

RHETORIC VS. REALITY: The Bush Credibility Gap



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Rhetoric vs. Reality: The Bush Credibility Gap

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I am a firm believer in the people. If given the truth, they can be depended upon to meet any national crises. The great point is to bring them the real facts.

- Abraham Lincoln (1809 - 1865)

Americans need to be able to believe their elected leaders, especially when the education of our children, the health of our families and the security of our armed forces are involved. And yet, on crucial issues from education to health care, from homeland security to tax policy, Americans justifiably question the credibility of the Bush Administration and Congressional Republicans. Time after time, Republican rhetoric not only fails to match reality: the initiatives, policies and programs promoted by Republican strategists actually undermine and attack the very goals they are supposed to achieve.

The Republican “Credibility Gap” was particularly stunning in the case of the highly publicized “16 words” used in justifying war on Iraq. But examples of their credibility gap abound throughout, such as in the case of the ballooning federal deficit. Despite years of promises to “balance the federal budget,” Republican leaders have transformed a ten-year, \$5.6 trillion federal surplus into a record, ten-year \$3 trillion deficit – a loss of \$9 trillion in just three years that our grandchildren will be paying for decades to come! And the trajectory towards fiscal failure was set long before the tragedy of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In many others areas, the Bush-Republican “Credibility Gap” is steadily becoming wider: policies on children, on education, on jobs, on homeland security and on senior citizens in no way match the promises of Republican politicians.

Those who govern by the narrowest of margins have abandoned their campaign promises of consensus, compromise and compassion. This report by the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, describes key areas where the resulting Bush-Republican “Credibility Gap” is undercutting our efforts to build a better, more prosperous, more secure future for our children.

ON EDUCATION:

Rather than leaving no child behind, the Republican record is full of broken promises to parents and children. Whether it's No Child Left Behind, Head Start, or college aid, Republicans talk about access, accountability, and quality but continuously fail to support our schools.

THE ISSUE: KEEPING PROMISES TO NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND



“With the No Child Left Behind Act, we have committed the nation to higher standards for every single public school, And we’ve committed the resources to help the students achieve those standards.”
[1st Anniversary No Child Left

Behind, East Room, White House, 1/8/03]

“After school programs keep kids safe, help working families, and improve academic achievements.” [Bush Proclamation, 10/4/02]



This year, the President’s budget underfunded the landmark No Child Left Behind Act, which he strongly supported, by nearly \$10 billion. The House education-spending bill **shortchanges these education promises by \$8 billion.** The President’s budget and the House education spending bill both deny 2.2 million children help with the basics of reading and math, compared to the amount promised in the NCLB. The President and Republicans in Congress also proposed under-funding after school programs – the President by more than \$1 billion. Likewise, Republicans have siphoned money away from initiatives to improve the quality of teachers in the classroom. Bush proposed cutting more than \$300 million from teacher quality programs compared to the level of funding authorized in fiscal year 2002.

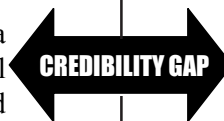
THE ISSUE: PROTECTING HEAD START



“We want Head Start to set higher ambitions for the millions of children it serves.” [Highland Park Elementary School, Maryland, 7/7/03]

“There needs to be a guarantee that the federal money spent on Head Start, only go to Head Start.”

[Highland Park Elementary School, Maryland, 7/7/03]



The White House and the House Republicans are aggressively promoting a bill to block grant the 35 year-old Head Start pre-school program, handing control over to state governments who, according to the Congressional Research Service, could then use a portion of their Head Start funds for *other* state needs, like cash assistance for transitional families, resulting in an **overall cut in early childhood services.** Block grants would compromise Head Start’s high educational standards, decrease comprehensive services, minimize parent involvement, and eliminate federal oversight. Both the National Head Start Association and The National League of Cities oppose the Republicans’ attempts to dismantle Head Start.

THE ISSUE: HELPING FAMILIES AFFORD COLLEGE



“Our economy demands new and different skills. We are a changing economy. And therefore, we must constantly educate workers to be able to fill the jobs of the 21st century. And so, therefore, I went to Congress and asked for increased funding for Pell Grants for higher education scholarships.” [Greater Kansas Chamber of Commerce, Kansas City, 9/4/03]

CREDIBILITY GAP

The Bush Administration recently revised the information used to determine financial aid eligibility. According to the Department of Education, **84,000 students will no longer be eligible for Pell Grants**, thanks to the Administration’s revisions, and **thousands more will face lower Pell Grant awards and slashed student loans**. Additionally, Bush’s FY2004 budget slashed the minimum Pell Grant awards despite the skyrocketing cost of a college education. Tuition at both public and private four-year colleges rose by nearly forty percent, adjusted for inflation, over the last decade. This year alone, tuition at public colleges and community colleges rose by 14 percent.



“Our government must work to make college more affordable for students who come from economically disadvantaged homes.” [Michigan Affirmative Action Case, Roosevelt Room, White House, 1/15/03]

CREDIBILITY GAP

The President’s budget proposed: cutting-off aid to low-income students, cutting grants for students with exceptional needs, slashing aid to institutions that serve predominately low-income students, gutting funding for outreach programs that put college within reach for disadvantaged high school and middle schools students (TRIO and GEARUP), and cutting funding for Youth Opportunity Grants, which are targeted to high-poverty urban and rural communities.

ON THE ECONOMY:

In less than three years the Republicans have lost 3.2 million jobs and added \$3.6 trillion to the national debt. Today, nine million people are out of work. Millions more have given up searching for a job or are working fewer hours than they would like. President Bush has the worst record of job creation since President Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression.

THE ISSUE: CREATING JOBS

“What I worry about is when I hear the stories of people who can’t find work. And so we have got to make sure that we continue to focus on jobs, and job creation, and job growth.” [Carpenters Union Picnic, Pittsburgh, 9/2/02]

CREDIBILITY GAP

Bush proposed to **cut funding for manufacturing assistance programs** by eliminating the Manufacturing Extension Program (MEP) and the Advanced Technology Program (ATP).



“The tax relief I have proposed and will push for until enacted ... will create 1.4 million new jobs by the end of 2004.” [Rose Garden Remarks, Washington, DC, 4/15/03]

More than 3 million private sector jobs have been lost since Bush took office, including 2.5 million manufacturing jobs. In fact, it is virtually certain that George W. Bush will have the worst job creation record since the Great Depression presidency of Herbert Hoover.



“Job creation is the number-one priority of — of economic policy out of Washington, D.C.” [Plenary Session of Economic Forum, Waco, 8/13/02]



“We should try to make it easier for people to find good jobs by giving them the education and training they need to succeed.” [Labor Department Summit, Washington, DC, 6/20/01]

Each budget the President has submitted to Congress since he has taken office has **cut funding for employment and training programs**. This year, the President’s budget cut funding for adult training, aid for dislocated workers, as well as the Employment Service state grants. Additionally, the Bush budget **eliminated re-employment and retraining assistance for approximately 45,000 dislocated workers**, and gutted the youth employment programs (youth activities and youth opportunity grants), cutting-off job assistance for nearly 15,000 young people. The Bush budget also cut vocational education by 25 percent.



“The best way to have more jobs is to help the people who create new jobs, and those are the small-business owners of America.” [Bush Signs Tax Relief, Rose Garden, Washington, DC, 5/28/03]

President Bush’s FY2002 budget imposed a user fee – or a tax – on small businesses that participate in the SBA’s venture capital program (SBIC). Additionally, the President’s FY2004 budget proposed eliminating the PRIME (Program for Investments and Microentrepreneurs) for disadvantaged microbusinesses, the BusinessLINC, a mentoring program for small businesses in low-income areas, and the One Stop Capital Shops (OSCS), which offer free counseling and assistance to local businesses found mainly in low-income Empowerment Zones.



THE ISSUE: TAX CUTS ARE DEVASTATING TO THE ECONOMY



“We can proceed with tax relief without fear of budget deficits, even if the economy softens.” [Chamber of Commerce, Kalamazoo, 3/27/01]

In October, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimated that the **federal deficit has skyrocketed to \$374 billion this year**, more than double the size of the deficit last year, and the largest deficit in history, in terms of dollars. **Next year, the deficit is projected to exceed \$500 billion**. The single biggest reason for the huge deficits: Bush-Republican tax cuts that aid the wealthiest 2% of Americans. By 2010, middle class taxpayers will be saddled with an additional \$40 billion in federal taxes.



ON HEALTH CARE:

America has the best health care in the world, but still millions of our citizens struggle to pay high health care premiums and have to fight to receive quality care. Today one in six Americans has no health insurance; and an additional four million Americans have become uninsured since the beginning of the Bush Administration.

THE ISSUE: AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL



“My job as the President is to submit a budget to the Congress and to set priorities, and one of the priorities that we’ve talked about is making sure the health care systems are funded.” [Roundtable, Atlanta, 3/01/01]

CREDIBILITY GAP

Bush’s first budget proposed **cutting grants to children’s hospitals** by 15% (\$34 million), and his FY 2004 budget proposed cutting 30% (\$86 million) out of grants to children’s hospitals. Bush’s most recent budget proposed eliminating the community access program – a program that provides health care services to the under-insured and uninsured offered by community providers. Bush’s budget also proposed cutting nearly 40 percent from 2002 purchasing levels for programs designed to increase access to health services in rural areas.



“Our second goal is high quality, affordable health care for all Americans. ... We must work toward a system in which all Americans have a good insurance policy...” [State of the Union, Washington, DC, 1/28/03]

CREDIBILITY GAP

Bush’s FY2004 budget gutted funding for the community access program and for health services in rural areas. As a result of his inaction, according to a census report released on September 30th, **the number of Americans who lack health insurance climbed 5.7 percent in 2002, to 43.6 million, the largest single increase in a decade.** Overall, 15.2 percent of Americans were uninsured last year, up from 14.6 percent in 2001.



“All Americans should be able to choose a health care plan that meets their needs at affordable prices.” [Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 2/11/02]

CREDIBILITY GAP

In June, House Republicans passed the Small Business Health Fairness Act. This bill nullifies state laws that guarantee access to essential care; and the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) warns that this bill will **increase health care costs** because it will allow cherry picking of the most desirable employers, leaving the more expensive employers in the current system.

THE ISSUE: FUNDING FOR SPECIAL HEALTH RESEARCH

“In order to win the war against cancer, we must fund the war against cancer.” [Cancer screening event, East Room, White House, 9/18/02]

CREDIBILITY GAP

President Bush and the Republicans are pushing a Medicare reform and prescription drug bill that slashes funding for chemotherapy and other critical cancer care.



“The legislation I sign today launches an emergency effort that will provide \$15 billion over the next five years to fight AIDS abroad.” [Bush signs H.R. 1298, US Department of State, 5/27/03]

CREDIBILITY GAP

The President’s FY04 budget request was for only \$2 billion to fight the spread of AIDS — \$1 billion short of the commitment he made to fully fund the AIDS initiative. Then, the Republicans in the House further cut the President’s budget request by \$1 billion.

ON RETIREMENT:

Once viable for years to come, the Social Security and Medicare trust funds are now paying for tax cuts for those who need them the least. Meanwhile, disabled veterans receive less in pensions than they deserve, and face long waits for health care. Pensions are being slashed and even eliminated, and 401(k) plans are losing value.

THE ISSUE: PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE



“If it’s good enough for the Congress, it’s good enough for the senior citizens of America.” [Remarks by President on Medicare and Prescription Drugs, Grand Rapids, 1/29/03]

CREDIBILITY GAP

According to the non-partisan Congressional Research Service (CRS), the Bush prescription drug plan would not provide seniors with a benefit equal to what members of Congress receive. CRS concluded that if Congress were to offer the same – or an equivalent — drug benefit for seniors as it offers its own, it would have to increase the value of Medicare benefits per person proposed by Bush and the Republicans by about \$2,700 a year in 2006, compared with a benefit in the Senate and House bills of between \$1,800 and \$1,900.

THE ISSUE: SOCIAL SECURITY



the Budget, White House, 9/7/01]

“It starts with having a responsible budget that meets our nation’s obligations without affecting Social Security or dipping into Social Security.” [Bush Statement on

CREDIBILITY GAP

Far from protecting programs important to seniors, the President’s economic program will spend every penny of the \$2.2 trillion Social Security surplus over the next ten years. Republicans have also proposed privatizing Social Security, which would leave it vulnerable to market swings and scandals. All of the GOP privatization proposals require **\$1 trillion in up-front costs.**

THE ISSUE: SENIORS

“Americans are doing the work of compassion every-day, visiting prisoners, providing shelter for battered women, bringing companionship to lonely seniors. These good works ... the assistance of the federal government.” [State of the Union, Washington, DC, 1/28/03]

CREDIBILITY GAP

The Bush 2004 budget proposed freezing all funding for the Administration on Aging, which would have resulted in **severe after-inflation cuts to Congregate Meals, Meals on Wheels, and home and community-based support programs.**

THE ISSUE: PENSION PROTECTION



“People who work hard and save for the future deserve every protection we can give them.” [Weekly Radio Address, 10/19/02]

CREDIBILITY GAP

In December 2002, the President announced a plan to alter federal pension rules that would have made it easier for companies to cut the pension benefits of older employees in half, according to the independent General Accounting Office (GAO). After a loud Democratic outcry, however, the Administration backed off the President’s plan. Additionally, the Bush’s Administration opposes legislation offered by Democrats to require top company executives to notify the retirement plan administrators when they sell significant positions of company stock, and to include employee representatives on the boards managing their own money. Since 2000, more than three million Americans have lost their pension coverage, and the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation is now under funded by \$9 billion, a nearly \$19 billion swing in the wrong direction in just three years.

ON THE ENVIRONMENT:

The Bush Administration has worked to undermine many key environmental protections, essentially rolling back 30 years of bipartisan progress.

THE ISSUE: MAINTAINING CLEAN AIR



“We will also work to make our air cleaner with the help of Congress, environmental groups and industry. We will require all power plants to meet clean air standards in order to reduce emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide, mercury and carbon dioxide within a reasonable period of time.” [Candidate

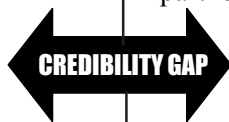
Bush’s Remarks, Saginaw, 9/29/00]



In 2000, Bush promised cleaner air by requiring all power plants to meet strong standards to reduce pollution. But Bush backtracked from his pledge during his first 100 days in office, saying: “I was responding to—to reality, and reality is the nation has got a real problem when it comes to energy.” Then, in August 2003, the Bush Administration approved a major rollback of current clean air enforcement rules, again putting the interests of industry over the clean, healthy air.

THE ISSUE: PROTECTING OUR LANDS

“We’ve got money in our budget to fully fund the **Land and Water Conservation Fund** for the first time, that says we’ll work with local folks to set aside lands that need to be protected.” [Honoring Environmental Youth Awards, Rose Garden, 4/24/01]



In 2000, Republicans in Congress struck a historic, bipartisan deal to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which preserves the great lands and places of America, helps save endangered and threatened species, and aids states and local communities with their conservation and recreation programs through creative partnerships. But contrary to his campaign promises, the President has never fully funded this key environmental program. Instead, cuts to the program were masked by diverting significant amounts of LWCF funds to other programs, including agencies’ operating expenses. Likewise, Congressional Republicans have failed to live up to their promise to fully fund the parks initiative. In their 2004 spending bill, Republicans provided 36 percent below the amount they had previously agreed to, effectively cutting funding for LWCF compared to the previous year.

“The federal government has clear responsibility for the Everglades, as in each of the nearly 400 other national parks. In recent years that obligation has sometimes been neglected. Many parks have lacked the resources they need for their basic care and maintenance. My administration will restore and renew America’s national parks.” [Bush Remarks, Everglades National Park, 6/4/01]



The Bush Administration has provided only 15 cents for every dollar it said was necessary to renew our parks. Instead, the Administration has spent millions on private consultants to determine how best to privatize the park system. To date, no study has shown any savings would come from privatization.

THE ISSUE: PROTECTING ENDANGERED SPECIES

“We’re making real progress protecting endangered species and helping them recover.” [Bush Names New EPA Administrator, 8/12/03]



Warren Garst



In October 2003, the Bush Administration dramatically reversed U.S. policy by **gutting protections for endangered species to allow circuses, trophy hunters, and the pet industry to import from foreign countries animals on the verge of extinction.** The new guidelines would allow Americans to **shoot endangered straight-horned markhor** in Pakistan and authorize the capture of endangered Asian elephants for circuses in the United States. The Administration has also proposed a partial resumption of the African ivory trade, which African wildlife experts predict will lead to an **explosion in elephant poaching.**

THE ISSUE: CLEAN WATER

“We must also be vigilant in protecting the air and soil and waters around us.”
[Bush Announces nomination of Leavitt, 8/11/03]



President Bush and his Administration have twice issued rules, that if enacted, would compromise the quality of our nation’s water supply. The first proposal surfaced in March 2001, when the Bush Administration announced that it would be reconsidering current standards for arsenic in water. Months later, the Administration was forced to retreat from its position in the face of a mounting public outcry. Then, in November 2003, the Administration released a plan to allow sewage treatment plants to skip currently required treatment procedures before storm run-offs occur into coastal waters, rivers and lakes. The proposed plan would allow hundreds of communities to skip cleaning steps that could allow viruses and parasites to seep into public drinking water supplies.

ON COMPASSION:

The President ran for office promising to be a new, more compassionate conservative. But his record in office betrays his reassuring rhetoric, as the Administration reversed course on programs like AmeriCorps, Teach for America, and funding Boys and Girls Clubs.

THE ISSUE: NATIONAL SERVICE



“I hope young Americans all across the country think about joining Teach for America.” [“Teach for America” Event, Atlanta, 1/31/02]

CREDIBILITY GAP

The Bush Administration cut 64 percent of Teach For America’s AmeriCorps funding. As a result, **2,300 TFA members will be denied their \$4,725 education awards**, causing a \$10.5 million shortfall for TFA. The Bush cuts will also eliminate the ability of TFA service members with student loans to defer, or stop the clock on, their student loan payments.



“Our country ... needs citizens working to rebuild our communities. We need mentors to love children, especially children whose parents are in prison. And we need more talented teachers in troubled schools. USA Freedom Corps will expand and improve the good efforts of AmeriCorps and Senior Corps to recruit more than 200,000 new volunteers.” [State of the Union, Washington, DC, 1/29/02]

CREDIBILITY GAP

In his 2002 State of the Union Address, President Bush pledged to expand AmeriCorps. But the Bush Administration’s mismanagement of the program, combined with accounting errors, have resulted in a 60 percent cut in this highly successful and popular program. As a result of the Bush Administration’s poor oversight of the program, fewer than 30,000 volunteers will be able to serve their country compared to the 75,000 Bush requested. The Bush Administration also failed to include funding for AmeriCorps in a list of critical priorities it submitted to Congress on July 7, 2003.

“I believe so strongly in mentoring. And I believe so strongly in helping children understand somebody loves them. And the government can’t do that, but what the government can do is facilitate programs and allow faith-based programs to access federal monies so that they can help change hearts.” [Touring Boys and Girls Club, Delaware, 4/3/01]

CREDIBILITY GAP

In April 2001, Bush proclaimed support for mentoring at a Boys and Girls Club in Delaware. But the Bush 2002 budget proposed **eliminating funding for Boys and Girls clubs in public housing developments.**

THE ISSUE: HOME OWNERSHIP



“You see, we want everybody in America to own their own home. ... An ownership society is a compassionate society. ... Yet ... fewer than

half of the Hispanics and half of the African-Americans own the home. That’s a home ownership gap. It’s a gap that we’ve got to work together to close.” [White House Conference on Increasing Minority Ownership, Washington, DC, 10/15/02]

← CREDIBILITY GAP →

The Bush 2004 budget eliminated funding for the rehabilitation of distressed public housing (HOPE VI), cut projected funding for Section-8 housing assistance, and zeroed out funding for the Rural Housing and Economic Development program. Additionally, the President’s much touted down payment assistance program has not yet begun, and provisions allowing low-income Americans to use Section 8 vouchers for down payments have been stalled at HUD. The Bush budget also included a provision that would **increase the rents for thousands of people living in Section-8 housing.**

ON PROTECTING THE HOMEFRONT:

After the tragedy of September 11th, America took strong steps to close the gaps in our national defense on land, sea, and in the air. We have made remarkable progress. But despite all the work that has been done, our public safety personnel are overtaxed here at home and our borders remain vulnerable.

THE ISSUE: FIRST RESPONDER FUNDING

“Well, first of all, you know, I’ve got a strong commitment to not only the firefighters but the first responders, and here are the facts. The budget prior to September 11 was about \$250 million, after September the 11th [it] is over \$1 billion. And my ’03 request for first responders is over \$3.5 billion. And so the commitment is strong, and the commitment is there.” [Bush Talks to Reporters, Washington, DC, 8/16/03]



← CREDIBILITY GAP →

Bush failed to mention that the \$3.5 billion for First Responder grants in his budget was offset by about **\$2.5 billion in cuts in other federal aid for state and local law enforcement, as well as local fire departments** – including drastic cuts in the COPS program and the proposed elimination of the Local Law Enforcement Block Grant and the Byrne State and Local Law Enforcement Grants. Not surprisingly, **firehouses around the nation are closing**, including in New York City.

THE ISSUE: PORT SECURITY

“We’re working hard to make sure your job is easier, that the port is safer.” [Remarks on Homeland Security, Newark, 6/24/02]



Neither the Bush 2003 or the 2004 budget included any funds for port security, and **Bush vetoed a bill that included \$39 million for the Container Security Initiative.** Additionally, the Congressional Republicans voted against an amendment to add \$500 million towards the \$4.4 billion the Coast Guard says is necessary to improve port security.

THE ISSUE: SECURING OUR BORDERS

“And I’ll give you one area where we need to do a better job and that’s on our borders. We need to know who’s coming into America. We need to know what they’re bringing into America. We need to know if they’re leaving when they say they’re going to leave America.” [Bush Delivers Remarks on the Economy, Davenport, 9/16/02]



Despite pledging to do more to secure our porous borders, the Bush 2004 budget included **no additional funding for INS border patrols and staff.** Additionally, in August, **Bush vetoed \$6.25 million for promised pay upgrades for Border Patrol agents.**

ON VETERANS :

When it comes to veterans, the reassuring rhetoric offered by President Bush and the Republicans in Congress does not match reality. While the President is heralding veterans, the Republicans in Congress shortchange veterans' health care by \$1.8 billion. While Republicans pretend to oppose the tax on disabled veterans, they refuse to join Democrats in repealing it.

THE ISSUE: HONORING AMERICA'S VETERANS

“The budget for Veterans Affairs has gone up by \$15 billion since I took office, a 30 percent increase. And my budget for fiscal year 2004 includes the largest discretionary increase for the Department of Veterans Affairs ever requested by a President.” [American Legion National Convention, St. Louis, 8/26/03]



In January, the Bush Administration abruptly cut-off access to VA health care for 164,000 veterans without service-connected disabilities who make as little as \$25,000 a year. **Bush's FY 2004 budget proposed increases in prescription drug fees that will force 1.3 million veterans out of VA health care,** according to the Administration's own estimate.

“In the budget I submitted, veterans are a priority.” [American Legion's 83rd Annual Convention, San Antonio, 8/29/01]



“America must, and will, keep its word to those men and women who have given us so much. Veterans have been promised good health care when they are sick and disabled; they must be treated with fairness and respect.” [Veterans Day Remarks After Arlington Cemetery Wreath Laying, Washington, DC, 11/11/02]



There is a huge crisis in veterans’ medical care: an average of 60,000 veterans are waiting six months or more for an appointment at Veterans Administration hospitals. Some are even dying before they get to see a doctor. In July, the House considered H.R. 2861, the VA-HUD Appropriations bill for FY 2004. This bill provides only \$25.2 billion for veterans’ health care – \$1.8 billion less than was promised in the budget resolution passed earlier this year.

THE ISSUE: DISABLED VETERANS TAX



“The needs of our veterans are once again priorities of our government.” [American Legion’s 83rd Annual Convention, San Antonio, 8/29/01]

“Those of us honored to serve in high office, have commitments of our own to our nation’s veterans.” [American Legion’s 83rd Annual

Convention, San Antonio, 8/29/01]



During the 107th Congress, the Bush Administration threatened to veto the entire Defense authorization bill if it included a provision to end the “Disabled Veterans Tax.” Every year, hundreds of thousands of disabled military veterans pay a “Disabled Veterans Tax” that costs them their disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Essentially, if a veteran has both 20 years of military service and a service-related disability, the veteran’s military retirement benefit is reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis by the amount the veteran receives in disability compensation, amounting to a “Disabled Veterans Tax.” In October 2003, Congressional Republicans offered a watered-down “solution” to the problem that would exclude two-thirds of disabled veterans from benefiting from the change.

THE ISSUE: SUPPORTING OUR TROOPS



“The heaviest burdens in our war on terror fall, as always, on the men and women of our Armed Forces and our intelligence services. ... We are grateful for their skill and courage, and for their acts of decency, which have shown America’s character to the world.” [President Addresses the Nation, 9/7/03]

“In order to boost the morale of our military, it starts with taking care of our people.” [American Legion’s 83rd Annual National Convention, San Antonio, 8/29/01]



Though Bush pays tribute in his speeches to the men and women in our armed forces – and to their families – his Administration’s policies often fail to provide for our troops and their families. Earlier this year, the Bush Administration decided to cut danger pay and separation allowances for combat soldiers, only reversing its decision in the face of widespread opposition. Additionally, National Guard and Reservists were sent to Iraq without the same level of protection as our regular troops. They are also forced to wait for medical care in substandard housing, despite the sacrifices they have made for our country.

THE ISSUE: WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION IN IRAQ

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Uranium
238.029

“The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa.” [State of the Union, 1/28/03]

← CREDIBILITY GAP →

The British intelligence upon which the President based this claim relied on evidence that had been called into question by the intelligence community prior to the State of the Union address. **Intelligence officials say the C.I.A. told British officials last fall that they doubted the evidence supporting the claim.** And, in March 2003, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that information that led to the claim that Iraq had tried to obtain uranium from Niger was a forgery.



“Our intelligence sources tell us that he has attempted to purchase high strength aluminum tubes suitable for nuclear weapons production.” [State of the Union, Washington, DC, 1/28/03]

← CREDIBILITY GAP →

In making the case that Iraq posed a nuclear threat to the United States, President Bush made reference to the Iraqi’s acquisition of aluminum tubes to be used for nuclear weapons production. **In truth, these tubes can be used for many purposes according to Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency,** “Clearly, there’s a difference of opinion in the intelligence community” on the purpose of the tubes, agreed Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage before a Senate committee.

THE ISSUE: SADDAM HUSSEIN HAS TIES TO TERRORISTS



“Evidence from intelligence sources, secret communications, and statements by people now in custody, reveal that Saddam Hussein aids and protects terrorists, including members of al-Qaida.” [State of the Union, Washington, DC, 1/28/03]

← CREDIBILITY GAP →

According to The New York Times, several CIA analysts assert that the Bush Administration exaggerated the links between Iraq and terrorism to strengthen the Administration’s case for a war. **Investigators at the Federal Bureau of Investigation were also “baffled” by Bush’s link between Al Qaida and Hussein.** “We’ve been looking at this hard for more than a year and you know what, we just don’t think it’s there,” said one official.