

THE INK OF LIBERTY

Why Reading, Writing, and Publishing Books Are the Most Patriotic Acts You Can Do Before the 2026 Midterm Elections

For every person who ever thought,
"There is nothing I can do."
You can write a book.

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Foreword: A Pamphlet for Our Time

On January 10, 1776, a forty-seven-page pamphlet changed the course of history. Thomas Paine -- an immigrant Englishman who had been in the American colonies barely fourteen months -- published *Common Sense*. By summer, he had persuaded a critical mass of ordinary Americans to demand full independence from the British Crown. The Declaration of Independence was signed six months later. Not because of a battle. Not because of a march. Because of a book.

That pamphlet sold between 50,000 and 120,000 copies. Historians estimate it reached, through reading aloud and shared copies, approximately five percent of the entire literate white population of the colonies. It caused -- in the words of historian Eric Foner -- a torrent of letters, pamphlets, and broadsides that transformed public opinion in mere months.

We are living in another such moment.

This is a book about why reading, writing, and publishing are not hobbies. They are the most powerful forms of civic participation available to ordinary Americans -- and they are precisely the tools that the forces behind Project 2025, Agenda 47, and MAGA are working hardest to suppress.

The 2026 midterm elections arrive in November. Democrats need to flip only a handful of House seats for a majority. The generic ballot already tilts five to seven points Democratic. But enthusiasm alone does not win elections. Informed, motivated, connected citizens do. And those citizens are built -- one page at a time.

This book is written for every American who has shouted at a television screen and wondered whether it made any difference. It didn't. But this book might.

Introduction: Noise Is Not Enough

Let us be honest about something that most political activists are reluctant to admit: **the marches are not working fast enough. The social media posts**

evaporate by nightfall. The viral videos are forgotten before breakfast. The shouting matches on cable television harden positions rather than change them. Unfocused, unled demonstrations -- however large and heartfelt -- have not stopped the systematic dismantling of American democratic institutions that is currently underway.

This is not a counsel of despair. It is a call to upgrade our tools.

Trump, Project 2025, Agenda 47, and the broader MAGA movement thrive on noise and turmoil. Chaos is their native habitat. Fury plays into their hands. When democratic citizens spend their energy generating heat, the movement that aims to remake American government along authoritarian lines generates light -- legislative wins, judicial appointments, executive orders, and a rewritten administrative state -- in the dark space that outrage leaves behind.

What they cannot survive is an informed, organized, literate citizenry that reads deeply, writes clearly, talks to neighbors

persuasively, and shows up at the polls with a mandate in hand.

This is the story of why books -- reading them, writing them, and distributing them -- are the most consequential political acts available to ordinary Americans in the months between now and November 2026. And it is a practical guide to doing exactly that, no matter your age, your background, or your prior experience with writing.

You do not need to be Kamala Harris, who sold 350,000 copies of *107 Days* in its first week. You do not need to be Gavin Newsom, whose *Young Man in a Hurry* topped the bestseller lists within days of release. You need to be yourself -- a citizen with a story, a community, and a purpose.

Thomas Paine was a corset-maker. He wrote *Common Sense* anyway. So can you.

Chapter 1: The Founders Wrote Their Way to Freedom

It is fashionable in some circles to treat the American Revolution primarily as a military event -- a story of battles at Lexington, Trenton, and Yorktown. But the revolution was won on paper before it was won on the battlefield.

The Founders were, above all else, writers. Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence. James Madison wrote the majority of the Federalist Papers. John Adams corresponded furiously with every intellectual in the Atlantic world. Benjamin Franklin ran printing presses. Thomas Paine wrote Common Sense.

The pamphlet was the social media of the eighteenth century -- cheap to produce, fast to distribute, personal in voice, and capable of reaching across class and geography in ways that formal political debate could not. Paine wrote in the vernacular. He wrote as if talking to a neighbor over a fence. He used plain language to argue complex ideas about sovereignty, tyranny, and the rights of ordinary people.

The result was not merely opinion. It was mobilization. Common Sense persuaded hundreds of thousands of Americans -- most of whom had been ambivalent about independence -- to demand a clean break with monarchy. Within six months, the Continental Congress voted for independence.

Paine's follow-on series, The American Crisis -- thirteen pamphlets written during the darkest years of the war -- kept the revolutionary spirit alive when the military situation looked hopeless. Washington ordered the first Crisis paper read aloud to his troops at Valley Forge. It was a book, not a bugle, that kept the Continental Army fighting.

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What Paine understood -- and what we must re-learn -- is that writing is not merely communication. It is a transformation. A well-made argument, clearly stated and widely circulated, changes how people see the world. It changes what they believe is possible. It changes what they are willing to do.

The Tea Party -- which gave rise to the modern MAGA movement -- understood this. They wrote books. They founded magazines. They built a media ecosystem that took three decades to mature and is now among the most powerful propaganda machines in the history of democratic politics. They were patient. They were organized. They were prolific.

The answer to that machine is not louder shouting. It is better writing.

Chapter 2: The Proven Link Between Reading and Voting

This is not merely an argument from history or intuition. The relationship between reading and political participation is one of the most thoroughly documented findings in American social science.

A ProPublica analysis of county-level data from the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections found a striking pattern: as the percentage of people with low literacy skills in a county increased, voter turnout consistently decreased. Conversely, counties with higher literacy levels showed higher voter turnout in every election examined. The correlation was strong and statistically significant across all three elections ($r = 0.60$, $p < 0.0001$).

A separate study published through the federal education research database reached a complementary conclusion: the amount of hard news read and years of education were the only statistically significant predictors of voting behavior among registered voters. Not income. Not race or ethnicity. Not television viewing. The single best predictor of whether someone votes -- given that they are already

registered -- is whether they regularly read substantive news.

Research published in peer-reviewed journals confirms this pattern for young people as well. Adolescents who demonstrate greater civic knowledge -- knowledge of American governance, knowledge of current events -- show a statistically significant increase in their reported likelihood of voting as adults. The habit of reading and the habit of voting develop together.

Political scientist Henry Milner, in his landmark work *Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work*, synthesizes data from the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand to argue that a population's level of civic literacy is the single best predictor of its level of political participation. More predictive than income inequality. More predictive than electoral system design.

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The implication for the 2026 midterms is direct: every book a potential voter reads between now and November increases their probability of voting. Every book club formed

in a retirement community, a church basement, or a neighborhood association creates a node of informed civic engagement that multiplies outward.

And every book a citizen writes and publishes -- however short, however locally distributed -- seeds a conversation that would not otherwise happen. It is a contribution to the civic commons that no protest march can replicate.

Chapter 3: What Project 2025 Fears Most -- and Why

If books were politically irrelevant, the architects of Project 2025 would not be trying so hard to eliminate them.

In the 2023-2024 school year alone, PEN America documented over 10,000 instances of individual books being banned in American schools—nearly triple the number from the previous year. These are not isolated incidents driven by concerned parents. They are the visible tip of a coordinated national strategy.

Project 2025 -- the Heritage Foundation's 900-page blueprint for restructuring the federal government -- directly targets libraries. It identifies schools and libraries in its opening pages as among the threats posed by what it calls the ruling and cultural elite. It proposes reducing federal oversight of library systems and reallocating those responsibilities to states and localities that have already demonstrated their willingness to ban books and punish library personnel.

PEN America's analysis concludes that if fully implemented, Project 2025 would ramp

up book banning, impose a more pervasive climate of censorship on schools and college campuses, and effectively silence educators and students at the national level.

Agenda 47 -- Donald Trump's own campaign manifesto for his second administration -- calls for shattering what it terms the left-wing censorship regime. In practice, this means banning federal agencies from flagging election disinformation, firing officials who have worked to counter false narratives, and investigating academic researchers who study misinformation. The Brennan Center for Justice has documented how this agenda specifically targets the agencies that protect election integrity.

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Think carefully about what this tells you.

The most powerful political movement in contemporary American history -- one that controls the executive branch of the federal government -- is expending enormous resources to keep books out of schools, remove them from library shelves, and suppress the institutional infrastructure that verifies and spreads accurate information.

They are not doing this because books are irrelevant.

They are doing this because books are the one tool they have not yet fully figured out how to control. Social media platforms can be pressured. News networks can be intimidated. Universities can be defunded. But a self-published paperback distributed among a community of neighbors -- containing clear arguments, documented facts, and a call to civic action -- cannot be unprinted by an executive order.

Write the book.

Chapter 4: Your Voice Is a Weapon They Cannot Confiscate

There is a particular kind of political despair that afflicts well-intentioned Americans in moments of crisis. It sounds like this: What difference can I possibly make? I am one person. I do not have a platform. I am not famous. No one will listen to me.

Thomas Paine had no platform when he arrived in Philadelphia in 1774. He was forty years old, had failed at every prior career he had attempted, and knew almost no one in the colonies. He had one thing: the ability to write clearly and passionately about ideas that mattered.

The American founders understood that democracy requires not just participation — it requires voice. Alexis de Tocqueville, writing after his 1831 tour of the United States, marveled at Americans' need to form associations, write pamphlets, publish newspapers, and argue publicly. He called this associational drive the foundation of

democratic civilization — the skill on which all other civic abilities depend.

But Tocqueville also warned of what he called soft despotism -- a condition in which Citizens, overwhelmed by the complexity of governance and the feeling of individual helplessness, gradually retreat from civic life and cede control to whoever is willing to exercise it. They do not lose their freedom in a single dramatic blow. They surrender it slowly, one evening of silence at a time.

We are living in Tocqueville's warning.

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Your voice -- your specific voice, shaped by your specific life, your specific community, your specific understanding of what is at stake -- cannot be confiscated. It cannot be banned. It cannot be algorithmically suppressed by a platform that answers to a billionaire. It can be put into a book and placed into the hands of every person you know.

You do not need to change the mind of a senator. You need to change the mind of three people in your neighborhood who were not planning to vote. A book can do that. A

conversation sparked by a book can do that. A reading group that meets monthly between now and November can absolutely do that.

The 2026 elections may well be decided by margins of a few thousand votes in competitive districts and counties. A well-organized reading community of fifty people - each of whom reads two or three civic books between now and November, each of whom has a dozen conversations as a result - is a political force. Scale that across retirement communities, faith communities, neighborhood associations, and book clubs across the country, and you have a movement.

Chapter 5: Reading As a Civic Duty

Most Americans think of voting as their primary civic duty. It is not. It is their most visible civic duty. The deeper, more foundational duty is to become informed enough to vote wisely -- and to help others do the same.

Reading is not a luxury. It is the engine of informed citizenship. But reading in a democracy requires more than the passive absorption of information. It requires active engagement: reading to understand, to question, to synthesize, and ultimately to act.

Here is a practical framework for reading as a civic practice:

Read to Understand the Threat

Before you can counter an agenda, you must understand it. Project 2025 is a public document. Agenda 47 is a public campaign manifesto. Read them -- or read the well-documented analyses produced by the Brennan Center, PEN America, the ACLU, and the Guttmacher Institute. Understand what is

actually being proposed, not just the outrage-generating headline version.

Read to Understand the Alternative

The books currently climbing the bestseller lists -- Kamala Harris's *107 Days*, Gavin Newsom's *Young Man in a Hurry*, Josh Shapiro's *Where We Keep the Light*, Cory Booker's *Stand* -- are not just political positioning. They are arguments about what America could be. Read them as you would read a platform. Ask what they propose. Ask whether it persuades you. Ask whether it would persuade your neighbor.

Read to Equip Yourself for Conversation

The research is clear: the amount of substantive political writing a person reads is the single strongest predictor of voting behavior. But reading also equips you for the most effective form of political persuasion available to ordinary citizens -- one-on-one, neighbor-to-neighbor conversation. People do not change their minds because of television advertisements. They change their minds because someone they trust, who clearly

knows what they're talking about, sat down with them and made an honest case.

Read to Pass It On

One of the oldest and most powerful civic traditions in American life is the reading community -- the church group that reads together, the neighborhood club that meets monthly, the book exchange at the library. These communities are not incidental to democracy. They ARE democracy at the local level: citizens gathering to think together, disagree respectfully, and arrive at shared understanding.

Tocqueville saw this in 1831. The founders relied on it in 1776. We need it again, urgently, in 2026.

Chapter 6: Writing As a Civic Act

Writing a book about your community, your values, your political understanding of this moment -- is not vanity. It is a service.

Writing clarifies thought in a way that no other activity does. When you sit down to explain something in writing -- really explain it, for a reader who does not already agree with you -- you are forced to interrogate your own assumptions. You discover what you actually believe versus what you merely feel. You find the gaps in your argument. You develop the discipline of evidence.

But the civic value of writing goes far beyond the writer's own development. A book -- even a short, self-published paperback distributed among a community of a few hundred people -- creates a permanent, portable, shareable argument. It does not disappear when the news cycle moves on. It does not get lost in an algorithm. It can be lent, gifted, read aloud, quoted, argued over, and passed from hand to hand indefinitely.

History is full of small books that have changed big things. Thomas Paine's Common Sense was just 47 pages long. Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin started as serialized installments in an abolitionist newspaper. Silent Spring by Rachel Carson sparked the modern environmental movement. The Port Huron Statement, which inspired a generation of progressive activism in the 1960s, began as a committee draft and eventually changed a whole generation.

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You do not need to write a masterpiece. You need to write something true, clear, and useful to someone in your community who is confused, disheartened, or unsure whether their vote matters. ***Let's Write an Amazon Book!: A Guide for CCRC Residents and Anyone with a Story to Tell***

What would you say to that person if you sat down with them for an hour? Say that. In writing. Give it a cover, a title, and an ISBN. Publish it on Amazon KDP. Give copies to your neighbors. Leave it in your community libraries (Each has a shelf for resident authors). Submit a free PDF to Chatterwood.

Donate it to your local library. Teach a workshop about it at your retirement community.

That is a political act of the highest order.

Chapter 7: Publishing Is Not Elitist -- It's Democratic

For most of American history, publishing a book required either wealth or the approval of a small number of gatekeepers -- editors, agents, and publishing house executives -- who decided what ideas deserved circulation. This has changed completely in the last decade.

Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) allows any American citizen -- any age, any background, any level of prior publishing experience -- to write a book, format it according to straightforward guidelines, and make it available for purchase and distribution worldwide within 72 hours. The service is free. Amazon prints each copy on demand and ships it directly to the buyer. The author receives royalties of up to 60 percent of the list price for paperback editions.

This is genuinely revolutionary. It is the closest modern equivalent to Paine's print shop on Market Street in Philadelphia -- a mechanism for bypassing institutional

gatekeepers and speaking directly to the public.

KDP does not ask your credentials. It does not require a literary agent. It does not charge an upfront fee. It requires a manuscript, a cover, and the willingness to share what you know.

The Basics of KDP Publishing

For a standard trade paperback -- the most appropriate format for a civic or political book -- Amazon KDP recommends the following specifications:

- Trim size: 6 x 9 inches (the most common and readable trade paperback size)
- Interior margins: 0.875" on the inside (gutter), 0.625" on the outside, 0.75" top and bottom
- Font: A readable serif font such as Garamond, Georgia, or Times New Roman at 11-12 point
- Line spacing: 1.15 to 1.5 for maximum readability
- File format: PDF or Microsoft Word (.docx) uploaded directly to the KDP platform

- Cover: A 300 DPI image at the exact dimensions KDP specifies for your trim size and page count
- Pricing: Most civic/political nonfiction paperbacks are priced between \$9.99 and \$16.99
- Distribution: KDP offers expanded distribution to libraries, bookstores, and other retail channels at no additional cost

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Once your book is listed, it receives an ISBN (Amazon assigns one at no charge), appears in Amazon's search results, and can be ordered by anyone, anywhere in the country. You can also order author copies at the cost of printing -- typically \$2 to \$4 per copy for a 100-page paperback -- and distribute them yourself at community events, book clubs, or civic gatherings.

This is not a vanity project. This is democracy in action.

Chapter 8: The Books Already Changing the 2026 Midterms

The politicians who are most likely to define the 2026 midterm elections and shape the 2028 presidential race have all reached the same conclusion: books matter. Not tweets. Not press releases. Books. Kamala Harris published *107 Days* in September 2025. It sold 350,000 copies in its first week -- the fourth-best memoir debut since 2023 - - and appeared on the New York Times Hardcover Nonfiction bestseller list for fifteen consecutive weeks by January 2026. Her memoir builds an argument about American values and what this election season requires of every citizen.

Gavin Newsom's *Young Man in a Hurry* - - released February 24, 2026 -- shot immediately to number one on the USA Today bestseller list. More than 91,000 copies sold in the first week through organic retail channels. The book is not just a memoir of California's governor. It is a national argument, distributed at bookstore scale, for a vision of America's future.

Josh Shapiro's ***Where We Keep the Light*** -- released January 27, 2026 -- landed on the New York Times Bestseller list within days. Senator Cory Booker's ***Stand*** -- growing out of his record-setting 25-hour Senate floor speech -- debuted at number 5 on the Publishers Weekly Hardcover Nonfiction list the week of April 5, 2026.

On the Republican side, Senator Tom Cotton's ***Seven Things You Can't Say About China*** climbed to number 1 on the New York Times bestseller list after its February 2025 release -- demonstrating that the conservative movement has not forgotten how to use books as instruments of political persuasion.

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These are not isolated gestures. They are a coordinated civic movement, conducted in print. The politicians building toward 2026 and 2028 are doing so through books because they know -- as the founders knew, as Paine knew -- that a well-made argument in print outlasts any news cycle and reaches people that social media cannot.

You are part of that same tradition every time you pick up one of these books. You are part of it again when you share it, discuss it, or write your own.

Chapter 9: How to Write and Publish Your Own Book Before November

This is the chapter where excuses run out. You have the evidence. You have the platform. You have something to say. Here is how to do it.

Step 1: Choose Your One True Subject

The most powerful civic books are specific: one story, one community, one argument, told clearly. What do you know that others need to hear? What have you experienced -- in your community, your workplace, your retirement community, your faith community -- that illuminates something larger about what is at stake in this election? Start there.

Step 2: Write It Short and Say It Plain

A 60-to-100-page paperback is entirely sufficient. Paine's **Common Sense** was 47 pages. Your book does not need to be comprehensive. It needs to be honest, clear, and readable by a neighbor sitting in an

armchair on a Sunday afternoon. Write at the level of intelligent conversation. Avoid jargon. Use specific examples. Tell stories.

Step 3: Get a Second Pair of Eyes

Ask a trusted friend, family member, or fellow community member, or listserv to read a draft. You need someone who will tell you honestly where the argument is unclear, where you assume too much, and where you have written something that will not land with a reader who doesn't already agree with you. This is the most important editing you will do.

Step 4: Format for KDP

Set your document to 6 x 9 inches. Use the margins described in Chapter 7. Use a clean, readable font. Add a title page, a copyright page, a brief table of contents, and an author bio. Save as a .DOCX. Use KDP's Cover Creator tool (free) to build a professional-looking cover. Be sure to delete or leave off any copyright notice. Encourage plagiarism, copying, commenting, and rewriting. It is very, very easy to correct and republish a new version. Save your .DOCX

for that purpose, or use the one KDP keeps for you.

Step 5: Upload and Publish

Create a free account at kdp.amazon.com. Click on "Create a new title." Follow the step-by-step upload prompts. Preview your book in KDP's online previewer before approving it. Set your price, but do not choose expanded distribution; you want to keep control of your work. Click "Publish." Your book will be available for order within 72 hours, though it usually takes only a day.

Step 6: Order Author Copies and Deploy

Order a batch of 20-50 author copies at cost (typically \$2-\$5 each for a short paperback). Distribute them at community events, book clubs, and civic gatherings. Leave copies in community common areas, faith community narthexes, and local library free-book exchanges. Host a reading discussion. Invite neighbors. Make the book a conversation. Use KDP to publish a low-priced Kindle version.

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You are not trying to become a bestselling author. You are trying to change the minds of the people around you -- specifically enough, clearly enough, urgently enough to move them to vote. That is entirely achievable with a short, honest, well-made book.

Chapter 10: Building a Reading Community Where You Live

A book read alone is valuable. A book read and discussed in community is transformative.

The reading community -- the neighborhood book club, the faith community discussion group, the retirement community civic circle -- is one of the oldest and most effective instruments of civic life in American history. It was in reading communities that abolitionism grew from a fringe movement into a national moral argument. It was in reading communities that the suffrage movement organized. It was in reading communities that the civil rights movement built the intellectual infrastructure for its legal strategy.

Start with Two People

You do not need a formal organization, a budget, or a committee. You need one other person who is also worried and also reads. Propose meeting once a month to discuss one book together. That is the entire beginning.

Choose Books with Urgency

Select books that are directly relevant to the election: the candidate memoirs listed in Chapter 8, the civic engagement guides in Chapter 11, and self-published local voices from your own community. Mix them: one well-known political memoir, one policy-focused analysis, one locally written civic book. The variety keeps the conversation alive.

Make It Welcoming, Not a Lecture

The most effective reading communities are not political rallies. They are genuine conversations -- places where people feel safe to admit confusion, ask questions, and disagree respectfully. The goal is not to confirm existing views. The goal is to sharpen thinking. People who leave feeling smarter and more informed are far more likely to vote than people who leave feeling harangued.

Expand Deliberately

Once you have a functioning group of even four to six people, begin inviting neighbors who are not yet engaged. Not the already-

converted. The ones who say they have given up on politics. The ones who say their vote doesn't matter. Those are the citizens whose presence on Election Day will decide the outcome.

Document and Share

Keep notes on your discussions. Write up your group's conclusions -- what you agreed on, what you disagreed on, what questions you still have. Post them on your community listserv or bulletin board. Better yet, compile them into a short self-published document and distribute it. You will be amazed at the conversations it starts.

Chapter 11: The Reading List -- Books Worth Your Time Before November

This is a working reading list -- curated for the citizen who wants to be fully informed and fully equipped for the 2026 midterms. Read what speaks to your situation. Share what moves you.

By the Candidates and Leaders

107 Days by Kamala Harris (2025): The most commercially successful political memoir of 2025 -- 350,000 copies sold in the first week. Harris's account of her 107-day presidential campaign is also a meditation on what democratic leadership requires in a crisis.

Young Man in a Hurry: A Memoir of Discovery by Gavin Newsom (2026): The California governor's memoir of growing up with dyslexia and learning to lead. Reached number 1 on the USA Today bestseller list in its first week.

Where We Keep the Light: Stories from a Life of Service by Gov. Josh Shapiro (2026): A memoir of civic service from one of

the most-watched governors in America. Contains important revelations about the 2024 Democratic VP selection process.

Stand by Sen. Cory Booker (2026): Grew out of Booker's record-setting 25-hour Senate floor speech. A call to ten civic virtues illustrated through American history. Debuted at number 5 on the Publishers Weekly list.

Seven Things You Can't Say About China by Sen. Tom Cotton (2025): Essential reading for understanding the national security arguments being made by the most hawkish wing of the Republican Party. Know your opposition.

Understanding the Threat

Mandate for Leadership: The Conservative Promise by The Heritage Foundation (2023): This is Project 2025 itself. Every politically engaged citizen should read at least the introduction and the chapters on education and libraries. Understand what you are opposing.

How Democracies Die by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt (2018): The political science classic on the quiet erosion of

democratic norms. More relevant in 2026 than when it was written.

Twilight of Democracy by Anne Applebaum (2020): A brilliant, personal account of how educated, intelligent people come to support authoritarian movements. Essential for understanding neighbors who have not yet come back.

The Anatomy of Fascism by Robert O. Paxton (2004): The definitive scholarly account of how fascist movements come to power. Short, clear, and deeply illuminating.

The Case for Democracy

Democracy in America by Alexis de Tocqueville (1835): Still the greatest foreign analysis of American civic life ever written. Read the sections on associations, the free press, and the dangers of what Tocqueville called soft despotism.

Common Sense by Thomas Paine (1776): Forty-seven pages that changed the course of history. Available free online. Read it and ask yourself: what is your Common Sense for 2026?

Our Common Purpose by American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2020): A serious, nonpartisan blueprint for democratic renewal. Specific, measurable, and actionable.

Afterword: What We Owe Each Other

The 250th anniversary of Common Sense passed in January of this year. For two and a half centuries, Americans have lived -- imperfectly, unevenly, and often unjustly, but persistently -- under the constitutional framework that Paine's pamphlet helped make possible. That framework is now under the most serious internal stress it has faced since the Civil War.

This is not hyperbole. It is the considered judgment of political scientists, constitutional lawyers, and historians who have spent their careers studying how democracies fail. The threats are documented. The strategies are public. The mechanisms of dismantlement are already operating.

The question is not whether the threat is real. The question is what we, as ordinary citizens, are willing to do about it.

Marching is not enough. Posting is not enough. Donating is not enough, though all of these things matter. What is needed is the deep, patient, durable civic work of building an informed, connected, motivated citizenry

that will show up in November 2026 -- and in every election after that -- with a clear understanding of what is at stake.

Books are how that citizenry is built. They always have been. They are how the founders built a revolution. They are how the suffragists built a movement. They are how the civil rights generation built a legal strategy that dismantled Jim Crow. And they are how you -- right now, in your community, with the tools available at kdp.amazon.com - - can do your part.

Read. Write. Publish. Discuss. Share.

The ink of liberty is still wet. Pick up the pen.

Appendix: KDP Quick-Start Checklist

Use this checklist when you are ready to publish your book on Amazon KDP:

- [] Write your manuscript in Microsoft Word or Google Docs
- [] Set page size to 6 x 9 inches
- [] Set margins: 0.875" inside (gutter), 0.625" outside, 0.75" top and bottom

- [] Use a serif font: Garamond, Georgia, or Times New Roman, 11 or 12 pt
- [] Set line spacing to 1.15-1.5
- [] Add title page, copyright page, table of contents, and author bio
- [] Save as a PDF for upload
- [] Create a cover using KDP Cover Creator (free) or Canva
- [] Create a free KDP account at kdp.amazon.com
- [] Click Create a new title > Paperback
- [] Upload your manuscript .DOCX and use KDP's free Cover Creator
- [] Preview the book in KDP's free online previewer -- check every page
- [] Set your price (\$5.00-\$14.99 recommended for short civic books)
- [] Do not Select Expanded Distribution to reach libraries and bookstores
- [] Click Publish -- your book is live within 24-72 hours
- [] Order author copies at cost for local distribution

[] Share the Amazon link with your community networks

[] Host a reading discussion. Keep the conversation going.

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For questions about the publishing process, Amazon KDP's help center at kdp.amazon.com/help provides step-by-step guidance on all topics. The Author Central portal at authorcentral.amazon.com allows you to manage your author profile and track sales. Ask Perplexity.ai about anything!

About the Author

Mel Haas is a retired Aeronautical Engineer, civic advocate, and self-published author living in Silver Spring, Maryland. A resident of a continuing care retirement community, Mel has published more than thirty books on topics including civic engagement, political literacy, technology education for seniors, and the threats posed to American democracy.

***The Ink of Liberty* is a call to fellow voters of every age to recognize that their most powerful tool is not a protest sign -- it is a pen.**