Why We Need the
Institute for Objective Policy Assessment (IOPA)

Dr. John Merrifield, IOPA President (IOPAChief@policytalk.org)
10/2/23

We find ourselves in dangerous circumstances despite other think tanks’ best efforts, and because of some of those efforts. In particular, we need:

A) **The IOPA Strategy**: Package diverse, well-researched perspectives into objective assessments; analysis plus informed, civil disagreement, and online discussion at policytalk.org.

B) **K-12 School System Reform (SSR)**: The serious knowledge gaps include:
1) School system outcome determinants: Too much variance is still unexplained; 2) insufficient understanding of charter school scandals jeopardizes SSR; 3) price system signals and incentives relevance to SSR; 4) that ‘free’ schooling is a costly delusion. It concentrates poverty near the worst schools; 5) the best alternative to universal, level playing school choice expansion; 6) how price decontrol would improve equity; and 7) the need for a close examination of how political control determines what is taught, how, where, and to whom.

C) **Fiscal Sustainability, especially Federal**: We’re sleepwalking into a mega-crisis. There is room for much more attention (see our extensive starting point) to this: a) existential threat; and b) huge opportunity to productively downsize government.

D) **Audit of Climate Change Debate**: Because “getting climate change policy wrong will be very costly,” we must reconcile the highly credentialed, diverse positions. See this extensive preliminary assessment. Especially, no-regrets paths to GHG reduction need to be given much more attention.

[A detailed version of this document] includes the following additional reasons IOPA is needed: a) election integrity – voter fatigue; b) abundant central planning failure; c) putting the ‘loyal’ back into the loyal opposition; d) improving managed trade; e) military-style medicine for all; f) disaster response; g) accountability for information sources; h) universal basic income; i) transition gains traps; j) developing a crony capitalism index; k) when less choice is better; l) when less competition is better; m) a sounding board process; n) income inequality; o) **A Virtuous Language Police**: p) tactics to change opinions not based on analysis; q) risk comparison policies; r) Abused, neglected children: We need to eliminate the shortages of desperately needed services.