

**Bush, George W(alker)**(1946– ) *43rd president of the United States*

George W. Bush was born on July 6, 1946, in New Haven, Connecticut, to GEORGE H(ERBERT) W(ALKER) BUSH and Barbara Pierce Bush. He was the eldest of six children: Pauline Robinson ("Robin," who died at age three from leukemia), JOHN ELLIS (JEB) BUSH, Neil Mallon, Marvin Pierce, and Dorothy Walker. The Bush family resided in New Haven for the first two years of George's life, while his father completed his studies at Yale University. They then moved to Midland, Texas, when his father began work in the oil industry. The younger Bush spent most of his childhood years in Texas, between Midland and Houston, attending public schools in the state until age 13, when he entered Kinkaid Preparatory School. Although his father spent much time away from home working, Bush held many fond memories of his childhood in Texas, where he learned the importance of close family relations and strong community dynamics. Bush credits his parents' unconditional support (especially his mother's) and his western Texas upbringing for influencing his moral and political outlook as a "compassionate conservative."

A keen athlete, especially in baseball, Bush later attended Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1961, fulfilling a long family tradition of attending the prestigious New England school. Bush graduated from Phillips in 1964 and, like his father and grandfather before him, studied at Yale University, majoring in history. Although a self-confessed "average student," Bush thrived at Yale in a nonacademic capacity. He was elected president of the fraternity Delta Kappa Epsilon, represented Yale in rugby, and was admitted into the Skull and Bones society in his senior year. Known as a popular

and gregarious student, Bush claimed to have studied as hard as he partied, graduating in 1968.

Without a decisive career prospect upon graduation, Bush entered the Texas Air National Guard in the fall of 1968, spending six years in the service before being honorably discharged. Although he never served in Vietnam, Bush trained in the T-38 jet and flew National Guard missions to protect the U.S. coast in the F-102 fighter. During the 2000 Republican presidential primary, and more prominently in the 2004 presidential election, Bush's National Guard service was called into question. Bush had obtained a coveted pilot's spot in the Guard despite long waiting lists, thereby avoiding the Vietnam military draft; political challengers accused Bush of benefiting from his father's political influence as Texan congressman. Prior to his release from his national service in October 1973, Bush enrolled in Harvard Business School, receiving his M.B.A. in 1975, after which he moved back to Midland to pursue a career in oil.

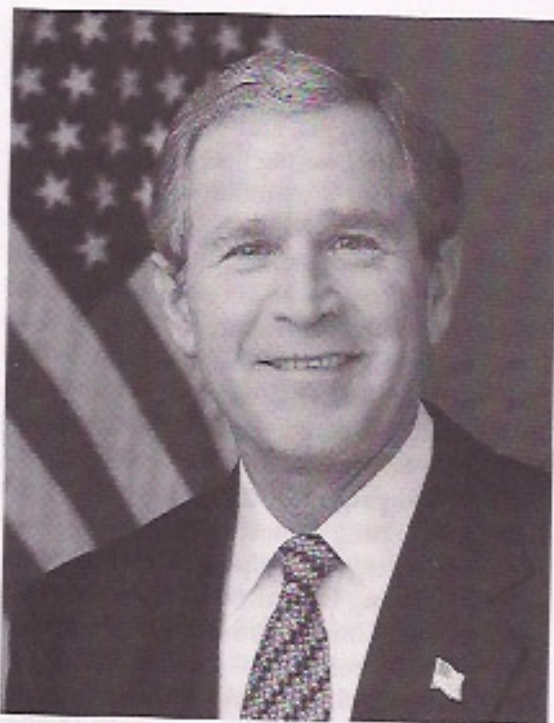
In an attempt to learn the ropes of the business, Bush started his career as a landman before investing in small drilling opportunities. In 1977, on the eve of his congressional run, Bush established Arbusto Energy (later named Bush Exploration), a small company that invested in low-risk wells around west Texas. In 1983, Bush merged Bush Exploration into Spectrum 7, joining investors Bill DeWitt and Mercer Reynolds and became the chief executive officer. Despite some initial successes, the oil price crash in the late 1980s forced Spectrum 7 to seek a buyer. Harken Energy eventually negotiated a deal with Spectrum 7, exchanging stock for Spectrum 7 assets, and Bush subsequently sat on Harken's board of directors. In April 1989, Bush established a group of investors, including DeWitt and Reynolds,



to purchase shares in the Texas Rangers Major League Baseball team. His initial investment later expanded to \$606,302, and Bush assumed day-to-day management responsibilities at the club until 1994, when he became the governor of Texas. Bush later sold the franchise in 1998, making more than \$15 million in profit.

Due to his family's high political profile, Bush's social exploits as a young man have been closely scrutinized. Bush has freely admitted that he enjoyed the social side of college, claiming to have partied as hard as he worked and developed a reputation as the life of the party. This reputation was often used against Bush during his various political campaigns, where he has faced accusations of alcohol abuse (including an alleged DWT) and drug use. However, two factors in Bush's life influenced a change in his gregarious lifestyle: his wife, LAURA L(ANE) BUSH, and his religious faith. While pursuing his career in the oil industry in Midland, Bush met Laura Welch, a teacher and librarian. After a brief courtship, the couple married on November 5, 1977. On November 25, 1981, the couple had twin girls, BARBARA P(IERCE) BUSH and JENNA W(ELCH) BAGER. Bush credits his wife's love, devotion, and patience as major stabilizing influences in his life, allowing him to overcome issues with alcohol and solidify his faith in the United Methodist Church. During the early 1980s, Bush developed a close relationship with the evangelist reverend Billy Graham, who profoundly inspired his religious rebirth and who Bush credits with providing him spiritual guidance. Such was Bush's spiritual conversion that his Christian faith became a central pillar in his moral and political perspective.

As a member of a famous political dynasty, Bush's political education began at a relatively early age. Bush's grandfather, Prescott Sheldon Bush, was senator of Connecticut for more than a decade during the 1950s and 1960s.



President George W. Bush (Eric Draper, White House)

Bush also directly experienced his father's rising political career, from his election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1966 to his U.S. presidential election victory in 1988. Fascinated by the political process and disciplined by his family in the importance of public service, Bush gained first-hand experience at political campaigning by participating in two of his father's congressional races: his unsuccessful Texas Senate race in 1964 and his congressional victory for the 7th District of Texas seat in 1966. Coming from such a rich political legacy, it was not surprising that Bush entered the political arena early, joining the Texas 19th District congressional race in 1978. With his new wife as his main political support, Bush traveled extensively around west Texas campaigning against federal natural gas legislation. Despite putting up a strong



fight as a Republican candidate, Bush was the underdog and lost to Democrat Kent Hance. During the campaign, Hance accused Bush of being a carpetbagger and out of touch with rural west Texans, having been born outside of Texas and being a member of a prominent political family.

Although he remained out of the electoral spotlight for 16 years, Bush remained actively involved in politics, supporting local Republicans and taking on advisory roles in his father's presidential campaign committees. Bush moved his young family to Washington, D.C., in 1988 for his father's successful presidential campaign, operating as a "loyal enforcer," vetting campaign officers, managing journalists, and helping with campaign strategy. During his father's presidency, Bush served as a "minister without portfolio" and chaired the Presidential Transition Team. Bush also participated in his father's unsuccessful presidential campaign in 1992. Although Bush remained largely in Texas during the race (unlike in 1988), he returned to Washington monthly in an attempt to redirect the faltering campaign. Bush's role in the 1992 campaign was largely undefined, but he embodied a more aggressive political stance, specifically targeting any negative elements that harmed his father's chances of victory. One strategy Bush strongly advocated to bolster his father's campaign was the use of an aggressive, negative advertisement campaign against Democratic presidential candidate WILLIAM (BILL) JEFFERSON CLINTON. His father's presidential loss hurt Bush deeply, but from the defeat, he learned a great deal about the management and strategy of political campaigning.

Bush's second personal venture into the electoral arena proved to be more successful. His decision to enter the Texas gubernatorial race in 1994 happened to coincide with his brother Jeb's run for governor in Florida.

While Jeb entered the Florida race as a strong contender for victory, Bush once again began his campaign as the underdog, just as he had in the 1978 congressional election. In taking on the popular Democratic incumbent Ann Richards, Bush faced an experienced political opponent who was a rising star in her party. Despite his apparent political disadvantage, Bush ran a substantive campaign that focused on a reduction in juvenile crime, a restructuring of the welfare system, an overhaul of the legal system that encouraged business entrepreneurship, and, most important statewide educational reform. In placing education as his top priority, Bush specifically targeted Richard's unpopular educational policies, further cementing his status as a compassionate conservative who placed families and communities first. This strategy proved effective, and Bush produced a surprising election win, garnering 53.5 percent of the vote.

Bush achieved a number of important legislative victories and notable policy changes during his first term as Texas governor. Bush launched an ambitious educational legislative program, one of his premier campaign promises, concentrating on improving the state's poor literacy level. Describing literacy as the "new civil right," Bush pushed for a 100 percent literacy rate, redirecting more state funds to schools while providing local schools with more freedom and autonomy to achieve this goal. His education policy proved very successful, improving test scores across the state, which allowed him the latitude to implement an enterprising legislative agenda for the rest of his term. Bush initiated a historic tax cut for Texans while also targeting the state's high crime rates. Based on this progressive first term, Bush sought an unprecedented reelection in 1998. His overwhelming victory, receiving 69 percent of the vote, made Bush the first governor in Texas history to win consecutive four-year terms. With this clear



popular mandate, Bush sought to establish faith-based initiatives to promote a better moral society and further tax cuts. Throughout his terms as governor, Bush achieved consistently high approval ratings.

In the wake of these successes, Governor Bush recognized the 2000 presidential election as a rare opportunity to emulate his father and place another Bush in the White House. The lack of an incumbent, combined with the political backing of prominent Republicans in Washington, meant this time Bush entered a political race as a favorite. Announcing his candidacy on June 12, 1999, Bush entered the Republican primary competing against a large group of notable Republicans, including Pat Buchanan, former vice president Dan Quayle, and JOHN S(IDNEY) MCCAIN III. The open primary race eventually narrowed to two candidates—Bush and McCain. In an initially tight race, Bush won the Iowa primary, while McCain won New Hampshire. Bush then proceeded to win the critical South Carolina primary, establishing momentum that carried him to victory. McCain suspended his campaign on March 9, 2000, clearing the way for Bush to secure the Republican nomination. While he won his party's nomination for president, Bush received criticism for running a particularly negative advertisement campaign against his opponent in the South Carolina primary. This political tactic (part of a broader campaign strategy devised and orchestrated by his political adviser KARI C(HRISTIAN) ROVE), combined with an aggressive message that appealed to the conservative base by promoting Bush's family values while portraying McCain as a Clintonesque Washington insider, resulted in a particularly nasty race.

Facing ALBERT (AL) A(RNOLD) GORE, JR., the incumbent vice president, and his running mate, Senator JOSEPH I(SADOR) LIEBERMAN, on the Democratic ticket, Bush named the experienced RICHARD (DICK)

B(RUCE) CHENEY as his vice presidential running mate. Cheney had been involved in the Nixon and Reagan administrations and more recently had been secretary of defense during the presidency of Bush's father. With Rove once again orchestrating his political strategy, Bush campaigned using a similar platform to his successful gubernatorial races: citing himself as a compassionate conservative in the mold of Ronald Reagan, championing educational reform, and endorsing wide tax cuts. Pundits and polls forecasted a tight presidential race, with Florida, where Bush's brother Jeb remained governor, recognized as a particularly critical state.

The results of the 2000 presidential election placed Bush in the White House; however, the circumstances surrounding his victory were both unprecedented and highly controversial. While early poll returns indicated that Gore had won the pivotal swing state of Florida, it was eventually awarded to Bush, providing him with the required 271 electoral votes for victory. Yet, Gore refused to concede the election, demanding a statewide recount and eventually forcing the outcome to be decided in the courts. After weeks of bitter court battles and the nation in a state of confusion over who the next president would be, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Bush the winner of Florida's votes, and thus the presidency. Despite the validation of the Bush victory by the Supreme Court, many people refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the new Bush administration, especially as he had lost the overall popular vote to Gore by 543,895 votes. This polarization of opinion of the Bush administration remained a constant throughout his two terms, resulting in a highly divided, partisan nation.

Despite the controversy and debate surrounding his election, Bush was inaugurated on January 20, 2001, and began his first term seeking to substantiate some of his campaign



promises. He immediately sought to implement an expansive tax reform program in June 2001 that redefined tax codes and provided for a large tax rebate. Continuing with his focus on education, Bush also developed a landmark education bill called No Child Left Behind that passed overwhelmingly with bipartisan support. In May 2001, Bush announced an ambitious plan to overhaul the Social Security system, advocating the creation of privatized accounts to establish partial privatization. Despite his efforts to initiate an ambitious domestic agenda in the first year of his presidency, the events of September 11, 2001, forced the president to shift his focus away from domestic issues to foreign affairs and United States security.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, in New York City and Washington, D.C., undeniably transformed the Bush presidency. The highly organized, simultaneous attacks using jet airliners stunned the world. The attacks caused almost 3,000 deaths and resulted in the collapse of the iconic World Trade Center and structural damage to the Pentagon. Having proposed a limited foreign policy platform during the 2000 election, Bush was suddenly thrust into a political realm where he admitted he had little experience. Despite this perceived shortcoming, Bush's actions in the immediate aftermath of the attacks managed to effectively console a grieving nation. He promised a swift and just response to those responsible for the attacks, visited "Ground Zero" in New York to meet relief workers, and gave one of his most impressive speeches in a special joint congressional session on September 20, 2001. Bush's management of the crisis earned him exceptionally high approval ratings, and this unique combination of a national crisis, congressional cooperation, and a popular mandate allowed him extraordinary latitude to implement a new direction for U.S. foreign policy.

The subsequent War on Terror effectively defined the Bush administration both domestically and in foreign policy. Addressing security deficiencies within the United States, Bush established the Department of Homeland Security in an attempt to reorganize the intelligence community and strengthen domestic security arrangements. He also advocated the passing of the USA PATRIOT Act, which broadly increased law enforcement's surveillance powers to find and detain suspected terrorists. Although this act passed overwhelmingly in Congress, critics of the act argued that it severely impinged on Americans' civil liberties in allowing government to have extraordinary powers, such as unrestricted access to wiretapping and personal records.

Targeting the al-Qaeda terrorist network as responsible for the 9/11 attacks, Bush ordered the invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, after the Taliban refused to give up the terrorist group, residing in the region. Bush initially enjoyed broad international support for the War on Terror, and the Afghanistan invasion essentially became a U.S.-led NATO operation. However, the development of the "Bush Doctrine," which legitimized preemptive military action against direct threats to the United States, and Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech, which identified North Korea, Iraq, and Iran as states that aided global terrorism, eroded this international support. On the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Bush spoke to the United Nations Security Council about the threat of Iraq to the international community, attempting to build a case to remove SADDAM HUSSEIN ABD AL-MAJID AL-TIKRITI from power. Bush argued that Hussein not only harbored weapons of mass destruction (WMD) but also aided and abetted terrorism. Despite efforts to convince the Security Council to develop more punitive measures in their resolutions against Iraq, Bush established a military coalition, including the United King-

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dom, and invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003. The Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq, coupled with the Bush Doctrine of preemptive war, severely damaged U.S. relations with the rest of the world.

Although Bush lacked international support for his actions, he still enjoyed favorable approval ratings from the American people in his handling of the War on Terror and U.S. security. In May 2004, he still commanded more than 60 percent approval in the polls, providing him with a boost for his reelection campaign later that year. As an unchallenged incumbent for the Republican nomination, Bush faced JOHN F(ORBES) KERRY and JOHN R(EID) EDWARDS on the Democratic ticket. Unsurprisingly, the main issue of the election was the War on Terror and Iraq. Vietnam veteran Kerry was highly critical of Bush's handling of both the war in Iraq and domestic security, arguing against continuation of the war and seeking a date for withdrawal. Bush countered by characterizing Kerry as a "flip-flopper" liberal whose foreign policy would seriously undermine Americans' safety during the War on Terror. The campaign became particularly negative, with television advertisements from both sides deriding each candidate. Despite a close battle fought over the pivotal states of Ohio and Florida, Bush won the election with more than 50 percent of the popular vote. A combination of Bush's solid security record since 9/11 and a political strategy once again devised by longtime political adviser Rove that appealed to and expanded the conservative base helped Bush secure the victory.

Bush attempted to maintain his domestic reforms program after his reelection, such as revamping U.S. immigration policy, implementing more tax cuts, and revisiting Social Security. However, the increasingly unpopular Iraq war continued to dominate his agenda, eroding both his popular and congressional support. His perceived mismanagement of the

aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 further affected his presidential efficacy. Indeed, the perceived mishandling of the Iraq war and Katrina contributed heavily to the overwhelming Democratic victory in the 2006 midterm elections, leaving Bush as essentially a lame duck for the remainder of his term. Bush did manage to secure some victories in his second term, such as naming two Supreme Court appointments: SAMUEL A. ALITO, JR., and JOHN G(LOVER) ROBERTS, JR., as chief justice. The \$15 billion relief program to tackle the global AIDS epidemic will also reflect positively on his presidential legacy. Despite these achievements, he ultimately left office with significantly low approval ratings of around 30 percent.

After leaving the White House on January 20, 2009, Bush returned to his Crawford, Texas, ranch where he has embarked on a relatively low-profile early post-presidency. While engaging in the traditional custom of speaking engagements, Bush has also written a memoir, *Decision Points*, published in November 2010. In addition, he oversees the development of the George W. Bush Presidential Center, located at Southern Methodist University near Dallas, a setting that will integrate his presidential library with a museum, the George W. Bush Policy Institute, and the George W. Bush Foundation.

Throughout his presidency, as with much of his political life, Bush conveyed a sanguine public persona that reflected his Texan roots, religious views, and strong family orientation. Despite his hereditary connection to the U.S. Northeast political establishment and his Ivy League education, Bush embraced his spiritual home of Texas, demonstrating a friendly and warm demeanor, maintaining a west Texan accent, and speaking in a plain, straightforward manner. While this combination of southern charm and rhetorical simplicity—as well as many high-profile verbal faux pas—frequently



led critics to deride his intellect and the efficacy of his public speaking, his public persona became one of his more effective political tools. His informal manner and his comfortable interpersonal style were very effective in smaller settings, such as town hall meetings, where he could interact with his audience more directly than in pre-prepared speeches at press conferences or in front of large audiences. Although he lacked the oratory sophistication and presence of previous presidents, Bush's political success has been largely attributed to this affable, populist, down-to-earth public manner, especially as it allowed him to cast himself in direct contrast to the more austere Gore in the 2000 presidential campaign. Bush has contended that the three most important elements of life are "faith, family and friends," and this outlook, combined with his promotion of social conservatism and family values, helped capture the political imagination of conservatives both in Texas and throughout the United States during the 1990s and early 2000s.

—MJS

#### **Bush, Jenna Welch**

See HAGER, JENNA W(ELCH)

#### **Bush, John (Jeb) Ellis**

(1953– ) *governor of Florida*

John E. Bush was born in Midland, Texas. He is the second son of President GEORGE H(ERBERT) W(ALKER) BUSH and his wife, Barbara, and the younger brother of President GEORGE W(ALKER) BUSH. His nickname, Jeb, with him since childhood, comes from his initials.

Raised in Midland and Houston, Bush attended Phillips Academy in Massachusetts (where his brother George was also attending).

He took a degree in Latin American affairs from the University of Texas, graduating early in 1973. Bush began his career in a position at Texas Commerce Bank. In 1980, he worked on his father's unsuccessful run for the Republican presidential nomination. In 1981, he moved to Miami, Florida, and became a successful real estate broker. He began his political service as chairman of the Dade County Republican Party. In 1987, he became Florida's secretary of commerce and served in that position for two terms until 1994, when he ran an unsuccessful campaign for governor (Bush was defeated by then-incumbent Democratic governor Lawton Chiles). Between 1994 and 1998, Bush founded a public policy institute and a charter school in Miami and authored a book. In 1998, Bush ran for governor a second time; this time, he won, defeating Lieutenant Governor Buddy McKay.

Bush served as governor of Florida at the same time that his brother George was governor of Texas (this was the first time that a pair of brothers served simultaneously as governors of two different states since Nelson and Winthrop Rockefeller were governors of New York and Arkansas, respectively, from 1967 to 1971). Of special interest to Bush was improving his state's educational system. His "One Florida" plan set out to correct minority enrollment at the state's universities, and he advocated the widespread use of standardized testing on the elementary and secondary levels. He is also known for his efforts to protect his state's environment. He was, however, criticized for a brusque nature and as being overly sensitive to criticism.

Following the disputed presidential election of 2000, Florida's electoral votes were claimed by both Republican George W. Bush and Democrat ALBERT (AL) A(RNOLD) GORE, JR. Jeb Bush, as brother of one of the candidates, officially removed himself from any decision that might affect the path of the recount.

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