

IN MY OPINION**Caroline Porter****Label me "liberal" any day**

What do "conservatives" mean when they accuse people of being "liberal?"

Well, let's see — racking up high deficits in federal spending? The Bush administration has broken all records there. Raising taxes? We either have to cut spending or raise revenues and Democrat president Bill Clinton balanced the budget for the first time in anyone's memory.

The last betrayal we remember is George Bush senior promising "Read my lips, no new taxes." Nice talk, but not the truth.

Conservatives like to complain about liberal programs but they are first at the trough when benefits are available. They greedily accept Social Security (that awful FDR started that), Medicare, Medicaid, clean water, clean air, farm subsidies, business tax breaks and drug prescription benefits. You name it, they lap it up. They love it that citizens 65 or older can have universal health care (Medicare) but don't want the rest of the population to have the same deal. They really don't care that 44 million Americans are totally without health insurance.

The liberals, along with active and retired military leaders, are saying that we should build up our military and give those guys and gals in Iraq and Iran a chance, but the conservative Bush administration not only

refuses to provide more soldiers, he has peeled back veteran benefits and those for families of soldiers overseas. So much for liberals being soft on terrorism and not supporting our military. Liberals, of course, or even the mentally stable, would have never invaded Iraq for no justifiable reason.

And did you hear that the information behind the latest orange terrorism alert is three years old? But handy, don't you think, in an election year?

Right-wingers don't want government interference in our lives, but don't trust women to make their own medical decisions and think we need an amendment to the United States Constitution to tell us whom we can and cannot marry. Facism, here we come.

If there is one comment that makes me snicker it's a Republican trying to defend our lousy economy by saying, "Well, the recession was already here when Clinton left office." Excuse me, but that turns out not to be true. The Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis released updated figures Friday on the quarterly movements of the gross domestic product for the years 2001, 2002 and 2003. Under the revised data, according to an article in the Peoria Journal Star, the GDP did not

decline for three consecutive quarters in 2001 as the old data showed. "In fact," says the article, "the GDP didn't post consecutive declines at all."

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) is the business cycle dating committee and the recognized arbiter of when recessions begin and end. They have declared the country's last downturn began in March 2001. The article concludes, "That would put the start of the recession two months after Bush took office."

Liberals also believe in freedom of religion and separation of church and state, the two reasons the English came to this country to fight for independence. They had lived under a religious state and found it to be dictatorial, with little freedom. The right-wingers are continually threatening those basic freedoms.

"Liberalism" in Webster's Dictionary is described, "a political philosophy based on belief in progress, the essential goodness of man, and the autonomy of the individual and standing for the protection of political and civil liberties."

When you are accusing people of being "liberal," count me in.

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