

Citizens Magazine

SPECIAL EDITION

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Op-ed

Can We Save America?

By Arkadiy Fridman

Most economic fallacies derive from the tendency to assume that there is a fixed pie, which one party can gain only at the expense of another. We have a system that increasingly taxes work and subsidizes non-work.

Milton Friedman

The world runs on individuals pursuing their self-interests. The great achievements of civilization have not come from government bureaus.

Einstein didn't construct his theory under order from a bureaucrat.

Henry Ford didn't revolutionize the automobile industry that way.

Milton Friedman

The economic prosperity of a country and its citizens' standard of living are very dependent on industrial and high tech power. America, Germany, Japan and South Korea all have basically sound economies and a high standard of living because they have advanced industries with companies that include Boeing, IBM, Apple, Ford, General Motors, Chrysler, Mercedes Benz, BMW, Krups, Sony, Toyota, Toshiba, Honda, Samsung, LG, and many more. These nations have excellent banking and insurance systems as well as stable political systems. They all compete with one another, but face serious competition from China, India and Brazil which have populations that provide cheap labor.

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LIBERTY VIEW INDUSTRIAL PLAZA, BROOKLYN, NY

Photo: Ilya Galak

Make It in The USA!

TO: MEMBERS OF UNITED STATES CONGRESS

Created By: Ilya Galak (R), Michael Califra (D), Lisa Giangrande (R), Bill Taitt (D)

*A special thank you to Hesham El-Meligy for his advice
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"Not only the wealth, but the independence and security of a country, appear to be materially connected with the prosperity of manufacturers. Every nation, with a view to those great objects, ought to endeavor to possess within itself all the essentials of national supply. These comprise the means of subsistence, habitation, clothing, and defense" – Alexander Hamilton

"The American consumer is also the American worker, and if we don't do something to protect our manufacturing base here at home, it is going to be hard to buy any retail goods" – Lindsey Graham

"Capitalism works better from every perspective when the economic decision makers are forced to share power with those who will be affected by those decisions" – Barney Frank

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Can We Save America?

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Given these realities, what must America do to remain the greatest country in the world?

First, must begin by electing public officials who are truly advocates of the free market system. We need this fundamental economic principle at every level of government and the voters must make sure that their elected officials stay true to their campaign promises of creating a pro-free market environment with a business friendly tax system.

Second, we must address the shortcomings of this nation's education system. Our colleges and universities are dangerously unbalanced with an abundance of progressive

economists. Since these are the institutions that produce our future economic leaders, we must see to it that students are exposed to a balance of economic theories and philosophies by increasing the number of conservative economists in our institutions of higher education.

Our young people, the next generation of leaders, must understand how a free market works. They must know that much of America's greatness comes from the strength of its middle class. It is the same corporations labeled as evil by many that provide the jobs enabling Americans to enjoy a middle class lifestyle. Government jobs are not the answer. Ironically, the more "evil" corporations we have, the more Americans will be employed in posi-



tions that support a middle class lifestyle. Of course, corporations don't have a monopoly on job creation. Collectively America's small businesses (typically under 1,500 employees, but including the local dry cleaners with seven em-

ployees and corner fruit and vegetable store with three employees) are America's largest employer. While these smaller businesses do provide some middle class jobs, many of their positions pay sub-middle class wages. However, they are an important part of a free market – providing much needed goods and services – and function as an entry point for workers who will advance as they obtain experience and become part of the middle class.

Third, government unions must realize that it is to their members' advantage to have a country with a balanced budget. Their demands must be rational and consistent with economic reality. Deficit spending will lead to the devaluation of our dollar and propel our great nation in the direction of becoming a third world county. Private unions need to understand that the businesses employing their members must be fiscally healthy for all their members to keep their jobs. Small businesses and corporations can only function so long with red ink on their balance sheet before payroll size is negatively impacted.

Bail outs might appear to provide a quick fix, but they are the wrong way to go. Taking money from one group of people (hard workers) and giving it to another group does not address the fundamental problem and creates a scenario that cannot be supported by this nation. It will bring about the collapse of both our economic and political systems.

If we follow these principles the question of how to motivate companies to return to America will be moot. Our economic environment will be sufficiently fertile that they will want to be here to grow their businesses, and as their businesses grow so do the number of middle class jobs.

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Make It in The USA!

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The biggest and most immediate threat to the health of our national economy is the sick state of the middle class.

Once the envy of the world and the great engine of prosperity that drove our national economy, the American middle class has been under pressure for more than thirty years. The offshoring of good-paying manufacturing jobs along with stagnant wages and the rising costs of everything from energy to health care and a college education have left the middle class hanging on to the American dream by their finger nails.

Yet there is a deafening silence from many of our elected representatives on the topic of bringing manufacturing jobs back to the United States.

With so much riding on the prosperity and growth a regenerated manufacturing base would bring to this country— which includes solutions for many of the social ills brought about by unemployment and service jobs that pay so little many Americans working full-time cannot afford to feed their families – that is simply unacceptable.

This nation is the wealthiest the world has ever known. It became an industrial power, then a superpower because of its ability to manufacture things. Yet we have let that base of our prosperity slowly erode as the investor class in search of ever-higher profits abandoned American workers in favor of cheap labor overseas.

Since the year 2000, more than 50,000 factories have closed their doors. The country lost 3.5 million manufacturing jobs, half a million of which were in high-tech industries such as telecommunications and electronics.

It is not the employer who pays the wages. He only handles the money. It is the product that pays the wages.

~ Henry Ford, 1922

The addiction to cheap foreign labor at any price has gotten so extreme that, even as we speak, the MTA is planning to use Chinese steel in a massive project to replace the deck on the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, even though, as the New York Times noted in an editorial on August 4th, 2013, "China has a very well-deserved reputation for producing inferior and often dangerous products." That reputation was validated when California bought Chinese steel to renovate San Francisco's Bay Bridge; a decision which led to delays and huge cost overruns because of faulty welds by the Chinese steel manufacturer.

Every time an American job is outsourced to China or other slave-wage countries, the American economy loses the spending power and tax revenues that worker's job generates. Every time an American worker is forced to take a low-paying service job, that worker's disposable income shrinks, making it harder for that worker to stay in the middle class and decreasing demand across the economy.

Simply put, we need more American manufacturing. We need to stop sending jobs and the dollars they generate overseas. We need to start exporting high-quality goods produced in the United States to markets around the world again, and to bring our trade deficits back into balance.

Our question to our elected representatives is simple. 1-What do you propose to bring back

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MTA IS PLANNING TO USE CHINESE STEEL IN A MASSIVE PROJECT TO REPLACE THE DECK ON THE VERRAZANO-NARROWS BRIDGE

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Make It in The USA!

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American manufacturing jobs? And 2- what do you propose to generate the development of new industries here in the United States?

We want you to work with us directly – citizens of from all backgrounds and experience – to cut through the bureaucracy and formulate policies that you can bring to the House of Representatives. These policies might include tax policy, education, direct government spending on our dilapidated infrastructure and other things that will not only create jobs for the millions who don't now have them, but to regenerate the manufacturing base in this country, and thus the American middle class. This is the only way we can again have an economy that works for everyone and not just a select few. We would like you to present bi-partisan legislation, call it the "Make It in the USA" bill, no later than May 2014.

Our goal is to inspire a "Make it in the USA" movement, the sole purpose of which would be to fight to bring manufacturing back to the U.S.;

save the manufacturing jobs we already have and to push for policies supporting new American industries whose jobs cannot be outsourced.

It is time to declare your allegiance to the American worker. It doesn't matter if you're a Republican or a Democrat; the one thing we should all be able to agree on is that this country needs its manufacturing sector back if it is going to regenerate the middle class. We are tired of politicians who use wedge issues to divide us. That is over. We want you to help us achieve the goals outlined here. Working for us is why we elect you. Working against us is why we won't.

"We the People" have already begun brainstorming real world solutions. If you feel that you want to bring in your own policy experts to find answers, please do; if you want to use any of our ideas, you are welcome to do that, too. **But we expect action.**

QUOTES

Leonid Markman (I – Bklyn):

Our main problem is taxes. The higher the taxes, the more expensive it is to manufacture

goods at home. Accordingly, businesses will look for ways to survive by reducing labor costs. The declining technological manufacturing, I believe, under today's governing policies, will go straight to India. While the industries that will continue to do business with the well-to-do Chinese will be the ones who can't afford to move their production elsewhere. India will be the second place, after China, where masses of American jobs will set sail to. The second problem is Healthcare. Most of our career politicians not only have no understanding of private business; I believe that they don't even see the difference between big and small business. Now medium and small businesses, to survive the expenses of taxes and health insurance, will simply lay off employees and put more responsibility on themselves and their remaining workers. Look around, thousands of businesses, even those that have been running for decades, are closing their doors. There can't be any talk of big earnings, only of survival. And lastly, businesses need more freedom to choose their strategies, and less regulation. In New York, inspectors go around the most vulnerable small businesses where the owners themselves work

with maybe one or two employees. They give out fines for about \$500-\$1000, because price labels aren't stuck on all the goods, or the minimal price for credit card purchases is not clearly displayed, or there's a piece of paper lying just outside the doorway, which could have come from anywhere. This disorder in the factories of Russia once led to the revolution. Oh, I don't know if such a comparison would be valid.

Source: Citizens Magazine

Steve Lawton (D – SI):

I think we need to find solutions to combating poverty. Here is the real problem. Three points to make. 1. Both parties are responsible for this. US "trade agreements" and currency markets have opened the door to find new markets to produce in to feed our demand. 2. The current situation was advocated for under the "free market" argument. Yet it is totally orchestrated and regulated by the Government, but in this case very favorable to American Corporations and not the American people. China's industrial expansion has been made possible by the American Dol-

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Make It in The USA!

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lar. Most of their trade (although they are trying to change this now) is backed by the American dollar. So China is an extension of the American market now. 3. Organized Labor has been the only sizable objectors of these policies

Richard Bell (R - SI):

There is so much to say on this topic I could be here all day. I used to manufacture automation control devices. There are regulations from so many agencies you can't count them and they are a big problem. Just one example, the DOT has regulations on how "hazardous" materials have to be shipped. There is no distinction between an eye dropper bottle size of acid and a railroad tank car size of acid. The regulations stipulate what size box it has to be shipped in, what the packing material must be, how many "hazardous" labels and what size the labels must be and exactly where the labels must be placed on the box. It's all gone too far. I agree we must be smart and safe about such things, but these regulations more than doubled the cost of a gallon of acid for my business, which adds nothing to my product and only adds to the cost of my overhead. This adds to the cost to my customers and makes me less competitive with devices from Asia.

Joann Olbrich (D-SI):

1) Stop rewarding those companies that send American jobs overseas with tax breaks, and instead punish them by taking away their subsidies and tax breaks, and put heavy tariffs on goods manufactured outside the US. 2) Reward with tax breaks and subsidies those companies that produce in the United States, with American workers getting a living wage.

Ilya Galak (R-SI):

Regarding the "race issue" and "social responsibility": Jordan sneakers. They sell from \$350.00 to \$450.00. Regular good quality sneakers cost approx. \$35. Kids of all races are crazy to purchase Jordan sneakers. I assume Michael Jordan makes a lot of money licensing his famous name. That is totally fine with me. The only question is – aren't Jordan sneakers made in sweat shops in Singapore and Thailand? If yes, wouldn't it be better if Jordan produced in our African -American communities? It would help people who are the most disadvantaged to get jobs –and training if the company supplied it – get help break the cycle of

poverty and dependence? Training and jobs will lead to less crime in African –American communities. I am sure if his sneakers would bear the label "Made in United States," Jordan's business would be even more successful and a model for others.

Michael Califra (D-SI):

Don't pressure the Fed to raise rates before a strong recovery is underway, which will help keep US exports competitive on world markets and help keep US factories open. Eliminate tax breaks that assist companies in moving production abroad. Pass a stimulus similar to the two-year \$109 billion bill passed in the Senate last session – large enough to create 1.5 million construction jobs rebuilding our infrastructure, but stipulating that only US manufactured steel and other materials are used in those projects. Invest in high-speed rail, again using only US produced materials. Invest in a national smart-energy grid and enact a clean-energy program that focuses on renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, which moves us away from fossil fuels; this should include investing in the development of eclectic vehicle charging stations on Interstate highways to help facilitate the demand for those vehicles, all of which will require development of US manufacturing.

Elik Yuzhny (R-Bklyn):

As Montesquieu said: "Useless laws weaken the necessary laws." Politicians compete with each other over who is going to propose and get more legislation approved. That is how they measure the effectiveness of politicians. Every day there are new laws and new regulations are coming from politicians, and tons of government agencies are popping up here and there. How much legislation do we need? Ten laws for each American? 20? 50? We have to start a different competition between politicians and agencies – who will propose to "repeal laws" and "repeal more regulations". We need to stop creating all those absurd laws and regulations that kill our businesses and regulate our daily lives. We have to start repealing these laws to let people and businesses breathe. We need laws against political corruption, not for it.

Alan Galak (D - Bklyn):

About a year ago I was fortunate enough to visit Italy. Among its many wonders was something I consistently saw in every souvenir shop and store I visited: easily more than half of all of the products said "Made in Italy." In fact, one store had a huge sign glued onto its front window

which blatantly said "Made in Italy; NO CHINA".

By no means is this an isolated incident. Ever went shopping for home appliances? If you have, then you may have noticed how many quality refrigerators and microwaves the Canadians are making. Also, I've been reading and hearing on the news about how the Germans have maintained a good economy and an industrial sector rivaling China's.

So we have countries today that have a healthy amount of manufacturing, all the while treating their workers in a civilized manner. Among the biggest factors attributing to their success is how their tax policies and incentives work. They reward companies that manufacture

domestically, and penalize those that outsource (unlike us who do the exact opposite). But I am mostly saying is that there are success stories out there, and we should learn from them.

Lisa Giangrande (R-SI):

If we want to Make It In the USA, we have to start producing it here! I grew up on Staten Island. Many neighbors and relatives worked in Proctor & Gamble factory to support their family, The Gypsum plant, and wood factories a hundred years back. We had a farmland feel with manufacturing driving our economy. Now we have taxes, fines and fees coming from our pockets to make up for lost revenues. Shame.

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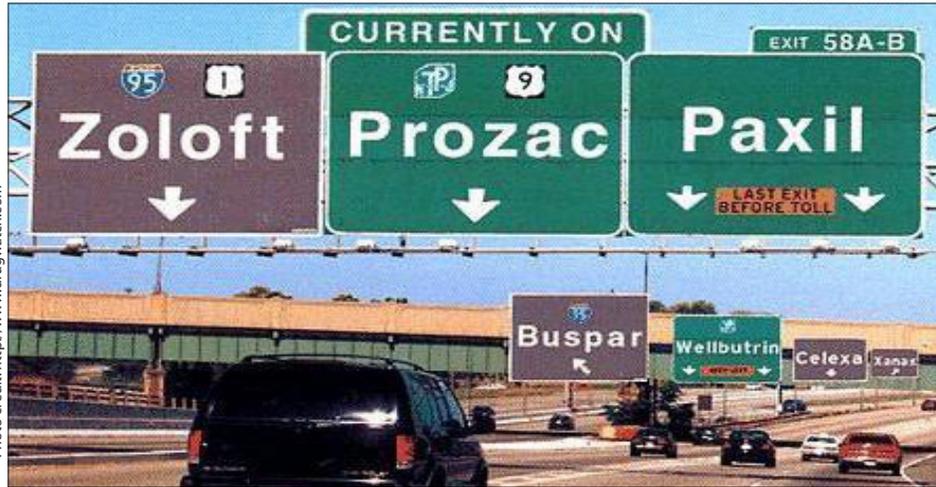


Photo credit: <http://www.drugwatch.com>

By Ilya Galak and Alan Galak

Why is it that our Nation is stricken time and time again with mass shootings? What can be done to counter and prevent future tragedies? In that discussion two central issues arise: gun control and mental health. I won't touch the issue of guns here; instead I want to focus on the latter. There is a gaping flaw in our mental health system that needs to be addressed.

In way to many cases, when a person has some mental ailment, or is just in a really bad

mood, doctors and psychiatrists put them on medication as quickly as possible. Amongst the most popular and commonly prescribed types of medications are SSRI's (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor). Serotonin is a chemical in the brain which when is not produced in balanced amounts can lead to things like depression, anxiety disorders, and OCD symptoms. Some notorious examples of SSRI's include Paxil, Prozac, Zoloft, and Celexa. This is not Tylenol or aspirin we're talking about here; SSRI's carry with them some serious side effects. Here's a

quote from www.drugwatch.com:

"Prozac is one of the few antidepressants approved for the treatment of depression in youths. Unfortunately, however, studies on children have linked the drug to increased suicidal thoughts and behavior. As a result, the FDA issued a public warning in October 2004, and two years later extended the advisory to include young adults as old as 24. In 2007, the FDA took an even stronger stance. The agency required antidepressant manufacturers to update existing black-box warnings about the increased risks of suicidal thoughts and behavior during initial treatment, which the FDA defined as the first one to two months."

The big problem is that these drugs are prescribed without any sort of tests to see if the patient really needs them. In most situations, before a doctor prescribes something – like say insulin – they run a blood test for said substance before coming to the conclusion that the patient needs that particular chemical worked on. Why isn't the same happening for these drugs? There are so many risks to just stuffing chemicals into the body without knowing all the details. What if for instance, one has normal levels of Serotonin in their brain, and now they are getting even more? I don't know the technicalities, but I'm sure nothing good or even safe will come of it.

Sadly, blood tests can not be used to test for

Serotonin because it is the amount in the brain, not the blood that matters. There is such a thing as a PET scan (Positron Emission Tomography). It technically doesn't test for Serotonin, but it does show activity in parts of the brain which are usually active / inactive depending on Serotonin levels. The major downside is that the scanning machine emits strong radiation and therefore can not be used casually. In the end it turns out that there is no concrete, fool-proof way of knowing that one needs the said drug, or that the outcome of taking it will be positive.

Is it possible for us to develop such a test in the near future? I can't say for sure; I'm not a scientist. But I do wonder how something like this would be done. First things first, someone will have to finance the whole thing. The pharmaceutical companies will most certainly not be for it; after all would they like it if they sold less medication? Logically it would be up to our federal government to step in. Seeing as how Congress very gratuitously throws money at things like the "Bridge to Nowhere", couldn't they invest it in something which is good for the people and could very well save lives? They have where to start, and I'm sure a lot of neurologists and psychiatrists would love to have their name on a project like this. Come on! Our country leads the world in innovation and science; we are more than capable of doing this.

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Nina Tortora**

Take one step into the Staten Island Community Center and Islander's Kids Learning Day Care Center and you immediately sense something different about this place. There is a mixture of home, community, organization, and belonging all at once. It is difficult to even tell that the entire community was struck by Super storm Sandy just a mere six months prior.



The hallways are decorated with photographs of the children dancing, upcoming picture days, and student work. Children are singing in the different classrooms to songs being played on the piano. The aroma of homemade food fills the building as breakfast is prepared in the kitchen.



The Staten Island Community Center is run by SICC Inc., a non-profit community organization whose function is cultural, educational, and social improvements for Staten Island and the greater New York community.

The SICC specializes in childcare. It is one of kind in its innovative and dynamic programs for children of all ages and backgrounds.

The center opened in 2004 to serve the Dongan Hills area of Staten Island, and quickly news spread of its excellence to all of Staten Island, and even New Jersey and Brooklyn. Since then, it has become well known as a center for academic excellence, dance, music, art, summer programs, and Universal Pre-Kindergarten

to bring affordable, well-rounded, advanced education, with high expectations to children 2.0 to 6.0 years old, regardless of race, creed, or cultural background.

The Staten Island Community Center (SICC inc) school age program goal is to remain as a stable place for children to spend time together in a supervised environment after school. Our teachers pick them up from school, help them with their homework, and provide a nutritious snack. We want to continue to pull school age kids off the streets and provide choices in music, art, and dance so that they can express themselves through the arts. We are providing creative channels for their energy.

through the City of New York. Unfortunately, the building was severely damaged during the storm, but reopened in less than two months. The people of the community have come together in an incredible effort to rebuild, even better than the original. The first level now has gorgeous, completely redesigned music, dance, and art studios, where the kids can enjoy both: group, and privately scheduled piano, guitar, dance, chess, and art lessons from our highly qualified professionals.

The Islanders Kids Day care center also boasts the New York City Board of Education Universal Pre Kindergarten program, as well as one third of the students entering the City's Gifted and Talented programs each year. The goal of the Islander's Kids Learning Center is

The neighborhood is a diverse New York City residential area. The center's mission is to socialize children in this environment. "We bring all of our children there for their second birthday," says one mother. "The experience simply cannot be replaced."

The center's director/owner, Ella Fridman, has over 30 years of teaching experience in both early childhood education, and music. "We socialize children at a very early age." The children have obvious routines and enjoy their schedules. They are calm, and make transitions with ease. The entire center runs like clockwork.

Renovations are ongoing after Super storm Sandy both in our building, and in the Staten Island community. Sandy is gone, but we stand up stronger and better than ever!