

PREFACE

It is long past time to put the American people first. For too long, the policy agenda in Washington has been defined by well-connected special interests that have severely undercut economic freedom for ordinary hardworking Americans. But on November 5, 2024, the American people spoke up and unambiguously rejected the failed liberal status quo. The reelection of Donald Trump has placed our country at the dawn of a new era. Today, by that dawn's early light, we can already see the prosperous, cheerful, energetic future it portends.

We must take this window of opportunity to act with courage and confidence.

The moral and practical case for ordered liberty and free enterprise is as necessary today as it was when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher rescued their nations' economies and won the Cold War. After four years of incompetence and corruption, the task before us is to unleash America from the red tape in which it has been bound and create an efficient economy that can conserve the true, the good, and the beautiful. Why? Because that is the only kind of economy that is worthy of a free people.

As we show year after year in the *Index of Economic Freedom*, an annual flagship publication of The Heritage Foundation, countries that support free markets, rule of law, private property, and limited government experience more prosperity, better education, and healthier environments. These countries also tend to produce better jobs, better goods and services, and better societies. The imperative to advance economic freedom and revitalize vibrant entrepreneurial growth is stronger than ever.

But markets and freedom don't exist in a vacuum, and the measure of societal greatness involves more than merely economic factors. We should recognize that our most important task today is rebuilding the well-functioning and healthy institutions of civil society that we need and deserve. The free market is a vital part of that process but must always be in service to our values and not the other way around.

Now is the time for correcting course. Today, economic freedom is being attacked on all sides, both at home and abroad. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is working to constrain freedom not only within China's own borders, but in nations around the world. Bureaucrats are more powerful than ever. They work with globalist organizations and multinational corporations alike to write regulations that stifle the freedom of the middle class while enriching the powerful under the guise of health emergencies and global warming.

If we want to pass on to our children and grandchildren a nation that is at least as free and prosperous as the one we inherited, we must focus our efforts on turning ordinary people away from the false promises of bigger government and sweeping economic programs while turning the rest of the world away from the CCP. The *Index of Economic Freedom* is a vital tool in this fight.

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