUCTURAL REFORMS — The innovations in this section can start to open up competition as soon as the 2018 election cycle, and should be implemented now rather than waiting the decade or more it may take to implement all the structural reforms needed.

4.1. Senators

_Elect three to five centrist independent U.S. senators._

Implement the Centrist Project’s “Senate Fulcrum Strategy.” Structural reform will take time. A highly leveraged way to break the current political gridlock would be to elect three to five centrist independent U.S. senators to act as a swing coalition and force change from the political center.

**Stakeholder(s):**

Centrist Project

U.S. Senators

4.2. Independents

_Run (centrist) independents at all levels._

Solutions-oriented, independent campaigns would bring critical new competition to politics, and can be powerful change agents. Today, it is difficult to run outside the duopoly, and even more difficult to win outside the duopoly.

**Stakeholder(s):**

Political Independents

Voters:

 Concerned voters should seek out and actively support such independent candidates.

4.3. Campaign Infrastructure

_Establish a shared election and financing infrastructure for independents (and moderates)._ Shared election infrastructure will be needed to reduce the barriers to entry for independent and moderate candidates.

**Stakeholder(s):**

Independent Political Candidates

Moderate Political Candidates
4.4. Support Structures

*Provide support structures for center-right and center-left party candidates.*

In addition, support structures are needed for solutions-minded center-right and center-left party candidates to help them withstand primary challengers.

**Stakeholder(s):**
- Center-Right Party Candidates
- Center-Left Party Candidates

4.5. State-Level Models

*Create and expand state-level models.*

Create and expand state-level models, such as “Govern for California,” to shift election outcomes.

**Stakeholder(s):**
- States

**State Legislators:**
State legislators have an important role in our political system, both in setting policy as well as election and governing rules.

**Govern for California:**
“Govern for California” focuses on state-level reform through leveraging political philanthropy to support candidates who put citizen interests ahead of personal, party, and special interests. Such efforts, as well as others that provide state-level support for independent and moderate candidates and elected officials, should be expanded.

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**Administrative Information**

Start Date: 
End Date: 

Publication Date: 2020-06-23

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