A House Divided
What Would We Have to Give Up to Get the Political System We Want?

Option 1: Reduce Dangerous, Toxic Talk

The problem is that the way we talk is poisoning public life. The "outrage industry" rewards people for saying and doing the most extreme things. News networks and social media must do much more to control hate speech. We need to stop rewarding outrage and bring back common sense.

Possible Actions:
- Facebook and other social media platforms and internet service providers should kick out users who use slurs or provocation or threaten physical violence.
- Require all television networks to provide opposing views on controversial issues.
- Make websites and television stations liable for allowing ads that make unsanctioned or false charges about political candidates.
- Protect freedom of speech on college campuses by protecting professors, students, and speakers who express unpopular or "politically incorrect" views.

Drawbacks:
- Internet companies could become the "language police," threatening people's right to express themselves freely.
- This reduces complex debates to "pro" and "con" voices and means that important voices may never be heard.
- This would unleash a flood of lawsuits from every frustrated politician.
- Students can't learn and thrive in a disrespectful or intimidating atmosphere where they feel threatened and intimidated.

What else?

Option 2: Make Fairer Rules for Politics and Follow Them

The problem is that wealthy, powerful special interests game the political system, making it impossible to find compromise. Candidates play to their bases rather than trying to reach a broader range of people. It's time to reduce the power of money in politics, correct the flaws in our system that reward such extreme partisanship, and restore the tradition of compromise that has served this nation well in the past.

Possible Actions:
- Remove the burdensome registration and scheduling barriers that make voting difficult for so many Americans. Too many people are being shut out.
- Revise the 1965 Voting Rights Act to forbid new laws or requirements that could make it harder for minorities or poor people to vote.
- Create nonpartisan commissions to draw election districts based on population patterns so politicians don't design them to favor their own party.
- Strictly limit how much elected groups and individuals can contribute to candidates and PACs, even by Constitutional amendment if necessary.

Drawbacks:
- This makes voting more like a choice than the duty it is. These requirements push us against voter fraud and manipulation.
- Limiting requirements like showing a photo ID could leave the voting system vulnerable to manipulation or fraud.
- In some legislative districts, minority groups would lose power.
- This would limit the ability of all kinds of groups and donors to participate, including those fighting for causes and candidates we ourselves support.

What else?

Option 3: Take Control and Make Decisions Closer to Home

The problem is that our most important decisions are being made too far away from home. And when the national government is embroiled in political inighting, problems go unsolved. It's time to put decision-making back in the hands of people who live and work closely together, share goals and values, and can act quickly.

Possible Actions:
- Dramatically reduce cumbersome federal regulations on the environment, energy, and transportation. Local residents have a much better understanding of what their communities need.
- Give states money without restrictions for major federal programs such as Medicaid and education so states can adapt them to fit their own needs.
- Local governments should rely much more on community groups, organizations, and churches to address issues like crime, health, and welfare.
- Return full control and funding of K-12 public education to local communities and the states so residents can determine what's best for their own children.

Drawbacks:
- We will forever get improvements in the environment, energy, and transportation with individual states going every which way.
- We could lose protections for major federal programs such as Medicaid and education that are now tied to national policies.
- Vulnerable Americans could suffer in communities that do not have the resources or willingness to take on these problems.
- Federal grants help schools with low-income students, and some communities may have to raise property taxes to close the gap.