

Cato's comprehensive guide to policymaking

A Guidebook for the 115th Congress

The 115th United States Congress opens with the Republican Party in control of the White House, Senate, and House for the first time in years. But regardless of which party or administration is in power, the duties of Congress always remain the same—to uphold the Constitution, and safeguard the rights and liberties of their constituents. The newly released 8th edition of the *Cato Handbook for Policymakers* provides members of Congress and their staff a detailed agenda for how to do just that.

The *Handbook* contains 80 chapters of policy advice, covering practically every issue that policymakers will face in the years ahead—from foreign policy, trade, and immigration to regulatory and fiscal reform, health care, school choice, and drug policy.

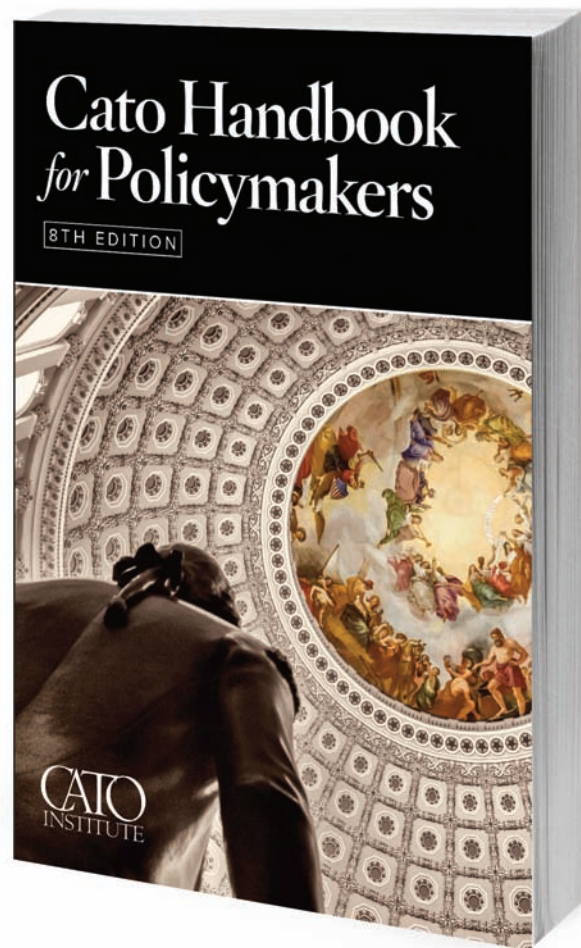
It also touches on broader questions about the nature of our government, advocating a return to federalism, where each branch of government has clearly defined and limited powers and as many decisions as possible are made by individuals, their communities, or the states. In Chapter 2, Cato senior fellow Tom Palmer advises Congress to stop delegating away its legislative powers to administrative agencies—legislation should be passed by Congress, not unelected bureaucrats. In Chapter 3, Cato vice presidents Gene Healy and John Samples urge Congress to reclaim its power of the purse, and repudiate the overreaches of executive power that it allowed to occur under the last several administrations. “The current regime of executive-branch dominance is at odds with our Constitution’s structure and history,” they write. “Presidential hegemony wasn’t part of the original plan: the Framers never conceived of the president as America’s ‘national

leader’ and the prime mover in the federal system.”

One of the most highly anticipated debates in Congress will be over the future of the Affordable Care Act. Republicans have promised to repeal and replace Obamacare—but with what? Cato’s Michael Cannon offers several detailed chapters on health care, in which he explains how to institute real reforms that make health care better and more affordable by putting consumers back in charge.

In Chapter 65, Christopher Preble and Trevor Thrall call for a return to prudence and restraint in U.S. Foreign Policy. For over a century, they note, U.S. policymakers followed George Washington’s advice in his Farewell Address: “The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations,” he said, “is in extending our *commercial* relations to have with them as little *political* connection as possible.” This wise advice still resonates with most Americans—the number of Americans who say that America should mind its own business internationally is near an all-time high.

As Washington also suggested, peaceful relations with nations should include a liberal trade policy. Economists have long agreed that free trade and immigration benefit both sides of the border. While some politicians on both the left and the right have taken to blaming trade or immigrants for Americans’ economic problems, Cato scholars Dan Ikenson and Alex Nowrasteh explain why Congress should leave Americans free to trade with and hire whomever they choose.



All 80 chapters go into great detail on the problems Congress faces, and how to solve them. But the simplest advice in the book, as Executive Vice President David Boaz notes in the introduction, may be the hardest lesson for policymakers to learn: oftentimes, Congress should do nothing about a problem. “Remember the ancient wisdom imparted to physicians: first, do no harm,” he writes. “And have confidence that free people, left to their own devices, will address issues of concern to them more effectively outside a political environment.” ■

THE HANDBOOK, WHICH HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED TO ALL CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES, IS AVAILABLE TO PURCHASE AT CATO.ORG/STORE, OR TO READ ONLINE AT CATO.ORG/HANDBOOK.