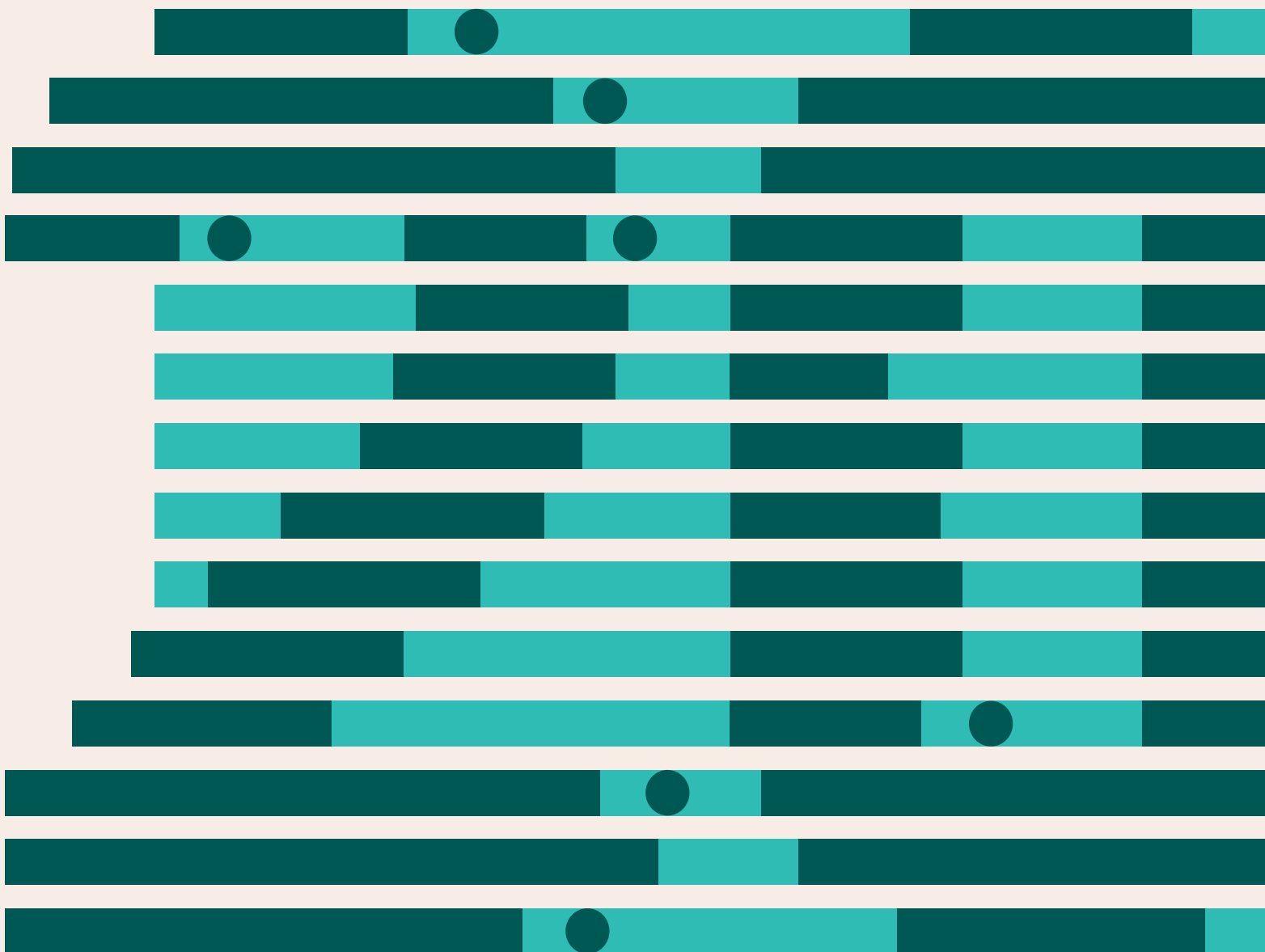



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF NEW AMERICA

New Ideas and New Voices to Renew America





In 2019, New America celebrates 20 years of innovation and impact. Since our founding in 1999, we have promised to bring new ideas and new voices into America’s public discourse: big, bold ideas that anticipate the need for sweeping reform. Over the years, we’ve also made it clear that we don’t stop at just developing big ideas—we want to ensure that those ideas have impact, through law, policy, or technological and practical solutions that help Americans and people around the world.

Twenty years on, we are dedicated to renewing America by continuing the quest to realize our nation’s highest ideals, honestly confronting the challenges presented by rapid technological and social change, and seizing the opportunities those changes create to expand opportunity and equity for all. Here, we highlight 10 big ideas that demonstrate the breadth and impact of New America’s work.



1 ●

FUELING THE FIGHT FOR NET NEUTRALITY

Idea

Everyone should have equal access to the internet, and providers shouldn't be able to discriminate or charge different prices for different content or because of the way the user connects.

Incubation

Tim Wu first coined the term “net neutrality” in 2003, later popularizing it in his 2010 book *The Master Switch*, which he wrote while on a New America fellowship. Once it was in the lexicon, New America embraced the concept as a motivating ideal of the Open Technology Institute (OTI), formed in 2009. The principle of openness—supporting access to an open internet, open spectrum, and open data—has always been important to OTI.

Impact

OTI's years-long effort to bring federal law in line with the notion of net neutrality saw an important victory in 2015, when the Federal Communications Commission adopted the strongest net neutrality protections in American history. OTI was instrumental in securing and defending those rules, filing hundreds of pages of comments with the FCC and helping the FCC successfully defend the rules from immediate attacks in court. In 2017, the FCC, under new leadership, repealed the rules, shifting OTI's work to an all-out defensive fight to save net neutrality in the courts, in Congress, and in the states, including California, which recently passed SB. 822—the nation's strongest net neutrality law—to fill the gap left by the federal level repeal.

Former President Barack Obama shares New America's Cost of Connectivity charts. (Photo: WhiteHouse.gov)



“If you want democracy to work well, you have to have great ideas. It’s world class ideas that actually make world class change. [New America is a place of] uncommon commitment on the part of really smart people.”

- CNN Anchor Van Jones

EMBRACING RANKED-CHOICE VOTING AS A PATHWAY TO PLURALISM

2.

Idea

American democracy should embody the true pluralism of our country—the many backgrounds, ideas, religious traditions, and institutions that define our shared experience—and our systems of voting and representation should encourage responsiveness and new coalitions in the face of changing public challenges. That’s why, since 2005, New America has gone beyond familiar solutions to improve democracy to explore real alternatives to the winner-take-all election structures that shut out new ideas and new coalitions.

Incubation

In the 2000s, New America fellows advocated instant-runoff voting in San Francisco and other localities, and more recently, New America’s Political Reform Program has been one of the leading voices for both ranked-choice voting and multi-member legislative districts. These two electoral structures ensure that more viewpoints are reflected and that candidates have to seek broad support.

Impact

With Maine becoming the first state to implement ranked-choice voting and to use it to determine the outcome of a congressional race, we have the beginnings of a real test of these ideas, and the Political Reform program will continue to study them closely, looking for lessons for other states and for ideas to improve this innovative system.



A voting booth in Fairfax, Virginia. (Photo: Rob Crandall / Shutterstock)

3.

MEASURING U.S. DRONE USE AND MISUSE

Idea

Creating the most definitive database of CIA drone attacks, as well as monitoring extra-judicial killings by the U.S. government, will make the world safer.

Incubation

International Security Program Director Peter Bergen created the drones database in 2009, in response to official U.S. government silence about the scope of the CIA drone program in Pakistan and claims by Pakistani sources of numerous civilian casualties and counterclaims by anonymous U.S. officials of scant civilian casualties.

Impact

This project has continued for almost a decade, allowing New America researchers to discover a number of important trends in America's covert drone program. For example, while in 2006 nearly 100 percent of drone attacks in Pakistan killed civilians, by 2013, the civilian casualty rate had dropped to nearly zero in Pakistan. In addition, while the drone program under former President Barack Obama killed around 3,000 people, our data showed



A Predator drone, an unmanned aircraft, on Balad Air Base in Iraq. (Photo: Shutterstock)

that militant leaders represented only a small number of victims—around 2 percent of the total. New America expanded the database to also examine U.S. drone strikes in Yemen and Somalia. In the final year of the Obama White House, administration officials published their own account of the drone program and credited the work of New America in making the program more transparent and accountable.

“New America is becoming an even more exciting and indispensable fixture in the policy landscape.”

- Former Secretary of State
Hillary Clinton



FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF CHILD SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

4.

Idea


Economic inequality and the unequal distribution of opportunity have long been concerns for scholars at New America. As early as 2003, New America's Ray Boshara articulated a vision to combat these social ills by designing a federal, legislative plan for universal children's savings accounts, or CSAs.

Impact

In the 15 years since its introduction, the ASPIRE Act has continued to inspire new iterations of the same idea and has also helped to spark a movement that is making CSAs a reality—more than 50 CSA programs are now running nationally, serving nearly 400,000 children in more than 30 states.

Incubation

Built on pioneering scholarship from the world of academia, New America's plan for universal CSAs was designed to boost opportunity by democratizing the ownership of capital and empowering rising generations of Americans to make productive investments in their future. This legislative ambition was first introduced in 2004 as a piece of bipartisan legislation called the ASPIRE Act. The proposal called for opening an account for each child born in the United States, and for each account to be seeded with a \$500 deposit, allowed to grow tax-free. Contributions to the account were to be encouraged by the prospect of tax-free growth and matching contributions for children from families with lower incomes and fewer resources, and the accumulated funds in the accounts were dedicated for key life events related to maximizing opportunity—things like education after high school, homeownership, and retirement.



5.

LINKING THE INDIVIDUAL MANDATE AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Idea

New America co-founders Ted Halstead and Michael Lind linked the personal responsibility of the individual mandate to purchase health insurance with the social responsibility to re-organize insurance markets through fairer rules and income-based subsidies. This linkage was central to their 2001 book *The Radical Center*, which also served as the founding document for New America and its approach to domestic policy in 2001.

Incubation

Their vision both attracted policy mavens and politicians to New America and helped make it a kind of central nervous system of serious bipartisan health care reform efforts in the 2000s. In a way that would later meaningfully influence their book, the specific details of how an individual mandate could work were first developed in 1991 by Mark Pauly and colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania and elsewhere, and were incorporated into a bipartisan counter-proposal to Bill Clinton's Health Security Act, which centered on an employer mandate. By the mid-2000s the progressive Center for American Progress had embraced the individual mandate as a key element of its respective national reform proposals.

Impact

New America Health Policy Program Director Len Nichols and colleagues supplemented these ideas with their own analyses. They also helped shape legislative proposals that centered on the individual mandate, which had broad bipartisan support. Along with Romneycare in Massachusetts, the arguments that had been repeatedly articulated in constructing and defending the Wyden-Bennett Health Americans Act legislation helped set the stage for the debate about the individual mandate between Hillary Clinton (*for*) and Barack Obama (*against*) in the 2008 Democratic primaries, as well as the debate about the Affordable Care Act itself in the Congress of 2009-10 and beyond (and quite possibly forever).



Former Governor Mitt Romney, whose 2006 “Romneycare” legislation set the stage for debate on the individual mandate. (Photo: Christopher Halloran / Shutterstock)

TRACKING TERRORISM IN THE UNITED STATES

6.

Idea

New America's International Security program (ISP) created a database about terrorism in the United States since 9/11 to track the actions of jihadist terrorists and to better understand who they are, and the reality of threats in order to promote better policy and judicious resource allocation.

Incubation

ISP established the website in 2010 to better understand who is charged with acts of jihadist terrorism in the United States. The dataset was subsequently expanded to include any act of lethal political violence.

Impact

In 2017, New America's research on the terrorist threat played a central role in the public and legal backlash against the Trump administration's travel ban. Our data showed that the ban would not have prevented any of the deadly attacks in the United States since 9/11 because it singled out countries of origin that had not been the home countries of any domestic terrorists in the prior 16 years. New America's research also showed that the Trump administration's claims that a southern border wall would stop terrorists were nonsense. New America's commitment to tracking deadly terrorist acts, regardless of motivation, provided an essential counterpoint to the tendency to focus only on jihadist attacks. In November 2017, Senator Dick Durbin introduced the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2017 to address the terrorist threat from domestic, non-jihadist terrorists. In doing so, Senator Durbin cited New America's data on deadly far-right attacks. The Obama administration appointed a senior Department of Justice official to focus on non-jihadist domestic terrorists and cited New America's research when that official was appointed.

“[New America is] devoted to exploring the sort of political topics that will be at the heart of the digital age...”

-The Economist

7.

EARLY EDUCATION DOESN'T END AT PRE-K

Idea

Starting in the mid-2000s, New America's Early & Elementary Education Policy team began to call out our country's education system for ignoring the learning path of our youngest Americans: "We, as a nation, are doing a very good job of squandering human potential, and making life harder for all Americans as a result," the team wrote in 2010. "This has to stop."

Incubation

Led by Lisa Guernsey and then Laura Bornfreund over the past nine years, the team has laid out the case for a fundamental rethinking of education policy, starting at birth and going through the third grade—work that has helped to spur communities and states to improve their early-learning offerings and change school systems. They have argued that the earliest years of children's lives are full of capacity for learning, and that early education doesn't end at Pre-K. More specifically, they argue that our traditional start of education at kindergarten is too late, and that how we educate children until third grade isn't coordinated enough with how children learn in their early years.

Impact

The Early & Elementary team has influenced federal policy (the Obama administration's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge and the new ESSA law), as well as how states are training educational leaders and teachers to better bridge the gap between preschool and elementary school. For instance, state leaders from Kentucky to Massachusetts to Virginia and many in between have embraced the change. States are now developing new policies to support the training of—and, in some cases, better compensation for—early educators and educational leaders. Most importantly, New America's team has helped to shift the mindset of policy leaders and educators across the country to recognize the learning continuum from birth through the third grade, which in turn should result in better educational outcomes for children and stronger citizens for our next generation.



Teacher instructing children. (Photo: Shutterstock)



8.

MAKING HIGHER EDUCATION OUTCOMES TRANSPARENT

Idea

States and the federal government spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year to help support students as they enroll in colleges and universities across the country. And yet, despite this investment, students and policymakers know shockingly little about how well particular schools serve students. The answer to the question, “Is college worth it?” is an unequivocal yes—on average. But the real question is: “In which program, at which college, at which price, and for which students is it worth it?” Regrettably, we can’t answer that question because the private higher education lobby convinced Congress to pass a law to ban the Department of Education from using already-collected information in order to answer it. The Education Policy Program has led the fight to change this—to end what we call the College Blackout.

Incubation

After Congress passed the ban on better data in 2008, the issue was considered a “done deal,” and revisiting it was treated as a political non-starter and a fool’s errand. But New America worked to find solutions and build political will, leading directly to the introduction of a bill in 2011 that would create a work-around to the ban. Future

iterations of the bill capitalized on the growing calls for transparency and improved on the legislation, adding new support from policymakers. Future iterations of the bill capitalized on the growing calls for transparency by overturning the ban completely and adding new legislative support. In 2014, New America released a now-seminal report, *College Blackout*, which shed light on the history of and problems with the ban. We have since worked to build a broad, bipartisan coalition of students, student advocates, colleges, employers, researchers, and other stakeholders to advocate for better data to help answer critical questions about college outcomes.

Impact

Since the release of New America’s report, bipartisan momentum for overturning the ban has skyrocketed. In 2017, Sens. Hatch, Warren, Cassidy, and Whitehouse introduced the College Transparency Act—a bill that has garnered support from dozens of other members of the House and Senate from both parties and over 130 outside organizations. Following the 2018 midterm elections, a *New York Times* article named the College Transparency Act as one of six key issues likely to break the Washington gridlock.

9.

REDEFINING CARE POLICY

Idea

Recognizing that families that used to be of the rigid breadwinner-homemaker model had become two breadwinners or a single breadwinner, New America Fellow Karen Kornbluh popularized the idea that American policy had not changed to keep up, proposing a series of policies to address this gap.

Incubation

Kornbluh wrote her 2001 *Washington Post* piece “The Mommy Tax” shortly before coming to New America, citing the work of Joan Williams and Jane Waldfogel. While many had examined this arena, New America was the first to frame it as part of a changing economy. New America Senior Policy Analyst Lauren Damme proposed paid family leave as part of the Next Social Contract Initiative. Building on those foundations, New America launched the Better Life Lab. In 2016, the program released the *Care Report*, which maps the cost, quality, and accessibility of childcare, and it has since worked to change the way we think about the intersection of gender, work, and social and economic policy through rigorous analysis, practical toolkits, and data-driven storytelling.

Impact

Work from New America authors has changed the national conversation around women, work, family, and care issues. In 2012, when she was still a New America board member, current CEO Anne-Marie Slaughter wrote the groundbreaking *Atlantic* article, “Why Women Still Can’t Have It All,” which re-launched a national conversation about gender equality. That same year, Fellow Liza Mundy wrote *The Richer Sex*, which explores how women’s rising economic power affects the dynamics of marriage, dating, work, and home life. Two years later, in 2014, Fellow Brigid Schulte wrote *Overwhelmed: Work, Love and Play When No One Has the Time*, which argues that workplaces have created a culture that is less productive and less happy. And with her 2015 book, *Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family*, Slaughter argues that gender equality can never be achieved until societies value care work as much as career work, with prescriptions for government, workplaces, and couples. This work continues within our Better Life Lab program, which actively works for culture change on these issues via its channel on Slate and the Better Life Lab podcast.



The Better Life Lab team interviewed hundreds of families, experts, and childcare providers for the New America Care Report, including Stephanie, a working mom struggling to find affordable, quality care for her daughter. (Photo: Long Story Short Media)

10.

USING TV “WHITE SPACES” TO CREATE EQUITABLE INTERNET ACCESS

Idea

New America’s Michael Calabrese saw that the transition to digital television would free up a valuable public resource: the empty broadcast TV channels known as “TV white spaces.” He initially proposed in 2002 that vacant channels in each market could be opened for unlicensed use, enabling “Super Wi-Fi” to narrow the digital divide in rural and other underserved areas.

Incubation

Through Congressional testimony, coalition building and policy research, Calabrese’s Wireless Future Program showed how vacant TV channels are uniquely suited to extend wireless broadband to rural and unserved areas. A New America pilot deployment at West Virginia University later showed how open, public access to vacant “beachfront spectrum” could facilitate more ubiquitous and low-cost wireless broadband connectivity in rural areas.

Impact

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) unanimously adopted the idea of opening unused public airwaves for ‘Super Wi-Fi’ in 2010. The United Kingdom, South Korea and a half-dozen emerging market nations have adopted it since. Microsoft and Google funded pilot networks around the world, mostly for education. In 2017, Microsoft launched its Airband initiative with a goal of using TV white space networks to connect 2 million rural Americans who currently lack fast and affordable broadband by 2022.

“The future belongs to the connected. No matter who you are or where you live in this country you are going to need access to modern communications to have a fair shot at 21st century success.”

- FCC Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel



What's in the plan for the next 20 years?

We are knitting together a big vision of what this country could look like, a vision of sweeping reform of our democracy:

- our educational system to support lifelong learning;
- our work and home places to ensure better work and better lives;
- our access to and protection from technology;
- our economic and social foundation;
- our national security anchored by protection of vital natural resources and an accurate assessment of the real threats to our nation from within and without.

Join our community of partners, dreamers, innovators, and collaborators as we celebrate and explore the journey of American renewal.

For more information on supporting New America, please contact development@newamerica.org or 202.596.3367

20 YEARS OF

NEW AMERICA

