Conference objectives:

- **To share information** about the nature and extent of the problems of government “deconstruction” and privatization.
- **To produce ideas** for policy or legislation to counter-act the deconstruction and privatization of government.
- **To produce ideas** for public messages and messaging: 1) how to explain “deconstruction” and privatization in terms of kitchen table issues that Americans care about; 2) how to identify organizations with the expertise, experience and capabilities to craft effective public messages.
- **To develop a plan** for moving the policy recommendations and messaging ideas forward.

**Thursday, October 5, 2017**

5:00  Tour of Kykuit, the John D. Rockefeller Estate (optional)  
6:00  Reception (Loggia)  
6:30  Dinner (Dining Room)  
Welcome:  
- Stephen Heintz, President, Rockefeller Brothers Fund  
- Neva Goodwin, Co-Director & Founder, Global Development And Environment Institute at Tufts University  
Keynote Speaker: the Honorable John Sarbanes (D-MD 3rd District)

**Friday, October 6, 2017**

7:30  Breakfast (Dining Room)

*All sessions are in the Main Conference Room*

8:30 – 9:30  **Plenary 1**  
**The Problem. And Why We’re Here.**  
- Neva Goodwin, Co-Director, Global Development And Environment Institute at Tufts University  
- June Sekera, Research Fellow, Global Development And Environment Institute, Tufts University  
- Vickie Choitz, Research Associate

Over the past three and a half decades, large swaths of the federal government have been contracted-out to private corporations, and what hasn’t been privatized has been marketized – transformed by market values, precepts and practices. The “competition prescription” has been widespread throughout federal
agencies. The ill effects, likewise, have been widespread, from prisons- and policing-for-profit, to the replacement of public education with for-profit education, to private collection agency bounty-hunters profiting off of the $1.4 trillion student loan industry.

The professional civil service workforce has been decimated, while the number of contractors and the amount of taxpayers’ money spent on them, has been swelling. For decades, we have been farming out to corporations roles and responsibilities that are properly those of public servants, i.e., people who have sworn an oath of office, as all federal employees are required to do. The corporatization trend must be reversed if government is to deliver public goods in the public interest, and if Americans are to reclaim their dismantled public goods and prevent further losses.

9:30 – 10:00 Plenary 2
Privatization and Public-Private-Partnerships: Public Risk for Private Gain
- David Hall, Founder, Public Service International Unit, University of Greenwich

Dr. Hall will present the findings of his international research on privatization and public-private-partnerships, as discussed in his 2015 report Why Public-Private-Partnerships Don’t Work.

10:00 – 10:30 Plenary 3
Public Opinion About Privatization
- Shar Habibi, Research & Policy Director, In The Public Interest.

Research indicates that much of the public favors "privatization" in concept, but when people understand how the public loses control, their opinion reverses. Participants in this session will hear about research on the public's opinion of the privatization concept and approaches to counteract false messages.

10:30 – 10:45 Break

10:45 – 12:15 Workshop 1
Outsourced government – driven by the corporate profit motive and the desire for secrecy. How can we put public purpose back in the driver’s seat?
- Shar Habibi, In The Public Interest (moderator)
- Janine Wedel, Professor, George Mason University
- Scott Amey, General Counsel, Project on Government Oversight
- Aman Banerji, Manager, Re-Public Project at the Roosevelt Institute

Corporatization of government is widespread throughout the entire federal governance structure. Within each of the main federal departments, the operations of major portions of agencies, offices, bureaus and, in some cases, virtually whole programs, have been contracted out. Recent research indicates that the ratio of contract workers to federal employees may be 2 to 1, or perhaps higher. No one knows precisely because there is no government-wide reporting of contracted-out government.¹

Additional privatizations are now on the drawing board under the Trump administration. Targeted or at risk are: the Veterans Health Administration system, Air Traffic Control system, infrastructure operation and ownership and the public education system (through vouchers), as well as others.

¹ A website that was created under the Obama administration, USAspending.gov, is woefully incomplete and not of practical use for public information on the issue of government corporatization.
It is fruitless to try to take on each of these privatizations on one-by-one. What is needed is an approach that cuts across all of them through legislation that affects all federal corporate contractors and requires government-wide reporting of all contractors as well as disclosures, transparency and accountability not now possible. Such requirements could not only make public education possible, but also may, in and of itself, reduce the amount of counter-productive contracting.

Speakers will provide an overview of the history of government’s privatization and profitization in the United States and will highlight current and planned privatization efforts. Privatization and profitization go by many names: public-private partnerships; pay for success, Social Impact Bonds and more. Regardless of what it’s called, a chief problem is supplanting public purpose with market values and the profit motive, and the sidelining of public interest as the driver.

How can we “Keep the People’s Work in Public Hands”? Participants will generate and discuss policy ideas to curtail privatization of basic governmental functions, so that the public interest is restored as the central, driving force of public goods production. Rep. Sarbanes’ CLEAN-UP Act may be a model.

12:30 – 1:30   Lunch
   •   Luncheon Address by Prof. Tom McGarity, University of Texas at Austin, School of Law
   “The Invisible Assault on Our Protections”

1:45 – 3:15   Workshop 2
Accountability for Corporations Doing the Basic Work of Government: Removing FOIA’s Shroud of Secrecy for Contractors
   •   Alfred Aman, Professor, Murphy School of Law, Indiana University
   •   Richard Murphy, Professor, Texas Tech University School of Law
   •   June Sekera, moderator

Many parts of privatized government will remain privatized for years and decades to come. Corporate contractors now operate huge swaths of the federal government and, in many cases, perform inherently governmental functions. But today these businesses operate behind legal shields of secrecy. One example: contractors are de facto exempt from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). And there are other immunities that allow federal contractors to operate secretly in ways that government agencies cannot and do not. The problem promises to worsen under the Trump administration’s plans for privatizing much more of the government.

Given this reality, what action can be taken to assure that the public has access to records relating to inherently governmental work that is being done by private contractors? How can these contractors be held accountable for their taxpayer-funded work and decision-making? How can the public be enabled to penetrate the shield of secrecy contractors enjoy?

Speakers will focus on contractors’ effective immunity from FOIA under current law and suggest timely remedies for FOIA reform. Participants will consider ways to remove corporate contractors’ FOIA immunity and generate policy recommendations.

3:15 – 3:30   Break
3:30 – 4:30 Roundtable Discussion

Getting on the same page: What’s our vocabulary for talking about privatized and marketized government?

There are so many terms in play – privatization, marketization, corporatization, outsourcing, public-private-partnerships – that clear communication is difficult and common understanding is hampered. This is true even for the “policy wonks” who live with these issues in their daily work lives. In this session, participants will explore essential terms for discussing the corporate takeover and market philosophy infusion of our government. We will attempt to come to common understandings of these terms to make our discussions and efforts more effective. This discussion is about communication among policy specialists. Tomorrow’s discussion will focus on messaging to the public.

4:30 – 5:00 Video Presentation

The Entrepreneurial State: Rethinking Risks and Rewards
- Mariana Mazzucato, Professor, University College London; Director, Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose

Dr. Mazzucato will discuss policies that can enable taxpayers to reap benefits from public investments in technological innovation.

6:00 Reception (Loggia)

7:00 – 8:30 Dinner (Dining Room)
- Michael Bernstein, Provost, Stony Brook University
  "Mainstream Economic Reasoning and the 'Demonization' of Government"
- James Galbraith, Professor, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin
  “The Predator State in the Time of Trump”

Saturday October 7, 2017

7:30 Breakfast (Dining Room)

All sessions in the Main Conference Room

8:30 – 8:45 Welcome back and objectives for the day
- Neva Goodwin

8:45 – 10:15 Mapping our Policy Ideas
 Distilling the Discussions: What Are Our Policy Ideas?
- Vickie Choitz: Facilitator

In this hands-on, interactive session, we will take the policy discussions we had yesterday and distill them into a concrete set of policy ideas. Session will include small group work and a policy mapping exercise with the whole group. The product will be a concrete set of policy ideas to curtail privatization of government functions and will be a central part of the conference report.

10:15 – 10:30 Break
Public Messaging: How do we translate policy ideas into kitchen-table topics that matter to people?

- Richard Eskow, Senior Advisor to Social Security Works (moderator)
- Michael Lind, Visiting Professor, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas, Austin
- Ellen Schneider, President and Founder, Active Voice Lab

The dominant messages that Americans have received for decades are that we have a huge and growing "big government," and that "privatization" brings efficiencies. Democrats as well as Republicans have broadcast the "big government" narrative and the claim that contracting out serves taxpayers' interests. But both claims are false. In fact, the federal workforce has not grown for the past 50 years; instead, what has ballooned is the number of contractors and contract workers. And research has shown that contracting out actually costs more than the same work being done by government workers.

Likewise, the public hears almost constantly that government is “broken,” “inefficient,” and “dysfunctional.” Yet, at the same time, it is the very effectiveness of government agencies and operations like the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, Veterans Health Administration and Air Traffic Control that has made them targets for elimination or privatization.

In some cases, the distortion has been unintentional; few people pay attention to the actual numbers of federal employees or federal agencies’ successes. In other cases, the public is being subjected to mind games. Research has shown that those who are less economically well-off lack information and are more easily manipulated by inaccurate messages, and that consequently voters make choices against their own interests.²

We lack a public messaging approach that conveys the heart of what government does in terms that average, working people care about. We also lack a way of showing that when government is ineffective, that dysfunction has often been caused by contracting out to corporate interests. The outcome of this workshop will be suggestions as to the core message(s) that will most effectively contribute to voter education and enlightenment, and that can rebut and replace the “mind games” that have dominated for so long.

Discussion questions:
* What makes for an effective public message?
* What are effective communications strategies?
* What messages could accompany the key policy or legislative ideas that have been put forward?
* Is there a core message?
* Who could deliver the message?
* How can we identify a professional organization that can transform our ideas into an effective, succinct public message(s)?

12:00 Wrap-up: Looking Ahead
Review plans for producing a Conference Report and next steps.

12:30 Box lunches to take or eat with the group at the Pocantico Center

² Lee Drutman, “America may be in a reinforcing feedback loop of growing inequality and Republican rule; Vox, Nov. 4, 2015.