

Project 1

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September 17, 2017

Abstract

In this report, I will be examining how the United States federal government changed under President George W. Bush and President Barack Obama. I will look into the campaign platforms for each president, determine expectations for how the federal government would resize to meet each president's campaign promises, and then look at actual policy decisions made by each president and how they changed the federal payroll. I will also examine natural disasters and geopolitical events that occurred during each presidency and how the federal government reacted.

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1 Introduction

For this report, I will be examining federal payroll data obtained by BuzzFeed News using the Freedom of Information Act. While the data set itself dates back to 1973, I will only be examining the data relevant to the presidency of George Bush (2001 - 2008) and Barack Obama (2009 - 2014). Although Obama's presidency lasted from 2009 to 2016, the data (at the time of writing this report) is only available through to 2014.

Since Bush is a Republican, and Obama a Democrat, we would expect a dichotomy in their policy decisions. Generally, Republican candidates run a campaign focused on shrinking the federal government and lowering taxes, while Democratic candidates tend to emphasize coordination with allies and.. These are common trends for each party, but presidential candidates know that winning the presidency means winning party leadership, so each candidate will support changes in policy that draw new voters and reform their respective parties. Let's look more closely at the history of each candidate and their campaign platforms.

1.1 Political Careers

Each president had to build up a strong political career before they were considered by their parties as viable presidential candidates. Let's look briefly at the life and political history of each president.

1.1.1 George W. Bush

George W. Bush was born in New Haven, Connecticut on July 6, 1946. His family moved to Odessa, Texas in 1948, and then to Midland, Texas in 1950. Bush began Elementary school in Midland and finished in Houston after the family moved there in 1959. Bush went to high school at Phillips Academy Andover in Andover, Massachusetts where he developed a love for American History. He went to college at Yale University where he majored in history with a concentration in European and American studies. After he graduated in 1968, he joined the National Guard. He then continued his education at Harvard University where he obtained his MBA. George Bush met Laura Welch in July 1977 and they were married on November 5, 1977. Their twin girls were born in November 1981.[1]

Bush began his political career by campaigning to be the Mayor of Odessa when he was 31. He lost the election, but was on the campaign trail soon after to assist his father's run for the presidency in 1988. He then assisted in his father's reelection campaign in 1982, but they were defeated by Bill Clinton. Bush returned to Texas where he decided to run for Governor. He focused his campaign on education, juvenile justice, and welfare policies. He won the campaign, and worked hard with Texas Democrats to follow through with his campaign promises. His most notable legislative accomplishment was overhauling the Texas education system, adding more choice and competition to the system and setting new skill requirements for children. He also introduced tax cuts, programs to help faith-based organizations, and began providing social services through churches.[1]

He won reelection as governor in 1998 and coined the term "compassionate conservatism", a brand meant to unite Republican values of the free market and small government with social welfare. His success as governor made him a prime choice to run for the presidency in the eyes of the Republican party.[1]

1.1.2 Barack Obama

Barack H. Obama II was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961. His parents divorced and, after his mother remarried, he moved to Indonesia with his mother and stepfather. His mother was concerned about his education so she sent him back to Hawaii to live with his grandparents. He attended Punahou School from fifth grade through the end of high school. He then went to college, first at Occidental in Los Angeles, and then at Columbia University in New York City. He majored in political science and graduated in 1983. Obama then moved to Chicago to work as a community organizer. He organized the citizens of Altgeld Gardens to pressure Chicago's city hall to improve the living conditions in the public housing project. Unsatisfied with his success, he resolved to get a law degree. He attended Harvard Law School in 1988 and graduated magna cum laude. He met Michelle Robinson shortly after graduation and they were married in 1992. They had two daughters born in 1998 and 2001.[2]

Obama first ran for a political office in 1996, when he ran to be a state senator in Illinois. Despite being a member of the minority party in the state legislature, he was able to work with Republicans and Democrats to pass campaign finance reform and crime legislation. He became a leading legislator after the Democrats won Senate majority and passed nearly 300 bills focusing on helping children, old people, labor unions, and the poor. He then set his sights on a 2004 race for a U.S. Senate seat. He differentiated himself by opposing Bush's war in Iraq. He won the Senate seat by the largest margin in the history of Senate elections in Illinois.[2]

Obama's stance against the war set him apart from other potential Democratic presidential candidates. In a keynote address he gave at the Democratic National Convention in 2004, he struck notes of unity between political parties and different ethnicities. He promoted optimism with a phrase he borrowed from Reverend Jeremiah Wright, "the audacity of hope".[2]

1.2 Presidential Campaigns

Each candidate makes a number of promises over the course of their campaign. Let's look at a number of these promises and the political policies we would expect to see to accomplish these promises.

References

- [1] Gary L. Gregg II *George W. Bush: Life Before the Presidency*
<https://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/life-before-the-presidency>
- [2] Michael Nelson *Barack Obama: Life Before the Presidency*
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