



ICONOCLAST EDITORIAL
OPINION OF THE PUBLISHERS

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Kerry Will Restore American Dignity

2004 Iconoclast Presidential Endorsement

Few Americans would have voted for George W. Bush four years ago if he had promised that, as President, he would:

- Empty the Social Security trust fund by \$507 billion to help offset fiscal irresponsibility and at the same time slash Social Security benefits.
- Cut Medicare by 17 percent and reduce veterans' benefits and military pay.
- Eliminate overtime pay for millions of Americans and raise oil prices by 50 percent.
- Give tax cuts to businesses that sent American jobs overseas, and, in fact, by policy encourage their departure.
- Give away billions of tax dollars in government contracts without competitive bids.
- Involve this country in a deadly and highly questionable war, and
- Take a budget surplus and turn it into the worst deficit in the history of the United States, creating a debt in just four years that will take generations to repay.

These were elements of a hidden agenda that surfaced only after he took office.

The publishers of The Iconoclast endorsed Bush four years ago, based on the things he promised, not on this smoke-screened agenda.

Today, we are endorsing his opponent, John Kerry, based not only on the things that Bush has delivered, but also on the vision of a return to normality that Kerry says our country needs.

Four items trouble us the most about the Bush administration: his initiatives to disable the Social Security system, the deteriorating state of the American economy, a dangerous shift away from the basic freedoms established by our founding fathers, and his

continuous mistakes regarding terrorism and Iraq.

President Bush has announced plans to change the Social Security system as we know it by privatizing it, which when considering all the tangents related to such a change, would put the entire economy in a dramatic tailspin.

The Social Security Trust Fund actually lends money to the rest of the government in exchange for government bonds, which is how the system must work by law, but how do you later repay Social Security while you are running a huge deficit? It's impossible, without raising taxes sometime in the future or becoming fiscally responsible now. Social Security money is being used to escalate our deficit and, at the same time, mask a much larger government deficit, instead of paying down the national debt, which would be a proper use, to guarantee a future gain.

Privatization is problematic in that it would subject Social Security to the ups, downs, and outright crashes of the Stock Market. It would take millions in brokerage fees and commissions out of the system, and, unless we have assurance that the Ivan Boeskys and Ken Lays of the world will be caught and punished as a deterrent, subject both the Market and the Social Security Fund to fraud and market manipulation, not to mention devastate and ruin multitudes of American families that would find their lives lost to starvation, shame, and isolation.

Kerry wants to keep Social Security, which each of us already owns. He says that the program is manageable, since it is projected to be solvent through 2042, with use of its trust funds. This would give ample time to strengthen the economy, reduce the budget deficit the Bush administration has created, and, therefore, bolster the program as needed to fit ever-changing demographics.

Our senior citizens depend upon Social Security. Bush's answer is radical and uncalled for, and would result in chaos as Americans have never experienced. Do we really want to risk the future of Social Security on Bush by spinning the wheel of uncertainty?

In those dark hours after the World Trade Center attacks, Americans rallied together with a new sense of patriotism. We were ready to follow Bush's lead through any travail.

He let us down.

When he finally emerged from his hide-outs on remote military bases well after the first crucial hours following the attack, he gave sound-bytes instead of solutions.

He did not trust us to be ready to sacrifice, build up our public and private security infrastructure, or cut down on our energy use to put economic pressure on the enemy in all the nations where he hides. He merely told us to shop, spend, and pretend nothing was wrong.

Rather than using the billions of dollars expended on the invasion of Iraq to shore up our boundaries and go after Osama bin Laden and the Saudi Arabian terrorists, the funds were used to initiate a war with what Bush called a more immediate menace, Saddam Hussein, in oil-rich Iraq. After all, Bush said Iraq had weapons of mass destruction trained on America. We believed him, just as we

believed it when he reported that Iraq was the heart of terrorism. We trusted him.

The Iconoclast, the President's hometown newspaper, took Bush on his word and editorialized in favor of the invasion. The newspaper's publisher promoted Bush and the invasion of Iraq to Londoners in a BBC interview during the time that the administration was wooing the support of Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Again, he let us down.

We presumed the President had solid proof of the existence of these weapons, what and where they were, even as the search continued. Otherwise, our troops would be in much greater danger and the premise for a hurried-up invasion would be moot, allowing more time to solicit assistance from our allies.

Instead we were duped into following yet another privileged agenda.

Now he argues unconvincingly that Iraq was providing safe harbor to terrorists, his new key justification for the invasion. It is like arguing that America provided safe harbor to terrorists leading to 9/11.

Once and for all, George Bush was President of the United States on that day. No one else. He had been President nine months, he had been officially warned of just such an attack a full month before it happened. As President, ultimately he and only he was responsible for our failure to avert those attacks.

We should expect that a sitting President would vacation less, if at all, and instead tend to the business of running the country, especially if he is, as he likes to boast, a "wartime president." America is in service 365 days a year. We don't need a part-time President who does not show up for duty as Commander-In-Chief until he is forced to, and who is in a constant state of blameless denial when things don't get done.

What has evolved from the virtual go-it-alone conquest of Iraq is more gruesome than a stain on a White House intern's dress. America's reputation and influence in the world has diminished, leaving us with brute force as our most persuasive voice.

Iraq is now a quagmire: no WMDs, no substantive link between Saddam and Osama, and no workable plan for the withdrawal of our troops. We are asked to go along on faith. But remember, blind patriotism can be a dangerous thing and "spin" will not bring back to life a dead soldier; certainly not a thousand of them.

Kerry has remained true to his vote granting the President the authority to use the threat of war to intimidate Saddam Hussein into allowing weapons inspections. He believes President Bush rushed into war before the inspectors finished their jobs.

Kerry also voted against President Bush's \$87 billion for troop funding because the bill promoted poor policy in Iraq, privileged Halliburton and other corporate friends of the Bush administration to profiteer from the war, and forced debt upon future generations of Americans.

Kerry's four-point plan for Iraq is realistic, wise, strong, and

correct. With the help from our European and Middle Eastern allies, his plan is to train Iraqi security forces, involve Iraqis in their rebuilding and constitution-writing processes, forgive Iraq's multi-billion dollar debts, and convene a regional conference with Iraq's neighbors in order to secure a pledge of respect for Iraq's borders and non-interference in Iraq's internal affairs.

The publishers of the Iconoclast differ with Bush on other issues, including the denial of stem cell research, shortchanging veterans' entitlements, cutting school programs and grants, dictating what our children learn through a thought-controlling "test" from Washington rather than allowing local school boards and parents to decide how young people should be taught, ignoring the environment, and creating extraneous language in the Patriot Act that removes some of the very freedoms that our founding fathers and generations of soldiers fought so hard to preserve.

We are concerned about the vast exportation of jobs to other countries, due in large part to policies carried out by Bush appointees. Funds previously geared at retention of small companies are being given to larger concerns, such as Halliburton — companies with strong ties to oil and gas. Job training has been cut every year that Bush has resided at the White House.

Then there is his resolve to inadequately finance Homeland Security and to cut the Community Oriented Policing Program (COPS) by 94 percent, to reduce money for rural development, to slash appropriations for the Small Business Administration, and to under-fund veterans' programs.

Likewise troubling is that President Bush fought against the creation of the 9/11 Commission and is yet to embrace its recommendations.

Vice President Cheney's Halliburton has been awarded multi-billion-dollar contracts without undergoing any meaningful bid process — an enormous conflict of interest — plus the company has been significantly raiding the funds of Export-Import Bank of America, reducing investment that could have gone toward small business trade.

When examined based on all the facts, Kerry's voting record is enviable and echoes that of many Bush allies who are aghast at how the Bush administration has destroyed the American economy. Compared to Bush on economic issues, Kerry would be an arch-conservative, providing for Americans first. He has what it takes to right our wronged economy.

The re-election of George W. Bush would be a mandate to continue on our present course of chaos. We cannot afford to double the debt that we already have. We need to be moving in the opposite direction.

John Kerry has 30 years of experience looking out for the American people and can navigate our country back to prosperity and re-instill in America the dignity she so craves and deserves. He has served us well as a highly decorated Vietnam veteran and has had a successful career as a district attorney, lieutenant governor, and

senator.

Kerry has a positive vision for America, plus the proven intelligence, good sense, and guts to make it happen.

That's why The Iconoclast urges Texans not to rate the candidate by his hometown or even his political party, but instead by where he intends to take the country.

The Iconoclast wholeheartedly endorses John Kerry.

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