

## IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

## Gore sets record as VP

Even Vice President and presidential candidate Al Gore doesn't talk about the fact that he and President Clinton kept a promise of devising "a government that works better and costs less." He should. You see, since Republicans don't really believe in government, they aren't very good at it—a fact certainly revealed time and time again since they got control of Congress in 1994.

Gore has accomplished more as a Vice-President than any in history, not just being President of the Senate and twiddling his thumbs, but was in charge of the effort to whittle down excesses in our Federal bureaucracy. At one point early in the last eight years, The Brookings Institute in Washington D.C. cited some of the improvements made by the Clinton administration, under Vice President Gore's direction.

By 1994 or so, the bureaucracy had shrunk by 75,000 workers to well below Reagan era levels. The report said, "In four years the civil service should drop below 2 million for the first time since 1966. Projected five-year savings, \$40.4 billion."

Congress set procurement reforms to simplify government buying. Projected five-year savings: \$22.5 billion. Pentagon procurement practices, the kind that made \$700 toilet seats and \$800 hammers famous, were cleaned up so that supply sergeants can now go to Wal-Mart, if need

be. In the eight years Reagan and Bush were in office, the waste, fraud and abuse in Pentagon procurement practices were never touched.

The Office of Personnel Management ditched 10,000 pages of regulations, promising managers more sway over hiring, firing and promotions, making it easier to fire incompetent federal employees.

Four federal services the public meets routinely, the Internal Revenue Service, Social Security Administration, Postal Service and Veterans Affairs Department, announced new, higher standards for customer service. After that time, the IRS actually surpassed its goal of delivering refunds in 40 days.

Tens of thousands of bureaucrats were offered buy-outs of up to \$25,000. How much of the deadwood hung on, we don't know, but if they did, it's the taxpayers who lost.

Presidential candidate Gore represents an administration that spearheaded and passed the Family Leave Act, the national youth service program, already bigger than the Peace Corps at its peak, an improved and expanded college loan program with a better repayment rate, the Brady bill, the assault-weapons ban (before Columbine), the motor-voter law making it easier to register to vote.

And I think Vice-President Gore's handling

of Clinton's problems and impeachment were first class. He was loyal. There isn't a person alive who thinks Gore approved of President Clinton's behavior. Al Gore isn't a cutsy, fraternity president type like George Dubya. Gore is, in a word, presidential.

Now let's just check some figures from the State of Texas. According to figures distributed by the AFL-CIO, Texas rates 50th in spending for teacher's salaries, 49th in spending on the environment, 1st in percent of poor working parents without insurance, 47th in delivery of social services, 42nd in child support collections, 5th in percentage of population living in poverty, 1st in percent of children without insurance, 48th in per capita funding for public health, 1st in air and water pollution levels, 41st in per capita spending on public education, and 1st in executions, (average one every two weeks for Bush's five years as governor.) For obvious reasons, I'm against the death penalty and this is barbaric.

When George Bush, Sr. ran against Ronald Reagan in a Republican primary, he spoke of Reagan's voodoo economics. He wasn't kidding. And now his son is proposing the same half-brained finances.

Syndicated columnist Richard Reeves wrote that by 1989, income distribution between the richest 5 percent of American families and the bottom 80 percent was back to the level it was in 1947. By 1987, male high school graduates with one to five

years of work experience were earning 18 percent less than their counterparts did in 1979. Their pay, adjusted for inflation, was the same as their counterparts earned in 1963.

In short, in the Reagan-Bush years, the rich got richer and paid fewer taxes. The middle class made less money and paid more taxes. The tax burden was shifted downward. We saw a startling decline in the prospects of young, middle-class families, particularly whose education ended after high school.

This is exactly the formula for disaster proposed by Dubya and the Republican party. Instead of paying off the debt with our surplus, which the majority of Americans want to do, they want to send a tidbit of our money back. If this is anything like the \$64 we received from the State of Illinois, they might as well forget it. Dumb, dumb, dumb.

As for reform of Social Security, how about not giving Social Security to anyone with an income over \$50,000? That would save gastrillions and get the terrible albatross off young peoples' back in one swift move. Anyone have the guts to do that?

Vice President Al Gore is the best prepared presidential candidate we've had in decades. This country should make use of all he has to offer.