

GEORGE H.W. BUSH, "SPEECH AT PENN STATE UNIVERSITY"  
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**Abstract:** During the 1992 presidential campaign, President George H. W. Bush lost a lead in the polls and subsequently the presidency to Bill Clinton. This study helps to account for that loss by illuminating weaknesses in his campaign stump speech. Bush's speech at Penn State University reflected his difficulties in distinguishing himself from his challenger and articulating a vision for his second term. The essay also illustrates larger controversies over politics and free speech on campus.

**Key Words:** 1992 presidential election, George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton, campaign speeches, free speech on campus, Penn State University

On September 23, 1992, President George H.W. Bush brought his reelection campaign to the University Park campus of the Pennsylvania State University. Speaking on the steps of Old Main to a cheering crowd of supporters, Bush said little new in the speech. Yet it still proved controversial, not so much because of what Bush said, but because of the way the event was staged. Sparking controversy over the distribution of tickets and the treatment of protestors at the event, Bush's appearance dramatized the difficulties of staging campaign events at colleges and universities. It also raised larger issues about politics and free speech on campus.

Bush's speech at Penn State was carefully prepared and vetted by his speech-writing staff and White House advisers. Yet despite all the effort that went into the speech, it was vague, uninspired, and unresponsive to criticisms of his administration, reflecting the larger problems with Bush's faltering campaign. Starting the year as a popular incumbent, Bush plummeted in the polls, apparently due to a declining economy.<sup>1</sup> Two weeks before coming to Penn State, he delivered a major address in Detroit, spelling out a blueprint for his second term, dubbed the "Agenda for American Renewal." Bush's speech at Penn State was billed as a major economic address elaborating on that plan. Yet he said little about his proposals for reviving the economy, speaking only vaguely of his fiscal conservatism and portraying his opponent as a "tax-and-spend" liberal. Missing an opportunity to respond to his critics and to give more details about his economic plans, Bush instead devoted most of his speech to flattering his audience, attacking his opponent, and dispensing patriotic platitudes.

One might blame the shortcomings of Bush's speech on all the hoopla and controversy surrounding a campaign rally. Yet the speech was quite typical of his "stump" speeches during the 1992 campaign. Like many of his speeches, Bush's speech at Penn State was neither clear about his own plans nor specific in its criticisms of Clinton. Reflecting the failures of his campaign in general, it only added to the picture of "a listless, indecisive man, unable to take the steps that might rescue his tottering reputation." Only a year earlier, Bush's reelection looked like it would be a "cakewalk." By the summer of 1992, however, more and more people were asking the same question: "Does George Bush really want to be president for another four years?"<sup>2</sup>

We begin our analysis of Bush's speech at Penn State with some background on George H.W. Bush as a politician and a speaker. We then revisit the 1992 campaign, recalling how Bush struggled to define his message, particularly on economic issues. We next show how Bush's appearance at PSU typified the failure of his 1992 campaign, as the President delivered a vague, unresponsive speech that criticized Clinton but did little to clarify Bush's own agenda for a second term. Finally, we reflect on the legacy of Bush's speech at Penn State, considering reactions to the speech and some of its implications for politics and free speech on campus.

### *Biography of George H. W. Bush*

George H. W. Bush was born on June 12, 1924, the second son of Prescott Bush and Dorothy Walker Bush. The Bush family raised their five children in Greenwich, Connecticut, where the boys attended Greenwich Country Day School and Phillips Academy. Bush graduated from Phillips in 1942, and immediately enlisted in the Navy. During World War II, he flew TBM Avengers in the South Pacific and was decorated for his bravery. Upon returning from the war, he married Barbara Pierce and enrolled at Yale University for an accelerated two-year bachelor of arts program.<sup>3</sup> Bush graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a major in economics while "minoring" (by his own admission) in baseball. (He was captain of the Yale baseball team).<sup>4</sup> After graduation, he moved his wife and first son, George Walker, to the booming oil fields of Texas.

After working in Odessa for a friend of his older brother, Bush formed an independent oil company in 1950 with his friend, John Overbey.<sup>5</sup> The Bush-Overbey Oil Development Company was based out of Midland, Texas, and worked to purchase mineral rights from farmers and landowners. Bush-Overbey attracted the attention of rising Texas businessman and oil tycoon, Hugh Lietke, Jr. Bush merged his company with Lietke's, creating Zapata Petroleum, the precursor to Pennzoil. Soon the company became the first oil company in Midland with a net worth over a million dollars—a large sum in the 1950s.<sup>6</sup>

Bush's father, an "Eisenhower Republican," represented the state of Connecticut in the U.S. Senate from 1953 to 1963. The Republican Party was non-competitive in Texas during the 1950s and 1960s, however, and the younger Bush's political career got off to a slow start. As Bush recalled in his memoir, "Over most of the state in the early 1960s, the Texas Republican Party was a Ma Bell operation—call a meeting of local Republicans, and you wouldn't need much more space than a phone

booth."<sup>7</sup> Bush worked with the Texas Republican Party in the 1960, 1962, and 1964 elections, and he ran a failed Senate bid in 1964. Finally, in 1966, he won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. In 1970, he vacated his House seat to run again for the U.S. Senate, losing to Democrat Lloyd Bentsen. The loss of his elected position opened other doors for Bush, who built his résumé over the next eight years in appointed positions. Bush served as the United States Representative to the United Nations from 1970 to 1973, chairperson of the Republican National Committee from 1973 to 1974, chief of the U.S. liaison office to the People's Republic of China from 1974 to 1976, and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1976 to 1977.<sup>8</sup> Although several of these positions were not in the public eye, they positioned Bush as a major Republican insider. After losing to Ronald Reagan in the 1980 Republican primaries, Bush became the logical choice as Reagan's vice presidential running mate. Bush brought balance to the ticket; he had the foreign policy experience Reagan lacked, and his family connections won over Eisenhower Republicans.<sup>9</sup> After serving as Reagan's Vice President for eight years, Bush ran for president, overwhelmingly defeating Democrat Michael Dukakis in the 1988 presidential election.

Succeeding Ronald Reagan—the "Great Communicator"—was no easy task. As John Robert Green has observed: "With his unmatched skill as a communicator, and with the simplicity of his message, Ronald Reagan was able to make most Americans think past the age of anxiety that his policies had created and concentrate instead on how good they felt about being Americans. He was, indeed, a tough act to follow."<sup>10</sup> In addition to lacking Reagan's skill as a communicator, Bush had few ideas for making his own mark on the presidency. David Mervin dubbed Bush's term in office "the guardianship presidency."<sup>11</sup> Michael Duffy and Dan Goodgame have characterized Bush as "marching in place."<sup>12</sup> Ryan J. Barilleaux and Mark J. Rozell described Bush's tendency to veto legislation—116 times during his four years in office—as exercising "prudence as policy," but others saw it as a reluctance to try anything new.<sup>13</sup> Bush proposed initiatives on education and illegal drugs, but they made little progress. Even his major legislative successes, including the Clean Air Act of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, did little to break the inertia of his overall policy-making efforts.<sup>14</sup>

Bush's foreign policy was dominated by two events, the collapse of the Soviet Union—typically credited to Ronald Reagan—and the Gulf War in 1991. In Operation Desert Storm, Bush reacted to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait by sending American troops into the Middle East, then oversaw the expulsion of Iraqi forces in a war that lasted only a hundred hours.<sup>15</sup> At first considered a spectacular victory, Bush was later criticized for failing to finish the job by destroying the Iraqi army and toppling Saddam Hussein. Nevertheless, at the end of the Gulf War in January 1991, Bush's popularity stood at the high mark of his presidency, with 89 percent of the American public approving of how he was "handling his job" as president. It remained above 70 percent until the end of August 1991.<sup>16</sup>

Economic problems, however, eroded Bush's post-war popularity. Reagan's "Morning in America" had given way to a dark economic reality, with the national debt quadrupling to \$4 trillion. Many in the middle class were out of work or unable to find permanent, well-paying jobs.<sup>17</sup> Rather than boost Bush's popularity, his swift success in

the Middle East actually may have backfired: Americans "resented the fact that [Bush] did not apply the same skills to reversing economic decline."<sup>18</sup> Bush's approval ratings dropped to 66 percent in October 1991, 56 percent in November, and 50 percent in December.<sup>19</sup>

Part of Bush's declining popularity may be attributed to his reversal on taxation. In his 1988 acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention, Bush made his infamous promise not to raise taxes: "And the Congress will push me to raise taxes, and I'll say no, and they'll push, and I'll say no, and they'll push again, and I'll say to them, 'Read my lips: no new taxes.'"<sup>20</sup> According to the Annenberg Campaign Mapping Project archives, Bush repeated the "read my lips" pledge only eight times during the 1988 general election campaign. Yet many political analysts credited Bush's victory over Democrat Michael Dukakis to his "no new taxes" pledge.<sup>21</sup>

Late in 1989, however, the Bush administration was forced to reevaluate its position. On Friday, October 13, 1989, the U.S. stock market plunged 190 points. Inflation, which had been slowly creeping upwards during the mid- and late-1980s, reached 5 percent. By mid-1990, the budget crisis had become so dire that the federal government faced a shutdown mandated by the Graham-Rudman-Hollings Deficit Control Act. Democrats in Congress refused to even debate the budget until the Bush administration found an additional \$50 billion in spending cuts.<sup>22</sup>

Recognizing that taxes had to be raised in order to avoid a huge budget deficit, Bush released a statement in June of 1990 admitting that the administration was considering tax increases. Although several American newspapers, including the *Los Angeles Times* and the *New York Times*, had been calling for tax increases, the press, the Democrats, and even some Republicans blasted Bush for going back on his campaign promise.<sup>23</sup> While Bush could have made the case for tax increases based on economic changes since 1988, the White House remained silent, proposing the increase to Congress but barely communicating with the public and press.<sup>24</sup> Bush's budget plan, formed in closed-door meetings between White House and congressional leaders, was proposed to Congress during a Rose Garden press conference on September 26. The budget would cut \$301 billion in mandatory and discretionary spending, but it also would include tax increases of \$134 billion, imposed primarily through a phased increase in gasoline taxes.<sup>25</sup>

Led by conservative Republican Newt Gingrich, Congress rejected the Bush plan on October 5, 1990. Bush refused to authorize a second continuing resolution that would have allowed the federal government to function without a fiscal plan. For three days, the federal government shut down. While this had little impact due to the Columbus Day holiday weekend, thousands of tourists were turned away from national parks and museums. On October 9, Bush was forced to sign the continuing resolution to reopen the federal government for business. Congress replaced most of the increase in gasoline taxes with an increase in income taxes for the wealthiest Americans. Bush signed the bill on October 27, despite the fact that fewer than one-quarter of the Republicans in Congress had backed it.<sup>26</sup>

Although the tax increase was less than Reagan's 1982 tax hike, Bush took a serious hit in popularity. Previously touted as a trustworthy man of noble character,

the reversal on taxes created new doubts that Bush was not "a man of convictions."<sup>27</sup> Only nine percent of those polled in June of 1992 agreed with the statement, "George Bush has kept his promises."<sup>28</sup> The Republican Party also took a hit because of Bush's reversal. In the 1990 midterm elections, Republicans lost ten Senate seats, 25 House seats, and two governorships. Even Newt Gingrich, the popular Republican Speaker of the House who had opposed the tax increase from the beginning, barely held onto his seat.<sup>29</sup> A year later, as the 1992 presidential campaign got underway, Bush's approval rating stood at just 46 percent and was continuing to decline.<sup>30</sup> With declining popular support, intense criticism from within his own party, and the economy still struggling, George H. W. Bush began his campaign for reelection facing a number of challenges.

### *The 1992 Campaign*

As 1991 came to a close, economic conditions in America continued to worsen. The national debt was growing, inflation was rising, and businesses were forced to downsize to restore profit margins. Many workers were unable to find good jobs.<sup>31</sup> While Bush enjoyed an 89 percent approval rating during the Gulf War, his numbers sank quickly after the war ended. Bush's "guardianship" presidency was losing its appeal. While the Bush campaign continued to focus on the President's leadership during the Gulf War, Americans grew increasingly concerned about the economy. Thus, the 1992 campaign came to be defined by economic issues and by a double challenge to the incumbent president: a strong, moderate Democrat with a plan to "put people first," and a serious third-party challenger stressing the need for fiscal responsibility.

Early in the 1992 campaign, Bush stuck to the classic "Rose Garden" strategy, tending to official business and trying to appear "presidential."<sup>32</sup> The Rose Garden strategy kept Bush in the White House for most of the campaign, with his ethos tied to the prestige of the office and his day-to-day decisions as President. Unfortunately for Bush, the strategy failed. With his approval rating plummeting to only 32 percent in mid-July, the White House finally abandoned the Rose Garden strategy.<sup>33</sup> *Looking* presidential only exacerbated suspicions that Bush was not *acting* presidential.

Bush's main challenger was, of course, Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas, a moderate Democrat who embodied much of what Bush lacked. An impressive, even charismatic figure, reporters described Clinton as a man who "could dominate a whole room with his raw physical presence . . . or win voters singly with a word, a touch, a grin, and a steady attentive gaze."<sup>34</sup> His critics dubbed him "Slick Willie," but to many voters the man from Hope appeared likable and competent. To boost his campaign before the Democratic convention, Clinton appeared on morning talk shows such as *Good Morning America* and *Today*, played his saxophone on Arsenio Hall's show, joked with Larry King on CNN, and "played to Generation X on an ask-me-anything show on MTV."<sup>35</sup> Clinton appealed to voters on a personal level, but he also won back former Reagan Democrats and even appealed to some moderate Republicans with his fiscal conservatism and his proposals for governmental reform.

Voters were especially impressed by Clinton's aggressive plan to handle America's economic problems. Promising to reinvent New Deal programs, Clinton

talked about "putting people first" by investing in education and reforming social welfare programs.<sup>36</sup> For the Clinton campaign team, the strategy was simple. Clinton campaign strategist James Carville developed three themes that became the campaign's haiku:

Change vs. more of the same  
 The economy, stupid  
 Don't forget health care<sup>37</sup>

These three themes defined both Clinton's agenda and his criticisms of Bush, and they clearly resonated with voters.

Compounding Bush's problems in the 1992 campaign was H. Ross Perot, a Texas billionaire who ran as a third-party candidate. Perot initially hurt Bush by focusing still more attention on the nation's economic problems and the unresponsive federal bureaucracy.<sup>38</sup> Appearing on television—both on paid half-hour political commercials and talk shows like *Larry King Live*—Perot built a substantial and devoted following.<sup>39</sup> Volunteers flocked to Perot, and he ultimately managed to get his name on the ballot on all fifty states.<sup>40</sup> As a fiscally conservative alternative to the sitting president, Perot threatened to take votes from Bush's own base in the Republican Party. Attacking Bush on both domestic and foreign affairs, he made balancing the budget a serious campaign issue, and he even portrayed Bush as weak in foreign affairs, criticizing him for allowing Iraq's Saddam Hussein to remain in power.<sup>41</sup>

Perot caused turmoil throughout the 1992 campaign. His candidacy began in February of 1992, and he initially enjoyed widespread support.<sup>42</sup> By mid-spring, however, critics were beginning to question Perot's fitness for office, pointing to his hiring of private investigators to track his business associates and even his own children.<sup>43</sup> Stung by the criticism, Perot withdrew from the race on July 19, 1992, giving the excuse that a third party would only deadlock the race and disrupt the country.<sup>44</sup> Since Perot already was on the ballot in all fifty states, however, he remained a candidate. On September 1, 1992, he re-entered the race, but he never regained the popularity he had enjoyed earlier in the year. Most former Perot voters apparently had moved into the Clinton camp, reinforcing the "anti-Bush" vote for Governor Clinton.<sup>45</sup> Few seemed willing to leave what looked like a winning campaign to return to Perot.

Bush seemed to lack any strategy for dealing with the economic issues that arose during the campaign. *The Economist* characterized the Bush strategy as "to seem above the fray of domestic politics, and to remind a grateful public of the sure-footedness of the commander-in-chief of Desert Storm."<sup>46</sup> Instead of viewing Bush as a strong leader, however, many Americans grew increasingly frustrated with a president who seemed indifferent to their economic problems. After six quarters of economic decline, Bush continued to insist that the economy was not nearly as bad as people thought and that the nation was "poised for economy recovery."<sup>47</sup> Voters no longer appeared willing to accept the president's reassurances. On the same day that Bush once again predicted economic recovery on Rush Limbaugh's radio talk show, Clinton's

lead over Bush grew to 21 percentage points (58-37 percent) in an *ABC News* poll of likely voters.<sup>48</sup>

The day after the Republican National Convention, Clinton outlined his comprehensive economic plan in a speech to the Detroit Economic Club. The Clinton plan focused on the budget deficit, calling for a significant tax increase for high income taxpayers (especially those with incomes over 1 million dollars). Clinton also proposed to retrain the 10 million unemployed people in America for better, more permanent jobs, and he called for a \$220 billion program to create temporary public works jobs for the unemployed.<sup>49</sup> Finally, Clinton pledged to eliminate tax loopholes for big business.<sup>50</sup> Clinton's plan met with immediate approval from voters. The popularity of the plan robbed Bush of the "convention bounce" candidates typically enjoy after their own nomination. After he announced his economic plan, Clinton continued to lead Bush in the polls by between 9 and 15 percentage points.<sup>51</sup>

On September 10, Bush also went to the Detroit Economic Club to outline *his* plan. Consisting of six basic goals and 13 specific proposals, Bush's "Agenda for American Renewal" focused on free trade and global economic competition, education and training, incentives for business, economic security for workers, equal opportunity, and "rightsizing" government. Bush gave few details on his proposals, but he did call for "radical changes in our education system to prepare our children for a constantly changing workplace," as well as "new approaches for reaching out to those who have been left behind." Like Clinton, Bush favored more scholarships and other measures to strengthen education, although he differed from Clinton on the question of "school choice."<sup>52</sup>

As he had throughout the campaign, Bush criticized Clinton for focusing only on the negative—for portraying America as "past her prime, over the hill." In a rare, metaphorical moment, Bush even dispensed some philosophical wisdom: "But you can't chart the stars if you think the sky is falling down." In closing his speech in Detroit, he both summarized his own economic philosophy and displayed the confidence in America that he found lacking in Clinton:

I want America to seize this moment. I want to stimulate entrepreneurial capitalism, not punish it. I want to empower people to make their own choices, not yoke them to new bureaucracies. I want a Government that spends less, regulates less, and taxes less. I will fight without hesitation for a free flow of trade and capital and ideas around the world, because Americans never retreat; we always compete.<sup>53</sup>

Bush claimed to see global economic competition as a business opportunity, while Clinton allegedly saw it as a threat to America's economic well-being.

Clinton responded to Bush's speech in Detroit in radio and television interviews, and many newspapers quoted Clinton's criticisms at length. Typical was this report in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*:

Gov. Bill Clinton labeled President George Bush's new economic package as "simply more of the same trickle down" favoring the rich while giving "small sop to the middle class" and slashing benefits for the elderly and disabled veterans. "Why did it take you over 3 1/2 years just to come up with more of the same?" Clinton asked Thursday after the president in a speech to the Detroit Economic Club repackaged many of his economic proposals and made some new proposals to cut spending. "It hasn't worked," Clinton said. "It has given us the lowest growth in 50 years, the loss of manufacturing jobs, declining incomes. . . . I hope the American people will reject this and vote for a real change and a new direction."<sup>54</sup>

The president had swung and missed, according to Clinton, and the challenger's swift response reinforced doubts about Bush's economic leadership.

Clinton was right: for most voters, it *was* "the economy, stupid." After three years, the economy remained stuck in recession, and Americans were losing their jobs at the same time that budget cuts at the state and federal levels reduced the benefits available to those out of work or struggling financially. Just before Labor Day 1992, the Census Bureau released the surprising statistic that 33.7 million Americans were living in poverty, more than at any time since the start of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty in 1964.<sup>55</sup> While the Bush campaign continued to argue that economic conditions were, in fact, improving, 2.1 million more Americans had fallen below the poverty line. And according to the Department of Labor, 167,000 more Americans lost their jobs in August 1992 alone.<sup>56</sup>

The Clinton campaign seized on these statistics, asking the same question Ronald Reagan posed twelve years earlier during his race against Jimmy Carter: "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" For many Americans, the answer clearly was "no." The Clinton campaign ran attack ads, showing Bush delivering his infamous line, "Read my lips: no new taxes." The same ads dubbed his economic record the "worst in fifty years."<sup>57</sup> Clinton's ads also emphasized that Bush had no plan for welfare reform, while Clinton proposed to spend \$6 billion a year to get poor people off welfare and into the work force through training, free child care, and tax credits. Clinton argued that Americans had been suffering under Republican economic policies for twelve years and that it was time for a change.

As the campaign wore on, Bush had many opportunities to respond to Clinton and clarify his own economic agenda. One of those opportunities came on September 23, when Bush was scheduled to speak at Penn State University. Bush's speech on the steps of Old Main was carefully prepared and vetted, and it attracted plenty of media attention, both locally and nationally. Yet, as he had throughout the campaign, Bush failed to address specifically his plans for solving the nation's economic woes. Instead, he delivered a speech that may have energized his supporters but did little to clarify his own vision for a second term in office.

### *The September 23 Speech*



Campaign speeches have a bad reputation. Although some of the most famous speeches in American history have, in fact, been campaign speeches,<sup>58</sup> many people think of such speeches as vacuous, ritualistic, or even deceptive. Some scholars argue that campaigns are good for us,<sup>59</sup> and empirical research shows that candidates generally *do* keep their promises.<sup>60</sup> Still, we do not expect much from campaign "stump" speeches. Because they are often carefully staged "media events," delivered to hand-picked audiences of cheering supporters, campaign speeches rarely contain serious discussion of complex issues. Instead, they tend toward hoopla and "sound bites," with the candidate "preaching to a choir" of committed supporters.

Campaign speeches have changed dramatically since the advent of television a half century ago. Once delivered from the back of train cars or literally from the stumps of felled trees, campaign speeches are now designed for television, with careful attention paid to crafting memorable one-liners and exploiting visually appealing settings. In 1960, as Theodore H. White observed, television became "the atmosphere of politics in which politicians breathed or suffocated to death,"<sup>61</sup> and some politicians learned that lesson better than others. Richard Nixon used television to good effect in his "Checkers" speech in 1952, but John F. Kennedy proved the real master of the medium when he bested Nixon on TV during the 1960 campaign. Twenty years later, Ronald Reagan proved even more skilled at speaking on television. Employing an "effeminate style" that exploited both the intimacy and the visual *pathos* of the medium, as Kathleen Hall Jamieson has argued, Reagan earned his reputation as "The Great Communicator" by mastering the visual grammar of television:

Reagan's success as a communicator is attributable to his understanding of the medium that more than any other dominates our lives. The notion that Reagan is to television what FDR was to radio is a commonplace, but one that camouflages an identifiable amalgam of skills that, in contemporary politics, gave Reagan his rhetorical edge. To a visual digestive medium, Reagan brings a talent for creating both verbal and nonverbal synoptic vignettes that capture his central claims. Better than any modern president, Reagan translated words into memorable televisual pictures. . . . Reagan's visual sense complements the conversational, intimate style through which he conveys a consistent public sense of himself and speaks through television in its own natural language.<sup>62</sup>

George H.W. Bush was no Ronald Reagan, and he struggled with campaign speaking. Where Reagan looked relaxed and comfortable on the campaign trail, Bush often looked stiff and anxious. Words that might have flowed effortlessly out of Ronald Reagan sounded wooden and forced coming from George H.W. Bush. Peggy Noonan, who wrote for both Reagan and Bush, claims that both former presidents worked hard on their speeches and collaborated closely with their speech writers. Yet Bush did not seem comfortable delivering hard-hitting attacks or talking about his personal life.<sup>63</sup> Noonan wrote a number of memorable, Reagan-like lines for Bush's acceptance speech at the 1988 Republican National Convention, including his references to a "kinder, gentler nation" and a "thousand points of light."<sup>64</sup> Generally, however, Bush's style was

more bureaucratic than inspirational or poetic. While an impressive communicator in other interpersonal or smaller group settings, Bush struggled to deliver campaign speeches with conviction and passion.

Bush's speech at Penn State reflected his difficulties "on the stump." Drafted by White House speech writer Jennifer Grossman, the speech was carefully researched and written,<sup>65</sup> and it was vetted by more than a dozen White House officials, including national security adviser Brent Scowcroft and White House legal adviser Gregory S. Walden.<sup>66</sup> Still, it lacked both substance and artistry, sounding almost petty in its attacks on Clinton and failing to distinguish clearly between the two candidates' positions. Bush compounded the problem by straying from the prepared text and skipping altogether one of the "six definitive differences" between the candidates that the speech was designed to illuminate.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, however, reporters traveling with the President barely noticed the omission, describing his remarks at Penn State as his "typical stump speech."<sup>68</sup>

Bush was introduced by legendary Penn State football Coach Joe Paterno.<sup>69</sup> After thanking Paterno for the "great introduction," the President quipped: "Last time I gave a speech on a college campus, one student came up to me afterwards and said, 'That was the best imitation of Dana Carvey I've ever seen.' I never knew I had such talent" (2).<sup>70</sup> Returning to Paterno, Bush praised the coach for his "courage" in supporting Bush in a "tough political year" (4). He then praised two Republican Members of Congress who had joined him on the stage, along with the president of the College Republicans and several leaders of the local Republican Party and the Bush-Quayle campaign.

Departing from his prepared text, Bush tossed out a number of one-liners, mostly referring to Penn State's football tradition. "I want to do to Governor Clinton this year what Penn State did to Cincinnati last year" (5), he declared in reference to PSU's 81-0 drubbing of Cincinnati the previous season. Then, for good measure, Bush celebrated the achievements of Nittany Lion baton twirler, John Mitchell: "Well, I'm glad I'm not running against Joe Paterno and I'm also glad I'm not running against that world-renowned baton twirler, John Mitchell. Where is the man? There he is, right back there. You can't see him, but I can—real talent" (5).

Bush finally returned to his prepared text in what is the seventh paragraph of the printed transcript of the speech. Yet even as written, Bush's statement of purpose was awkward and vague: "I came here to talk a bit about where we've been, and where we are, and what I want to do to get us where we've got to be" (7). Bush continued to stray from the economic theme of the speech as he recalled a plaque he had seen in Old Main and reminded the audience of his own military service: "You know, as I was walking through the Old Main I saw a plaque on the wall. Not too shiny, but then again, it didn't need to be. It was dedicated to 374 Americans who died in World War II. All from Penn State. And I was there, and I survived to see a lot of history between then and now, the heated battles and a long Cold War—won by people with the right stuff and the people with the right ideas" (7). Presumably, Bush himself had the "right stuff" and the "right ideas," but not even the prepared text directly made that connection.

Perhaps Bush hoped that reminding voters of his foreign policy credentials would distract them from their economic woes. Drawing a contrast he made throughout the speech, he spoke of himself as the optimistic, forward-looking leader who had helped Ronald Reagan win the Cold War. Indeed, Bush imitated Reagan throughout the speech, portraying himself as the confident and patriotic alternative to defeatist Democrats like Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton. Like Carter, Bush implied, Clinton was too pessimistic, too quick to concede the decline of American power and prestige. According to Bush, Clinton was the "wrong" choice for America if you wanted "to move this country forward" (9). America needed strong, confident leadership, not a president who believed that America's best days were part of the nation's past.

Taking shots at his opponent, Bush talked like the underdog, not the confident incumbent. Speaking in "gunfight" metaphors, he compared criticizing Clinton's record to "going after an unarmed man." Clinton "should have armed himself," Bush taunted; he should have "packed more than promises" when he took on George H.W. Bush (10). In distinguishing himself from Clinton, Bush claimed to operate from "radically different premises" and spoke of "differences in our visions" (10). In the prepared text, Bush was to elaborate on six of those "definitive differences."<sup>71</sup> Yet in delivering the speech, he failed to enumerate those differences and he skipped over one of the six differences entirely.

Ironically, a heckler inspired one of the most specific policy statements in Bush's speech. Responding to the heckler's taunts about the administration's AIDS policies, Bush left his prepared text, first asking whether they could "get this guy to shut up," then breaking into an impromptu defense of his administration. "We have spent \$4.3 billion on that," Bush shot back; "I have asked now for \$4.9 million." Researchers would not rest until they found a cure for AIDS, Bush assured the crowd, and "so we care about it." "It's a terrible curse," he concluded, and the heckler had raised "a legitimate question" (11).

Returning to his prepared text, Bush then introduced the first of the six differences between him and his opponent: their view of what makes the economy grow. Recalling his speech two weeks earlier in Detroit, Bush reminded his listeners of his "Agenda for American Renewal," which outlined his economic plans for a second term. In that speech, he insisted, he "didn't just hammer away at what's wrong with America." Instead, he "gave fair due to what's right" and "offered a comprehensive, integrated approach to win the new global economic competition—to create the world's first \$10-trillion economy by the dawn of the century" (12). That approach included thirteen specific actions that he would pursue in the first year of his second term, Bush insisted, and he would fight for those initiatives "harder than the Nittany Lions—fourth quarter, fourth down—goal to go. And that's tough. That's tough" (13).

At no point in his speech did Bush elaborate on those thirteen initiatives. Nor did he explain in specific terms how his economic philosophy differed from that of his opponent. Portraying Clinton as a tax-and-spend liberal, Bush implied that his opponent favored a bigger government and distrusted ordinary citizens. According to Bush, Clinton believed that "government planners and projects and programs" were what "makes this country go," while Bush knew that the economy was driven by

"individual working men and women" and "the freedom of a market" (16). Sarcastically emphasizing the word with "quote and unquote," Bush accused Clinton of believing that the government could "invest" your money "smarter than you can" (17). Bush, on the other hand, didn't "see it that way." He believed that "the smart money" was on "the smart people, like [those] standing right out here in this beautiful day in Pennsylvania" (17).

Bush marveled at the irony, suggesting that Clinton advocated the failed, socialistic policies of the communist world. Bush, on the other hand, rode the wave of the future: free markets and free trade. Playing the history teacher, he said:

You know, it's crazy. Some of y'all are studying history, and it's a crazy thing. At the very moment when Russia and Eastern Europe and the whole world is turning our way, why would we want to go back their way? (Applause) And all of a sudden, all around the world, people are turning to free markets and to free trade and to freedom. And now that the world is finally catching on, what are we supposed to say—"just kidding," and start their way? No. (18)

In Bush's history lesson, the complexities of a new global economic order were reduced to the Cold War competition between communism and the free world.

Bush's second major difference with Clinton involved taxes, which Clinton supposedly would raise. In support of that claim, Bush offered what he described as the "facts" about Clinton's record in Arkansas:

Now, listen to this 'cause this is factual. My opponent disagrees. In Arkansas he's taxing everything he can get his hands on: groceries, beer, gas—(Boo-o-o!). I knew you wouldn't like that one—mobile homes, cable TV, used cars, airplanes, coal—he was even taxing food stamps until the federal government forced him to stop. Now, I guess that's why (Boo-o-o!). And that's the truth. I guess that's why yesterday my subconscious spoke up—and by accident—and it was an accident, down there in the South—I actually called him "Governor Taxes." And I'm sorry, I apologize. (Bush! Bush! Bush!). (23-25)

Not surprisingly, Bush's line about taxing beer brought "boos" from his audience of college students, yet it also proved an embarrassing mistake. Noting that Republicans also supported taxes on beer and gasoline, one White House aide had warned against using the line when the draft speech was vetted—but to no avail. NBC's Bob Kur noticed, however, and called the whole country's attention to the mistake in his report on the rally: "What Bush did not tell students at Penn State is that he too raised the beer tax and several others."<sup>72</sup>

The third theme of Bush's speech, government spending, received short shrift, principally because Bush skipped over a whole paragraph of details in his prepared text. Beginning with the blanket assertion that Clinton wanted to "raise Government spending, and I want to cut it" (26), Bush accused his opponent of proposing 220 billion

dollars in "brand spanking new government spending." He also noted that *Newsweek* magazine had predicted that "his true total could be 3 times as high as that" (27). Left out of the speech was Bush's own proposals for the elimination of "246 programs and more than 4,000 projects" that he deemed "luxuries," along with his call for a balanced budget amendment and a line-item veto. Not only did these omissions render Bush's speech less specific, but it also left it entirely negative on the issue of government spending. What was supposed to be a contrast of the two candidates' positions instead became another attack on Clinton.

Returning to his prepared text, Bush moved to the fourth difference between Clinton and himself: their views on "opening foreign markets to American goods." According to Bush, Clinton waffled on free trade, while Bush brought the same "can do" spirit to trade that he brought to all other issues: "And I believe in free trade because I believe that when trade is free and fair, America beats the competition fair and square—anytime" (28). Of course, Bush could not accuse Clinton of *opposing* free trade; "there was a time," he conceded, when "Governor Clinton said he favored open trade" (29). Yet after meeting with "big union guys," Clinton allegedly backed away from his support for free trade, responding to a question about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by saying that he had no "definitive opinion" on the matter. "Well, I've got news for the Governor," Bush said pointedly: "There's no call-waiting in the Oval Office." As if speaking to Clinton directly, Bush concluded: "You can't have it both ways. You gotta make up your mind" (29).

In the prepared text of his speech, Bush was next supposed to discuss the fifth difference between himself and Clinton: their views on government red tape, mandates, and monopolies. The prepared text had Bush declaring himself the friend of "the little guy with a big dream," claiming that Americans wasted 5.3 billion hours "just trying to keep up with federal regulations," and dramatizing the magnitude of that statistic by comparing it to "watching every pro football game on television back-to-back for the next twelve millions years."<sup>73</sup> In the speech he actually delivered, however, Bush skipped all of that, perhaps because the speech was already running long. Or perhaps the material was cut because a White House aide had questioned the statistics during the vetting of the speech.<sup>74</sup> Whatever the explanation, the speech, as actually delivered, ended up addressing only five of the "six definitive differences" that speech writer Grossman had hoped to illuminate.<sup>75</sup>

That left Bush to conclude with one last issue distinguishing himself and Clinton: the conservative "hot button" issue of legal reform. Describing the legal system as "out of control and headed for a crash," Bush claimed that Americans spent "up to \$200 billion" a year "in direct costs to lawyers" and declared: "Now, that's got to stop" (30). Portraying Clinton as a captive of special interests, he quoted one unnamed trial lawyer who declared that he could "never remember an occasion" when Clinton had "failed to do the right thing where we trial lawyers were concerned" (31). "Well, how touching," Bush declared sarcastically. Bush contrasted his own views with those of Clinton's by promising to "put a lid" on these "crazy lawsuits" (31). Yet he said nothing about any specific restrictions or caps that he might put on such lawsuits. Indeed, his "plan"

seemed to consist of little more than imploring people to be nice: "We need—Americas need—need to stop suing each other so much and caring for each other more" (30).

Bush's speech at PSU concluded with tough talk and a patriotic celebration, as the President chastised Clinton for suggesting that America was "powerless." In a classic Republican refrain, Bush implied that the Democratic candidate was soft on defense, while reminding the audience of his own foreign policy experience. Quoting Clinton out of context, he ridiculed the Democratic challenger for talking about a president's "powerless moments when countries are invaded, friends are threatened, Americans are held hostage, and our Nation's interests are on the line" (32). There would be no such talk in the Bush administration, he promised. Again, he feigned speaking to Clinton directly: "Well, let me say, Governor Clinton: If America is powerless when our Nation's interests are on the line—who else do you suppose is going to take care of us? My America is not powerless. My America takes care of its interests. And when we have to fight, we're willing to do it if the cause is just" (33).

In the final analysis, Bush's speech at Penn State was more of an attack on the opposition than an economic blueprint for his own second term. Raising the "character issue" repeatedly, Bush concluded with some more locker-room wisdom: "You learn more about character on the 2-yard line than anywhere else in life." He then connected that wisdom to his own experience, reminding his audience that he's "been there" and boasting of America's strength: "But there's one thing about America—we never back down, we never give up, we never retreat, we always compete. And we always win. That is the United States of America" (34). Stirring his audience to chants of "U.S.A.! U.S.A.! U.S.A.!", Bush professed his "faith in our great country," while Clinton supposedly ranked the United States "somewhere below Germany, but north of Sri Lanka." "He ought to open his eyes and look around," Bush admonished in taking one last shot at Clinton; "We are the most respected country in the entire world" (35).

According to Matt Herb of *Blue/White Illustrated*, a publication focusing on Penn State sports, Bush's speech at Old Main demonstrated his understanding of one of the "first rules" of public speaking—"know your audience"—with its emphasis on the "two subjects most dear to the student-dominated crowd: football and beer."<sup>76</sup> Yet reporter Jim MacKinnon of the *Centre Daily Times* offered a different assessment, describing the speech as "long on attacks on Democratic candidate Bill Clinton" but "short on major economic proposals."<sup>77</sup> Bush's patriotic bravado may have played well before his audience of invited supporters, but it did little to answer criticisms that he lacked new ideas. Bush also may have been guilty of misrepresenting Clinton's plans for investing in communities, encouraging more private investment, opening up global markets, and "rewarding work and families."<sup>78</sup> Even in the prepared text, Bush did little to distinguish his own agenda from that of the challenger Clinton, and the speech as actually delivered was even less specific, substituting one-liners and patriotic appeals for well-formulated arguments. In effect, Bush used his audience of cheering, flag-waving college students as the backdrop for a patriotic "media event" staged for the benefit of the TV cameras.

Bush's speech at Penn State thus raises larger questions about the purpose of allowing campaign events on campus. What educational purposes might be served by

hosting political rallies on campus? Shouldn't such events encourage young people to reflect upon the issues of the day or to discuss and debate the candidates' positions? Bush's speech at Penn State also stirred controversy over *how* such rallies are staged, as the handling of tickets and protestors at the event upset many people. In the final section of this essay, we examine some of those controversies and explore their implications for ongoing debates over politics and free speech on campus.

### *The Legacy of Bush's Speech at Penn State*

George H.W. Bush's speech at Penn State not only sheds light on the shortcomings of his 1992 reelection campaign, but also on some of the issues and controversies surrounding politics and free speech on college campuses. Outraged by Paterno's appearance and certain other aspects of the rally, Democratic politicians, alumni, free speech activists, and others complained to Penn State President Joab Thomas about what they perceived as an official endorsement of the Bush campaign. Responding to the complaints, the university admitted no wrongdoing and failed to address the larger issues surrounding campaign events on campus. Like many other universities, Penn State lacks a coherent policy for hosting campaign events and, as a result, the controversy over the purposes and conduct of such events continues to this day.

The controversy over Bush's appearance at Penn State began when the College Republicans first approached the university with a request to host a campaign stop by the President. At that time, the group asked for permission to provide ticketed, "VIP" seating for Bush's supporters, and consistent with university policy at that time, the request was granted. On September 21, however, a group of about 20 students entered the local Republican Party headquarters and demanded tickets to the VIP seating area. They were denied and complained to university officials. After a "lengthy review" by university legal counsel and a meeting with representatives of the Secret Service, the university determined that student groups had a right to reserve seating for VIPs and special guests at events they sponsored, and their right to distribute those tickets as they saw fit was upheld.<sup>79</sup>

The controversy continued the night before Bush arrived, when the College Republicans tried to decorate the front of Old Main with a Penn State flag. The university ordered the flag removed on the grounds that it might be perceived as an official endorsement of Bush's candidacy. Subsequently, an Assistant Vice President of University Relations authorized the display of a Penn State shield, as long as the name "Penn State" was removed as an identifier. The university also agreed to the College Republican's request that a "no signs/no sticks" policy be enforced in the regulated seating area, with the understanding that the policy would apply to *all* signs, not just those opposed to Bush.<sup>80</sup>

Unfortunately, university security personnel either misunderstood the policy or deliberately ignored it. Instead of confiscating all signs, they selectively enforced the "no signs" policy, letting Bush supporters keep their signs while denying signs to others. In addition, critics complained that protestors were kept far from the stage and treated

roughly by university police. Adding to the controversy, of course, was the fact that Joe Paterno had introduced the President, and that Penn State cheerleaders, members of the Blue Band, and the Nittany Lion mascot joined Bush on the stage. In the eyes of some critics, that made it look like the university officially endorsed the Bush campaign.<sup>81</sup>

Pictures and videotape from the event suggest that the critics had a point. Even the limited view provided by the videotape reveals a large crowd cheering the President while waving little American flags or pro-Bush banners. Clearly visible behind Bush is the small Penn State shield that the university deemed a non-endorsement. That shield, however, was part of a larger banner that not only included the official Bush-Quayle logo, but also wished Bush "A Nittany Lion Welcome." In addition, dozens of flag-waving supporters stood behind the President, facing the cameras and holding pro-Bush signs, including a large banner touting his "Agenda for American Renewal." Finally, of course, the whole event took place on the steps of the architectural icon of Penn State, the Old Main building.

Given all that, it hardly comes as a surprise that letters from alumni and others opposed to Bush flooded into President Joab Thomas' office.<sup>82</sup> Alumnus Paul Kovach wrote that he was "ashamed" of Penn State for allowing Paterno—"the most visible spokesperson of the University"—to introduce Bush, and he was also "very upset" that protestors were kept away from the President. "So much for free speech," Kovach wrote in his letter to Thomas. Similarly, Jane A. Gray, a 1973 graduate, objected in the "strongest possible terms" to the banner displaying both the Penn State and the Bush campaign logos, as well as to the presence of the university mascot, marching band, and cheerleaders. Harvey L. Hurdle, a 1982 graduate and a "frequent contributor" to the Smeal College of Business, also expressed his "strong disapproval" of allowing university employees and symbols to serve as "props" for the Bush reelection campaign, while Anne H. Flannery of Woodbury, New Jersey even threatened a boycott of sorts. In an angry, hand-scrawled note with large block letters and lots of exclamation points, Flannery wrote:

I am *very* upset that your college has taken a political stand!!! My niece and nephew both graduated from Penn State—were married on the grounds near the college—other nieces and nephews showed interest in attending when they become eligible in 2 years—but—as one of their relatives, that partially helps support their tuition, I have told all the parents they will receive *NO* financial help from us, if any of them choose Penn State!!!

Thomas also heard from state Democratic leaders. In a UPI dispatch, Senate Minority Whip J. William Lincoln (D-Fayette) was quoted as calling the rally a "disgrace," while Senator Patrick Stapleton (D-Indiana) even hinted that it might "adversely affect the university's relationship with the legislature."<sup>83</sup> In a letter to Thomas, Senate Minority Leader Robert Mellow (D-Lackawanna) called the effort to "hype" the Republican campaign "absolutely reprehensible" and demanded that Paterno not be "allowed to use Penn State . . . as a prop for his own political show."



Paterno's "latest escapade," Mellow wrote, went "far beyond the realm of political brinkmanship," and there could be "no denying" that hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvania residents . . . have the impression that Pennsylvania State University supports his political philosophy and his actions."<sup>84</sup>

Even the Central Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union weighed in on the controversy. In a long letter to Thomas, local ACLU president Margaret T. Young cited news reports of "racial abuse" against anti-Bush protestors and noted that one of the ACLU's own board members had her Clinton-Gore sign confiscated by "a man she believed to be a member of the Young Republicans." As such, the rally "raised important civil liberties questions," and Young demanded answers to a series of questions about whether protestors were censored, the behavior of the police, and the legitimacy of a "VIP" section packed with "several hundred" cheering supporters. The letter also criticized Paterno's role in the event, arguing that the university violated the "equal access" rule when its "most celebrated campus figure" praised the President in front of "so many impressionable students." Furthermore, "the Penn State logo was everywhere," according to Young, giving the speech "the appearance of a university-sponsored event."<sup>85</sup>

In responding to the controversy, Thomas drew from a list of "debriefing points" prepared by university counsel Delbert J. McQuaide and a committee of university officials, essentially denying that the university had handled the event badly. For those who complained about Paterno's role, the university had this response: "Coach Paterno exercised his First Amendment rights, . . . Mr. Paterno did not represent the university, or speak for the University, its President, or its Board of Trustees." In response to questions about the participation of the Nittany Lion, the Blue Band, or the cheerleaders, the university offered a similar explanation: all were *invited* to participate, and their participation was voluntary. Regarding the Penn State shield, the university recalled the decisions to remove the words "Penn State" from the banner and to prohibit the use of a larger Penn State flag.<sup>86</sup> That was more than some other universities did, Thomas explained in his response to Senator Mellow's letter. When Clinton had spoken at Michigan State two weeks earlier, Thomas wrote, he stood behind a podium bearing the university's name, while in the case of Bush's visit "the name of Penn State was deleted from the podium and the banners at our request."<sup>87</sup>

The university had similar responses to the various free speech issues raised by critics of the event. The question of a VIP section had been reviewed carefully by legal counsel, the university explained, and it was determined that student groups had a right to reserve areas for VIP seating at events they sponsor—as they had for earlier campus visits by Hillary Clinton and Jerry Brown.<sup>88</sup> Responding to complaints about the confiscation of anti-Bush signs, the university admitted that there had been some "confusion," as University Security initially agreed to enforce a "no signs/no sticks" policy, but then realized that a large number of Bush signs already "had been placed on the ground in the restricted area." After consultations with legal counsel, a decision was made to "reverse enforcement" of the no sign policy. Finally, the university dismissed reports of "rough behavior" against protestors, deeming the crowd control problem "not nearly as bad" as what one might expect at a "high school wrestling or

football challenge." The protestors had not been marginalized or silenced, the university insisted, noting that the media had, in fact, "reported on this anti-Bush presence."<sup>89</sup>

By treating the Bush controversy as a public relations problem, the university failed to address the real issues at hand: What are the rights of partisan political groups and protestors on campus? And what should be the role of the university in hosting and providing security for campaign events? Not surprisingly, then, the same controversies arose during later visits to campus by presidential candidates and their surrogates. During the 2000 campaign, for example, Republican vice presidential candidate Dick Cheney made a brief stop at Penn State, and the university again allowed the College Republicans and the local Republican Committee to control tickets to the event. Again the policy led to controversy over who would be admitted and what sorts of signs and behaviors would be allowed. The sponsors claimed that tickets to Cheney's speech were free and available to anybody, yet the rally was packed with cheering supporters, with only a smattering of protestors. As Cheney spoke, Penn State policy escorted some of those protestors—a few chanting but others silent—out of the building. Supposedly, "outside signs" again had been prohibited, but somehow hundreds of hand-painted Bush-Cheney signs found their way into the arena. Because it was a "private and ticketed event," Officer Donald Reed explained, the Penn State police left it up to the event's organizers to determine what was appropriate signage and what sorts of behaviors warranted "ejection from the arena."<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, about 50 protestors—initially denied a permit to demonstrate near the venue—voiced their objections to Cheney's visit in a "designated protest area" across the street.<sup>91</sup>

Not surprisingly, the protestors expressed outrage at their treatment, calling the university's actions a "blatant infringement" on their First Amendment rights.<sup>92</sup> Ali Altman, a vice president of the College Democrats at Penn State, claimed to have been "physically restrained" by Penn State police for holding up a Gore-Lieberman t-shirt.<sup>93</sup> Another student, Maggie Benoit, claimed that she and a friend had been evicted from the arena simply for sitting by another student who held a pro-Gore sign. "Neither of us were holding signs," Benoit insisted. "It was guilt by association." Two more students, dressed as "Republican Billionaires," claimed that police and Secret Service agents confiscated their signs, stood behind them the whole time they were in the arena, then forced them to leave when they complained that their signs had been torn to pieces. "It's outrageous," said local resident Ron Brouman about the university's handling of demonstrators at the rally. "First Amendment rights should apply to everyone," he said. "This is free speech."<sup>94</sup>

In 2004, security concerns further complicated the issues surrounding campaign events on campus. In the wake of 9/11, political events in general were more tightly controlled, particularly those involving the incumbent president and vice president, George W. Bush and Dick Cheney. Tickets to Bush-Cheney events were often distributed only to those who donated to the campaign, and "scores" of people were "evicted or denied entry to Bush campaign events" across the country.<sup>95</sup> In some cases, those seeking tickets to Bush-Cheney events were asked to sign loyalty oaths, consenting to public release of their names as supporters of President Bush.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, the "defining feature" of campaign 2004, as Jeffrey MacDonald reported, became "security so tight that candidates seldom hear or see their critics in person."<sup>97</sup> In Charleston, West Virginia, one couple was arrested and jailed on trespassing charges for wearing anti-Bush t-shirts and refusing to relocate to a designated "free speech zone."<sup>98</sup> In Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, six protestors were arrested for disorderly conduct after they stripped to their skivvies and formed a pyramid mimicking the infamous photo from Abu Ghraib along Bush's motorcade route.<sup>99</sup> According to Stephen Hess of the Brookings Institution, such incidents may be distasteful, but they reflect a new reality in the Age of Terror: "The president of the United States is likely to get killed, and we have to take precautions." According to ACLU attorney Chris Hansen, however, the Bush campaign used security "as an excuse to repress dissent," falsely implying that "dissent is dangerous and will inevitably lead to physical attacks."<sup>100</sup>

Neither presidential candidate visited Penn State in 2004, but that did not spare university officials from again dealing with campaign controversies. Teresa Heinz Kerry's visit to Penn State in September essentially went off without a hitch,<sup>101</sup> but controversy again erupted when George H.W. Bush visited Penn State in support of his son's reelection. Although tickets were free and available to the public, registered Republicans received personal invitations before tickets were made available to the general public.<sup>102</sup> At the event itself, there were reports of Kerry supporters being denied admission, and volunteer ushers reportedly tore up the tickets of some students wearing Kerry-Edward buttons.<sup>103</sup> G. T. Thompson, chair of the Centre County Republican Party, even admitted to the *Centre Daily Times* that the volunteers were instructed not to admit anyone with Kerry-Edwards "paraphernalia" or anything else "slanderous towards the president" or the Republican Party.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, the debate over politics and free speech on campus continues, not only at Penn State but across the country. In a post-9/11 world, it may well be necessary to enforce tighter security measures at on-campus political events. But does that mean that only loyal supporters should be admitted to such events? Or that protestors must be corralled and relocated to some distant "free speech zone"? In response to criticisms that they have violated First Amendment rights, some partisans have distinguished between "official visits" and "party events," insisting that they have a right to hold rallies designed to "energize" the party faithful, not debate the issues with their opponents.<sup>105</sup> Yet are such events consistent with the educational mission of colleges and universities? What *is* the rationale for hosting campaign events on campus, and what educational purposes are served by closed, ticketed "party events" designed only to rally the faithful?

Political cynicism and apathy among young people are serious problems in America, and hosting campaign events on campus may be one way to combat these trends. Yet if campaign events are to engage young people, they must promote, not stifle, discussion of campaign issues, and they must be open to students of all political persuasions, not just committed supporters. Events like George Bush's rally at Penn State in 1992 do little to promote political debate, nor do they engage students not already actively involved in political affairs. Moreover, they encourage bad speeches—speeches designed only to "fire up" the crowd rather than seriously engage the issues.

If universities hope to promote voting among young people, they must encourage more open and genuinely deliberative campaign events on campus.

As Daniel M. Shea has argued in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, campus visits by political candidates can be exciting events, stirring political passions and "fostering civic and political engagement." For small colleges in particular, a visit by a presidential candidate cannot only "invigorate" students politically, but also be "good for the wider community, improving town-gown relations." Yet if such events are closed, partisan rallies, they "violate a core tenet of democratic society—the open and robust exchange of ideas in a public setting." Candidates may be "anxious to stifle public debate, to control their message and artfully manipulate news content," but institutions that "strive to cultivate responsible citizens" should refuse to be complicit in that process. As Shea concludes:

Who, if not colleges, will challenge those undemocratic impulses? Colleges are not obligated to provide an arena and a bullhorn for a select few. . . . Our drive to engage students cannot trump our obligation to foster a robust exchange of ideas. . . . In the end it boils down to this: Closed, ticketed events are inconsistent with the mission of higher education and with the spirit of democracy. Candidates on the campus? You bet. But with no strings attached.<sup>106</sup>

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58 Among these would be Abraham Lincoln's "Cooper Union" speech, William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold," Franklin Roosevelt's nominating speech for Al Smith, Richard Nixon's "Checkers Speech," and John F. Kennedy's "Houston Ministerial Speech."

59 See, for example, Roderick P. Hart, *Campaign Talk: Why Campaigns are Good For Us* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

60 See Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 3-15.

61 Theodore H. White, *America in Search of Itself: The Making of the President, 1956-1980* (New York: Warner Books, 1982), 168.

62 Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Eloquence in an Electronic Age: The Transformation of Political Speechmaking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 119.

63 Peggy Noonan, *What I Saw at the Revolution: A Political Life in the Reagan Era* (New York: Ivy Books, 1990), 309-329.

64 George H.W. Bush, "1988 Republican National Convention Acceptance Address," *American Rhetoric*, online at: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/georgehbush1988rnc.htm> (accessed August 29, 2006).

65 Materials gathered for the speech included research on significant historical events on the day of the speech, September 23, 1992, input solicited from the Penn State football office and University Relations, and information about—and writings by—the man scheduled to introduce President Bush, coach Joe Paterno. Included in the speech writing file for the speech at the Bush Library are facts and figures about Coach Paterno's coaching record, including a season-by-season chart of his teams' records and bowl games, and an article by Paterno published in *Crisis* magazine in January 1990, "What Virgil Taught Me about Football." See Office of Speechwriting, Series: Speech Files, Backup, Chron. Files, 1989-1993, Box 180, Folder Penn State University 9/23/92 [OA 7564], George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, College Station, Texas.

66 In the files for the speech in the Bush Library, there are multiple copies of a second draft of the speech that had been circulated to some 25 White House staffers, asking for responses from about a dozen of them. The files include edited versions of the text sent back by Scowcroft and Walden, who was identified as the Associate Legal Counsel to the President. See Office of Speechwriting, Series: Speech Files, Backup, Chron. Files, 1989-1993, Box 180, Folder Penn State University 9/23/92 [OA 7564], George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, College Station, Texas.

67 Jennifer Grossman to Steve Provost, "Memorandum for the President," 22 September 1992, Office of Speechwriting, Series: Speech Files, Backup, Chron. Files, 1989-1993, Box 180, Folder Penn State University 9/23/92 [OA 7564], George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, College Station, Texas.

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68 See Jim MacKinnon, "20,000 Hear Bush Speak," *Centre Daily Times*, September 24, 1992, A1.

69 In his introduction of Bush, Paterno praised Bush, declaring: "The impact that George Bush has had on history will not be understood for generations to come." He dismissed fears that the nation faced darker days ahead, envisioning a return of those "days of individual responsibility" when people cared for one another and their communities. Emphasizing that America was founded on "We the People," Paterno also urged his audience to vote, saying: "If you don't vote, don't gripe." Paterno's speech inspired polite applause but was badly delivered. In addition to awkward pauses and phrasing, Paterno rarely looked up from his speech text, except at the end as he introduced "The President of the United States – George Bush!"

70 All of the remaining passages from Bush's September 23, 1992, speech at Penn State University are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the speech that accompanies this essay. All subsequent speech citations come from George H.W. Bush, "Speech at PSU," September 23, 1992, as transcribed from the Pennsylvania State University video recording by Sandra French and Sara Ann Mehlretter.

71 Jennifer Grossman to Steve Provost, "Memorandum for the President."

72 Quoted in Howard Kurtz, "Winning the TV Screen but Losing the Big Picture: Voters Seem Immune to Bush Attacks on Clinton That Set Tone for Network News Coverage," *Washington Post*, September 26, 1992, A7.

73 Jennifer Grossman, "Presidential Remarks: Penn State University, Wednesday, September 23, 1992, 1:30 P.M.," Draft Two, in Office of Speechwriting, Series: Speech Files, Backup, Chron. Files, 1989-1993, Box 180, Folder Penn State University 9/23/92 [OA 7564], George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, College Station, Texas.

74 In response to the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft circulated among White House aides, there appears to have been questions raised both about the 5.3 billion hours figure and the translation of that figure into years watching football. One copy of the draft in the speech writing files of the Bush Presidential Library has handwritten emendations changing the 5.3 billion figure to 6.3 and twelve million years to 268,000 years.

75 Jennifer Grossman to Steve Provost, "Memorandum for the President."

76 Matt Herb, "Bush a Crowd-Pleaser in Penn State Visit," *Blue-White Illustrated*, October 5, 1992, 2, 14.

77 MacKinnon, "20,000 Hear Bush Speak," A1.

78 See Clinton and Gore, *Putting People First*, 14.

79 "Official PSU Response – Debriefing Points," Joab Thomas Papers, 1984-1996, M231, Box 21, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, the Pennsylvania State University Archives, State College, Pennsylvania.

80 "Democrats Angry Over Bush Visit to Penn State," UPI dispatch, September 25, 1992, Joab Thomas Papers, 1984-1996, M231, Box 21, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, the Pennsylvania State University Archives, State College, Pennsylvania.



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81 See Letters, Joab Thomas Papers, 1984-1996, M231, Box 21, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, the Pennsylvania State University Archives, State College, Pennsylvania.

82 All quotations from letters are taken from the Pennsylvania State University Archives, letters from alumni and concerned Pennsylvania citizens addressed to Dr. Joan Thomas, dated September 28 through October 30, 1992. See Letters, Joab Thomas Papers, 1984-1996, M231, Box 21, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, the Pennsylvania State University Archives, State College, Pennsylvania.

83 "Democrats Angry Over Bush Visit to Penn State," UPI dispatch, September 25, 1992.

84 Robert J. Mellow, "Letter to Dr. Joab Thomas, President," September 25, 1992, Joab Thomas Papers, 1984-1996, M231, Box 21, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, the Pennsylvania State University Archives, State College, Pennsylvania.

85 Margaret T. Young, "Letter to Dr Joab L. Thomas," October 20, 1992, Joab Thomas Papers, 1984-1996, M231, Box 21, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, the Pennsylvania State University Archives, State College, Pennsylvania.

86 "Official PSU Response – Debriefing Points," Joab Thomas Papers, 1984-1996, M231, Box 21, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, the Pennsylvania State University Archives, State College, Pennsylvania.

87 Joab L. Thomas, "Letter to the Honorable Robert J. Mellow," October 16, 1992," Joab Thomas Papers, 1984-1996, M231, Box 21, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, the Pennsylvania State University Archives, State College, Pennsylvania.

88 Brown visited in August of the previous year, while Clinton visited in April 1992.

89 "Official PSU Response – Debriefing Points," Joab Thomas Papers.

90 Heather Cook, Elly Spinweber, and Alex Weininger, "Cheney Rallies Penn State," *The Daily Collegian*, November 3, 2000 available at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2000/11/11-03-00tdc/11-03-00dnews-1.asp> (accessed on January 17, 2007).

91 Alison Kepner, "Students Protest Arrival of Vice Presidential Candidate," *The Daily Collegian*, November 3, 2000, available at available at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2000/11/11-03-00tdc/11-03-00dnews-2.asp> (accessed on January 17, 2007).

92 Missy Mazzaferro, "Letter to the Editor: Removal of Sign at Speech an Infringement of Rights," *The Daily Collegian*, November 6, 2000, available at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2000/11/11-06-00tdc/11-06-00dops-letter-3.asp> (accessed on January 17, 2007).

93 Cook, Spinweber, and Weininger, "Cheney Rallies Penn State," available at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2000/11/11-03-00tdc/11-03-00dnews-1.asp>.

94 Kepner, "Students Protest Arrival of Vice Presidential Candidate," available at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2000/11/11-03-00tdc/11-03-00dnews-2.asp>.

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95 Dan Eggen, "Policing is Aggressive at Bush Events," *The Washington Post*, October 28, 2004, A7.

96 Dana Milbank, "Republicans Sign Along the Dotted Line," *Washington Post*, August 1, 2004, A5.

97 G. Jeffrey MacDonald, "A Close Eye—and Tight Grip—on Campaign Protesters," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 2004, 11.

98 Ibid. Also see Eggen, "Policing is Aggressive at Bush Events," A7.

99 Eggen, "Policing is Aggressive at Bush Events," A7.

100 MacDonald, "A Close Eye—and Tight Grip—on Campaign Protesters," 11.

101 Heinz's speech in the Schwab Auditorium on September 16 was a ticketed event, and despite a small demonstration outside the venue there were no reports of disruptions or arrests. See Mike Joseph, "Heinz Kerry Rallies Local Dems," *Centre Daily Times*, September 17, 2004, 1A.

102 See Allison Busacca, "Tickets Available Today for Bush Speech," *The Daily Collegian*, October 28, 2004, available at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2004/10/10-28-04tdc/10-28-04dnews-11.asp> (accessed January 19, 2007); and Drew Curly, "Former President Bush's Rally Sold Out," *The Daily Collegian*, Penn State, October 29, 2004, available at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2004/10/10-29-04tdc/10-29-04dnews-08.asp> (accessed January 17, 2007).

103 Drew Curly, "Bush Sr. Rallies to Support Son," *The Daily Collegian*, Penn State, November 1, 2004, available at <http://www.collegian.psu.edu/archive/2004/11/11-01-04tdc/11-01-04dnews-15.asp> (accessed January 17, 2007).

104 Erin Nissley, "Students Say They Were Turned Away at the Door," *Centre Daily Times*, October 30, 2004, 5A.

105 See Steve Larese, "Bush-Backers-Only Policy Riles Voters at RNC Rallies," *Boston Globe*, August 9, 2004, A2.

106 Daniel M. Shea, "When Candidates Visit," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, August 2006, B20.