

LICENSE TO GOVERN

By Lev Neymotin, PhD

ABSTRACT

This white paper introduces a civic reform proposal titled *License to Govern* (LTG), calling for the establishment of a mandatory Certificate of Training in Governance (CTG) for all individuals seeking public office.

Echoing the standards of other critical professions—aviation, medicine, architecture—we argue that governance, which shapes the nation's destiny and determines individual freedoms, must demand at least equivalent rigor in training and certification. The objective is not to limit democracy, but to elevate it by ensuring baseline civic competence, constitutional fluency, and ethical grounding in all public servants. We aim to safeguard our republic not through elitist control, but through an enforceable minimum of preparedness, free from partisan indoctrination or bureaucratic gatekeeping. If we require licenses for those who touch our bodies or homes, how can we accept less from those who wield power over our very lives?

This paper includes an expanded justification for such a reform, a full curriculum proposal for both a year-long course and an intensive two-week boot camp, and a plan for implementing the CTG across local, state, and federal levels. Crucially, we confront and reject the dangers of replacing democratic choice with ideological obedience. The CTG is designed to ensure integrity, not conformity. The License to Govern is not a step toward dictatorship; it is a rescue mission for a republic at risk of incompetence.

1. INTRODUCTION: A REPUBLIC IF YOU CAN EDUCATE IT

Would you trust an unlicensed pilot to fly your family cross-country? Would you allow someone with no medical training to perform heart surgery? Would you hire a man with no electrical training to wire your house?

Of course not. So why do we allow people with zero formal education in governance to run our cities, our states, and our nation?

It is a bitter irony: the more power a position holds over the lives and freedoms of millions, the less formal competence it requires. While surgeons, teachers, engineers, and airline pilots are held to strict standards, elected officials are not. They are often selected not for their knowledge, but for their charisma, their rhetoric, or their alignment with tribal ideologies. Their resumes are TV soundbites. Their qualifications? A campaign machine and the ability to say what donors and voters want to hear.

Let's be blunt: this is no longer sustainable. Incompetent governance is not a partisan issue—it is a systemic failure. I, as a conservative, am appalled by the ascendancy of individuals such as AOC and her cohort known as the Squad, who wield influence grossly disproportionate to their civic literacy and real-world experience. I am equally appalled by radical progressive candidates like Madani running for mayor in New York City on platforms soaked in utopian slogans, unmoored from fiscal reality or constitutional bounds. These figures, in my view, cheapen and damage the very image of patriotic public service that conservatives cherish.

But let me be clear: the problem is not their politics—it is their lack of civic qualification. And this criticism extends equally to demagogues of all stripes. My demand is simple and universal: *Prove you are prepared to govern before you are allowed to govern.*

Democracy must never mean rule by the ignorant.

Of course, there is a danger in any effort to standardize public service training: the danger of creating a new elite or a caste of bureaucratic clones. We confront this danger directly. The CTG and LTG system is not a filter of ideology, but a foundation of civic literacy. It is not a loyalty oath, but a competence test.

CTG must never become a tool of exclusion or partisan enforcement. Instead, it must serve as the civic equivalent of a driver's license: attainable, nonpartisan, and enforced with minimal bias.

We do not need to brainwash candidates. But we do need to make sure they understand:

- The Constitution they swear to uphold,
- The limits and responsibilities of government,
- The basics of law, budgeting, crisis response, ethics, and history.

These are not partisan values. They are civic necessities.

2. PROPOSED CURRICULA FOR COURSES AND BOOT CAMP

The goal of the LTG system is to create a tiered educational framework culminating in a CTG—Certificate of Training in Governance. This certification must be:

- Free and publicly available,
- Rigorously nonpartisan,
- Tiered by level of governance (local, state, federal),
- Focused on practical knowledge, not abstract theory,
- Assessed by a structured, test-based system.

2.1 COURSE CURRICULUM (1-Year, Max)**Foundational Module (12 Weeks)**

- U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights: Text, Context, Interpretation
- American Civic Structure: Federalism, Checks and Balances
- Rights vs. Responsibilities of Elected Officials

Public Finance and Budgeting (8 Weeks)

- Budget Construction and Fiscal Policy
- Reading and Interpreting Financial Statements
- Case Studies in City, State, and Federal Budgeting

Ethics and Law (6 Weeks)

- Codes of Conduct and Conflict of Interest
- Campaign Finance Laws
- Administrative and Constitutional Law Overview

Governance in Practice (8 Weeks)

- Crisis Management and Emergency Powers
- Regulatory Systems and Oversight Functions
- Role of the Judiciary and Administrative Law Judges

Communications and Media (4 Weeks)

- Principles of Transparent Public Communication
- Media Ethics and Propaganda Detection

Civic Engagement (4 Weeks)

- Participatory Democracy and Listening to Constituents
- Organizing Town Halls and Public Forums

Final Capstone Project (4 Weeks)

- Design a mock governance program (e.g., a municipal budget, emergency response plan, or public health policy) and present it to a review panel.

2.2 BOOT CAMP FORMAT (2 Weeks, Intensive)

Day 1–3: The Constitution in Action

- Rapid immersion in U.S. Constitution and Federalist Papers
- Mock debates and constitutional challenges

Day 4–5: Ethics and Decision-Making

- Historical case studies in ethical failure and success
- Group simulations of real-world political dilemmas

Day 6–8: Budgeting and Policy Design

- Creating and defending a mock budget under constraints
- Exploring tradeoffs in public policy under limited resources

Day 9–10: Crisis Management Simulation

- Simulated emergencies (e.g., natural disaster, public health crisis, civil unrest)
- Chain of command, communication protocols, legal boundaries

Day 11–12: The People You Serve

- Roleplay with diverse stakeholders
- Listening and persuasion workshops

Day 13–14: Examination and Certification

- Written test, oral defense, and group assessment

Graduates receive a CTG valid for five years, renewable through continuing education.

2.3 FORMAT AND CONTENT OF CTG

The Certificate of Training in Governance is not a diploma. It is a baseline clearance, equivalent to a license:

- It guarantees the individual has completed structured civic education.
- It is mandatory for eligibility to *run* for public office—not to *vote*.
- It is renewable and revocable based on gross misconduct.

Levels:

- **Level I (Municipal)** – Town councils, school boards
- **Level II (State)** – State assembly, governors, statewide commissions
- **Level III (Federal)** – Congress, Senate, Executive Branch appointments

Each level incorporates progressively more complex content and simulated experiences.

3. IMPLEMENTATION WITHOUT INDOCTRINATION

The most immediate and legitimate concern with the LTG proposal is that it might become a vehicle for ideological conformity or administrative tyranny. But this can be avoided through institutional design:

- **Independent Oversight:** CTG development and assessment must be conducted by a board composed of retired judges, constitutional scholars from across the political spectrum, and randomly selected certified citizens.
- **Transparency:** All instructional materials, test questions, and grading rubrics must be public.
- **Public Access:** Courses and boot camps must be free, online, and open for all to review.
- **Appeals Process:** Any rejection of CTG must include a clear, appealable explanation.

The system should empower—not restrict—the democratic process by ensuring candidates are prepared, not filtered by ideology.

4. CONCLUSION: A LICENSE FOR LEADERSHIP

We do not let doctors experiment on our bodies without training. We do not let pilots take the yoke of a 737 without flight hours. But we allow strangers with no civic knowledge to make laws, raise taxes, deploy troops, and suspend liberties.

It is time to end this madness.

The License to Govern is not an attack on democracy. It is its maturation. A democracy where civic knowledge is optional is not sustainable. This system, centered around the CTG, ensures public servants are not puppets—brainwashed or otherwise—but competent stewards of public trust.

The CTG will not create philosopher-kings. But it may stop the rise of ignorant tyrants, left or right. And that would be a good start.

Lev Neymotin, PhD is a scientist, civic observer, and a passionate defender of constitutional responsibility in public service.