

# Gore's caution works to protect citizens

Bush's ideas would endanger the prosperity of the last eight years.

In 1992 the presidential election was focused on rescuing America from the mire of recession. The decision before us then was between the economic policies of the Reagan-Bush years and the possibilities being offered by the Clinton-Gore ticket. Fortunately, America voted for the Democrats that year and during the

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past eight years the result has been the largest economic growth in our history. Now, though, the situation is much different than in '92. It's 2000 and we're not starting into the abyss of a recession, but rather a projected budget surplus of several trillion dollars.

The choices in this election are much harder than they were eight

years ago. Back then it was easy to say that the Reagan-Bush economic plan hadn't worked for twelve years and that it was about time to try something new. In 1995 Edward N. Wolff reported in *American Prospect's* Summer Edition that between 1983 and 1989 "more than 60 percent of the new wealth went to the top 1 percent and 99 percent went to the top 20 percent." For the past eight years, the Clinton-Gore plan has taken us to a period of significant economic growth and shared prosperity.

Now we're faced with the question of how to responsibly act during this period of economic tranquility. Do we give ourselves a monstrous tax break, as Gov. George W. Bush advocates, or do we listen to Vice President Al Gore's voice of caution and use this hard earned prosperity to provide for the needs of our elderly and the development of the next generation?

Gov. Bush encourages us to go for the choice of present pleasures. According to Dean Baker, co-director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, Bush wants to give us a tax cut package totaling \$1.6 trillion. Opposed to the \$500 billion

Certainly, the decision of the 2000 election is much more difficult than the decision of the 1992 election. The choices aren't as clear cut and require us to weigh future obligations against present pleasures.

tax cut package being advocated by Gore, Bush's looks a lot sweeter.

And while I'd enjoy a tax cut, who wouldn't, I don't know if this Bush scheme is one we can afford, or if it is one most of us would even benefit from.

If Bush makes such a tax cut, we'd be limiting our ability to pay for other programs, such as the education of our children and the healthcare of our elderly.

In addition to limiting our ability to take care of our families, Bush's plan wouldn't benefit many Americans. In his column from the July 31, 2000 edition of *Newsweek*, Jonathan Alter reveals that "the benefits of (Bush's) income tax cut are ... skewed toward the prosperous - 60 percent of the benefits go to those with more than \$100,000 in household income; 27 percent to those making more

than \$350,000." Dean Baker's statement during his Debatable Issues presentation that Bush's proposal to change the existing income tax brackets would benefit the wealthy supports the assertion that Bush's economic policies are more concerned with the well being of the wealthy, rather than with the poor and working families of America.

While the economic proposals of the two main candidates for president should not be the only the reason for voting for them, they should receive due attention.

As college students that will be entering the job market in the next few years this is an especially important decision for us.

Will we vote to continue the economic growth of the past eight years, which will increase the employment opportunities available to us, and face our national responsibilities or will we vote for the present pleasure being advocated by Bush, and return to the days of Reaganomics? We already tried one of these options, and it failed. Let's stay the course of economic responsibility and ignore the present pleasures.

# Supreme Court appointees are a key issue

New justices would have the opportunity to enact changes.

Not only do Supreme Court Justices hold the highest and longest lasting politically appointed office, but they have the final word in the interpretation of our Constitution. Our written law has become increasingly controversial as we endeavor to broaden the scope of our

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rights and freedoms and as we gain distance from its establishment. This year's presidential election will be crucial to the future of the Supreme Court because of the executive branch's role in the appointment process and because the court is currently closely divided on critical issues.

The next president will probably have the opportunity to elect two to three new justices. Three members of the court are currently age 70 or above: Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist and Associate Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and John Paul Stevens, who are generally considered swing, conservative, and liberal voters, respectively. Their retirements may depend on election results; if a justice does not want to give up their dissent on certain issues and believes he or she may be replaced by a justice who does not share their view, they may not step down. Although some may hold out, we can expect retirements in the near future, and the appointees that fill these positions will play a role in determining our country's future on issues such as abortion, gun control, gay rights, campaign reform, freedom of expression, and the

Supreme Court appointments are for a lifetime, and justices' decisions affect the rights we have struggled to attain.

environment.

Some argue that there is no historic proof of the types of justices that will be appointed by either major party candidate, but by looking at the platforms of Gov. George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore and their favorite currently serving justices, there is a fairly good chance we can predict the ideology of upcoming appointees. There are exceptions, such as justice Byron White, a conservative appointed by President John F. Kennedy, and David H. Souter, appointed by President Bush despite his liberal tendencies. But one can expect a president to want his views represented in the judicial branch.

George W. Bush named his favorite currently serving justices: Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, who are considered "strict constructionists," generally supporting the most right wing views. If the balance of power in the court is tilted to give the conservatives a majority, it is possible that the court could abolish constitutional rights Americans take for granted and the progress toward civil rights and freedoms we have come to enjoy over the last 30 years could be destroyed.

Right wing justices, such as Scalia and Thomas, do not believe in the constitutional right of privacy, upon which the foundation of *Roe v. Wade* is based. This decision among others hangs precariously on a 4-5 vote, which upcoming appointments could alter dramatically. The People for the American Way issued a report called "Courting Disaster," June 2000, which calls Scalia and Thomas "eager" to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. In a May *New York Times*/

CBS Poll, 62 percent of voters believe Gore would be likely to appoint Supreme Court Justices who will keep abortion legal, while only 27 percent believe Bush would. Vice President Gore predicted that the next president will appoint three to four new justices, and that these appointees "will decide whether or not we keep a woman's right to choose."

Clarence Thomas, who William Raspberry calls "President George Bush's enduring bequest to America," has suggested that Congress has no power to control guns. He voted in a narrow 5-4 margin to overturn the Gun Free School Zones Act, a federal effort enacted to protect citizens and children, which George W. Bush also opposes.

Conservatives could cite examples of liberal members' dissents and make predictions about Gore's appointments, but the Vice President leans toward the middle and does not name counterparts to Scalia and Thomas as his models for appointments. George W. Bush appeals to the right wing voters and would continue to enact these ideals in the event he is elected. Tradition can be a positive force, but regression in terms of civil rights will not be.

To all the voters who consider not participating because they are disenchanted by the political system, who are opposed to the idea of choosing between the lesser of two evils, or who has become apathetic to this process: consider whether you are comfortable with the danger our civil rights face in this election. Our freedom hangs in the balance, should George W. Bush become the next president, and the stakes in this election extend well into the future. All voters have a way to influence this seemingly insular branch. Supreme Court appointments are for a lifetime, and justices' decisions affect the rights we have struggled to attain. Let us maintain these rights and work toward further progress by supporting the candidate that will try to do the same.