




Glenn Beck's Common Sense

It is becoming increasingly obvious to more  and more people that government in America is continuing to expand as freedom contracts. But is it time for a revolution? Radio host and Fox News personality Glenn Beck thinks so. And he expounds upon that thesis in his new book, *Glenn Beck's Common Sense: The Case Against an Out-of-Control Government, Inspired by Thomas Paine*.

His short book — like Thomas Paine's anonymous pamphlet of the same name that helped inspire the first American Revolution — is a call to action for lovers of liberty. But instead of encouraging a declaration of independence from an oppressive foreign monarch and the formation of a new government, Beck urges that people unite through peaceful means and put the existing federal government back where it belongs: within the constraints of the U.S. Constitution. "Today we find ourselves back in 1776," writes Beck in his opening note. "Silence has gotten us nowhere so it's once again time for our collective voice to make a simple yet powerful demand ... *Don't Tread on Me*."

He blasts both political parties, the "money-changers," and the alleged "change" that has supposedly arrived in Washington, explaining that the new "conductor" has simply increased the speed at which the "misdirected train" of state is headed. "America has let thieves into her home and that nagging in your gut is a final warning that our country is about to be stolen," he writes.

The Founding Fathers understood that people's rights are endowed by their Creator, not governments. This is highlighted in the first chapter of the book. Later in the book, Beck points out that America is a republic, not a democracy. He notes that the Founding Fathers believed democracy led to mob rule, and that the current tax structure is making a mockery of the rule of law — a critical element of republican government.

He claims that since today's Americans were simply handed the blessings of liberty, they do not understand the sacrifices involved in obtaining it or its value, leading them to give it away for perceived security. He suggests that the government is once again out of step with the Laws of Nature, criticizing everything from the state of education and the national debt to the loss of national sovereignty and the departure from the free-market system.

Beck makes a compelling case that it is the duty of Americans who understand the problems to correct them. People today must serve as the "guardians of freedom," because others have failed to do so. "If you understand the threat to the Republic, it is your duty to wake up your neighbors," he explains.

America is in a "life-and-death struggle for personal freedom and national liberty," Beck writes. But he advises citizens to stay calm when contemplating solutions to so-called "emergencies" that politicians use to further their agenda. "Panic will not lead this ship to a safer port, only farther out to sea, into far deeper and more dangerous waters."

Beck's contempt for the current crop of politicians becomes increasingly obvious as the book goes on. After mocking the House's fiasco with bounced checks at the House bank, he claims politicians "are like



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some alien life form who believes they are of higher intelligence, don't have to live by the same rules, and have no personal shame." He proceeds by describing them as parasites, noting that they feed off the "sweat and blood" of Americans while buying their loyalty with "pork" and pet projects. Finally, Beck goes so far as to accuse them of "borderline" treason.

The national debt, the government's \$100 trillion in unfunded liabilities, and the trillions of dollars of risk taxpayers have been exposed to as a result of the bailouts is a prevalent theme throughout the book — as it should be. The financial condition of America is a very serious threat, not only to liberty but possibly even to the nation's very survival. "Common sense tells us that you can't solve a debt crisis with more debt or solve a spending crisis with more spending," he points out.

The book devotes an entire chapter to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the 67,000-page U.S. tax code, calling it the "political weapon of choice." After briefly describing its history, Beck ridicules the inclusion of the word "service" in the name, calling it "smiley-faced fascism."

After dealing with taxation, Beck's version of *Common Sense* describes America's political class. Noting that Congressmen make more money than 95 percent of American families and provide themselves with outlandish benefits that private-sector employees could never dream of receiving, he refers to Congress as America's aristocracy. This creates a "bubble" around them that isolates them from the reality of their constituents.

And that bubble is hard to burst. According to Beck, campaign finance laws are created to keep those in power entrenched. Another part of their scheme involves what is known as "gerrymandering." In this process, representatives create districts that they believe will favor their reelection. "Which begs the question: Are we choosing our representatives, or are they choosing who gets to vote for them?" He goes on to describe the careers of some of the "political elite" in Congress — some of whom have been in power more than 50 years — before making his case for imposing term limits.

But in arguing on behalf of term limits, he overlooks the fact that it would apply to constitutionalists such as 11-term Congressman Ron Paul as well as to those who have abused their oath of office, that Congressmen who cannot run for reelection because of term limits become lame-duck Congressmen who have no incentive to pay attention to their constituents, and that term-limiting Congressmen out of office does not solve the underlying problem of an uninformed and misinformed electorate that enables bad Congressmen to get elected in the first place. There is much common sense in Glenn Beck's *Common Sense*, but not on every page.

Next, *Common Sense* targets "the cancer of progressivism." According to Beck, so-called progressives "seek to redefine, reshape, and rebuild America into a country where individual liberty and personal property mean nothing if they conflict with the plans and goals of the State." He claims that their ideology — which he refers to as a disease — has infected both parties, the bureaucrats, lobbyists, trade unions, and even corporations.

Some of the tools used by the progressives don't immediately stand out to people because they seem unrelated to politics, according to Beck. One of these tools is global-warming hysteria and radical environmentalism in general, which he calls the vehicle to more government control. He also claims that children are essentially being brainwashed to join in the alarmism, concluding that these efforts are aimed at breaking the spirit.

Beck goes on to challenge a myriad of other government policies and anti-freedom propositions as well. After dealing with gun control and the continuing infringement upon the right to keep and bear arms,



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the book cites Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union as examples of what this infringement can lead to. After highlighting a variety of very real problems in the book, Beck chooses a new, unrelated, and surprising enemy: those who promote the notion of a global conspiracy. In an attempt to equate them with people who advocate violence, he cautions readers to “stay away from these individuals and those ideas” and also says that they “will eventually seek to impose their rule and lifestyle on all of us.” But after warning about those who claim a global conspiracy is afoot, he goes on to expose the increasing efforts to centralize power at the global level through the United Nations and assorted treaties. Does he really believe that the machinations of the global elites to consolidate power through the UN and other institutions of world order have nothing to do with — dare we say it — conspiracy? Here again, common sense is lacking in Glenn Beck’s *Common Sense*.

In the book’s final chapter, Beck once again calls for a revolution, a “second American Revolution.” But rather than the use of muskets, he encourages readers to liberate their thinking, leave their political parties, and stop believing the lies emanating from Washington.

“NOW IS THE TIME,” he writes. “We must draw a line in the sand and let our voices be heard loud and clear.” He explains that if America falls, liberty for mankind may very well disappear forever. “Renew that promise first made during a hot summer in Philadelphia and mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.”

Finally, he dedicates a few final pages to the promotion of his “9.12 Project.” And after Beck’s portion of the book comes a reprint of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* pamphlet. An inspiring read to be sure.

Glenn Beck’s modern-day *Common Sense* is well written and thought provoking. The use of mild humor throughout the book makes the dreadful nature of the realities he describes easier to absorb. Although the book has significant shortcomings — e.g., its commendation of term limits and its condemnation of Americans who warn against conspiracy — it is still worth reading in this reviewer’s opinion. Indeed, it is refreshing to find someone like Beck, with his high stature in the media, warn against America’s downward spiral into collectivism. And of course, as with any book advancing a political point of view, it should be read with a critical eye and — yes — common sense.

[Glenn Beck’s Common Sense: The Case Against an Out-of-Control Government, Inspired by Thomas Paine](#), by Glenn Beck, New York: Mercury Radio Arts/Threshold Editions, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2009, paperback, 174 pages (including Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*), \$11.99.



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