



Americans work hard, pay their bills, and raise their families. Yet no matter how much they play by the rules, it feels like life is getting more expensive — housing, energy, health care, and even starting a business.

This didn't happen by accident. It's the result of decades of government rules and red tape that have created a system favoring politically connected interests while making it harder for ordinary Americans to get ahead.

The economics are simple: When government restricts supply and delays investment, prices rise — and working families pay the price. And when compliance costs are so high that only large corporations can afford them, smaller competitors and new businesses are pushed out before they even get started. The system isn't just inefficient — it's unfair.

There has been some progress this year, including rolling back costly regulations and passing a new law that protects families from higher taxes while encouraging small business investment. But decades of government obstruction won't disappear overnight. Restoring opportunity will require sustained effort.

But the path forward is clear: an affordability agenda focused on abundance, competition, and opportunity. Americans don't need more speeches about helping working families — they need policies that actually do it. By removing barriers to growth, we can boost productivity — the key to higher wages, lower prices, and stronger economic growth.

Ending excessive government interference and unleashing the free market is the only way to make life more affordable for everyone — and keep it that way.

— THE AGENDA —

1. Energy Abundance to Fuel the Future

Remove barriers to permitting, so we can generate more energy and build more infrastructure — because more energy equals more affordable energy.

The Problem: Emerging technologies are improving daily life. Each advance is typically better, faster, and cheaper — but also more energy-intensive, driving up electricity demand. At the same time, government policies make it harder to build new energy capacity. For example, approving permits for new transmission lines takes more than four years on average and can stretch to 11 years before construction even begins. Rising demand combined with constrained supply inevitably means higher prices: Electricity prices have jumped 21% since 2020.

Artificial intelligence is now driving a transformative shift in the global economy, often compared to the Industrial Revolution. AI investment is boosting GDP growth worldwide, especially in the United States — but AI data centers are exceptionally power-hungry. If America wants to lead in AI, we must dramatically shorten the approval process for the energy projects needed to power this critical technology and secure our economic future.

Policy Solutions:

- **Streamline and Reform the Permitting Process.** Remove government red tape preventing needed new generation or transmission from being built. Congress must address NEPA, the Clean Water Act, and the Clean Air Act that prevent permits from being issued.
- **Strengthen The Grid.** Modernize regulations allowing quicker replacements of outdated infrastructure. Ensure 24/7 power reliability as demand increases, particularly in regions experiencing surging data center growth and electrification trends.

2. Lower Health Care Costs by Funding Patients, Not the System

Remove barriers that limit access to coverage options like HSAs and DPC – because more patient choice and control means lower health care costs.

The Problem: Despite world-class doctors and cutting-edge technology, 70% of Americans say the health care system is broken. Costs keep climbing, consuming a growing share of family budgets. For decades, health insurance premiums have risen faster than both inflation and wages.

The core problem is a system dominated by third-party payers. Today, roughly 90% of health care spending flows through insurance companies or government programs instead of directly through patients. At the same time, millions of Americans are locked into employer-based coverage, Obamacare, or government plans, limiting choice and competition.

Real reform starts by putting patients back in control of their health care dollars. Expanding access to tax-free health savings accounts (HSAs), direct primary care (DPC), and association health plans (AHPs) would give Americans the freedom to choose coverage that fits both their needs and their budgets. When providers must compete for patients' business, prices come down—and transparency goes up.

Policy Solutions:

- **Fund Patients, Not Insurers.** Let every American have a tax-free health savings account, a personal “medical wallet” that puts patients in charge of their care. Deposit government subsidies directly into people's HSAs instead of sending money to insurance companies. The result will be lower prices and better care.
- **Remove Barriers to Care.** Remove barriers to affordable direct primary care (“a Netflix subscription to your favorite doctors”). Allow direct-to-consumer sales of medical items, including prescription drugs. By cutting out the insurance company middleman, we will bring prices down.

3. Reduce What It Costs to Rent, Buy, or Finance a Home

Remove obstacles to building more housing—because more housing means lower housing costs.

The Problem: For most Americans, homeownership remains a cornerstone of the American Dream. But when housing is treated as a regulatory privilege rather than a market good, costs rise, competition falls, and economic growth slows.

Overly burdensome housing, land-use, and zoning regulations are primary causes of today's high housing costs (compounded by high interest rates and high construction costs). By restricting what can be built, where it can be built, and how dense communities can become, these rules artificially limit supply even as demand grows. The result is higher prices for renters and homeownership that is out of reach for millions of Americans.

Policy Solutions:

- **Repeal Red Tape Driving Up Prices.** Congress can lift regulations to make it easier to build more housing. Costly mandates dictate what materials and techniques homebuilders must use, driving up prices. Congress can also allow additional housing on public lands far away from any national parks or historic sites. Congress should make receipt of some federal housing funds conditional on instituting reforms such as increasing high-density zoning and multi-family zoning, reducing minimum lot size requirements, allowing more manufactured housing, and allowing more single-room occupancy units.
- **State And Local Zoning Reforms.** Housing bottlenecks mostly come from the local level, where we need to allow private property owners additional flexibility to make reasonable increases in density. Artificial scarcity drives up prices and causes unnecessary conflict between aspiring buyers or renters and incumbent owners.

4. Food and Groceries That Don't Cost Your Whole Paycheck

Lower government economic interference across the board – because less government interference means lower grocery prices.

The Problem: Grocery prices sit at the nexus of price pressures across the economy. Food doesn't just come from farms – it depends on energy, labor, transportation, packaging, and finance, all of which are heavily influenced by government policy. When costs rise in any one of these areas, they ripple through the entire food supply chain and show up at the checkout counter.

Energy prices, for example, affect everything from fertilizer and farm equipment to refrigeration and trucking. Labor mandates raise costs for farm workers, processors, and grocery employees. Regulations increase compliance expenses at each step, while trade barriers and tariffs raise the price of imported ingredients and packaging. On top of that, the lingering effects of the Bidenomics government spending blowout continue to erode purchasing power, meaning families pay more even when the underlying product hasn't changed.

Grocery prices reflect not a single cause, but the cumulative effect of many policy-driven pressures converging in one place. So the best way to bring down grocery prices is to adopt the affordable agenda outlined here, plus these additional items.

Policy Solutions:

- **Protect the Tax Cuts.** One way to make life more affordable is to keep more of what you earn. The Working Families Tax Cuts law prevented the largest tax increase in American history and added other tax benefits. Some in Washington want to reverse those tax cuts to pay for more Washington spending – they want to enhance affordability for the government, not us! They have it backward.
- **End Prevailing Wages in Government Contracts.** The government purposely spends more than it needs to on all sorts of major projects, for instance by insisting that contractors pay their workers a so-called “prevailing wage” rather than the market wage. This alone increases the cost of a project by 10%. That's like you putting an addition on your home and purposely paying the builder more for labor. You'd never do that, but government does. Ending these special-interest programs would improve competition, lower costs, and improve quality.

- **Repeal the Jones Act.** The Jones Act requires that goods shipped between U.S. ports to be carried on vessels that are U.S.-built, U.S.-owned, and U.S.-crewed. While intended to protect domestic shipbuilding and maritime jobs, it dramatically raises shipping costs by limiting competition and reducing the number of eligible vessels. Those higher transportation costs are passed on to consumers—especially in non-contiguous states and territories like Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico—making everyday goods more expensive and weakening economic growth.
- **Make Capital Investing Easier.** The Working Families Tax Cuts law allows full expensing for most categories of business investment and makes it permanent. This is a huge win for all businesses, but especially mom-and-pop ones. Full expensing encourages business investment, stimulates economic growth, and simplifies tax compliance, all of which helps make life more affordable. We cannot let it be repealed.
- **Reduce Government Spending.** Lower federal spending can help reduce inflation by easing excess demand in the economy and reducing the need to borrow. When government spending grows faster than the economy, excess money put into the system increases demand without a corresponding increase in the supply of goods and services. That imbalance pushes prices higher. By restraining spending, the government reduces pressure on the Federal Reserve to monetize deficits or keep interest rates artificially low, helping stabilize prices and restore the purchasing power of families' paychecks. Reducing government spending needs to be a central focus!
- **More Flexibility for Workers.** Many Americans stay in jobs they would otherwise leave because they fear losing benefits like health insurance. Policymakers should make it easier for small businesses, independent contractors, and other workers to pool together to buy affordable health coverage and also legalize portable benefit arrangements that include health care, retirement savings, and other benefits. These reforms would give workers greater freedom to change jobs or work independently while still building long-term financial security.

RESOURCES: AFP has deep dive policy reports across these issues and more here.

[A Guide to Unlocking Energy Abundance:
The Impact of Permitting Delays on Access to Energy and Economic Development](#)

[AFP's Roadmap to Unleash America's Full Potential Through Energy, Labor and Technology Policy](#)

[A Roadmap to Health Care Reform:
Proven Policies for States to Increase Access, Reduce Wait Times, and Improve Quality of Health Care](#)

[A Roadmap for Housing Policy Reform](#)