

THE CHARTER & BYLAWS *of* **THE COMMON GROUND**

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DRAFT — Founded 2026

A party for builders, not extractors. For the penitent, not the proud.

CHARTER

of The Common Ground

Preamble

We hold that technology, governance, and economic systems exist to serve the people who depend on them — not to extract value from captive users, citizens, or communities. When platforms degrade, when institutions prioritize self-preservation over function, when complexity is weaponized to obscure exploitation, these systems have failed the people they claim to serve.

We hold that The Common Ground is a home for the altruist. Those who seek public office or leadership within The Common Ground for personal financial gain, for the accumulation of power, or for the gratification of ego have no place in our ranks. We do not need saints — we need people whose first question is what they can build for others, not what they can extract for themselves.

We hold that dissent is not disloyalty — but neither is it a substitute for action. Like the penitent man, one who would object must bow their head and move forward: an objection without a proposal is incomplete; a complaint repeated endlessly without alternative is obstruction, and obstruction is its own form of bad faith. To dissent is to take responsibility for offering something better.

We hold that those who build, repair, grow, make, teach, and maintain are the foundation of a functioning society. The shareholders and executives who extract from their labor are not. Policy should be written by and for the trades, the crafts, the artists, the writers, the caregivers, and the philosophers — not for those who have arranged the world to take a cut of everything they touch.

We hold that transparency is not a feature to be toggled on; it is the default state of any institution that claims public trust.

We are, simply, the people who find common ground in this work — neither party nor faction in the old sense, but a gathering of builders, the honorable and the humble, who share a standard and hold each other to it.

Under these principles, we establish this Charter.

Article I — Name & Purpose

Section 1. Name.

This organization shall be known as The Common Ground (hereinafter “the Common Ground”).

Section 2. Purpose.

The Common Ground exists to nominate and support candidates committed to this Charter; to develop policy that resists the enshittification of public and private systems; to advocate for decentralized, local-first, privacy-respecting infrastructure; to champion radical transparency in all matters of public trust; to defend the dignity, compensation, and advancement of working people; and to maintain a public accounting of which institutions serve the public good and which betray it.

Article II — Membership & Character

Section 1. Open Membership.

Any registered voter who affirms support for this Charter may become a Common Grounder. No loyalty oath, no financial contribution, and no test of ideology shall be required.

Section 2. The Altruist Standard.

Members seeking office, endorsement, or leadership within The Common Ground shall be evaluated against the Altruist Standard: that their motivation is service to others rather than personal enrichment or the accumulation of power. Demonstrable patterns of self-dealing, ego-driven conduct, or treating affiliation with The Common Ground as a vehicle for personal advancement shall be grounds for disqualification from leadership and, in egregious cases, removal from membership.

Section 3. Right of Dissent.

No member shall be removed, sanctioned, or disadvantaged for expressing good-faith disagreement with any position, policy, candidate, or action of The Common Ground.

Section 4. The Penitent Man Clause — Constructive Dissent Required.

Dissent is welcomed and protected, but it carries an obligation. A member who objects to a proceeding shall, when raising that objection, also offer an

alternative proposal or a specific path forward. Objections without proposals are recorded but do not delay action. A member who repeatedly raises the same objection across multiple proceedings, having had it formally addressed and without offering new substance, may be ruled out of order on that specific matter by the chair of the proceeding, subject to appeal to the Dissent & Review Committee. The intent is to honor the dissenter while preventing the obstructionist.

Section 5. Non-Discrimination.

The Common Ground shall not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, economic status, national origin, or age.

Article III — Core Principles

These principles may only be amended by a two-thirds vote of the full membership.

Principle 1: Stewardship of the Long Future

We hold that we are not the last generation, and that those who come after us deserve a world at least as habitable, as functional, and as full of possibility as the one we inherited — ideally more so. Our predecessors faced this duty and, in many respects, failed it. The greed and short-sightedness of those who held power before us has left our generation with a degraded climate, hollowed-out institutions, and an economy structured to extract from the future. We will do better, because we must.

The Common Ground shall evaluate policy, infrastructure, and technology decisions against an intergenerational standard: does this leave the world better positioned for those who come after, or does it extract from their inheritance to subsidize our convenience? Decisions that impose long-term costs on future generations to capture short-term benefits for the present shall be opposed in policy and in practice.

This principle applies to: planetary stewardship — climate, ecosystems, soil, water, biodiversity, and the atmosphere are shared inheritances, and practices that degrade them for private gain are a transfer of wealth from the future to the present; the built environment — infrastructure, housing, and platforms shall be designed for durability, repairability, and adaptability rather than planned obsolescence; knowledge and culture — what we learn, build, and create should be passed forward in forms our

descendants can access, modify, and build upon, and the deliberate destruction of public archives or paywalling of essential knowledge are offenses against the long future; and beyond Earth — if humanity is to exist beyond this planet, the orbital and extraplanetary environments deserve the same stewardship we owe Earth, and The Common Ground opposes the privatization of space as an extractive frontier by any private interest, treating orbit, the Moon, and beyond as commons to be protected rather than enclosures to be claimed.

We do not build for ourselves alone. We build so that those who come after can build further than we were able — and so that they, in turn, can give their children a better starting point than we gave them.

Principle 2: Anti-Enshittification

Platforms, utilities, and public-facing systems shall not be permitted to degrade quality to extract surplus value from captive users. The Common Ground supports right-to-repair, interoperability mandates, data portability, and the prohibition of dark patterns.

Principle 3: Local-First Infrastructure

Communities should own their critical infrastructure: broadband, energy, food, water. The Common Ground supports municipal broadband, energy cooperatives, community growing systems, and decentralized infrastructure.

Principle 4: Radical Transparency

Medical billing, insurance pricing, government contracting, and regulatory processes shall be machine-readable, auditable, and contestable by default. Complexity used to obscure exploitation is itself a form of exploitation.

Principle 5: Decentralized & Privacy-First Technology

Government should adopt open-source, local-first, privacy-respecting tools. No civic participation shall require dependence on surveillance platforms.

Principle 6: Worker Dignity & The Dignity of Trades

The backbone of any enterprise is the people who do the work — the tradespeople, makers, caregivers, technicians, artists, writers, and craftspeople. The Common Ground advocates for ethical working conditions, fair and transparent compensation, defined skill and rank progression, the right to organize, protection from retaliation, and the

elimination of exploitative non-compete and arbitration clauses. The Common Ground rejects the doctrine that shareholders and executives are the engine of value creation. Excessive executive compensation, nepotism, and rent-seeking ownership structures shall be opposed in policy and in practice. We aim to return economic and cultural authority to the people who actually build the world.

Principle 7: Sustainable Margins, Not Extraction

Economic policy should incentivize sustainable margins over growth-at-all-costs. The Common Ground supports small-scale manufacturing, cooperative ownership, ethical contracting, and tax frameworks that distinguish productive enterprise from rent-seeking.

Principle 8: Civic Technology as Public Good

Voting systems, petition platforms, and government APIs shall be open-source, independently auditable, and publicly owned.

Principle 9: The Right to Be Heard, The Duty to Propose

Every member has the right to challenge any decision, question any leader, and propose any alternative. With that right comes the duty to offer something constructive. Silence is not consent; obstruction is not dissent.

Principle 10: Accountability of Institutions

No institution run by humans is infallible. Hospitals, universities, government agencies, corporations, foundations, and law enforcement bodies shall be subject to public accountability. The Common Ground shall maintain a public registry of institutions that exemplify or betray the public trust, with a fair pathway to reform and removal from adverse listings.

Article IV — Organizational Structure

Section 1. Convention.

The Convention is the highest authority of The Common Ground and shall meet at least annually. All members in good standing may attend and vote.

Section 2. The Helm Committee.

Between Conventions, the affairs of The Common Ground shall be managed by the Helm Committee, consisting of no fewer than five (5) and no more

than fifteen (15) members elected by the Convention. The Helm Committee shall meet at least quarterly. All meetings shall be open and minutes published within seven (7) days. The name reflects the Committee's function: to steer The Common Ground between Conventions while remaining accountable to the crew.

Section 3. Officers.

The officers shall be a Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary (who maintains the Dissent Register), and Treasurer (who publishes quarterly financial reports). All officers serve two-year terms with a maximum of two consecutive terms in the same office.

Section 4. Anti-Capture Provisions.

No individual may hold more than one officer position. No officer or Helm Committee member may receive compensation from The Common Ground beyond documented reasonable expenses. No officer may hold a financial interest in any entity contracting with The Common Ground. These provisions may not be waived.

Article V — Lobbying, Influence & Offenses Against The Common Ground

Section 1. Position on Lobbying.

The Common Ground recognizes that lobbying — in its proper sense, as advocacy to government on behalf of a constituency — can serve the public good. It can also be a vehicle for corruption. The position of The Common Ground is therefore not prohibition but radical transparency.

Section 2. Disclosure Requirements.

Any officer, candidate, endorsed official, or Helm Committee member of The Common Ground who meets with a lobbyist, accepts a meeting from a registered influence organization, or receives any thing of value from a lobbying entity shall disclose, within seventy-two (72) hours: the identity of the parties involved, the subject discussed, and the value of anything received. Disclosures shall be published to the Dissent Register and the public ledger of The Common Ground.

Section 3. Graduated Scale of Offenses.

Acts that violate the trust placed in members of The Common Ground shall be addressed according to a graduated scale, recognizing both the seriousness of the offense and the human capacity for reform.

Tier 1: Misconduct

Minor self-interested acts, conflicts of interest not properly disclosed, or failures of process that do not involve material harm. Consequence: censure, mandatory disclosure, possible removal from a specific role or committee. The member retains general standing in The Common Ground. The Penitent Man path applies: acknowledgment and corrective action restore good standing.

Tier 2: Breach of Trust

Material self-dealing, repeated misconduct after censure, abuse of position for personal advantage, or violation of the Altruist Standard. Consequence: removal from all offices and endorsements within The Common Ground, public record of the finding, and disqualification from future office for a defined period. The member is eligible for reinstatement after demonstrated reform through a process modeled on the Petition for Reform (Article VI, Section 4). Humans, like institutions, are not beyond redemption.

Tier 3: Treason Against the Core Principles

The most serious offense The Common Ground recognizes. Treason consists of any of the following: accepting money, gifts, or undisclosed favors from a lobbying entity, corporation, or foreign interest in exchange for political action; conducting such dealings behind closed doors; coordinating with entities on the Accountability List in secret; or selling endorsement, position, or influence within The Common Ground for personal benefit. Treason is distinguished from lesser offenses by being committed in secret — the betrayal is compounded by the deception. Consequence: permanent expulsion from The Common Ground, permanent bar from all future endorsement, and addition of the offending entity to the Accountability List as blacklisted, with full public disclosure of the facts. Unlike the lower tiers, there is no path of reform for treason. The trust cannot be rebuilt because it was broken in darkness. Both the person and the entity shall be permanently identified in the public record.

Section 4. Due Process.

Allegations at any tier shall be investigated by a committee independent of any individual implicated. The accused shall have the right to a fair hearing, to present evidence and witnesses, and to be accompanied by an advocate of their choosing. Findings shall be published with their factual basis. Standards of evidence shall scale with the severity of the consequence.

Article VI — The Public Accountability Registry

Section 1. Purpose.

The Common Ground shall maintain a public, two-part registry of institutions: the Honor Roll, which recognizes businesses, foundations, agencies, and organizations that exemplify the principles of this Charter; and the Accountability List, which identifies those that betray the public trust. The Registry may include corporations, hospitals, universities, foundations, government agencies, and specific subdivisions thereof (including individual police departments, federal agency offices, or other operational units).

Section 2. Honor Roll.

Entities on the Honor Roll have demonstrated commitment to worker dignity, transparency, anti-extractive practices, environmental responsibility, or other principles consistent with this Charter. Honor Roll listings shall be reviewed annually.

Section 3. Accountability List.

Entities on the Accountability List have demonstrably violated the principles of this Charter through documented patterns of harm — worker mistreatment, billing fraud, surveillance abuse, civil rights violations, environmental destruction, or similar conduct. Each listing shall include specific factual basis and citations to verifiable sources. The Common Ground shall not endorse, accept contributions from, or do business with entities on the Accountability List.

Section 4. The Path of Reform.

No institution is beyond redemption. Any entity on the Accountability List may submit, at any time, a Petition for Reform demonstrating: (i) acknowledgment of the conduct that resulted in listing; (ii) specific corrective actions taken; (iii) verifiable evidence of changed practices; and (iv) ongoing commitments. The Helm Committee shall review such petitions

in good faith and, where reform is genuine and demonstrated, shall remove the entity from the Accountability List. Removal shall be public and shall acknowledge the reform.

Section 5. Due Process.

Before any entity is added to the Accountability List, the entity shall be notified and given thirty (30) days to respond. The Common Ground shall publish both the listing rationale and the entity's response. The Common Ground recognizes that mistakes in listing are possible and shall maintain a correction process for factual errors.

Section 6. No Entity Is Infallible.

The Common Ground affirms that any institution run by humans is subject to scrutiny. This includes institutions The Common Ground itself admires — Honor Roll status does not exempt an entity from accountability if circumstances change.

Article VII — Finances & Transparency

Section 1. Public Accounting.

All financial records shall be available to any member within five (5) business days of request, with quarterly reports published publicly.

Section 2. No Dark Money.

The Common Ground shall not create, fund, or coordinate with any entity whose purpose is to obscure the source of political contributions. The Common Ground shall not accept contributions from entities on the Accountability List.

Article VIII — Amendments

Section 1. Charter Amendments.

This Charter may be amended by a two-thirds vote at a duly called Convention, with thirty (30) days prior notice.

Section 2. Core Principles Protection.

The Core Principles in Article III may only be amended by a two-thirds vote of the full membership, with a sixty (60) day public comment period.

Section 3. Anti-Regression Clause.

No amendment shall reduce transparency, eliminate dissent protections, weaken the Treason Clause, extend term limits, or concentrate decision-making in fewer hands than the prior version provided. Any such amendment shall be void.

BYLAWS

Adopted Pursuant to the Charter of The Common Ground

Article I — Meetings & Proceedings

Section 1. Annual Convention.

Held annually, with at least sixty (60) days notice.

Section 2. Quorum & Remote Participation.

Quorum is thirty percent (30%) of members present in person or by verified remote means. All meetings of The Common Ground shall provide for remote participation with full voting rights.

Section 3. Open Meetings.

All meetings of The Common Ground and its committees are open to members. Executive sessions are limited to personnel and legal matters and must be recorded in public minutes.

Article II — Helm Committee Operations

Section 1. Composition.

The Helm Committee consists of five to fifteen members elected at the Convention, serving staggered two-year terms.

Section 2. Recall.

Any officer or Helm Committee member may be recalled by a two-thirds vote at a Special Convention or by petition of forty percent (40%) of members.

Article III — Standing Committees

The following committees shall exist: Policy, Candidate Review, Finance & Transparency, Technology & Infrastructure, Worker Advocacy (charged with policy and oversight related to Principle 5), Accountability Registry (which maintains the Honor Roll and Accountability List under Article VI of the Charter), and Dissent & Review.

Article IV — The Dissent Register

Section 1. Purpose.

The Dissent Register is a permanent public record maintained by the Secretary and overseen by the Dissent & Review Committee.

Section 2. Submission Requirements.

Any member may submit a formal objection. To trigger a formal review and response, the submission must include: (i) the specific action being objected to, (ii) the basis for the objection, and (iii) an alternative proposal or suggested path forward. Objections without an alternative are recorded in the Register but do not require formal response and do not delay action — the Penitent Man Clause applies.

Section 3. Response.

Complete submissions receive acknowledgment within seven (7) days and a substantive written response within thirty (30) days.

Section 4. Anti-Filibuster.

A member who repeatedly submits the same objection across multiple proceedings, having had it formally addressed and without offering new substance, may be ruled out of order on that specific matter. The member retains the right to appeal and to raise other objections; only the repetition is curtailed.

Section 5. No Retaliation.

No member shall face adverse action for any good-faith Register submission. Retaliation is grounds for recall.

Article V — The Accountability Registry (Operations)

Section 1. Listing Process.

The Accountability Registry Committee shall review nominations from members for both Honor Roll and Accountability List inclusion. All listings require documented evidence and shall follow the due process requirements of Article VI of the Charter.

Section 2. Petitions for Reform.

Petitions for Reform shall be reviewed by the Committee and decided within ninety (90) days. The Common Ground shall maintain a standard form and clear criteria for such petitions, published on its website.

Section 3. Annual Review.

All listings shall be reviewed annually. Honor Roll entities that no longer meet the standard shall be removed. Accountability List entities that have demonstrated reform shall be removed.

Article VI — Lobbying Disclosure (Operations)

Section 1. Disclosure Form.

The Common Ground shall maintain a standard Lobbying Disclosure Form, submitted within seventy-two (72) hours of any qualifying contact, published immediately to the public ledger.

Section 2. Investigation of Treason.

Allegations of violations of the Treason Clause (Charter Article V, Section 3) shall be investigated by an ad hoc committee independent of any individual implicated. The accused shall have the right to a fair hearing, to present evidence, and to be accompanied by an advocate of their choosing.

Article VII — Bylaw Amendments

Bylaws may be amended by a majority vote at a Convention with fourteen (14) days notice. No bylaw shall conflict with the Charter.

Resolution of Adoption

This Charter and these Bylaws are adopted as the founding governing documents of The Common Ground.

Chair, The Common Ground

Secretary, The Common Ground

Date: _____