

“Project 2025: A Looming Threat to Rural Arkansans,” by Dr. Chris Jones

An extremist plan has been released and it is catching a lot of attention: Project 2025.

The Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington D.C.-based think tank is leading the effort to implement Project 2025, which is really a roadmap to enact an extremist policy agenda for an authoritarian U.S. president. The document outlines how they will take over various sectors including healthcare, environmental regulations, economic policies, and labor laws.

Project 2025 is nearly 1000 pages. It is, I believe, the precursor of authoritarianism in America. It threatens your and my basic rights to freedom, good personal health, and a strong state and national economy.

Even *Forbes*, the conservative American business magazine, ran an article stating:

“Whatever your politics, the extreme, ideologically driven policies being suggested for [Donald] Trump’s second term will undermine democracy, supercharge government corruption, and devastate the American economy.”

Here are key aspects that pose significant threats to rural Arkansas:

Healthcare Access (page 87-92)

Arkansans across the state want and need access to responsible, professional healthcare. The Project 2025 proposal to reduce federal involvement in healthcare is particularly troubling. This could lead to substantial cuts in Medicaid, a vital program for low-income families and seniors in rural Arkansas. Many already face limited healthcare options. Such cuts could result in more hospital and clinic closures, and increased travel distances for medical care. Imagine having to drive two to three times farther to receive your basic healthcare.

As I wrote in an earlier column: A study published in 2023 found that **ALL 75 counties in Arkansas have at least one ambulance desert**, meaning it takes paramedics longer than 25 minutes to drive to some residents’ homes. This is a life-threatening

danger to anyone suffering a stroke or heart attack. Imagine having to wait two to three times longer to get emergency healthcare!

Environmental Protections (page 115-122)

We proudly call our Arkansas home “The Natural State”. Nature is our crown jewel. The Project 2025 push for **totally** removing environmental protections threatens our natural resources and our quality of life. Rural communities depend heavily on agriculture and tourism, which could suffer due to increased pollution and environmental degradation. This removal of safeguards could compromise water and air quality, directly impacting the health and livelihoods of all Arkansans.

Economic Impacts (Page 145-150)

Small mom & pop shops are the engines that drive Arkansas. Our communities depend heavily on local small business. Project 2025's emphasis on reduced corporate oversight would unfairly harm small, local businesses. In Arkansas, where small farms and family-owned enterprises form the economic backbone, such policies can lead to increased corporate consolidation, harming local economies and reducing economic diversity.

Ending Overtime Pay (Page 210-215)

Over 150,000 workers in Arkansas receive overtime pay. This includes Arkansans who work in transportation, healthcare, manufacturing, law enforcement, retail, and construction.

Workers in Arkansas earn an average of \$4,290 annually in overtime pay. The total amount paid in overtime across Arkansas is estimated to be approximately **\$650 million** each year. The Project 2025 proposal to eliminate mandatory overtime pay is a serious concern. Many Arkansans rely on overtime wages just to make ends meet. Removing this requirement would reduce household incomes, particularly affecting workers in rural areas, increasing financial instability for families already struggling to cover basic expenses.

What Can We Do?

Arkansans must act to protect their communities. Ask your elected officials to explain Project 2025. Ask them if they support the plan. Tell them you **do not!** Engage with local representatives, participate in town hall meetings, and support organizations advocating for rural interests. And **vote** for candidates who prioritize rural health, environmental protection, and economic fairness. This is crucial. Let's make sure our voices are heard and our needs met.

Project 2025 is a looming threat to rural Arkansans, but we can still stop this threat.

For more information on Project 2025, visit: [2025_MandateForLeadership_FULLL.pdf \(project2025.org\)](#).

Share your thoughts and comments at chrisjoneslistens@gmail.com.