

LICENSE TO GOVERN: PATH TO LEGISLATION

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INTRODUCTION: From Proposal to Policy

Introducing *License to Govern (LTG)* formally across the entire landscape of democratic governance is a monumental yet necessary endeavor. LTG proposes that any individual seeking to hold public office—whether elected, selected, or appointed—must obtain a **Certificate of Training in Governance (CTG)**. The requirement would span all levels of government: municipal, state, and federal. This reform is not cosmetic; it is foundational.

Implementing LTG would require a constitutional, legal, and administrative undertaking that touches every layer of American political structure. It would involve legislatures, courts, constitutional scholars, and ultimately, likely be reviewed by the **Supreme Court of the United States**. Despite the challenges, the potential rewards are extraordinary: restoring competence, trust, and functionality to our civic institutions. LTG offers a form of *insurance*—that those empowered to govern possess a verified understanding of the structures, responsibilities, and ethical bounds of their office.

This document provides a detailed analysis of the legal, constitutional, and procedural pathways necessary for implementing LTG statutes across the three levels of U.S. governance.

1. CONSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS

1.1 Federal Constitution: Eligibility for Public Office

The U.S. Constitution defines minimal eligibility for federal elected office:

- **President** (Art. II): Must be a natural-born citizen, at least 35 years old, and a resident within the U.S. for at least 14 years.
- **Senator** (Art. I, Sec. 3): Must be at least 30 years old, a citizen for at least 9 years, and an inhabitant of the state when elected.
- **Representative** (Art. I, Sec. 2): Must be at least 25 years old, a citizen for at least 7 years, and an inhabitant of the state.

These criteria are exclusive. In *U.S. Term Limits v. Thornton* (1995), the Supreme Court ruled that states cannot impose additional qualifications for federal office beyond what the Constitution specifies.

Implication: LTG **cannot** be made mandatory for federal elected office (Congress or the Presidency) through federal or state legislation alone. A **constitutional amendment** would be required. This presents a significant but not insurmountable legal barrier.

Strategic Guidance: Begin with voluntary CTG programs for federal candidates — those who earn certification could receive endorsements or priority placement in debates, media coverage, and party support. Over time, this could normalize the expectation of civic training.

1.2 State Constitutions and Laws

States have greater autonomy in defining eligibility for their own offices, such as governors, state legislators, and attorneys general. Many states already impose additional requirements like residency duration or clean criminal records.

- **Training Requirements:** States can enact laws that require training or certification for **appointed officials** and **civil servants**. This is already common in areas like law enforcement and education.

- **Ballot Access Tools:** States could offer incentives such as ballot prominence, voter guide inclusion, or public funding to candidates who voluntarily complete CTG programs.

Implication: States are key battlegrounds for implementing LTG. Legislatures could pass statutes requiring CTG for appointments and integrating voluntary certification for elected roles.

Strategic Guidance: Draft model legislation that can be adopted state-by-state. Start with “opt-in” CTG pilot programs and phase-in mandatory requirements for appointed officials. Build public support to expand it to elected offices.

1.3 Municipal Governance

Cities and towns operate under state charters, giving them flexibility to set internal governance standards through:

- **Ordinances** mandating training for elected and appointed officials.
- **Ethics reform packages** that include CTG as a new standard.
- **Charter amendments** to make CTG a requirement for running for city council, school board, etc.

Implication: Municipalities are the lowest-hanging fruit for enacting LTG. Cities and towns can adopt it through local ordinances and serve as demonstration projects.

Strategic Guidance: Partner with civic-minded mayors and city councils to pilot CTG programs. Promote these municipalities as national models of governance reform.

2. PATH TO LEGISLATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 Development Phase

- **Draft model LTG legislation** that provides a tiered structure for municipal, state, and federal levels, tailored to local authority.
- **Engage constitutional scholars** early to ensure proposals align with legal precedent and avoid overreach.
- **Create a CTG Board of Standards** to design curriculum and testing criteria. The board should be bipartisan and include educators, retired judges, and former public servants.
- **Pilot programs** should be launched in volunteer states or municipalities to refine curriculum and process, and gather data.

2.2 Public Advocacy Phase

- **Public awareness campaign** should use clear, values-driven messaging: “No one should govern without training.”
- **Build bipartisan coalitions** by framing LTG as pro-democracy, not partisan. Engage veterans, educators, technologists, and civic leaders.
- **Think tanks and NGOs** can provide research, legitimacy, and funding. Seek partnerships with institutions like Brookings, Heritage Foundation, and CivicNation.

2.3 Legislative Phase (State and Local)

- **Introduce legislation** in friendly states. Focus on CTG as part of existing ethics or transparency reform packages.
- **Incentivize adoption** by tying CTG to campaign matching funds, tax credits for campaign donors, or ballot placement priority.
- **Encourage municipalities** to adopt CTG through council resolutions or citizen initiatives. Link it to public trust, ethics, and performance.

2.4 Federal Phase

- **For appointed federal officials:** Congress or the Executive Branch can require CTG as part of the vetting or confirmation process.
- **For civil servants:** The Office of Personnel Management can integrate CTG into hiring criteria, professional development, or promotion tracks.
- **For elected federal officials:** Start the long-term process of drafting a **constitutional amendment** to authorize mandatory civic training. Build coalitions across states to call for an Article V Convention or lobby Congress.

2.5 Legal Review and Court Challenges

- **Prepare for constitutional challenges** using legal scholars and civil liberties watchdogs.
- **Defend CTG** as a non-discriminatory, educational prerequisite—analogous to a bar exam, not a political filter.
- **Build in due process:** a transparent appeals process for candidates who are denied certification due to scoring or conduct issues.

3. MAJOR PLAYERS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Stakeholder	Role in LTG Implementation
State Legislatures	Primary arena for passing LTG laws for appointments and incentivized certifications
City Councils & Mayors	Can adopt LTG for local governance, pilot programs, and ethical reform
Federal Agencies	Especially Executive Branch and OPM; can embed CTG in hiring and appointment standards
Office of Personnel Management	Oversees federal workforce, ideal vehicle for integrating CTG into civil service
Courts	Expected to hear challenges to LTG laws; need airtight legal rationale
Supreme Court	May be asked to rule on federal eligibility implications or limits of state authority
CTG Board of Standards	Ensures neutrality, transparency, and rigor in CTG content and certification process
Universities & Law Schools	Natural partners for developing and hosting CTG courses and boot camps
Civic Organizations	Key partners in outreach, fundraising, training, and advocacy
Media & Public Figures	Vital to shaping public opinion and combating misinformation

4. CONCLUSION: FROM IDEA TO LAW

The *License to Govern* initiative is ambitious, but necessary. It is a civic infrastructure project—one that builds competence into the very foundation of public service.

Change must start where the law allows: in our cities, counties, and states. By showing that civic literacy improves governance at the local level, we build momentum for wider adoption.

At every stage, transparency, nonpartisanship, and accessibility must be non-negotiable. CTG is not a filter for ideology—it is a floor of competence. A republic survives not only by electing leaders, but by ensuring they understand the republic they are trusted to serve.

Let CTG become as normal as a driver's license: a basic civic contract between leaders and the people they serve.

Prepared as a legislative roadmap in support of the white paper "License to Govern" by Lev Neymotin, PhD.