



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

Dr. John Merrifield, IOPA President (IOPACHief@policytalk.org)

11/11/23

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 study 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 can improve equity; and 7) 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 (**a solid starting point**) to this: a) existential threat; and b) huge opportunity to productively downsize government.

D) This **WSJ Article** created a huge opportunity for reforms of State Systems for mental health services for children. We need to **eliminate the shortages** of much-needed services.

E) **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**] describes other reasons IOPA is needed: a) election integrity – voter fatigue; b) much 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) we need a crony capitalism index; k) when less choice is better; l) when less competition is better; m) income inequality; n) **A Virtuous Language Police**; o) tactics to change opinions not based on analysis; and p) risk comparison policies.