



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Contact:
Emily Bolton
(646) 343-0155
press@volckeralliance.org

New Research Reveals Significant Increase in Americans’ Demand for Government Reform

Findings Help Explain Trump’s Victory and Provide Bipartisan Path for Government Overhaul

December 15, 2016, New York, NY – New research released today by the **Volcker Alliance** reveals a surge in the percentage of Americans who think that government needs major reform, including a broad consensus of cynicism about government performance across the political spectrum. *What Americans Want from Government Reform*, a paper by **Paul C. Light**, Paulette Goddard Professor of Public Service at New York University’s Wagner School of Public Service, also identifies potential avenues for reform that he feels could have broad, bipartisan appeal. The report is based on data from eight public opinions survey conducted between 1997 and 2016.

Paul A. Volcker, former chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors and founder of the Volcker Alliance, which helped finance the research, welcomed Dr. Light’s effort to identify common ground and to specify areas of reform to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government. “Democracies require the consent—and trust—of their citizens to succeed,” said Mr. Volcker. “Professor Light’s analysis demonstrates the importance of the challenge before us.”

“Frankly, I was as surprised by the election results as many other pollsters and pundits,” said Dr. Light. “Delving into the data about the attitude of Americans toward the federal government has helped me to understand the outcome much better. Survey data over the past 20 years clearly show growing anger and frustration toward government and a widening base of support for the belief that government requires serious reform, regardless of what level of services it is trying to provide.”

In *What Americans Want from Government Reform*, Dr. Light shows that the percentage of Americans who favor smaller government and very major reform increased from 17 percent in 1997 to 43 percent in August 2016, while the percentage of Americans who favor bigger government and only some reform dropped from 43 percent in 1997 to 20 percent in 2016, and the percentage who favor bigger government and very major reform increased from 16 percent in 1997 to 25 percent in 2016. These changes gave Mr. Trump a unified base of small government

and big reform supporters, but gave former Secretary of State Clinton a base of big government supporters who were deeply divided on the need for government reform.

Dr. Light has called for a slate of reforms of the federal government that data suggest would draw bipartisan support. These reforms, which would extend beyond the agenda of the Volcker Alliance, include: electoral reform to reduce the influence of money in elections; ethics reform to address conflicts of interest for elected officials; a concerted reduction in waste and inefficiency in government operations; a bipartisan national commission to overhaul government systems and workforce; and a stronger personnel system.

“We’ve known for some time that trust in government was dropping,” said Dr. Light. “What we didn’t know is what that lack of trust meant for government. Now we can clearly see that the American public wants its government to change. There is a significant appetite—a mandate, really—for significant government reform.”

For more information, visit www.volckeralliance.org.

The Volcker Alliance is a 501(c)3 organization.

About Dr. Paul Light

Dr. Light was a special consultant to the 1988 National Commission on the Public Service, which was chaired by former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker, and has advised Mr. Volcker on public services issues since then. He came to NYU after serving as vice president and director of governmental studies at the Brookings Institution. He also designed new initiatives for civic engagement as the director of the public policy program at the Pew Charitable Trusts, educating future public servants as professor and associate dean of the University of Minnesota’s Hubert H. Humphrey Institute, strengthened public management as a senior adviser to US Senator John Glenn and the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, and oversaw the research agenda at the National Academy of Public Administration.

About The Volcker Alliance

The Volcker Alliance was launched in 2013 by former Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker to address the challenge of effective execution of public policies and to help rebuild public trust in government. The nonpartisan Alliance works toward that broad objective by partnering with other organizations—academic, business, governmental, and public interest—to strengthen professional education for public service, conduct needed research on government performance, and improve the efficiency and accountability of governmental organization at the federal, state, and local levels.