THE BUILDING A BETTER AMERICA BLUEPRINT

BOOK TWO

THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

Strong Foundations. Stronger Future.

Evidence. Opportunity. Accountability.

Working Draft - July 2026

Prepared as part of a living, evidence-informed governing blueprint.

Policy concepts are proposals unless identified as current law or verified data.

Editorial and Fact-Checking Note

This document consolidates the economic material developed after Book One. It has been edited for grammar, internal consistency, and factual accuracy as of July 15, 2026. Current law, verified data, and Blueprint proposals are identified separately wherever practical.

Several important corrections and clarifications were made during review:

- Federal overtime law currently generally requires time-and-a-half after 40 hours for covered, nonexempt workers; the 32-hour threshold in this book is a Blueprint proposal, not current law.
- A 32-hour workweek with unchanged weekly pay would raise the effective hourly cost of covered labor by 25 percent before overtime. The book does not claim that all employers can absorb that change without productivity gains, staffing changes, price effects, or transition support.
- Institutional investors own a small share of all single-family homes nationally, but their share of single-family rentals is considerably higher in some metropolitan markets. The housing proposal therefore focuses on local concentration rather than treating every market as identical.
- Federal policy changed in 2026 to restrict certain institutional purchases of single-family homes and Congress enacted additional housing legislation. The Blueprint proposal is presented as a framework to complement, evaluate, or improve current policy rather than as an entirely new idea.
- Housing prices, starts, wages, and other economic indicators change frequently. Dated figures are included with their reference period and should be updated before formal publication.

Nothing enters the Blueprint unless we can explain it, defend it, fund it, and measure it.

Contents

Preface: The Purpose of the American Economy

> *The American economy should create the opportunity for every person to build a better life through work, innovation, responsibility, and freedom.*

Economic growth matters. Gross domestic product, investment, productivity, corporate profits, and financial markets all provide valuable information about the health of the economy. None of them, by itself, tells us whether ordinary households are becoming more secure.

The Blueprint therefore evaluates prosperity through both national performance and household experience. A successful economy should support innovation and enterprise while making it realistically possible for working people to afford housing, healthcare, transportation, family life, savings, and retirement.

The Five Economic Pillars

1. Reward work, skill development, entrepreneurship, innovation, and responsible risk-taking.
2. Make essential living costs more manageable by expanding supply, competition, transparency, and household purchasing power.
3. Preserve free enterprise while enforcing fair competition and preventing abusive concentration of market power.
4. Maintain fiscal responsibility and avoid treating permanent borrowing as a substitute for sustainable growth.
5. Invest in education, infrastructure, science, technology, manufacturing capacity, and workforce development when measurable long-term benefits justify the cost.

The Affordability Test

Before Congress adopts major economic legislation, an independent analysis should estimate its expected effect on housing, healthcare, food, energy, transportation, childcare, wages, employment, inflation, small businesses, and the federal budget. No policy will improve every measure, but lawmakers should disclose the tradeoffs before voting.

Chapter 1: The American Dream and Economic Success

The Promise

The American Dream is not a government guarantee of wealth or identical outcomes. It is the preservation of a genuine opportunity to improve one's life through work, education, enterprise, saving, and responsible choices.

Public policy should seek to keep the following goals realistically attainable over time:

- Renting or owning a safe home without an unsustainable housing burden.
- Owning reliable transportation or having dependable alternatives.
- Raising a family in a safe community.
- Obtaining education, training, or credentials that lead to meaningful work.
- Receiving necessary healthcare without financial ruin.

- Building emergency savings and retirement security.
- Taking reasonable time away from work for family, rest, and civic life.
- Starting a business, investing responsibly, and passing opportunity to the next generation.

Freedom and Responsibility

Economic freedom includes the ability to work, create, own property, start a business, change careers, invest, and compete under clear rules. Opportunity also carries responsibility: people are encouraged to work, continue learning, save when possible, respect the law, and contribute to their communities.

Government cannot ensure that every decision succeeds. It can work to prevent corruption, discriminatory barriers, deceptive practices, monopoly abuse, and public policies that unnecessarily place opportunity beyond the reach of ordinary families.

The American Dream Report

Every four years, the federal government should publish a nonpartisan American Dream Report measuring whether opportunity is expanding or contracting. The report should include inflation-adjusted household income, housing affordability, wealth and debt, retirement savings, small-business formation, mobility across income levels, health outcomes, and the share of households able to meet essential expenses without revolving debt.

> *The American Dream is measured not only by how much wealth can be created, but by how many Americans have a realistic chance to build a stable home, support a family, and leave a stronger future to the next generation.*

Chapter 2: Wages, Work, and the 32-Hour Standard

Current Law

Under the Fair Labor Standards Act, covered nonexempt employees are generally entitled to overtime pay at not less than one-and-one-half times their regular rate after 40 hours in a workweek. The federal minimum wage remains $7.25 per hour under current federal law, though many states and localities require higher rates.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that average weekly hours for private nonfarm employees were 34.3 hours in June 2026, while industry averages varied substantially. Manufacturing averaged about 40.3 hours and construction about 39.3 hours. These averages include part-time and full-time employees and should not be interpreted as the schedule of every worker.

Blueprint Reform

> *The standard full-time workweek should become four days and 32 hours, with no reduction in the established weekly base pay of covered full-time workers.*

- The normal full-time standard becomes 32 hours over four days.
- Workers keep the weekly base pay they received immediately before the transition, subject to ordinary raises, promotions, or negotiated changes.

- Covered employees become eligible for overtime after 32 hours in a workweek.
- Overtime remains available when employers need additional coverage and employees voluntarily accept it, subject to lawful scheduling and emergency rules.
- Healthcare, public safety, utilities, transportation, manufacturing, hospitality, retail, and other continuous operations may use rotating schedules while preserving the 32-hour individual standard where applicable.
- Employers may not reclassify workers, reduce benefits, or divide positions primarily to evade the standard.

The Math

Holding weekly pay constant while reducing scheduled hours from 40 to 32 raises the effective hourly rate by 25 percent. For example, a worker earning $800 for 40 hours has an effective rate of $20 per hour. If that worker receives the same $800 for 32 hours, the effective rate becomes $25 per hour.

Example	Current 40-hour week	Proposed 32-hour week
Weekly base pay	$800	$800
Scheduled hours	40	32
Effective hourly rate	$20	$25
Increase in hourly labor cost	-	25%

If that employee works 36 hours under a 32-hour overtime rule, four hours would be paid at the applicable overtime rate. Using time-and-a-half on the new $25 regular rate, those four hours would add $150, producing weekly gross pay of $950. Final legislation would need precise rules for salaries, bonuses, shift differentials, piece rates, collective bargaining agreements, and exempt employees.

What This Policy Is Intended to Achieve

- More time for family, caregiving, education, health, community involvement, and rest.
- A stronger link between productivity gains and worker quality of life.
- Additional hiring or paid overtime where businesses require coverage beyond 32 hours.
- Lower burnout and turnover when organizations can maintain output through better processes and scheduling.

Risks and Honest Tradeoffs

The 32-hour standard is an ambitious labor-cost reform. It could raise costs for employers that cannot increase productivity or change staffing efficiently. Possible responses include hiring, overtime, automation, reduced operating hours, lower profit margins, slower wage growth after implementation, higher prices, or reduced employment. These effects may vary sharply by industry and business size.

The Blueprint therefore supports a phased transition rather than an overnight national mandate. Small businesses and labor-intensive essential services may require longer implementation periods, temporary tax relief tied to verified payroll retention, or alternative compliance models. Any support must be temporary and evaluated publicly.

Proposed Transition

Phase	Illustrative timing	Primary action
Federal pilot	Year 1	Adopt 32-hour schedules in selected federal offices and contracts; measure output and service quality.
Large employers	Years 2-3	Begin phased overtime threshold changes and pay-maintenance requirements.
Medium employers	Years 3-4	Transition with technical assistance and sector-specific scheduling rules.
Small employers	Years 4-6	Longer transition, targeted temporary support, and hardship review.
National review	End of Year 5	Independent assessment of employment, prices, productivity, wages, and business closures.

Success Metrics

- Real weekly earnings and total compensation.
- Employment, vacancies, hiring, and business formation or closure.
- Productivity per hour and output per worker.
- Overtime usage and involuntary scheduling.
- Consumer prices in labor-intensive sectors.
- Employee retention, injuries, absenteeism, and reported well-being.
- Service access and wait times in essential industries.

Chapter 3: Productivity, Innovation, and Shared Prosperity

The Principle

> *When technology and better organization allow the economy to produce more value, workers should share in those gains through compensation, security, opportunity, or time.*

The Blueprint does not assume that every business can provide unchanged weekly pay for fewer hours without adapting. The workweek reform depends on productivity, management, technology, training, and reduced turnover. It should be paired with an economic transition strategy rather than treated as an isolated mandate.

Business Transition Tools

- Tax incentives for qualifying productivity investments that preserve employment and compensation.
- Low-cost financing for small businesses purchasing modern equipment or software.
- Community-college, union, and employer partnerships for training workers in new systems.
- Technical assistance for scheduling, process redesign, cybersecurity, and digital adoption.
- Temporary transition credits linked to payroll retention rather than permanent subsidies.
- Public reporting to prevent companies from claiming benefits without delivering the promised investment or employment outcomes.

Automation and Workers

Automation should not be treated as either inherently harmful or inherently beneficial. It can eliminate dangerous or repetitive tasks, improve quality, and lower costs. It can also displace workers or concentrate gains among owners if transitions are ignored. The Blueprint supports rapid retraining, portable credentials, wage insurance pilots for displaced workers, and incentives for firms that redeploy employees rather than immediately dismissing them.

The Fair Deal

Participants	Responsibility
Workers	Perform high-quality work, develop skills, follow safety rules, and participate honestly in productivity improvements.
Employers	Invest in workers and equipment, maintain safe workplaces, report results honestly, and share gains fairly.
Government	Keep rules predictable, enforce competition, fund infrastructure and education, and remove unnecessary barriers without abandoning essential protections.

Guardrails

- No permanent subsidy for ordinary payroll costs.
- No tax credit without independently verifiable investment or employment conditions.
- No requirement that small firms adopt technology inappropriate to their business.
- No use of artificial intelligence or workplace surveillance that violates privacy, discrimination, labor, or safety law.
- Public sunset reviews for every transition program.

Chapter 4: Housing Supply, Homeownership, and Market Concentration

The Current Housing Picture

Housing conditions vary widely across the country, but national indicators show continued affordability pressure. The median sales price of new houses sold in May 2026 was $424,900. Single-family housing starts were running at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 882,000 in May 2026, below the prior year's rate. These figures describe new construction and do not represent every local market or all existing-home sales.

Institutional ownership is also geographically concentrated. GAO found that in six studied metropolitan areas, institutional investors owned less than 1 percent to 3 percent of all single-family homes in 2024, but 4 percent to 22 percent of single-family rental homes. The report was not designed to produce a national estimate for every market.

Federal policy changed during 2026. A January executive order restricted the use of federal programs to facilitate certain purchases of single-family homes by large institutional investors, and Congress subsequently enacted legislation intended to further curb institutional ownership. The Blueprint should evaluate those measures before adding duplicative restrictions.

The Blueprint Principle

> *Housing markets should reward construction, responsible investment, and entrepreneurship while preserving meaningful opportunities for families to own homes and preventing excessive local concentration of market power.*

Build More Homes

Restrictions on investors cannot solve a shortage by themselves. The country must increase the supply of housing, including starter homes, single-family homes, townhomes, duplexes, small multifamily buildings, apartments, senior housing, accessible housing, and workforce housing.

- Prioritize federal infrastructure support for communities that permit sufficient housing near jobs and transportation.
- Create predictable review deadlines while preserving legitimate safety, accessibility, and environmental standards.
- Support modular and manufactured housing that satisfies durable construction and consumer-protection standards.
- Tie construction incentives to delivery of regionally attainable units, not merely project announcements.
- Avoid large demand-only subsidies in severely supply-constrained markets unless construction expands concurrently.

Institutional Ownership Limits

The Blueprint supports limits based on local market concentration, not a simplistic national cap on the number of homes a company may own. A fixed nationwide limit could be too strict in one market and ineffective in another, while affiliated entities could be used to evade it.

- Require disclosure of beneficial ownership and affiliated entities.
- Measure institutional ownership as a share of single-family homes and single-family rentals within defined metropolitan or county markets.
- Apply escalating acquisition restrictions, taxes, or antitrust review when concentration exceeds evidence-based thresholds.
- Provide individual owner-occupants a first-look period for certain federally controlled or federally backed properties.
- Preserve narrowly defined treatment for newly built rental communities that add supply rather than purchasing existing owner-occupant homes.
- Distinguish large institutions from families and small local landlords.

Renters and Honest Pricing

Rental advertisements should disclose the full unavoidable monthly cost before an application fee is collected. Mandatory technology, package, trash, amenity, parking, insurance, and administrative charges should not be hidden behind an artificially low advertised rent. Optional services may be listed separately when they are genuinely optional.

First-Time Homebuyers

- Targeted down-payment and closing-cost assistance based on need and regional conditions.
- Homebuyer education and plain-language mortgage disclosures.
- Strong appraisal, inspection, fair-lending, and anti-steering protections.
- Coordination with new construction so assistance does not merely bid up a fixed supply.
- Continued support for effective programs such as the VA home loan guarantee.

Housing Scorecard

- Median rent and home price relative to median income.
- Housing permits, starts, completions, and vacancy rates.
- Starter-home construction and first-time homeownership.
- Institutional ownership by local market.
- Full advertised rent versus mandatory final monthly charges.
- Mortgage delinquency, foreclosure, and homelessness outcomes.
- Average permitting and project completion time.

Chapter 5: Banking, Credit, and Financial Opportunity

This chapter is intentionally presented as a policy framework rather than a complete regulatory code. Banking and credit rules require additional review of existing federal statutes, agency authority, consumer access, and the possibility that poorly designed caps could restrict credit for higher-risk borrowers.

The Blueprint Principle

> *Financial institutions should succeed by helping customers save, borrow, invest, and build—not through hidden costs, confusing terms, or products designed to keep households trapped in debt.*

Plain-Language Financial Disclosures

Before a consumer accepts a credit card, mortgage, auto loan, personal loan, or buy-now-pay-later agreement, the provider should display a short standardized summary of the annual percentage rate, total expected interest under common payment patterns, all mandatory fees, penalty rates, promotional expiration dates, and the consequences of minimum-only payments.

Credit Cards

- Require prominent disclosure of the estimated payoff period and interest cost when only minimum payments are made.
- Require promotional balance-transfer offers to disclose transfer fees, promotional duration, post-promotional APR, and payment allocation rules.
- Limit deceptive or duplicative fees while preserving the ability to price legitimate lending risk.
- Require advance notice of material rate or fee changes and simple cancellation procedures.
- Strengthen enforcement against marketing that obscures the true cost of credit.

Auto and Consumer Lending

- Disclose the financed price, cash price, total interest, loan term, and cost of add-on products separately.
- Prohibit misrepresenting optional products as required for financing.
- Require clear refund rules for canceled service contracts, warranties, and insurance add-ons.
- Strengthen action against payment packing, discriminatory markups, and falsified income or application information.

Competition and Access

The Blueprint supports banks, credit unions, community lenders, and responsible financial technology. Consumer protection should not become a barrier that only the largest institutions can afford. Regulations should be scaled where possible, while core rules against fraud, discrimination, unsafe practices, and deceptive pricing apply consistently.

Financial Education

Financial literacy should be taught before adulthood and reinforced through free public resources. Students should learn budgeting, taxes, credit scores, compound interest, loans, insurance, renting, mortgages, retirement accounts, and common scams. Education is not a substitute for fair rules, but it helps people use financial tools more effectively.

Emergency Savings and Retirement

- Encourage automatic enrollment in workplace retirement plans with the right to opt out.
- Expand simple, portable retirement options for workers without employer plans.
- Permit carefully designed emergency-savings accounts alongside retirement plans.
- Maintain access to diversified investments and low-cost index funds.
- Require clear fee and conflict-of-interest disclosures for investment products.

Financial Health Scorecard

- Households with emergency savings.
- Credit-card balances, delinquency, and payoff periods.
- Auto-loan and mortgage delinquency.
- Consumer bankruptcy and debt-collection complaints.
- Retirement participation and median balances by age.
- Small-business credit availability.
- Fees paid by income group and product type.

Chapter 6: The National Economic Scorecard

No single statistic can describe national prosperity. The Blueprint would publish an annual dashboard using consistent historical methods and clear revisions when data change.

Measure	What it tells the public
Real median household income	Whether typical household resources are rising after inflation.
Disposable personal income	What residents have available after current taxes to spend or save.
Employment and labor-force participation	Whether people are finding and seeking work.
Real weekly earnings	Whether pay is keeping pace with prices and hours.
Housing affordability	Whether rents and home payments are manageable relative to income.
Productivity	Whether the economy is producing more value per hour of work.
Business formation and survival	Whether entrepreneurship is expanding and firms remain viable.
Household debt and savings	Whether growth is creating security or dependence on borrowing.
Poverty and mobility	Whether people can improve their economic position.
Inflation	Whether purchasing power is stable.
Federal deficit and debt-to-GDP	Whether public finances are sustainable.

The report should distinguish national averages from regional and household differences. It should not declare that an economy is successful merely because GDP or markets rose, nor declare failure merely because one indicator weakened temporarily.

Appendix A: Implementation and Fiscal Guardrails

Policy Classification

Policy	Status in this draft	Further work required
32-hour workweek with maintained weekly pay	Core Blueprint proposal	Formal labor-market modeling, legal drafting, industry exemptions, and transition cost estimate.
Overtime after 32 hours	Core Blueprint proposal	FLSA amendment, exempt-worker rules, collective bargaining review.
Productivity transition support	Supporting proposal	Budget cap, eligibility standards, sunset dates, and anti-fraud design.
Housing supply incentives	Core Blueprint proposal	Federal-state-local authority, grant design, and environmental review.
Institutional ownership limits	Core principle; thresholds unresolved	Interaction with 2026 executive and legislative changes, market-level data, and antitrust analysis.
Rental fee transparency	Core Blueprint proposal	Preemption and state consumer-law coordination.
Banking and credit reforms	Framework under development	Detailed CFPB, Federal Reserve, OCC, FDIC, FTC, and state-law review.

Fiscal Rules

- Permanent programs require permanent funding or permanent savings.
- Illustrative savings are not counted as revenue until independently verified.
- Temporary business-transition assistance must expire automatically unless Congress affirmatively renews it after a public evaluation.
- Policies should be modeled under cautious, expected, and adverse scenarios.
- The integrated ten-year budget will be completed in the Legislative and Constitutional Companion rather than duplicated in each policy book.

Appendix B: Book Ownership and Cross-References

This volume owns economic outcomes and household-market policy. It does not rewrite the institutional chapters established in Book One.

Topic	Primary home	How Book Two uses it
Federal budgeting and agency audits	Book One	Applies the fiscal rules without restating the entire federal budget framework.
Treasury and tax administration	Book One	References tax administration when discussing incentives and household income.

Justice and antitrust enforcement structure	Book One	Defines economic conduct that should be investigated without redesigning DOJ.
Education Department governance	Book One	References workforce development but leaves agency design to Book One.
Healthcare administration	Book One / expanded benefits in Book Three	Treats healthcare affordability as an economic measure without repeating the full healthcare system.
Housing market and homeownership	Book Two	Primary policy home.
Wages and workweek	Book Two	Primary policy home.
Banking and consumer credit	Book Two	Primary policy home.
Family, children, education experience	Book Three	Not repeated here except where costs affect economic security.

Primary and Authoritative Sources

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8. The White House. Executive Order: Stopping Wall Street from Competing with Main Street Homebuyers. https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/01/stopping-wall-street-from-competing-with-main-street-homebuyers/ January 20, 2026. Cited only to describe executive policy; policy claims are not treated as neutral empirical findings.

9. U.S. Government Accountability Office. Congress Curbs Institutional Investors' Ownership of Single-Family Homes. We Looked at This Trend. https://www.gao.gov/blog/congress-curbs-institutional-investors-ownership-single-family-homes.-we-looked-trend Published July 13, 2026. Used to note recent legislative change; final statutory text should be reviewed before publication.

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11. U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Disposable Personal Income. https://www.bea.gov/data/income-saving/disposable-personal-income Accessed July 15, 2026.

12. U.S. Census Bureau. Housing topic and affordability data resources. https://www.census.gov/topics/housing.html Accessed July 15, 2026.

Source and Publication Caution

This is a working draft, not an official government cost estimate or legal opinion. The 32-hour workweek, housing concentration thresholds, business-transition measures, and financial regulations require formal economic modeling, statutory drafting, constitutional review, and integrated scoring. Current data and laws should be rechecked immediately before public release.

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