

George H.W. Bush - 41st President of the United States of America.
(June 12, 1924 – November 30, 2018)



George Herbert Walker Bush was raised in Greenwich, Connecticut and served in the United States Navy during World War II. After the war, he graduated from Yale University and moved to West Texas, where he established a successful oil company.

Political Career:

- After an unsuccessful run for the United States Senate, he won election to the 7th Congressional District of Texas in 1966.
- President Richard Nixon appointed Bush to the position of Ambassador to the United Nations in 1971 and to the position of chairman of the Republican National Committee in 1973.
- In 1974, President Gerald Ford appointed him as the Chief of the Liaison Office to the People's Republic of China.
- In 1976 Bush became the Director of Central Intelligence.
- Bush ran for president in 1980, but was defeated in the Republican presidential primaries by Ronald Reagan. He was then elected vice president in 1980 and 1984 as Reagan's running mate.
- In the 1988 presidential election, Bush defeated Democrat Michael Dukakis, becoming the first incumbent vice president to be elected president since Martin Van Buren in 1836.

Domestic Issues during the Bush Presidency

Bush supported most of Ronald Reagan's programs. However, Bush promised several changes including a greater emphasis on child care, education, and the war on illegal drugs. Unfortunately, his plans were not well received by a Democratically controlled Congress. During 1991 and 1992 the nation suffered an **economic recession** and a high unemployment rate of 7 to 8%. The nation's financial budget was struggling from a high deficit.

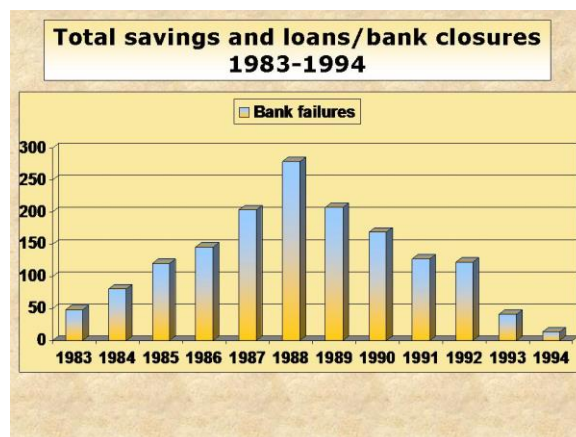
The AIDS Crisis

AIDS – Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome greatly impacted American society during the 21st century. It was estimate that 1 million Americans had contracted AIDS (40+ million worldwide), and more than 30,000 people were dying each year from AIDS-related disease. There was no vaccination for the **HIV virus** (human immunodeficiency virus). Education against the disease was HIV Testing, safe sex and avoidance of contaminated blood.

Many controversies surrounded the disease including the methods of testing, payments for AIDS treatments, and the rights of confidentiality of individuals with AIDS versus the rights of those with whom they came in contact.

Savings and Loan Failures

Deregulation and poor enforcement of bank rules during the Reagan administration led to unwise and sometimes dishonest banking practices. Several U.S. Senators along with federal and state officials were involved in **banking fraud**. Loans were given to organizations and people who had **bad credit** and **no way to repay** their debts. In the early 1990's because of these loans and bank fraud, hundreds of savings and loan associations went bankrupt. Similar problems affected commercial banks. Many banks were forced to close, others merged into larger banks that were still financially stable. The cost to the taxpayers of these bad deals was **over \$500 billion**. Congress created the **RTC** (Resolution Trust Corporation) and along with the **FDIC** (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) they finally solved the delinquency problems by 1995.



Health Care Problems

Affordable health care became a major problem in the 1990's. During Bush's presidency, more working families lost their health care coverage due to the rapid increase in the premium costs due to a rapid rise for hospitalization and prescription drugs. Families could no longer afford their monthly premiums.

There was now an argument within the nation whether to have universal health care provided by the government or continue to allow the insurance and pharmaceutical companies along with the medical associations continue to act independently of the government. **The issue still continues today!**

Social Concerns

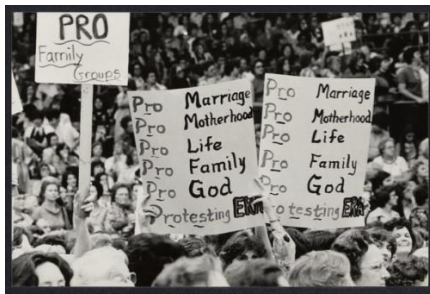
George H.W. Bush followed Ronald Reagan's lead by appointing conservative justices to the federal bench. After a long debate the Senate approved two Bush nominees to the **Supreme Court: Justice David Souter in 1990 and Justice Clarence Thomas in 1991.**

Liberals, minorities, and some women's groups criticized these appointments.

Three main issues were forefront in the Supreme Court: **Abortion, Life-Support for the terminally ill and the right to die.**

Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992)

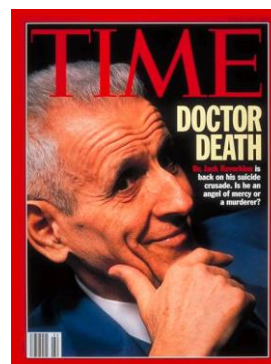
The Supreme Court upheld the 1973 ***Roe v. Wade*** ruling that legalized abortion. However certain restrictions were allowed to the states, such as a 24-hour waiting period for an abortion, parental consent for minors, and certain record-keeping procedures.



Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Dept. Of Health (1990) saw the Supreme Court rule that Nancy Cruzan, in a coma with brain injuries after an auto accident) had not clearly expressed her wish to remove life support ahead of time and that the state had a legitimate concern in protecting life. However, the Court also said that each state was free to develop its own policies and in many instances life support may be removed in terminal cases.

Jack Kevorkian

He was a Michigan doctor who became nationally known for helping dozens of terminally ill patients commit suicide. After numerous prosecutions and acquittals, Kevorkian was found guilty of murder in 1999. The hearing had been televised live. Many Americans sympathized with Kevorkian's assisted suicide actions.



In **Oregon**, voters and the legislature approved the ***Death with Dignity Act***, which permits physician-assisted suicide in carefully defined circumstances.

Foreign Issues during the Bush Presidency

The breakup of the Soviet Union and the downfall of communism in Eastern Europe ended the Cold War. This presented the Bush Administration with new opportunities and new problems.

The Persian Gulf Conflict

In August 1990, **Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein** and his well-equipped military invaded **Kuwait**. Exiled leaders and other Middle East nations pleaded with the United States for military assistance. With full Congressional approval, Bush sent 500,000 troops to Kuwait and other regions of the Middle East. The campaign was called **Operation Desert Shield**. Bush also persuaded the United Nations Security Council to condemn Hussein's aggression and place economic sanctions on Iraq. Bush then formed an alliance with 23 other nations to stop any further Iraqi aggression.



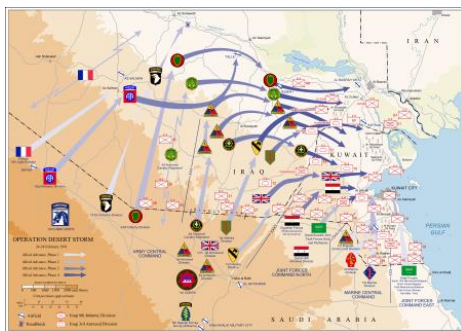
Kuwaiti oil fields after Iraqi attack



President Bush visits troops on the Middle East

By early 1991, the economic pressures had weakened Iraqi but Hussein refused to negotiate. In mid-January, the coalition forces began an intensive bombing campaign on Iraqi positions and **Operation Desert Storm** had begun. In retaliation, Iraqi launched **Scud missile attacks** on Saudi Arabia and Israel, with little or no success.

After five weeks of bombing, Bush ordered **General Norman Schwarzkopf** and his troops to invade Southern Iraq and liberate Kuwait. After four days of fighting, the Iraqi army suffered over 100,000 casualties and large segments of the Iraqi army had surrendered. Bush then ordered a truce, but Saddam Hussein remained in power in Baghdad. **Bush would be criticized for his truce and going into Baghdad and capturing Saddam Hussein.**



Desert Storm invasion plan



Coalition missile attack on Baghdad

Problems in Panama

The return of the Canal Zone to Panama had been in effect for several years. However, in early 1988 during the Reagan Administration, the Panamanian military leader, **Manuel Noriega**, who had been indicted by U.S. officials for drug trafficking, overthrew the civil government in Panama. Strikes and demonstrations were seen in the streets of Panama. In response to sanctions levied by President Reagan, Noriega announced a state of war existed between Panama and the United States.

In December 1989, Bush ordered an **invasion of Panama**. Within days, Noriega's forces were dispersed and there were only a small number of casualties. Noriega was taken to Miami to stand trial and was convicted on drug-related charges, sentenced to a 40-year prison term.

Intervention in Somalia

In 1991 **Somalia**, located on the Horn of Africa, began a fierce civil war led by local warlords. More than 50,000 Somalis died within a year and bandits hampered United Nations and Red Cross relief convoys causing widespread famines and disease. The United Nations approved a Bush Administration plan for limited military action in Somalia, called **Operation Restore Hope**. American and coalition forces landed in the capital **Mogadishu** in December 1992 and peace was gradually restored. The U.S. troops were withdrawn in 1993 and then the United Nations troops left in 1995. The truce between the warlords and the coalition and the subsequent military withdrawals did not achieve a solution and problems still exist in the region today.

Intervention in the Balkans

By 1991, the former communist country of **Yugoslavia** disintegrated under a civil war caused by ethnic and religious conflicts. **Serbian nationalists** of the "new" Yugoslavia fought **Croats and Muslims** for power in the central state of **Bosnia**. The European Community, NATO and the United Nations sought to end the fighting. In June 1993, the United States reluctantly agreed to military participation in the peacekeeping missions. In 1995 a truce was signed which led to elections the following year.

Yugoslav-Serbian repression and brutal ethnic cleansing campaigns against **ethnic Albanians** living in **southern Kosovo** erupted into another civil war in 1997. The earlier scenario repeated itself only this time it involved U.S. and NATO bombing campaigns until another truce was signed in 1999. Later, the leaders of all sides involved were to stand trial for war crimes at the International Court of Justice in the Hague.



The Bush Administration and China

One example of Bush's conservative and pragmatic approach to foreign affairs occurred early in his administration. In June 1989, the Chinese military suppressed a pro-democracy movement demonstrating in **Beijing's Tiananmen Square**. Using tanks and armored cars, the military crushed the demonstrations and fired into the crowd, killing hundreds of protestors. Although Bush abhorred the Chinese government's violent crackdown in Tiananmen Square, he did not want to jettison improved U.S.-Sino relations by overreacting to events. Many in Congress cried out for a harsh, punitive response to the Chinese government's killing of peaceful protestors, but the Bush administration imposed only limited sanctions. Later in his administration, Bush sent Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger, deputy secretary of state, to China to try to repair the damaged, but not destroyed, relationship. In the end, U.S.-Sino relations, while always somewhat fragile, have generally thrived, particularly in the economic realm, where both nations have benefitted from a robust trading partnership.

(<https://millercenter.org/president/bush/foreign-affairs>)

Changing U.S. – Soviet Relations

When Bush became President in 1989, the United States had already begun to see a thawing of relations with the Soviet Union. As vice president, he attended the December 1988 summit between President Ronald Reagan and Soviet Premier **Mikhail Gorbachev**. Bush spoke of softening relations in his inaugural address, claiming that "a new breeze is blowing," and adding that "great nations of the world are moving toward democracy through the door to freedom."

Bush's relationship with Gorbachev began with what the Soviets called the *pauza* (**pause**). With his instinctual caution, the President wanted time to study the situation before moving forward with his own policy. Although the Soviets were concerned that Bush's *pauza* indicated a new direction in U.S. foreign policy, it actually helped consolidate the improved U.S.-Soviet relations.

Bush's restrained response to the collapse of Communism in Europe, while diplomatically skillful, cost him dearly at home among his conservative supporters who argued that Ronald Reagan would have celebrated this historic development with some type of public address.

In December 1989, Bush and Gorbachev discussed arms reductions and strengthened their relations. At a summit in Washington, D.C., in June 1990, the two men signed a broad arms reduction agreement in which the United States and Soviet Union consented to decreasing their nuclear arsenals. By most accounts the Bush Administration was successful in redefining relations with the Soviet Union in a post-Cold War environment. In July 1991, Bush met Gorbachev in Moscow and signed the **Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, known as START**.

When Gorbachev's opponents attempted a coup to oust him from power the next month, the Bush administration waited anxiously for the outcome. The coup failed, and Gorbachev resumed his position but the Soviet Union was in evident decline. Throughout the fall, the Soviet Republics began to declare their independence from the Soviet Union, and in December, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus announced they were forming a new confederation of states. Gorbachev resigned as the President of the Soviet Union on December 25, 1991.

The efforts of both the administration of Bush and Gorbachev achieved results in improving U.S.-Soviet relations in ways that would have been unthinkable ten years earlier. Critics of the Bush administration faulted it for being aligned too closely with Gorbachev and too willing to compromise; many thought that Bush should have made more overtures to Boris Yeltsin, the President of Russia who often wanted reforms to proceed more quickly than Gorbachev and eventually oversaw much of Russia's transition away from Communism. Nonetheless, Bush's relationship with Gorbachev helped facilitate improved U.S.-Soviet relations.

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Conclusion

The public supported President Bush’s foreign policies but the domestic problems plagued his administration. During his second year in office, the United States entered a serious economic recession. Purchasing and production declined, fear gripped the banking and financial markets. Corporate downsizing led to rising unemployment. A sluggish recovery took some steps to lower the unemployment rate and stimulate the economy but the country saw that it was time for a political change.

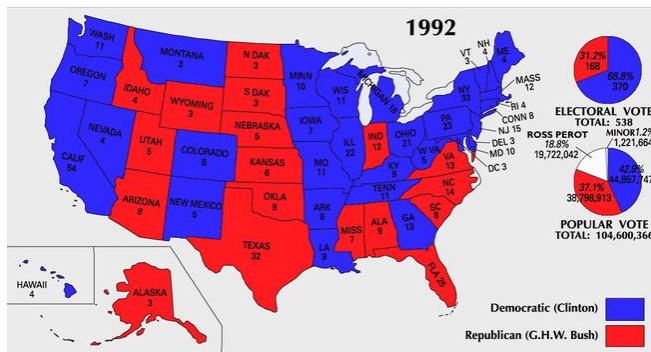
The 1992 Election saw George H.W. Bush lose his campaign for re-election to the **Democrat, Bill Clinton**. The election took place after the **redistricting** that resulted from the **1990 census**.

Democrats won control of the Presidency and both chambers of Congress, the last time this happened was the Republican victory in 1980.

The Election was between the Republican incumbent George H.W. Bush, Democratic Governor of Arkansas Bill Clinton and Texas Businessman Ross Perot who ran as an Independent.

Clinton received 370 Electoral Votes but only 43% of the Popular Vote. Perot won the largest share of the Popular Vote for an Independent candidate since Theodore Roosevelt’s 1912 candidacy.

What was initially viewed as an easy win for the incumbent, George H. W. Bush, turned out quite differently. His famous **“Read my lips: no new taxes”** statement was used against him effectively by his primary challenger Pat Buchanan and later by Governor Bill Clinton. One of the first indicators of Bush's re-election challenge was a poll showing him losing to Texas billionaire Ross Perot in May.



Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush and Ross Perot