

To Save Our Economy, We Must Start With Local Government

By Cliff Maloney, CEO of Citizens Alliance

For years, conservatives have rightly sounded the alarm on the massive waste, fraud, and abuse plaguing our federal government. Through initiatives like DOGE—the Department of Government Efficiency—we’ve exposed just how bloated and broken our federal bureaucracy has become.

And while those revelations have been invaluable in waking up Americans to the scale of the problem, it’s become clear that national efforts alone are not enough. DOGE is now being dragged by the entrenched political establishment it was sent to clear out, this means the rest of us have to step up.

If we are serious about saving our economy and restoring traditional conservative values—and I am, we need to take that same energy and precision and bring it to the local level.

The truth is, real, lasting change starts in our communities—not in the halls of Washington.

The federal government is slow, unaccountable, and disconnected

Anyone who’s spent more than five minutes dealing with federal agencies knows just how inefficient the system has become.

Even when we uncover corruption or inefficiency through watchdog groups like DOGE, actually turning those discoveries into meaningful reform is a slow and often futile process. The layers of bureaucracy, special interests, and political posturing can stall or completely derail any genuine effort at change.

Worse yet, because the federal government controls monetary policy, it can temporarily shield itself from the consequences of poor financial decision-making by printing money or manipulating interest rates. This may delay the pain, but it magnifies the eventual economic fallout—and it’s the American people who ultimately pay the price.

And that’s exactly what we’re all experiencing today.

State governments aren't any better than the federal government

Let's not kid ourselves—state governments have picked up plenty of bad habits from Washington. Even though they're closer to the people, they're still bloated, unaccountable, and plagued by waste, fraud, and abuse.

So what makes them different from the federal swamp?

Simple. They don't have a printing press. They can't just paper over their failures with fake money and debt. When state governments screw up, the pain hits fast and hits hard—pensions collapse, taxes skyrocket, and basic services like roads and infrastructure fall apart.

It's not just mismanagement—it's a direct threat to taxpayers, and it's why we need watchdogs at every level of government.

And in the process, citizens are left to pick up the pieces. We can see the outcome of this in virtually every state, and it's especially apparent in liberal states, like Illinois, New York, and California, where

But there's a silver lining here: because the pain is felt more directly, voters tend to respond more swiftly—and that gives us a unique opportunity.

Local government is where the rubber meets the road

I've always believed that the most powerful political force in this country isn't a politician or a lobbyist—it's a well-informed, well-organized local citizen. That's where our focus at Citizens Alliance has turned in recent years: activating and empowering everyday Americans to take ownership of their communities, and to demand better from their local governments.

Local governments aren't immune to corruption or incompetence, but they are far more responsive to pressure.

Why? Because local politicians live among us. They shop at the same grocery stores, attend the same churches, and send their kids to the same schools. They're not cloistered behind security details or far removed in the halls of Congress.

They hear directly from their constituents—and that means they're held more accountable.

When local voters show up, speak out, and get organized, change happens, and it's often fast.

Change at the local level can ripple upward

One of the biggest myths in American politics is that change must come from the top down, but history shows us that the opposite is true.

Whether it was the school choice movement, limited government, or even tax policy—some of the most impactful policy shifts in recent decades began at the local or state level before gaining national traction. When local governments adopt sound fiscal practices—like balanced budgets, transparency mandates, and spending caps—it not only benefits that community, but it creates a blueprint for other cities, states, and even Congress to follow.

That's why we need to focus our efforts at the grassroots. When we create models of success at the local level, we create momentum for national reform.

Real engagement—not just marketing

Too many politicians rely on top-down tactics to win elections and push policies: flashy ad campaigns, hollow PR messaging, and soulless social media posts. These methods may generate headlines, but they don't generate change.

At Citizens Alliance, we believe in a different strategy—one that goes back to the basics of grassroots activism. We believe in engaging directly with voters, at their doorsteps, in their neighborhoods, and at their community centers.

Strategies like door-knocking, which we executed at Citizen's Alliance for the Pennsylvania House of Representatives when all of the political "experts" said couldn't be done, may not be glamorous, but they are powerful.

It creates personal connections. It allows us to explain—in *real terms*—how fiscal irresponsibility impacts real lives. And most importantly, it helps us identify and mobilize the voters who are most likely to demand accountability from their elected officials.

In just the last year, our volunteers have knocked on over 8 million doors across the country, registering voters, educating citizens, and building relationships to win 418 elections. We've seen firsthand how effective this approach can be in turning passive citizens into active participants in their local government.

Building a new culture of accountability

One of the most rewarding aspects of our local engagement efforts is seeing people realize they truly have the power.

When we talk with a single mother struggling with rising property taxes, or a retired veteran worried about benefits to their family, and we connect the dots for them—it's like flipping a switch.

That's the beginning of a true grassroots movement. And as more Americans engage locally, we begin to build a new culture—one rooted in accountability, transparency, and fiscal responsibility.

But it doesn't stop at voting.

We encourage citizens to attend city council meetings, run for school board, challenge bloated budgets, and organize watchdog groups in their towns. That's what a government *of the people, by the people, for the people* really looks like.

Restoring our republic starts locally

We live in a time when traditional conservative values—limited government, fiscal responsibility, personal accountability—are under assault from every direction. But those values won't be restored by sending another career politician to D.C. with empty promises.

They'll be restored when we, as citizens, reclaim ownership of our local institutions. When we refuse to accept wasteful spending in our town halls. When we demand that our mayors, county commissioners, and school boards respect taxpayers and protect our freedoms.

This movement won't be built by political consultants or campaign donors—it will be built at the grassroots level, by individual citizens like you, working together.

What you can do right now

If you're reading this and wondering how you can get involved, here are a few steps to take immediately:

1. **Get informed.** Start attending your local government meetings. Read your city's budget. Learn where your tax dollars are going.
2. **Get organized.** Connect with like-minded citizens. Host a town hall. Form a local watchdog group.
3. **Get active.** Knock on doors. Talk to your neighbors. Encourage voter registration. Run for office yourself.
4. **Hold officials accountable.** Don't let them off the hook. Ask tough questions. Demand transparency. Expect results.

We have the tools. We have the energy. What we need now is the will to act. The time is now.

The revolution starts at your doorstep

I didn't get into this fight because I wanted to sit in air-conditioned offices debating theory.

I got into it because I believe in the American people. I believe in our ability to govern ourselves. And I believe that the most effective way to fix this broken system is to start where it matters most—*right here at home*.

The next great American revival won't be led by elites or dictated from above.

It will be led by patriots on the ground—citizens who love this country, who care about their communities, and who are ready to take a stand. So let's get to work. Let's knock on the doors. Let's expose the waste. Let's demand better.

Because if we want to save this country, we have to start at the front steps of our own neighborhoods.

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