OPTION 1
BREAK THE GRIP OF SPECIAL INTERESTS
what could be done
• Require full and immediate disclosure of all meetings between lobbyists and lawmakers or their staff members.
• Create a government-sponsored online clearinghouse to disclose the nature of all special-interest group activities and funding.
• Amend the Constitution to reverse the Supreme Court’s 2010 Citizens united v FEC ruling that allows super PACs to collect unlimited corporate campaign contributions.
• Require that broadcast media organizations provide free advertising to political candidates, and require campaigns to use only these outlets.
• Restrict and control the revolving door between government and the lobbying industry by instituting and enforcing a waiting period before lawmakers can work for interest groups after leaving office.

consequences & trade-offs
• But this would result in the need to document an avalanche of minute details, as even the most trivial meetings would have to be recorded.
• This would mean more government intrusion into private organizations, and make it impossible for people to support causes anonymously.
• This would restrict political freedom of speech as guaranteed in the First Amendment.
• Media organizations would give up an important source of revenue and control over their own airwaves, and candidates’ ability to spread their message would be limited, thus curtailing their free speech rights.
• This would limit officials’ ability to use their experience and expertise in their future careers, thereby penalizing them for holding public office.

OPTION 2
INCREASE RESPONSIBILITY
what could be done
• Severely punish campaign violations by disqualifying candidates who break the rules and remove officeholders who win election by breaking rules.
• Individual citizens and news organizations can pay much stricter attention to their representatives’ financial dealings and votes, and act on their findings by publicizing unethical or illegal behavior.
• Introduce term limits in Congress to ensure that elected officials don’t become part of an entrenched political elite.
• Community organizations and universities can start training programs for people considering running for office, to teach ethical decision making and stress the importance of accountability.
• More individuals from outside the established political system should step up and run for office.

consequences & trade-offs
• But this may place an impossible burden on men and women running for office, overburdening them for even minor infractions and drastically reducing the number of otherwise excellent candidates.
• This may create an even more intensely partisan environment of “gotcha” politics and result in false accusations.
• This would require a constitutional amendment and would increase the power of unelected officials, such as appointees and bureaucrats, whose longer experience would give them the advantage over freshman legislators.
• This may place such candidates at a disadvantage if their opponents are willing to use any means in order to win.
• Inexperienced lawmakers, once elected, may be more susceptible to manipulation, gamesmanship, and other tricks of the trade.

OPTION 3
FIX THE MECHANISMS OF GOVERNMENT
what could be done
• Make it easier for citizens to vote by implementing nationwide weekend voting, same-day registration, or by making Election Day a national holiday.
• Ensure major parties face more competition from third-party and independent candidates by making it easier to qualify to be on the ballot and by experimenting with proportional representation instead of winner-take-all elections.
• Expand primary voting by requiring states to use “open primaries,” in which citizens of any party can vote.
• Turn the redistricting process over to independent citizens’ committees, or juries, instead of politically motivated legislative bodies.
• Revise the rules for filibustering in Congress to prevent a few lawmakers from blocking actions supported by the majority.

consequences & trade-offs
• This would increase the number of poorly informed voters, and might increase the incidence of voter fraud.
• Having more third-party and single-issue candidates might dilute the public debate and draw attention away from broader and more pressing public issues.
• Opening up political party primaries to all voters makes it possible to manipulate the system so that, for example, the weakest candidate in an opposing party would win.
• More balanced electoral districts would undermine the power of minorities, which often depend on “majority minority” districts to win representation.
• Removing the filibuster would make it easier for a majority to pass any legislation it wanted.