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## **How Conservative Is George W. Bush?**

**by Anthony Gregory**

Given that so many conservatives have come out in favor of George W. Bush, who supposedly isn't as bad as John Kerry, an important question arises: Exactly how conservative is George W. Bush?

Bush has expanded the welfare state and increased discretionary spending at a faster rate than any president since Lyndon Johnson. His Medicare bill alone should have disgusted enough conservatives sufficiently to refuse to vote for him. The fact that the Bush administration deliberately misled fellow Republicans in Congress about the cost of the bill — a misdeed that would have surely, and justifiably, yielded scorn and wrath from conservatives had Clinton been the perpetrator — should alone convince Americans that this administration is neither politically honest nor fiscally responsible.

Bush's trade policies have been quite protectionist by modern standards. Moreover, farm subsidies under Bush have made Clinton look like a Scrooge with tax dollars.

Bush signed the horrid McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Reform Bill, admitting that some of the provisions were unconstitutional. Now he complains that the law doesn't go far enough in restricting the political speech of independent political organizations.

Though the assault-weapons ban has expired, it is no credit to the administration. Bush expressed willingness to revive the ban — whereas he has shown nothing but contempt in his stonewalling of efforts to arm airline pilots.

And now he's calling for free government health clinics in every town, free health care for all disadvantaged youth, and massive welfare to Americans to help them purchase homes.

Of course, this doesn't even get into Bush's war policies, both at home and abroad, that many conservatives have had the good sense to question. But even if we assume Bush to be an angel as far as the war on terror is concerned — even if we assume his role as a strong war president compensates for all the socialism he has pushed through — we see just how much big government and spending some Republicans are ultimately willing to tolerate: any amount. No matter how much Bush increases spending, panders to voters, assaults the free market — as long

as there's a war on, and as long as a Republican is in charge, we must open the floodgates to infinite government spending.

Indeed, to criticize even the domestic policies of Bush is often interpreted as an endorsement of Kerry, and hence an insult to America. To point out Bush's flaws is to aid the Enemy.

The fact that the majority of people in a recent worldwide poll said they prefer Kerry was taken by many media conservatives to mean that the world hates America. This ludicrous faux patriotism, whereby love of country is the same as loyalty to a particular political party, is not only un-American and dangerous, it explains to a great extent why so many conservatives are willing to relinquish any principles they might have regarding small government in order to support whatever the president does.

Would conservatives feel the same way if Al Gore had become president? If Gore, who unlike most Democrats voted in favor of Gulf War I, had gone to war with both Afghanistan and Iraq, would his war leadership automatically exempt him from criticism for his domestic welfare spending, the way it appears to have done in the case of Bush? If Kerry wins, will conservatives be silent about the new president's welfare spending, as long as he wages a good war every two years?

If Kerry seems dangerously socialistic, Bush's competitive efforts to outspend the Democrats have been no help. But it is hard to see how Kerry could possibly be a bigger welfare-monger than Bush. Bush's record makes all the combined social spending under the last two Democratic presidents look paltry by comparison. Under a Republican we have seen more socialism than a modern Democrat could get away with, and we will continue to see it so long as conservatives continue to support policies that violate conservative principles.

*Anthony Gregory is a writer and musician who lives in Berkeley, California. He earned his bachelor's degree in history at UC Berkeley, where he was president of the Cal Libertarians. He is an intern at the [Independent Institute](#) and has written for [RationalReview.com](#), the [Libertarian Enterprise](#), and [LewRockwell.com](#). See his webpage, [AnthonyGregory.com](#), for more articles and personal information.*

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