

SAGAMORE

Introduction

Jay Hein

On July 4, 1776, we declared our independence and our interdependence: independence from a colonial power that considered us subjects, not citizens. Interdependence among fellow citizens whose duty to each other would be the means to a more perfect union.

Our team at Sagamore produced this book to celebrate our nation's Quarter Millennium and to showcase some of our work investing in America's next 250 years. We are deeply grateful for the precious inheritance of Western Civilization, and our think tank is dedicated to its renewal. While our contribution may be modest, we believe these ideas and innovations illuminate a path to securing a confident, self-governing, and prosperous America—one capable of extending liberty's promise for generations to come.

Our friend Yuval Levin's book, *A Time to Build*, sets the scene for what you are about to read. He wrote that we must focus "...on the actual lives of our actual, concrete communities. It will require that we turn more of our attention homeward, away from raging national controversies and toward the everyday lives of our living moral communities—toward family, school, and congregation; toward civic priorities and local commitments; toward neighbors in need and friends in crisis."

Saint Augustine delivered a very powerful life hack when he introduced the notion of rightly ordered loves. For him (and for me), it requires loving God above all else, followed by a love for others and then the things of this world that we get to build and shape. This book digs deep with questions about what a good life and a good society are made of.

We face serious threats from within and without. Wall Street is thriving while Main Street is struggling. We have more access to the world, and yet many suffer from diminishing relationships. A majority of those polled by the Wall Street Journal said that the American Dream is not accessible to them.

This book offers three lanes of action to build more onramps to the good life. We need to build better communities, we need to build a new defense industry to bolster innovation and reshore manufacturing, and we need to build better citizens who use the fullest amount of their powers for the things that matter most.

Building Better Communities

Former U.S. Senator Ben Sasse was diagnosed with a terminal disease at the end of 2025, and he has been making rare but powerful appearances on *60 Minutes*, podcasts, and other platforms in the months leading up to our nation's Semiquincentennial. Given mere months to live, Sasse has used wit and wisdom gained from his classical education, battle-tested in the Senate and university leadership, to reflect on what matters most.

Often asked about the state of American politics, Sasse argues that small towns hold the promise of renewal far more so than what happens in Washington, DC. With the keen analysis of an academic, he contrasts the "thick" communities in real places with real people with the "thin" communities of political association.

Edmund Burke wrote a book in 1790 to dispute the French Revolution's belief in a political (or abstract) solution to a good society. Rather, Burke introduced the idea of "little platoons" (family, local church, community groups) as the places where we acquire civic responsibility and virtue; in other words, the skills to be the type of good citizen and neighbor that our Founders bet on preserving our Republic.

Sasse has used Burke's vision to both explain the means to a good society and to explain why his talks have gone viral. We live in a world addicted to our screens and increasingly isolated from those who think differently and who represent different demographic groups. Indeed, a decreasing number of us spend time with the elderly, and the dying process is mysterious and scary. Thus, they are tuning into Sasse's shows to glimpse an unknown territory.

Of course, that territory is quite well known in small towns where we build relationships with young and old, rich and poor, Republican and Democrat. The young are taught not to see neighbors through the "thin" dimensions of their politics or other abstract associations (excepting sports team loyalties!). Neighbors, especially in small towns, simply become the people who know your name and join you in life's ups, downs, and other transitions.

Sagamore's Building Better Communities portfolio is featured in the first section of this book to offer ideas and innovations to bolster small-town life in America. The strategy

begins with real estate, deepens into neighborhoods, and elevates to questions of what it takes for all our neighbors to flourish.

Eric Doden served as commerce secretary under Indiana Gov. Mike Pence. Together, they designed one of the nation's most significant policy reforms to give rebirth to small- and mid-sized cities. While we need our major cities to thrive, three out of every four Hoosiers live in towns with populations under 100,000. Many of these communities face persistent challenges—population decline, underutilized downtowns, and limited opportunities—that strain public resources and weaken Indiana's long-term economic competitiveness.

Initially launched as Regional Cities and then scaled by Pence's lieutenant governor, who succeeded him in a program called READI, the twin initiatives deployed just over \$1 billion, with local investments being estimated at a stunning 26:1 return on investment.

Doden's first story is an inspiring vision of government as catalytic capital. And his second story follows with a roadmap for responsible capitalism. In a program Doden leads at Sagamore called Renewing Cities, our core belief is that communities should revitalize their Main Street at the scale of dozens of buildings owned locally in a land trust model.

Myriad downtown strategies sponsored by the government or fueled by philanthropy fail to turn around a city's economic and population declines because they are not tied to market forces. Renewing Cities builds a capital stack that includes public and philanthropic capital alongside the private capital that can sustain and scale development.

Sagamore's real estate strategy restores health and vibrancy to Indiana's historic downtowns by combining local ownership, capacity building, and catalytic capital. Our model empowers communities to take control of their built environment, unlock investment, and create lasting economic momentum.

That said, rebuilding Main Street is not enough. Communities need to be equally committed to downtown development and neighborhood revitalization. We honored Rocket Mortgage founder Dan Gilbert with Sagamore's Celebrating American Ideas award for his investments in Detroit's distressed central business district and failing neighborhoods. Gilbert moved his headquarters from the suburbs to the city a few years before Detroit declared bankruptcy in 2013—the largest ever in US history.

Gilbert's response has been \$7.5 billion over the past 15 years to get the Motor City moving again. These investments have transformed the city's skyline by completely renovating 140 properties primarily through adaptive reuse—turning historic and abandoned buildings into

modern offices, residential, and retail uses. He has also deployed \$500 million to eliminate unjust property tax debt for tens of thousands of struggling Detroiters and funded home repairs for many others. Such strategic philanthropy will stabilize neighborhoods, encourage homeownership, and prevent the loss of generational wealth in the city. Gilbert's story of responsible capitalism is followed by two inspiring examples of sports-driven community and economic development. This first one was launched by the Green Bay Packers and Microsoft, who teamed up to prove several practices counter to the Silicon Valley method of tech investing:

- Economic impact and financial returns need not be a trade-off;
- The model can be generated by a region's strengths rather than an abstract investment thesis;
- The strategy is so unique to the region's ecosystem that it cannot be copied, but the principles can be replicated in many different regions.

TitletownTech is the venture capital firm that was created to move this new approach forward. It is a \$95 million investment and emerging-technology platform spanning three Wisconsin cities and leveraging the assets from several other regions throughout the United States. Steve Case lauded TitletownTech in his book, *Rise of the Rest*, supporting his own view that the future upside of venture-investing in America resides between the coasts.

As Green Bay Packers executive Ed Policy was beginning to write a white paper that led to the creation of TitletownTech, the city of Indianapolis was preparing to host the Super Bowl in February 2012 and transition from its focus on real estate-driven downtown development to neighborhood revitalization.

The former was ignited by Richard Lugar in the 1970s. Better known as a distinguished United States senator, Lugar's political career took flight as Indianapolis mayor in part due to his vision to make sports tourism the centerpiece of his economic development strategy. His successors continued to build on this model, which was fueled by a very generous and strategic corporate community. The Super Bowl represented the jewel in this crowning achievement.

And yet, the bigger story of Super Bowl XLVI was something known as the Legacy Project. The NFL awards \$1 million in grant funding to Super Bowl host cities as a goodwill gesture to benefit corners of the city existing outside the bright lights of the game's big stage. These

grants normally build a youth activity center or some other good cause that will be a meaningful benefit to a neighborhood.

But Indianapolis wanted to change the game. In their bid to win the right to host the Super Bowl, committee chairman Mark Miles collaborated with LISC executive director (now Sagamore senior fellow) Bill Taft to design a Legacy Initiative that would leverage the city's sports tourism success into major investment in the surrounding neighborhoods. The result was \$154 million invested as the nation was just coming out of the Great Financial Crisis, and the dollars were deployed in one of the most foreclosure-ravaged zip codes in the U.S.

Leadership matters. Following the inspiring examples of commercial real estate and neighborhood revitalization, we feature a roundtable of three innovative mayors who offer compelling insights into what it takes to turn communities around.

Steve Goldsmith is one of Richard Lugar's successors as Indianapolis mayor who became nationally renowned for his own suite of civic innovations. He is now a Harvard professor helping the next generation of mayors adopt "smart cities" techniques through tech and better business practice.

Rick Baker made "seamless cities" his focus to ensure that all residents of St. Petersburg had the same access to the American Dream. And Blair Milo led her hometown of La Porte, IN into the status of a "hub of awesome" to attract talent and inspire a pathway for small towns to have big (and believable) ambitions.

Back to Ben Sasse's formula for American renewal. It must work on a human scale. It's not the best policy ideas, investment theses, or social innovations that matter most. Living a good life is a combination of spiritual, physical, financial, relational, and other factors.

We are so fortunate to count Dr. Byron Johnson as one of Sagamore's senior fellows. He is also director of Baylor University's Institute for Human Flourishing and co-director of the largest study ever conducted on human flourishing across the world. With \$45 million in funding, the project will survey over 200,000 participants in 22 countries in partnerships with Harvard and Gallup. His essay reflects on the findings from the first wave of research; hint: money alone does not buy happiness.

Dr. Amy Sherman was a founding member of Sagamore's team in 2004, and her work over the years has illuminated many facets of human flourishing. Her most recent work is a

book titled *Agents of Flourishing*, where she builds on the Thriving Cities framework of our Belmont University colleague Dr. Josh Yates.

Sherman teaches that the biblical notion of “shalom” best captures the essence of human flourishing. It’s God’s desire for people to experience wholeness, peace, justice, abundance, beauty, and right relationships.

To create the conditions for these attributes to be formed, a flourishing community must offer six endowments to its residents:

The Good: Strong social ethics.

The True: High value of knowledge and learning.

The Beautiful: Enhanced focus on creativity and aesthetics.

The Just and Well-Ordered: Ensures restorative justice and civil rights.

The Prosperous: Bolsters economic life for all citizens.

The Sustainable: Preserves natural and physical health.

Will Acuff brings our community development section to a close with a description of his efforts to bolster human flourishing in East Nashville. Will and his wife Tiffany understood that the biggest problem with poverty was the potential that it kept locked up behind systemic injustices, poor education, lack of access to capital, and more. But rather than focusing on a parade of horrors, they trained their sight on the surest route of escape: entrepreneurship.

Will and Tiffany launched Corner to Corner to help their neighbors build the confidence, knowledge, relationships, and resources they need to build a new future. The results? In ten years, they have helped over 1,900 neighbors start businesses in one of Nashville’s historically high-poverty neighborhoods. These businesses have generated over \$47 million in neighborhood activity annually.

While Corner to Corner operates in one of the shadows that Indianapolis’ Legacy Project sought to help light up, their neighborhood is adjacent to the Tennessee Titans’ new stadium build, which offers abundant opportunity to transfer the lessons from TitledownTech and Indianapolis’ Legacy Project to ensure neighborhood transformation is among the headlines of Nashville’s 2030 Super Bowl story.

Building the Future of Defense

As a congressman representing Green Bay, WI, Mike Gallagher offers the first essay in this section to sound the alarm that our efforts to win peace with China through trade have diminished our safety and competitiveness.

This position is captured eloquently by the “Pottinger Paradox,” named after former Deputy National Security Advisor Matt Pottinger, who testified before the Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party chaired by then-U.S. Rep. Gallagher. Pottinger’s argument centered around the idea that when dealing with a Marxist-Leninist regime, the more you accommodate them, the more aggressive they become. In other words, appeasement does not reduce tension with the CCP; it signals weakness and invites further pressure. Deterrence requires not just military readiness but ideological confidence and economic assertiveness.

As a companion to these insights by his friend Pottinger, Gallagher is an adherent of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s doctrine known as Waging Peace. Made famous by the 1965 memoir he wrote about his final four years in office, it was during his four decades as a military general that he pursued the “waging peace” strategy to avoid nuclear war. To keep the peace, he relied on diplomacy, strong transatlantic alliances, and balanced military power with economic growth. He was strategic in showing enough force to deter conflict.

Gallagher reflects on his congressional leadership of committees to enhance US cyber capabilities and increase the speed, force, and unity of action to equip our warfighters with the technology they need. But he focuses most on the China threat and the arguments he formed with Matt Pottinger in their *Foreign Affairs* article titled “No Substitute for Victory.”

Both in Congress shaping policy and now at Palantir as head of defense, Gallagher is providing a clear line of sight to the defense reforms and reindustrialization required to wage peace in the decades ahead. We are grateful for his service as chair of Sagamore’s Midwest Defense Forum, which bolsters the Great Lakes region’s defense industrial base.

A fellow strategist, Dom Morris, is a Sagamore partner from the other side of the pond. He argues that the free world has lost its ability to see itself clearly. What’s needed is an honest, comparative assessment of strategic power—the discipline of knowing, across every dimension that matters, where one stands against another and where the balance is moving. Echoes of Eisenhower and Gallagher/Pottinger can be heard.

Yet, it's poetic to reflect that the author is from the other side of our Independence story. 250 years ago, our 13 American colonies formed the Continental Army led by General George Washington and declared independence from Britain. Interestingly, one-third of the colonists remained loyal to the British Crown, which resulted in a massive civil war that commenced between the newly formed Patriots and the Loyalists. That was a fight between the values we inherited from the English and the application of those values during that period of colonialism.

World War II is the crisis that formed the "Special Relationship" that turned back the threat of Nazi Germany through shared military intelligence and pooled resources. We are honored to have Morris become a partner to help renew the US-UK defense alliance, as well as lead Britain to be a more forceful contributor to keeping the peace alongside Western allies.

Morris posits that net assessment is how civilization keeps its eyes open. It's not intelligence, consultancy, nor forecasting. It is comparative—us versus them. It is diagnostic, describing the competition truthfully. And it is multi-dimensional—the full anatomy of power.

Sagamore partner Julius Krein picks up the net assessment theme in his essay considering the future of defense financing. Krein grounds his thinking in Gallagher's concern: China has an annual manufacturing surplus equivalent to Britain's entire GDP. He indicts US leaders who advocated "invent it here and make it there," thereby neglecting the profound connection between innovation and production.

Krein is CEO of the New American Industrial Alliance (NAIA), which is restoring US techno-industrial strength, and Sagamore is privileged to be the operating partner for NAIA's foundation. In his article here, Krein explains the barriers to sufficient incentives for investment in critical defense industrial base industries, and he offers a new strategic framework for public funds to activate private investment.

Jason Wolf offers a companion piece on how Israel used venture capital as part of the arsenal to respond to the October 7, 2023 attacks. Jason joined with partners Frielanader and Linchevski to preserve the startup ecosystem — one of the most dynamic innovation economies in the world — which faced an existential threat that had nothing to do with the quality of its companies. Founders were mobilized into reserve duty overnight. Investors pulled back. Supply chains for talent and capital, which had taken years to build, froze in

the space of days. Companies with every prospect of long-term success suddenly found themselves exposed to risks no business plan had anticipated.

Wolf and his partners saw this clearly — and they saw something else too. Allowing these companies to fail was not merely an economic setback. Israel's innovation economy is not incidental to its national strength; it is one of its central pillars. The same culture that produces elite military units also produces the engineers and entrepreneurs who build the technologies that modern democracies depend on. To let that ecosystem collapse under wartime pressure would be to weaken the country not only for the present crisis, but for every challenge that follows.

Iron Nation was formed to rescue companies in a moment of emergency, but even more so to keep alive the human and technological capacity on which Israel's future depends. And by building bridges to the United States, we can ensure that Israel's hardest-earned innovations could become part of a wider architecture of allied strength.

Dr. Jerry Hendrix, Rob Panos and Ryan Hein combine for a couple of articles explaining how America powerfully turned to the Great Lakes region's manufacturing prowess to help win world war too. As Hein notes, "War has never been solely about battlefield valor; logistics, production, and secure lines of communication have often proved decisive." Strategies have ranged from Napoleon's use of economic warfare brigades to cutting off Britain from other European trade. And no doubt France's supply of muskets, uniforms, gunpowder, and naval power proved essential to the American Revolution's unlikely victory.

Dr. Arthur Herman joined two of Sagamore's Midwest Conferences—one in Green Bay and another in Detroit—to share insights from his book *Freedom's Forge*. Herman described how auto plants became tank and aircraft factories and consumer goods production gave way to munitions, engines, and warships. The Midwest, already the center of American heavy industry, became the physical engine of Allied victory.

The numbers still stagger. Dr. Jerry Hendrix's essay explains that the United States produced more than 300,000 military aircraft during the war, more than 100,000 tanks and armored vehicles, and roughly 141 destroyers and destroyer escorts, a significant portion of which were built in the Great Lakes region.

Shipbuilders clustered around the Great Lakes produced 47 different types of naval vessels, launching them on what would later be called America's "fourth coast" or "inland sea." The Navy conducted pilot training on two paddle-wheel aircraft carriers operating on

Lake Michigan itself. The scale of wartime Midwestern production was not incidental to victory; it was foundational.

“This is not a fireside chat on war. It is a talk on national security... We must be the great arsenal of democracy.” – FDR, 1940

Dr. Hendrix lauds Lake Michigan's continuing advantage. The fourth-largest lake in the world by volume, stretching more than 300 miles in length and lying entirely within United States territory, Lake Michigan offers a unique environment for testing advanced naval platforms. The Chippewa Basin reaches depths of 920 feet, ample for unmanned underwater vehicle development and testing. FAA-designated restricted military airspace, designation R-6903, already covers the lake, where Air National Guard aircraft from Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois operate. Lake Michigan also represents an ideal location for an “Area 52” - a classified test and development range for unmanned and autonomous naval systems, analogous to the Air Force’s fabled Area 51 test complex in the Nevada desert.

It is time to replenish the great arsenal of democracy again. Sagamore is honored to host the New American Industrial Alliance Foundation in support of their reindustrialization strategies. U.S. Senator Todd Young championed the CHIPS and Science Act, which authorized \$280 billion for semiconductor manufacturing, R&D, and workforce development. The law has catalyzed a surge of Midwestern investment: Intel's Ohio campus, SK Hynix at Purdue, the DARPA quantum proving ground in Illinois, and dozens of smaller announcements tracked by Sagamore Institute researchers, who have documented more than 100 major Midwest defense-related announcements in a single year.

With a nod to the history legacy of the Wright Brothers' invention of aviation in Dayton, Ohio, Sagamore senior fellow Alan Dowd bridges that history to the rising unmanned flights that keep our military pilots out of harm’s way. Dowd notes that the Wright Brothers’ first flight covered just 120 feet—less than the wingspan of a Global Hawk drone—and lasted all of 12 seconds. Some drones can stay aloft for months at a time.

It can be argued that America’s national security is not tied to our weapons stockpiles as much as our innovation and production capacity. And with a nod to Eisenhower’s Waging Peace doctrine, we need more AI companies such as Palantir to make software so lethal that our adversaries choose not to pick a fight. As the next section on wartime reflections reminds us so vividly, our goal should always be to keep the peace.

Sabin Howard has been a frequent speaker at the Forum conferences that are led by Sagamore Distinguished Fellows Baroness Philippa Stroud and David Stroud. He has graciously translated some of those speeches into an essay for this book describing his role as the sculptor of the long overdue World War I Memorial in Washington, DC.

Howard envisioned a movie in bronze and gave it a fitting title, *A Soldier's Journey*. His figures tell the story of a doughboy engaging with the Great War. He leaves his family, heeds the call to arms, travels overseas into the chaos and frenzy of battle, endures the trauma and loss of war, and finally returns home, shell-shocked and transformed and victorious.

The shell-shocked figure, depicted in the Cost of War scene, was patterned after live models who had actually seen combat. Sabin felt he could truly portray the suffering of post-traumatic stress only if he sculpted from veterans. Their faces register deeper pain than most.

The final product is placed outside The Willard Hotel across from The White House. Thirty-eight figures. Sixty feet long. Twenty-five tons. Nine years of work. Sabin knows that the bronze will weather and stones will age, but he hopes that the monument will help us be a people who remember who we are and rise to become a better version of ourselves.

Sagamore senior fellow Joe Loconte delivers a fascinating portrait of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, two Oxford dons whose friendship, faith, and fiction continue to influence new generations of readers. While their books are immensely popular, Loconte explains the world in crisis that shaped them.

Both fought as British soldiers in the trenches in France during the First World War, each bearing resemblance to the shell-shocked soldier in Sabin Howard's monument. As Hitler began to cast a dark shadow over Europe, a debate was held in the Oxford Union with this motion put forward for a vote: "This House will in no circumstances fight for its King and Country." It was approved by a vote of 275 to 153.

Whereas the United States lost 116,500 men and women in World War I, Europe lost a devastating 20 million or more. The rising generation of leaders at Oxford were publicly renouncing their obligation to defend the nation while forces were unleashing an unprecedented assault on Western Civilization. Tolkien and Lewis forged a literary counter-offensive drawing on the traditional wisdom of Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Milton.

Building Better Citizens

Baroness Philippa Stroud is renewing the Tolkien-Lewis defense of Western Civilization in her role as chair of the Alliance for Responsible Citizenship (ARC). ARC convenes thousands each year in London to rediscover the best of our inheritance, a story based on the good, the true, and the beautiful.

She quotes Winston Churchill as saying: “When one generation no longer esteems its own heritage and fails to pass the torch to its own children...it is saying, in essence...that the very foundational principles and experiences that make it the society it is, are no longer valid...What is required when this happens —when society has lost its way — is for leaders to arise who have not forgotten the discarded legacy and who love it with all their heart.”

Baroness Stroud is one such leader, and she is calling for a comprehensive renewal: the reconstruction of the spiritual life of nations, a recovery of our history, a renewed vision for the family, and the cultivation of artists and builders who lift us higher towards the beautiful and the transcendent. At ARC, she is offering a rallying call for bold innovators, builders, and visionaries who are committed to restoring the foundations of our civilization and shaping a hopeful future.

Much like Joe Loconte, Baroness Stroud draws inspiration from Tolkien. She concludes her essay reflecting on Gandalf’s words to the old, greatly weakened King Theoden, “Perhaps your hands would remember their old strength better if they grasped your sword.” Perhaps your heart would remember its old strengths better if we grasped these truths. So, remember, stand tall, and rebuild the foundations that form the pathway to our future.

And now, as if he’s returning volley, Joe Loconte offers an essay on Western Civilization and the American Political Order. He explains how the Colonial Americans were educated in the classical-Christian tradition. They learned the lessons of ancient Greece and ancient Rome. They studied the writings of Aristotle, Cicero, Thucydides, and Plutarch.

One of the ironies of the Revolution is that it was inspired by a rich English tradition. The Colonists claimed the protections of the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights. And they were deeply influenced by the writings of English philosopher John Locke, as they brought together the concepts of natural law and natural rights more than any other place in history.

Locke insisted that a political authority is only legitimate if it protects man’s fundamental rights. Like no one before him, Locke combined the classical view of natural law with a

biblical defense of natural rights. In his *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), Locke identifies these rights as “life, liberty, and property.” And by property, Locke means much more than our possessions: he means every good thing that we produce from the work of our hands and the creativity of our minds.

Locke draws from Cicero, as well as from the Scriptures, to argue that everyone was born “equal and independent...the workmanship of one omnipotent and infinitely wise Maker; all the servants of one sovereign Master; sent into the world by His order and about his business; they are His property...”

Herein lies the source of the majesty of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights.”

The fundamental purpose of government, Locke argues, is the EQUAL PROTECTION of our natural rights, regardless of race or class or creed: equal Justice under the law. The miracle at Philadelphia was to produce a Constitution in which the entire structure of government was designed to protect the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Declaration.

The centerpiece of Sagamore’s citizenship portfolio is an operating partnership with Baroness Philippa Stroud and David Stroud (you’ll hear about him below) to host Forum in New York City, Boston, Washington DC, Atlanta, and Dallas. Forum convenes senior leaders with a transformational mindset who want to use their platforms for good.

Sabin Howard and Joe Loconte are among the frequent speakers and participants. Another one is Eric Cook, who is the founder of the Society of Classical Learning.

Cook contributed an essay that builds on the “civilizational moment” that Os Guinness introduced at an ARC conference. Guinness argues that 250 years after our nation’s founding, many of the assumptions that formed the American Experiment (and West more broadly) are being questioned.

In his book, *Our Civilizational Moment*, Guinness writes,

The West is in the midst of a civilisational moment and a civilisational contest. A civilisational moment is a critical transition phase in the life of a civilisation, when it loses a decisive connection with the dynamic that inspired it. Such a moment must

result in one of three broad options: a renewal of the dynamic that inspired the civilisation in the first place, a successful replacement of the original dynamic by another, or the decline of the civilisation. In sum, the issue for a civilisation in a civilisational moment is its vision of ultimate reality—is the civilisation in living touch with the ideas, ideals, and inspiration that created it, and which it needs to continue to flourish? Or, with its roots severed and no replacement in place, will it decline and die?

Cook then presents Guinness' three options in response to the crisis. Will we **recover** the ideals that made the West? Will we **replace** those ideals with something new? Or, will we simply **decline** (much like secular Europe has done)?

Dr. Yuval Levin is one of America's brightest minds and most forceful advocates of the "recovery" option. At the 2025 Indiana Conference on Citizenship, IBJ Media CEO and Liberty Fund chairman Nate Feltman interviewed Levin about his book *American Covenant: How the Constitution Unified Our Nation—and Could Again*. Levin outlines how the Founders carefully constructed our Constitution to, among other important purposes, promote national unity and cohesion among Americans. He posits that unity does not mean agreeing all the time — that is an impossibility in a diverse society of free individuals. Rather, he argues we have forgotten how to disagree as we no longer spend time in civil, active disagreement with others.

Today, there is little incentive to do so. Politicians who work across the aisle are often chastised publicly for working with the enemy. Social media encourages our elected officials to perform like actors voicing the grievances of their core (primary) voters rather than legislate by negotiating on their voters' behalf.

Levin explains in the interview that his way of thinking about the Constitution is very Madisonian. Madison almost uniquely thinks about social cohesion and unity. He understands that what's required for that is a kind of civic virtue — an ability to play your part in a free society, to take responsibility and ownership for the fate of that society.

Levin cites both Madison and George Washington is explicitly stating that the most important and difficult role in our politics is not president, it's not congressman, it's not judge. It's citizen. And that job comes with obligations, too. It's not just voting. It's not just turning out on Election Day. It's really playing a part and taking ownership of the challenges that confront your society — seeing this society's future and saying, "This is our future, and I have an obligation here," and stepping up and playing that role.

David Stroud co-founded Forum with Baroness Philippa Stroud to help citizens with their job and doing their bit (as the Brits like to say). The Strouds were deeply influenced by their friend, Professor Sir Niall Ferguson, who argues that informal networks of leaders of the kind that Heffer describes are the untold story of the rise and flourishing of civilizations. Ferguson's book, *The Square and the Tower*, takes readers through the merchant networks of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Scientific Revolution, and other movements shaped by these dense networks.

At each Forum event, David Stroud tells stories of similar networks from his own studies, revealing common patterns of responsible citizens in dense networks accomplishing transformational change. He teases out how no single individual or group served as architect of this change; rather, it was caused by the spontaneous order of diverse leaders sharing purpose and using their platforms for good.

Forum therefore convenes the politician and the artist, the journalist and the investment banker, the philanthropist and the academic. Not only do all have a part to play, but their complementary skills and experiences prove to be the X factor.

The Sagamore Network was formed to serve Forum and our growing community of policymakers, impact investors, social entrepreneurs, and responsible citizens who are committed to making America a more perfect union. The contributing authors of this book are among the finest leaders of society, and it is our privilege to serve them. We hope that their words will inspire you to serve more and better where you are called. Godspeed.

Jay Hein
Indianapolis, Indiana
July 4, 2026

CITIZENSHIP *at* SAGAMORE

Celebrating and Renewing

The **practice of citizenship** is at the heart of Sagamore's mission, purpose and values. 250 years ago, the Founding Fathers placed a big bet on citizens. Rather than being ruled by distant powers or centralized authority, the United States was built on the principle that a free people governing themselves could create a different kind of society.

This bet paid off: Today, our country is the world's oldest modern democracy and has created countless opportunities for its people to prosper and achieve the American dream.

But history also teaches us that our democracy did not sustain itself by accident or mere divine providence. Our country has been continually shaped and improved by individuals and communities who understood that citizenship requires action—not only in moments of crisis, but in the everyday choices we make to strengthen our institutions, invest in our communities and safeguard the freedoms that all of us share.

One of the most unique aspects of our founding a quarter-millennium ago is that the original declaration of our nation—that all of us are “created equal” and are endowed with “unalienable rights”—continues to be the core guiding principle of our nation. The Founding Fathers were prescient enough to instill this value as the basis of our independence, even if they themselves did not always meet this ideal. This ongoing conversation with history, and our ability to work together within this aspirational framework, remains at the heart of what it means to practice citizenship for America's next 250 years.

We encourage you to explore Sagamore's resources on this history we've created and curated over the years, and to celebrate America's founding this year by putting citizenship to work.



Explore resources from Sagamore on how America has established, preserved, and perpetuated liberty over the last 250 years.

Watch a new short documentary series from Sagamore's Joe Loconte on Dr. Benjamin Rush, an “unknown Founding Father.”



PUTTING CITIZENSHIP TO WORK

Practical resources and suggestions for how you can celebrate America's 250 through the act of citizenship

1
"That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

Register to vote and participate in local and national elections. Encourage your friends, families and neighbors to do the same.



Register to vote and find your local polling place at [Vote.org](https://www.vote.org)

2
"The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States."

Learn about America's history and discuss the lessons, contradictions and values with others. Practice both disagreement and finding common ground.

Check out America 250 events and activities from the Indiana State Museum



3
"With a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor."

Get involved in your community and work together to build America's Next 250. Volunteer somewhere, advocate for what you believe in and help others when you can.



Explore volunteer opportunities with [United Way of Central Indiana](https://www.unitedwaycentralindiana.org)