



Jeb Bush Will Not Run as a Conservative

His father and his brother captured the Republican nomination for president, posing as conservatives, then governed as moderates. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush (shown), however, appears determined to chart a different course. If he does make a bid for president, this Bush is sending clear signals that it will not be as a conservative.



After two previous Bush presidencies, in which conservative positions were adopted sporadically, this should not come as a surprise. But, following the openly hard-left Obama presidency, many Republicans are desperate for victory, and may buy the idea that the winning formula is to nominate a “middle-of-the-road” candidate.

At least that’s the idea Jeb is trying to sell to the Republican Party. According to Breitbart.com, he believes a Republican presidential candidate who is “willing to lose the primary to win the general” has the best chance to capture the White House in 2016. “I kinda know how a Republican can win,” Jeb said. His strategy, of course, is predicated on the belief that lesser conservative candidates actually do better in the general election.

Breitbart.com asserted that “Bush has shown every indication that he will not pander to conservatives and take positions that are at odds with what he truly believes.”

Many accused former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney of deception for running as a “severe conservative,” when he actually is more accurately associated with a moderate brand of Republicanism based on his record as governor of the liberal bastion of Massachusetts. Mitt’s father, George, was considered a Rockefeller Republican when he was governor of Michigan back in the 1960s, so those with longer memories or greater knowledge of political history were understandably skeptical of Mitt being a conservative of any type, not to mention a “severe” one.

Compared to the Bush family’s deep ties with Establishment Republicanism, however, George and Mitt Romney are not in their league.

The Bush family has long ties with the power elites of the United States, going back to Jeb’s great-grandfather, Samuel Prescott Bush. Samuel became general manager of the Buckeye Steel Castings Company in 1901. The business, which manufactured railway parts, was run by Frank Rockefeller, brother of the founder of the Standard Oil Company, John D. Rockefeller. Among the company’s important clients were railroads run by E. H. Harriman. The Bush and Harriman families began a connection that would continue over the next several decades.

In 1918, Bernard Baruch of Democrat Woodrow Wilson’s War Industries Board appointed Samuel Bush as chief of the Ordnance, Small Arms and Ammunition section, providing government assistance to munitions manufacturers during World War I. Bush later landed a spot on the Federal Reserve Board of



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Cleveland, and in 1931, progressive Republican President Herbert Hoover placed him on a committee for unemployment relief.

The Bush family had clearly entered the American political establishment. The next political Bush was Samuel Bush's son Prescott, who joined the exclusive Skull and Bones fraternity at Yale. After college, in 1924, Bush became a vice president of A. Harriman, an investment banking firm, where his father-in-law, George Herbert Walker, was president. In 1931, Prescott Bush made partner at Brown Brothers Harriman Company. The next year, he was introduced to CBS's William Paley by his good friend Averell Harriman. Harriman was a powerful player in the Democratic Party, and was instrumental in obtaining a spot on the CBS board of directors for Prescott.

In 1947, Prescott Bush served as treasurer for Planned Parenthood's national capital campaign. This contributed to his defeat for the U.S. Senate in Connecticut in 1950 (where there was a significant Roman Catholic population). But then in 1952, Bush defeated Democrat Abraham Ribicoff in a special election for the U.S. Senate. That was the year that General Dwight Eisenhower took the Republican nomination over the more conservative Senator Robert A. Taft. Not surprisingly, Prescott Bush publicly favored Eisenhower and his "Modern Republicanism," with its supposed goal of a more efficient and cheaper welfare state. Senator Barry Goldwater denounced "Modern Republicanism" as just a "dimestore New Deal." Bush also shared President Eisenhower's dislike of Senator Joseph McCarthy, and was one of the Republican senators who joined Democrats in voting to condemn McCarthy in December 1954. Interestingly, Bush was the last member of the Senate to visit McCarthy in the hospital before McCarthy's May 1, 1957 death.

Prescott Bush was an early supporter of the presidential ambitions of New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, but when Rockefeller divorced his first wife to marry another woman, Bush abandoned Rockefeller in the 1964 campaign. The torch passed to Bush's second son, George Herbert Walker Bush, who lost a congressional race in 1964. After following his father's path of attending Yale and joining the secretive Skull and Bones fraternity, George H.W. moved to Texas to enter the oil business. After chairing the Harris County Republican Party, Bush lost his first bid for public office in 1964, but came back to win a seat in the House of Representatives in 1966. President Richard Nixon convinced Bush to run for the U.S. Senate in 1970, but he was defeated by Democrat Lloyd Bentsen. Nixon revived Bush's political career with appointments as ambassador to the UN, the chairmanship of the Republican National Committee, and our unofficial ambassador to Communist China. President Gerald Ford tapped George H.W. Bush for the directorship of the CIA in 1976. After Carter replaced Bush at the CIA the next year, Bush became a director of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), an organization formed after World War I to get the United States to drop its traditional non-interventionist foreign policy.

Bush's run for president in 1980 was blocked by former California Governor Ronald Reagan. Despite support from New York banker David Rockefeller (grandson of John D.) and other powerful establishment figures, Bush could not defeat Reagan. Bush blasted Reagan's supply-side economics, with its call for income tax cuts, as "voodoo economics," but Reagan crushed Bush in the New Hampshire primary, then cruised to the nomination. With Reagan's capture of the Republican nomination, it appeared that Bush's political ascendancy was over. But Reagan selected Bush as his running-mate to "unite" the party, breathing new life into the Bush political dynasty.

During Reagan's eight years as president, some of his popularity naturally transferred to his vice president. George H.W. Bush flipped his public position on abortion from "pro-choice" to 'pro-life," in preparation for a 1988 bid for the Republican nomination. In his 1988 acceptance speech to the



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Republican National Convention, Bush dropped hints of a leftward shift, however, by calling for a “kinder and gentler America.” First Lady Nancy Reagan rightly wondered, “‘kinder and gentler’ than what?” It is widely conceded that Bush’s easy victory over a northeastern liberal was largely because the voters thought they were getting Reagan’s “third term.”

Bush’s more middle-of-the-road Republicanism was obscured by a campaign in which he supported the death penalty and vowed never to raise taxes, even going so far as to say, “Read my lips: no new taxes.” As president, however, he would flip and support a tax increase pushed by the Democrats, and publicly resign his membership in the National Rifle Association. Not surprisingly, considering his CFR connections, Bush conducted a heavily interventionist foreign policy. He sent American troops into Panama, Somalia, and the Persian Gulf. Following the victory over Iraq in 1991, Bush proclaimed the world was entering into a “New World Order.” He even went to Hawaii for the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and blamed the attack upon isolationists of the day who had opposed America’s entry into World War II.

With George H.W. Bush’s crushing defeat by Democrat Bill Clinton in 1992, it once again appeared that the Bush family’s political dynasty was finished. But, after two years of Democrat Clinton, Republicans made huge gains in Congress and governorships, including a victory in Texas by Bush’s son George W. After six years as governor of Texas, George W. was the establishment’s candidate for the 2000 presidential race.

As a presidential candidate, George W. played the conservative Republican electorate like a country music star plays a guitar. When asked to name his favorite philosopher during one of the Republican Party presidential candidate debates, he named Jesus Christ (one presumes he beat out Socrates and Plato). That was all it took for many evangelical Christians to line up in support. Other conservatives were won over by his support of tax cuts, while many liked his rejection of Clinton’s repeated interventions into foreign countries. Bush said he was not into “nation building,” and it was time for a more “humble foreign policy.” Hungry for victory, Republican conservatives failed to see the subtle distancing by George W. from limited government conservatism when he announced that he was a “compassionate conservative.” More perceptive conservatives perceived that it was just the “modern Republicanism” of Eisenhower — well, modernized.

Of course, once in office, George W. veered leftward, increasing federal government involvement in education with his No Child Left Behind program, even working with ultra-liberal Senator Edward Kennedy to get it passed. He created other new federal programs, busting the budget. And, his foreign policy was anything but humble. By 2006, Bush was so unpopular that the Republicans lost Congress after 12 years of control. In 2008, after eight years of George W., the country rejected the Republican Party, giving us President Barack Obama.

Now, Jeb Bush is being offered as the candidate who can lead the Republicans back into control of the Oval Office. Whereas his father and brother slipped into office under the guise of being conservatives, Jeb has apparently determined that he does not need to even pretend he is one.

As Florida governor, Jeb emphasized the standardized testing that we see in No Child Left Behind and Common Core. In fact, he is among the nation’s leading advocates of imposing Common Core standards on all the schools. Although Common Core is mostly opposed by conservative activists across the country, Jeb is not backing off. Another stance of his that places him at odds with much of the Republican Party is his support for increased immigration. He has even called the allowing of illegal immigration “an act of love,” instead of the criminal act that it is.



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It would seem that Republicans would have learned their lesson by now. After all the damage inflicted upon the party by Jeb's father and brother, it is startling that he could even offer himself as the party's nominee with a straight face. But, in light of the powerful ties the Bush family continues to enjoy with the insiders of the American political establishment, it would be foolish to count out Jeb.

Photo of Jeb Bush: AP Images



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