ONE

Failure to Adapt

There are many things we do not know about the Jurassic period, when dinosaurs ruled the earth. But one thing is certain: Dinosaurs went extinct because they failed to adapt. It might have been because the atmosphere became clogged with debris from an asteroid that hit the earth. It could have been the result of massive volcanic eruptions. Although scientists rate the blue whale as the largest creature that has ever lived, dinosaurs as a class rank as the most powerful and fearsome creatures that have roamed the planet. But strength and longevity are no guarantees of durability and endurance. Dinosaurs disappeared when they could not cope with change that wiped out what they needed to live on, even though starfish, turtles, and salamanders survived.

Nothing that gets out of sync with its environment lasts long—and that goes for governments just as much as dinosaurs. There are already warning signs that American government has late-Jurassic-period

challenges. Like the dinosaurs, government is strong and powerful. But like the forces that led the dinosaurs to extinction, government is failing to adapt to the challenges it faces. American government struggles with its most important and fundamental decisions. Even worse, it too often fails to deliver on the decisions it makes. That wastes scarce public money and leaves citizens disappointed. It's a profoundly serious problem that, if government does not evolve quickly enough, could lead American government down the same path that devastated the Jurassic-age dinosaurs. The book is hopeful, however, for the tools for avoiding this future lie within our grasp. We have the ability to escape Jurassic government, if we recover our government's lost commitment to competence.

It is no secret that American government is in a precarious position. Trust in public institutions is at a historic low. Public distrust in the ability of government to deliver on its promises is high. In far too many areas, government does not perform well. Tight budgets make it hard to launch anything new, and the fiscal pinch is forcing excruciating decisions about what to cut. Oceans of budgetary red ink slosh ahead for as far as we can see. Fed up with government's intrusion in our lives, conservatives pledge to "starve the beast." Liberals struggle mightily to make good on the ambitious promises they have made. Public employees find themselves a handy target for everything that goes wrong, since it is easier to target the instrument than what it seeks to accomplish. There is little satisfaction in the government we have and no consensus on how to make it better.

A thoughtful political scientist from the University of California, Berkeley, Todd La Porte, sadly wonders about a "heightened sense of latent dread," with public problems that are growing larger and government's capacity to solve them shrinking.[1] In fact, an August 2015 poll showed that just 2 percent of Americans were "enthusiastic" about the federal government. Another 21 percent were "satisfied but not enthusiastic." Three-fourths of those surveyed had negative feelings

toward the federal government, including 27 percent who were downright "angry."[2] In yet another poll, taken in July 2015, a third of respondents thought that the government was "too big," and 28 percent found it "not transparent." But the biggest problems were that government was simply not managed well: It was "inefficient" (73 percent), "wasteful" (63 percent), "out of touch" (63 percent), and "corrupt" (67 percent).[3] There simply is no fixing what ails American government without improving its capacity to deliver on what citizens pay for—and rightly expect to work.

There are explanations aplenty for the sorry state of American democracy, but at the core is a simple fact: We have lost our commitment to competence—to a belief that, whatever government leaders decide, they will deliver on their promises. For more than 130 years, from the late 19th century to the early post–World War II years, we built a government consensus on competence. Led by both Republicans and Democrats, Progressives established the modern American government. They battled fiercely over *what government ought to do*. But when they reached consensus, there was a bipartisan commitment *to making government work*.

Along the way, however, an insidious fear grew among citizens, fed by their elected leaders, that government was out to ruin the country and that government itself had become the problem. In her 2015 best seller, set in the 1950s, *Go Set a Watchman*, Harper Lee casts a character, Uncle Jack, as a profound cynic of government. "Cynical, hell," he says. "I'm a healthy old man with a constitutional mistrust of paternalism and government in large doses." He goes on, "The only thing I'm afraid of about this country is that its government will someday become so monstrous that the smallest person living in it will be trampled underfoot, and then it wouldn't be worth living in."[4] Many citizens and their elected officials managed to convince themselves that Uncle Jack's fears had come to dominate government and the country. That allowed Ronald Reagan, in 1986, to win lasting applause

from the Right—and grudging respect from the Left—when he said, "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the Government, and I'm here to help."[5]

The contrast with a century before could not have been deeper. The Progressive spirit—a bipartisan dedication not to *big* government but to *effective* government—created the modern American state. It reined in corporate trusts and improved the lives of sweatshop workers. It created the modern executive establishment, from the Federal Reserve to the nation's budgetary and civil service policies. It fought and won two world wars, built interstate highways, and put a man on the moon. It tackled, more or less well, a new era of social and economic problems, from poverty to pollution.

Starting in the 1970s, however, the Progressive tradition gradually drifted out of sync with government's mission, as too many citizens and elected officials alike lost faith in government and its ability to deliver. The tradition took on a reputation for big government at all costs and a partisan leaning toward Democrats, instead of bipartisan commitment to competence. Instead of pursuing a commitment to making government work, it grew into a lack of confidence in government to work at all. As the astute political scientist, John J. DiIulio Jr., observed, we have fallen into a deepening spiral of overreach by Democrats, in launching ambitious programs but failing to build the capacity to manage them, and disinvestment by Republicans, in preaching the virtues of cutting government but failing to ensure that the parts of government they believe in actually work.[6] On one level, this spiral is a natural product of the partisan gridlock that has seized up the nation's political machinery. On a deeper level, it has helped create and feed that gridlock, by allowing the two political parties to follow their very different political ideologies to the same unhappy place: A government that too often fails to deliver, that encourages citizens' cynicism, and that reinforces the ideologies that feed deepening incompetence and latent dread.

But this is not a book about cynicism or pessimism. It has a profoundly positive view of American government and what it can—and must—do for citizens, and it advances that view through a simple argument. We might not like all of what government does, but we are not about to lessen our expectations that it should do it. We might not believe that government can meet these expectations, but it actually does far better, far more often than we think. We can take straightforward steps to help government meet the challenges it faces in the 21st century. And, by doing so, we can reclaim our government and the lost bipartisan promise on which it was built. In the pages that follow, I will explore the challenges that led us to our current predicament and the steps we can take to escape the fate of the Jurassic dinosaurs.

We have been fighting over what government should do as long as there has been a country to fight over. But we need to restore government's capacity to deliver on what we decide as a country we ought to accomplish. That will not magically unlock gridlock, but we do have it within our grasp to restore confidence that what the government seeks to do it will do well. In the turbulent world of gridlocked politics, restoring America's commitment to competence would be no mean feat.

ESCAPING MADISON'S "WRETCHED SITUATION"

In a 1788 speech, James Madison wondered about those we elect to govern. "Is there no virtue among us? If there be not, we are in a wretched situation," he said.[7] It often seems that, over the past century, Madison's worst fears have come true. In that time, the scope and power of government grew enormously, from new entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare to the vast array of new government agencies. But there was also the simultaneous growth of a bipartisan commitment to competent government, led by the

Progressive spirit. There were fierce battles about just what government ought to do. But once the conflicts settled about the *what*, there was a surprising (to us today, at least) commitment about the *how*: with a professional, not an amateur, government.

Reformers on both sides of the political aisle were alert, of course, to the worries about governmental tyranny that preoccupied the founders and led to Madison's separation of powers. The Progressives developed their own strategy to empower government without unleashing tyranny by building strong boundaries. Some of the boundaries were structural, such as the creation of independent regulatory agencies. Some of the boundaries were procedural, such as a civil service system and a comprehensive executive budget, to constrain arbitrary actions and to put the key decisions in the sunshine for all to see.

Perhaps most important, this Progressive spirit had distinctly bipartisan roots. It did not spring from the roots of big-government liberal Democrats, although that is the meaning the "Progressive" label has acquired over time. In fact, many of the most important Progressive reforms emerged from Republican administrations (see table 1-1), as well as Democratic ones, and these bipartisan roots are the secret sauce that helped the modern administrative state grow and endure. In fact, that is one of the secrets about why the Progressive movement and its imprint on the modern administrative state endured so long. Both parties shared a commitment to "take Care that the Laws be faithfully executed," as the president swears in the oath prescribed in the Constitution, and that that principle guided the expansion of the American state.

However, as government became more muscular during the 20th century, both political parties gradually slid away from that bipartisan consensus. Democrats began focusing more on their policy ambitions than on how to fulfill them. Republicans, unable to repeal many programs, fought rearguard actions to weaken those programs by weakening their execution. As a result, confidence in the Progressives' strategy, including their commitment to a professionalized civil

Table 1-1. The Bipartisan Foundations of the Progressive State

INITIATIVE	PRESIDENT	PARTY	YEAR
Civil Service Reform Act *Advance a professional civil service*	Arthur	Republican	1883
Interstate Commerce Commission *Regulate railroads and trucking to reduce monopoly power*	Cleveland	Democrat	1883
Bureau of Internal Revenue (later Internal Revenue Service—Eisenhower [Republican, 1953]) *Collect income taxes*	Cleveland	Democrat	1894
Department of Commerce *Advance the interests of business*	T. Roosevelt	Republican	1903
Food and Drug Administration *Protect safety of food and pharmaceuticals*	T. Roosevelt	Republican	1906
Federal Reserve *Manage the supply of money and credit*	Wilson	Democrat	1913
Department of Labor *Advance the interests of labor*	Wilson	Democrat	1913
Federal Trade Commission *Prevent unfair business practices, especially monopoly power*	Wilson	Democrat	1914
Budget and Accounting Act *Create a comprehensive executive budget*	Harding	Republican	1921
Occupational Safety and Health Administration *Regulate the safety of the workplace*	Nixon	Republican	1970
Environmental Protection Agency *Improve the quality of air, water, and soil*	Nixon	Republican	1970

service and comprehensive executive budgeting, withered. The bureaucratic boundaries constraining governmental power softened as we came to rely more on nongovernmental proxies to do government's work, beyond the boundaries of the bureaucracy. Most important, the consensus around the Progressives' commitment to effective government melted under the weight of partisanship and gridlock.

This unintended conspiracy, not surprisingly, increased government's performance problems. It was little wonder that the public's confidence in government shrank. There was a growing sense that an ever-larger, often unaccountable, and sometimes evil government had permeated every corner of our lives. In fact, as we see a bit later in the book, government has in fact pervaded virtually every nook and cranny of society, but that was precisely because Americans wanted it that way. But the failure to ensure that a commitment to competence supported that expansion led to ongoing performance problems that, in turn, cracked the Progressives' foundations of professional execution and strong accountability. It then set the stage for the bipartisan conspiracy of blaming government for almost everything.

For more than a century, we fought mainly over the *what* of policy but had a strong consensus about the *how*. We have now moved to a new stage that reverses that balance. Much of the what is largely a settled question, because partisan gridlock and demographic trends already in motion make it hard either to grow or to shrink government. The big policy disputes are largely at the margins. At the same time, the how consensus has evaporated. Indeed, some partisans are trying to halt government's ability to deliver on some promises, and libertarians are trying to dismantle the state. Within both the Republican and Democratic camps, policy strategies have emerged that have led to a neglect of administrative capacity. It has become fashionable to argue that government ought to be run more like the private sector and that, wherever possible, government ought to spin its functions into a vast array of linkages with private proxies, including contracts, quasi-governmental corporations, tax breaks, regulations,

and other indirect proxy-based mechanisms. Compared with the Progressives' strategy of a stronger government strongly managed with strong boundaries, these proxy mechanisms are usually harder to manage and hold accountable. More important, they blurred the boundaries of public accountability by interweaving the governmental and nongovernmental worlds, and they have increased the disconnection between citizens and their government. What worked for the era of strong direct government works badly for leveraging nongovernmental proxies.

For more than a century, the system the Progressives built provided the foundation for both Republican and Democratic policies. But as gridlock grew and polarization increased, that consensus dissolved. The partisan debates seem to suggest that the big battles are about *what* government should do and *how big* it should be. These contests are fierce, but the far more fundamental—but often hidden—question we face is how government should do its work. Not only do we not know the answer to that question; all too often we do not even recognize that it has become the central question. Until we figure out new strategies and tactics to do what the people want to do—and insist on doing—and until we understand that this is a critical puzzle, we are doomed to policy gridlock and performance poison.

Over time, the Progressive movement fell out of sync with Progressive policies. No new consensus has emerged to replace it. And without a consensus on how the laws should be faithfully executed, the performance of the nation's policies will inevitably suffer. That is the core of why so many Americans, both ordinary citizens and their elected officials, have lost faith in American government.

The dominant strategies and tactics for the first half of the 20th century gradually became a poor fit for post–World War II American governance. The boundaries have eroded, political support for government professionalism has waned, and both parties found different tactical roads to the same unhappy place: a government without a core commitment to make governance work. We cannot stay

where we are without risking government's ability to perform, and we cannot risk government's ability to perform without further undermining confidence in government. Liberals campaigned for a larger governmental portrait without figuring out how government would paint the strokes. Conservatives insisted on a smaller government and campaigned to limit the power of government's bureaucrats without determining how to deliver the government programs that citizens continued to expect. The Progressives' strategy for modern American government has gradually eroded.

What we are left with is a collection of tactical, uneasy compromises made since World War II to hold the basic Progressive strategy together. That is the foundation for the increased interweaving of government with the nongovernmental sectors and among the federal, state, and local levels of government: more government programs managed indirectly through a broader collection of proxy tools. The tactic allowed liberals to grow government without taking account of government's growing size, and it allowed conservatives to accept the growing role of government without accepting its increasing reach. This unspoken conspiracy allowed government to transform with remarkable speed and breadth. As government used these tools more, figuring how to use them effectively and to hold them accountable was an afterthought, if there was any thought at all.

It is little wonder that the result has been a collection of performance problems and deepening distrust of government. This was a direct result of the obsession of ideologues, on all sides, about the what of government, at the expense of the how—until the how questions became increasingly problematic and began undermining government's capacity to perform the what. It did not happen instantly. The roots, in fact, were clear even in the 1960s, when John F. Kennedy noted, "Most of us are conditioned for many years to have a viewpoint, Republican or Democratic—liberal, conservative, moderate." But, he pointed out, most of the problems we face no longer can be sorted into neat ideological bins. Rather, most of the problems we face, he said, "are

administrative problems," which require "very sophisticated judgments which do not lend themselves to the great sort of 'passionate moments' which have stirred this country so often in the past."[8] The more we focus on ideological judgments about policy, the more we miss Kennedy's insight that it is in the delivery of our promises that the country's big issues increasingly rest.

In the 21st century, government's role has steadily expanded, despite rhetoric on all sides about hemming it in. A major driver has been government's effort to manage, control, and limit the risks to which citizens are subject. The governmental and nongovernmental sectors have become more interconnected because citizens have called on government increasingly to protect them from harm (like terrorist attacks), to help them recover from adverse events (like hurricanes and tornadoes), and to help insulate them from the often unpredictable behavior of private markets (especially after the 2008 economic collapse). A careful reading of the Constitution does not show this as a fundamental function of government, except perhaps to "promote the general welfare," but the management of risk has become one of the most important foundations for the expansion of government since the late 1800s—and for the interpenetration of the governmental and nongovernmental sectors.

The erosion of the Progressive commitment to competence shows no signs of abating. Even worse, there is no plan, on any front, for fixing the problems into which government's capacity to deliver has fallen. But as government's capacity has fallen out of sync with the challenges it must solve, the public's expectations have scarcely decreased. Even the loudest of small-government advocates expect government to be there when they need it.

Consider the case of the wildfires that savaged central Texas in 2011. Rep. Michael McCaul (R-Tex.), who represented the area, hammered the U.S. Forest Service for failing to pre-position a giant DC-10 aerial tanker so it was ready to fight the outbreak, for allowing the plane to sit on a Texas runway for 48 hours when it did arrive, and

then for keeping smaller P-3 Orion tankers on the ground in California when they could have been used to fight the Texas wildfires. Given the enormous damage the fires were causing in Texas, especially around Bastrop, it was easy to understand his frustration that planes were sitting idle as the brush was burning. But the issue proved much more complicated and far more interesting. The DC-10 was not operated by the Forest Service but by a private contractor working for the agency. The crew members of the DC-10 had logged so many flying hours that they were required to rest. (There had been accidents in the past when tired crews pushed themselves past human limits.) The local support team needed to put together a facility to prepare the flame retardant that the plane would drop, so it took time to get the plane ready. As for the P-3 Orion tankers: They were indeed sitting on the ground—because the separate contractor that owned and operated the planes, Aero Union, had not completed the required safety inspections. (In the past, there had been accidents where improperly maintained air tankers had crashed, including a dramatic 2002 crash, caught on video, where a plane's wings fell off in midair.) Aero Union never did get its planes back into the air, and when the company folded, it could sell them only for spare parts.

Then there was the question of whose job it was to put out the Texas fires. As a federal agency, the Forest Service is responsible for managing fires only on the federal property it oversees. McCaul was pressuring the Forest Service to send out its tankers, but 99.9 percent of the land on fire lay beyond the agency's responsibility. Tom Harbour, the Forest Service's director for fire and aviation management, subtly reminded McCaul that the congressman was pressing for federal help to meet state and local government responsibilities. "We are here," Harbour said, "because our friends in the Texas Forest Service asked us to help. We are pleased to be able to do so."[9] And why was federal help so badly needed? Just as Texans were demanding the feds fly in aerial tankers, the Texas state government was cutting support for its own forest service. Four years later, residents in the same part

of Texas inflamed protests against a U.S. Army training exercise, which many local residents around Bastrop suspected was part of a plan to impose martial law. That was simply not true. But the residents noisily opposed the spread of federal power—except when they wanted the federal government to step outside its bounds to help them fight fires that their state government, trimmed back because of budget cuts, could not.

Here was a case in which one of the nation's most vociferous groups of small-government conservatives urgently called on a federal agency to respond, in a way that required the agency to move beyond its authorized responsibility. It responded because it was the right thing to do—mutual aid in times of trouble is good policy, good politics, and effective government. Critics often savage the federal government's power, except when they need it, and when they need it, they want it immediately. Then, when the U.S. Forest Service quickly responded, it did not come to the rescue with assets it owned but with aerial tankers from private contractors working for the feds. We want a small government, except when we need a big government. When government responds, we do not much care which level of government arrives as long as the problem is solved, and much of the problem solving comes through complex partnerships with the private sector.

Representative McCaul's attack on big government while arguing for help for his constituents proved popular. He was reelected in 2014, winning 62 percent of the vote. But there's an irony here: A poll in February 2015 by the University of Texas and the *Texas Tribune* found that just 23 percent of citizens in the Lone Star State had a favorable view of the federal government. Among those surveyed, 57 percent saw the federal government unfavorably, including 36 percent who saw it "very unfavorably." State and local governments did better, with 50 percent favorable for the state government and 46 percent for local government.[10] When the fires threatened, however, McCaul called on the federal government for help. Pressures for quick government response often push the federal government to the foreground of action,

even though citizens—and often their elected representatives—say they don't trust the federal government to begin with. No matter how much we dislike government, we're quick to call on it when trouble threatens.

We have come a long way from the Progressives' bipartisan vision of an effective government, with its power constrained by clear boundaries. We have ended up with a bigger government, where the boundaries are anything but clear. All we know is that we want what we want, and we are happy to blind ourselves to the ironic paradoxes scattered along the way. We want a smaller government, except when we want a government that takes care of our problems. We do not like government, but we expect it will perform well when we need it. This pattern works, on one level, because it allows us to have our democratic cake and eat it too. But it increases tension in government. It undermines public trust in government's actions. It muddies our sense of who is in charge of what, and it disconnects citizens from the government they are paying for. When it works, it does not work as well as it should. Because it's so complicated, it sometimes does not work at all. It is a clear case of government failing to adapt to the challenges it faces, and that makes it a symptom of Jurassic government. We clearly need a better strategy to do what we want to have done.

HOW TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE

As the century-long consensus on competence has eroded, the big question remains: How *will* we do what we must get done? Conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats might well have different answers. A good answer will not magically sweep away political disputes, but without some answer, there is no chance of recovering faith in American democracy. And without even recognizing the importance of the question, there is no hope of getting started. If it does not adapt, America's Jurassic government will be well on the path to extinction.

If we as a nation—and the leaders we elect to govern us—are to escape Madison's warning of wretchedness, we need a new plan for connecting the *what* of government with its *how*. The Progressive tradition served as the foundation of much of what America accomplished in the 20th century. We now need a reboot of that tradition to Progressive 2.0, a commitment to good governance that can transcend partisanship and achieve today what the first phase of Progressivism did for more than a century.

Let me outline six basic truths here—truths that all of us must come to grips with. They must become self-evident and provide the backbone for genuine leadership. I explore these truths more fully in the chapters that follow.

1. Government cannot shrink (much). Conservatives will not let liberals grow it. Demographic trends, especially with a growing population of graying baby boomers, will not let conservatives shrink it. Citizens increasingly expect that government will solve the problems they face, from protecting against terrorism to defending against Ebola. What is inside government's basket of services will surely change, but its overall size will not. In fact, at least as a share of the economy, government has not changed much for 50 years. What is past is prologue.

2. Government does hard things (compared with the private sector) and it is not going to stop. We expect it to provide health care for veterans, ensure food safety, deal with the aftermath of big storms, and fight cybercrime and terrorism. Government does what the private sector will not or cannot do. And when big problems develop, like the shrapnel-filled airbags built by private companies for private carmakers in the early 2010s, a predictable chorus follows: Why didn't government prevent these problems—and what is government going to do about fixing them?

3. Government does much of what it does by interweaving its work with the nongovernmental world, so government's footprint will only increase. Many of the federal government's programs are managed

through proxies in the private and nonprofit worlds. Consider Medicare and Medicaid. Together they account for 20 percent of the budget, but they are managed by just 0.2 percent of all federal employees. How does that work? Government does not directly manage the programs—it manages those in private and nonprofit hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes who actually deliver them. The same pattern spills across many of the federal government's activities, including the deceptively complex puzzles at the bottom of fighting the Texas wildfires.

4. The combination of these truths makes it harder for government to deliver. It is intrinsically more difficult to do hard things and to do them through proxies. There are good reasons for both. Government's role has expanded to harder things because the public expects government to do more. It has relied on proxy patterns because they allow more flexibility, and they bring expertise into government that it does not have on its own. The strategy has been attractive to many liberals because it has allowed them to expand government's reach without making government bureaucracy bigger. It has been attractive to many conservatives because they have been able to swallow a larger government as long as the private sector delivered it. But these proxies are harder to manage. It is no accident that to improve management of the 32 programs listed as most prone to waste, fraud, and abuse by the federal watchdog agency, the Government Accountability Office, every one of them required smart managers who understood how to build strong horizontal connections among vertical silos. That is a direct product of the drift away from the original Progressive movement's reliance on strong boundaries to get government's work done.

5. Starving the beast only undermines performance. Fed up with the growing reach of government, conservatives have tried to cut government (see points 1 and 2). Their odds of winning this battle have not improved (see point 1). If they cannot cut the programs directly, they have been tempted to starve government of the capacity it needs to manage them. That has been the strategy for conservatives opposed

to Obamacare: If they cannot kill it, perhaps they can destroy its ability to work. The starve-the-beast strategy, however, has only worsened public trust in government because it has only reinforced the public's sense that government cannot get its job done. The contentious but important battle over what government should do has been a recurring theme within the Progressive movement for far more than a century. Undermining the *how* of government instead of changing the *what* of its functions, however, has only undermined government's capacity to do its job without fundamentally leading the government to do less of it. That, in turn, has proven dangerous to the performance of public institutions and the public's trust in them.

6. *The failure to perform is bad policy, bad politics, and bad democracy.* Undermining government's ability to deliver, therefore, is not good for anyone. The point in George W. Bush's administration where polling showed his negatives higher than his positives, and from which he never recovered, was the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, where the government clearly had failed its citizens. Barack Obama fell into a similar trap of distrust after the failed launch of the Obamacare website, when citizens trying to sign up for the program encountered online services that could not deliver. His poll numbers gradually pulled free of the performance-failure flypaper, but only because the administration's political operatives realized they were close to falling into Bush's trap. It is certain that future presidents will have their own versions of the Katrina/Obamacare crisis: huge, and usually unexpected, management problems that undermine performance, diminish trust, and reduce political support. In the short run, that can prove politically fatal; in the long run, that can even further weaken the ability of American government to adapt—and risk sending it down the path that doomed the sauropods, the giants of the Jurassic period whose failure to adapt led them to extinction.

CAN WE AFFORD A GOVERNMENT THAT DOES NOT WORK?

We can—surely will—and ought to continue to fiercely debate what government ought to do. We can even temporarily trick ourselves into thinking that the execution of government programs does not matter, or that we can fight rearguard actions against programs we do not like by undermining government's ability to execute them. But, like it or not, we built the government we have, we do not show any real sign of rolling it back, and we expect it to deliver on a host of promises it has made. We cannot afford a Jurassic government that fails to adapt.

Consider ten government programs that simply must work.

1. Air-traffic control. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) manages the nation's system for steering planes from takeoff to landing. In 2011 air passengers clocked 815 billion revenue passenger miles (one passenger paying to fly one mile). That number is projected to nearly double to 1.57 trillion by 2032.[11] Those passengers expect that the government will get them there safely. Everyone expects that when they arrive at the airport, the system will deliver them safely to their destinations but, in August 2015, a software upgrade glitch at an FAA regional center left hundreds of planes grounded and thousands of passengers fuming.

2. Care for veterans. Millions of Americans have served their country in the armed forces, and many have come back with serious injuries and ongoing illnesses. However, investigative reporters, first in Arizona and then across the nation, discovered in 2014 that too many vets were having to wait far too long to receive medical care. Vets expect that, following their service, they will receive the care that the government promised—and Americans insist that the promises will be kept. The failure of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to deliver rightly stirred outrage among vets, members of Congress, and citizens.

3. Weather satellite data. The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration manages a fleet of weather satellites that provides the key data and photos that help forecasters everywhere predict the weather we will have.[12] Private forecasters rely on these national satellites for the numbers and satellite images they display on their local forecasts, and there are no plans to replace government satellites with private ones. The satellites are vulnerable, and coverage in some places is thin. If a satellite fails, there could be critical gaps as big storms approach the coast. Americans expect the government to warn of approaching weather that could threaten lives and property, even while they are unaware that the government is the source of the weather data on which their favorite private forecasts online and from local media are dependent.

4. Improper payments. In 2014 the federal government made $125 billion in improper payments. Two-thirds of the problem came from just three programs—the Medicare and Medicaid programs in the Department of Health and Human Services and the Earned Income program in the Department of the Treasury.[13] Taxpayers expect that their hard-earned dollars will not go to waste.

5. Cybersecurity. Cyberthreats have grown from a few rogue attacks to a genuine national and economic security issue. In 2014 the North Korean government's assault on Sony Pictures transformed its effort to stop the release of a movie about a fictional attempt to assassinate the country's leader into an international political and business crisis. At the VA, where the troubled department was struggling to transform itself by relying more on telemedicine and sophisticated electronic records systems, there were more than a billion cyberattacks in March 2015 alone.[14] Intrusions into both private and governmental systems have become an enormous security risk. Americans expect that they will be kept safe from cyberattacks and that the government services on which they depend will not be destroyed by a computer collapse.

6. Bridge safety. There are 610,749 bridges in the country, and the Federal Highway Administration determined in 2014 that 61,365—10 percent—were structurally deficient.[15] In 2007 a structurally deficient bridge on I-35W in Minneapolis collapsed and 13 people died. Americans expect that government will prevent bridges from collapsing as they are driving across them.

7. Airport screening. The U.S. Transportation Security Administration processes 1.8 million travelers every day through its airport checkpoints, to ensure that no one is bringing anything dangerous on board airplanes. Citizens expect that they will be able to fly safely without fear of a terrorist attack.

8. Safe drinking water. In January 2014 residents in West Virginia turned on their taps one morning and found the water smelled strongly of black licorice. Some residents went to local hospitals with nausea and eye infections. Some of the hospitals decided to limit surgeries. As we will explore in more detail in chapter 5, a tank in a chemical plant had sprung a leak and spilled toxins into the local water supply. Citizens expect that government will ensure that their drinking water will not make them sick.

9. Investor protection, part 1. In the years leading up to the 2008 financial crisis, many banks issued mortgages for more than properties were worth, packaged them together in financial instruments that almost no one understood, sold them to investors who believed they were getting a good deal, and then proved unable to halt the collapse when housing prices fell and the mortgage investments proved shoddy. Citizens expect that the government will protect them from misrepresentation and other shady practices by investment companies.

10. Investor protection, part 2. In 2010 the stock market's Dow Jones average mysteriously dropped more than 1,000 points in just a few seconds. As they investigated, government officials determined that a single trader had used sophisticated computer programs and high-speed trading to plunge the market into crisis. In an instant, he wiped

out a trillion dollars' worth of equity. Fortunately, the market quickly recovered. But investors expected that the government would ensure stability in the financial markets on which the economy depends.

These issues are important, complex, and increasingly international. Consider an eleventh example: the challenge of keeping our food chain safe. More than 90 percent of the seafood we eat in the United States is produced abroad, half in fish farms. An excursion to a local supermarket makes the point that it is much more than seafood that is globalized. On a recent trip, I found snails from Indonesia, smoked oysters from China, crispy onions and canned mushrooms from the Netherlands, anchovies from Morocco, and artichoke hearts from Peru. There were veggies that simply said "packed in the USA," but the label did not say where they had been grown. Our food chain is increasingly long, ever more global, and out of the government's direct control. But even though the job is hard, we still expect the government to make sure every bite of our food is healthy, every time.

This is what we expect government to do, but the institution is unquestionably struggling to do it. Our expectations are growing, government's performance is falling short, and it is becoming increasingly clear that we need a fresh approach to government to do what we expect it to do. The Progressives' foundation worked remarkably well until it ran out of gas. What we need now is a reinvented strategy, based on a renewed bipartisan commitment to making government work, holding it accountable, and matching its capacity to the challenges of the 21st century. We need, in short, a reboot, with a Progressive 2.0 to align government's capacity with the jobs we expect it to do.

What would this look like? We fight most over the issues that, in fact, are most settled: what government ought to do. We ignore the issues that are most in play and whose consequences are critical to government in the 21st century: how government can best do what it sets

out to do. A renewed commitment to competence must crack this dual dilemma of focusing attention on the right questions and developing far-reaching answers that help government deliver.

In the chapters that follow, I explore how we can do so. The answers are based in three building blocks. The first is *people*: getting the right people with the right skills in the right places at the right time. Government—along with society in general—is becoming more complex, more interconnected, and more international, yet too often more caught in deep silos with thick walls. The biggest problems plaguing American government require bridging the boundaries between organizations that share responsibility for delivering results. The greater the complexity, the more we must rely on individual leaders with strong bridge-building instincts. The original Progressive tradition built the foundation. It began with the passage of the Civil Service Reform Act in 1883, an act sponsored by a Democrat (George Pendleton from Ohio), drafted by a reformer (Dorman Bridgeman Eaton from Vermont), and signed by a Republican (Chester A. Arthur from New York). They reflected a nonpartisan commitment to a professional government. The commitment to competence needs to demonstrate that a professional government with the capacity to get the job done serves even the most fiercely partisan players. The harder the things that government tries to do, the more important that professionalism becomes—and government is not about to give up on doing hard things.

The second building block is greater skill in managing the *interweaving of government*. Government is less and less a solitary actor and far more a partner—with other government agencies, other levels of government, other sectors (including the private and nonprofit), and other governments—in getting its work done. Over the course of the 20th century, government has gradually woven an ever-more-complex fabric of action, one different from the threads used to create the modern American state. If government is to be effective, it needs tools that cope with this vast increase in interwoven action.

The third building block is *evidence and information*. An information age government, quite simply, needs evidence and technology to guide it. Evidence provides feedback on what works. Technology vastly enhances efficiency. It crosses the boundaries that bureaucratic structures cannot. And technology creates opportunities to link citizens with their government. As the delivery of government services gets more and more complex, with government relying on a vast network of interconnected proxies, many of which are outside government, technology can provide a laser-like link for accountability. The original Progressive movement empowered government and held it accountable through structures and processes, carefully constrained. Since government has evolved into a system where structures and processes are no longer the basic building blocks, with the tools and mission falling out of sync in a Jurassic government, we need a replacement. In Progressive 2.0, that is evidence and technology.

I spell out the case for a new government, with a fresh commitment to competence, in the pages that follow. In a remarkably bipartisan way, Republicans and Democrats alike relied for generations on Progressivism, often for different partisan goals. But that tradition failed to adapt as government's challenges grew and no longer delivers the goods and services that citizens and policymakers expect. And it certainly no longer advances a government that citizens can trust and in which they have faith.

It is scarcely surprising that American politics today is nasty. The nation's governance has always been a full-contact sport. It surely was when the founders met in Philadelphia to write the Declaration of Independence and then to draft the Constitution, and it always will be. But today's political atmosphere is also a reflection of the profound uneasiness, often unspoken, about government's ability to deliver results as well as its deep intrusion into our lives. Progressive 1.0 was built to solve delivery of government services. But the model is outdated, and that is why we need the renewed commitment to competence.

This time, however, the stakes are even higher. As the 2008 financial collapse demonstrated, and as the 2014 Ebola outbreak underlined, a problem anywhere can quickly become a problem everywhere. The 24-hour news cycle shines a harsh spotlight on problems and gives government officials little time to react before political judgments crystallize. The founders of the nation anticipated a more leisurely process to find consensus in political disputes. The challenges of the 21st century do not allow the leisure that the system demands. But the founders also anticipated that government would work well on behalf of the country's citizens, and they expected that subsequent generations would figure out how to make that happen. That is the challenge of our age, and it is the great question for which Progressive 2.0 is the answer.

We can and will—and should—continue to fight fiercely over what government should do. We might even fight about issues that are long settled. But as we fight over the *what* of policy, we ignore the usually neglected questions about the *how* at our peril. It is bad politics not to deliver on promises, no matter which party makes them. And if citizens lose confidence in government's ability to deliver on its word, it is even worse for citizens' trust in their government. We should not pretend we can erase partisanship. That would be folly, since it cannot be done, and it would not be smart, since lively, even raucous, debate is healthy for a democracy's soul. What we do need is a new consensus that whatever we decide as a country to do, we have an obligation to citizens to do well. We need to reclaim our government by recovering the lost commitment to competence. In the pages that follow, I explore how. If we fail to adapt, we will slip ever deeper into Jurassic government, and we know from the dinosaurs how that will turn out.