POL S 355, Autumn 2016

***Debating Presidential Power***

**Topic 1: The** Obama/**Bush administration failed to achieve a successful legacy in domestic affairs.**

**Rebuttals**:

**Medicare Prescription and Drug Modernization Act**

1. “Ownership society”
   1. Visions surrounding personal responsibility and increased ownership of houses, businesses, retirement accounts, and health insurance
   2. *..if you own something, you have a vital stake in the future of our country. The more ownership there is in America, the more vitality there is in America, and the more people have a vital stake in the future of this country.* - President George W. Bush, June 17, 2004
2. Health savings accounts
   1. Bush wanted health savings accounts to be used with health insurance plans
   2. Would be more affordable, wanted to control some costs of health care
   3. Wanted people to be able to make more decisions for themselves about health plans
3. Medicare Modernization Act, December 8, 2003
   1. Bush had argued that medicare was outdated
   2. Reform
      1. His reform included an option for prescription drug benefits that could only be delivered through private insurance plans
      2. If people wanted the new benefit, they had to purchase a private insurance plan
   3. Reasoning
      1. Hoped the proposal would increase competition and allow market forces to regulate health care
   4. View as quasi-victory
      1. New benefits and competition increased
      2. Largest expansion of Medicare benefits since its creation
      3. More funds spent than anticipated

The bill was passed both in the house and the senate with close margins with bipartisan support – Final Senate vote: 52-44 (11 Democrats in favor)

Rebuttal (timed 1:50):

After passing in Congress, President Bush signed the Medicare Modernization Act into law in December of 2003. This was the largest overhaul of Medicare in the program’s history. Since Medicare had been introduced in 1965, the role of prescription drugs in healthcare had vastly increased and science had changed the way many thought about health care. Medicare, as it was, was not equipped to deal with these new needs. The MMA sought to fix this problem and did so. The drug benefit provided to more than 40 millions American--including nearly 10 million low-income people--granted better access for all to prescription drugs. Increased private sector competition resulted in more innovation and flexibility in coverage. Because of this, the estimated costs of the program to taxpayers have declined nearly 38 percent since enactment. Another benefit of Bush’s modernized Medicare was a focus on preventive care. Medicare covered modern preventive medicine including cardiovascular blood screening, diabetes screening, ultrasound screenings for aneurysms, and smoking cessation counseling. Bush also increased funding for medical research that has led to medical breakthroughs. A direct effect of this increased funding in the development of the HPV cancer vaccine.

When looking at public response to this action, overall satisfaction was seen at rates over 85 percent in 2007. When Obama sought to reform health care, parts of this measure were also modified to be included in the Affordable Care Act, such as Medicare Part D (a prescription drug benefit).

Furthermore, this act was a part of a larger articulation of Bush’s ideal of an “ownership society.” Bush set forward a strong sense of vision in this message of creating a society in which individuals would feel invested in the nation because of their ownership of houses, businesses, health insurance, etc. Bush was the first person to coin this term and showed his ability to inspire through vision, a category of presidential evaluation defined by Greenstein. The Medicare Modernization Act is a clear example of Bush’s ability to tackle large problems through governance and create solutions that help the majority of Americans, as well as an articulation of conservatism through the new lenses of ownership society.

**Hurricane Katrina response**

1. Before
   1. August 23, 2005 – Katrina forms as a tropical storm off the coast of Bahamas
      1. Over next 7 days, grew into hurricane
      2. First landfall in FL, then along gulf coast
      3. Became most destructive natural disaster in American history, 1,300 people dead, NOLA flooded
   2. Bush put FEMA on highest level of alert before Katrina made landfall
      1. August 25, 2005 – Gov. Blanco declared state of emergency in LA, asked Bush to do same
      2. He did so the next day
      3. This authorized FEMA to organize and mobilize resources
   3. Federal efforts intended to support state and local officials
      1. Relief supplies readied
      2. Military made preparations for emergency
   4. Bush signed emergency declaration allowing LA to use fed resources for state disaster-response
2. Evacuation
   1. Mayor ordered voluntary evacuation of New Orleans – August 27th
      1. Many residents did not respond
      2. Mayor Nagin
   2. Bush pushed for LA Governor to force a mandatory evacuation
      1. By the time it came, it was too late
      2. Became mandatory August 28th, the day before the hurricane hit
3. Failure in response
   1. Response by federal level
      1. Hurricane hit August 29th – FEMA mobilizes 1,000 homeland security workers to provide assistance to city
         1. To organize efforts, FEMA told workers to wait until local authorities mobilized them
   2. Inaccurate information
      1. Federal level did not have adequate information concerning devastation caused
   3. Administration accused of negligence, incompetence, even racism
   4. Argued that state and local authorities lead natural disaster response
      1. Federal government then supports their efforts
      2. Deeply rooted in American tradition
   5. Local and state authorities were ill prepared and bickered over how to respond
   6. Federal response plans were very new
      1. Created in response to 9/11, failed to account for widespread or simultaneous catastrophes
      2. Many cities and communities with very different needs
         1. Waveland, Mississippi – smaller city, completely devastated, required smaller scale but immediate search and rescue, and large volumes of life saving and sustaining commodities
         2. New Orleans – over 18 hours approx.. 80% of city flooded, one of large search and rescue operations in Nation’s history
      3. National Incident Management System (NIMS) created in 2003 to provide nationwide approach to domestic incidents
         1. Central component – Incident Command System (ICS)
            1. Provides means to coordinate efforts of individual responders and agencies as they respond to and help manage an incident
      4. National Response Plan (NRP)
         1. Adopted in December 2004 by federal government
         2. All-hazard plan that establishes a single, comprehensive framework for managing domestic incidents
         3. Built on premise that incidents should be handled at lowest jurisdictional level possible
         4. Recognized that proactive Federal response may be required in rare circumstances – no final plan was put in place for this
4. After
   1. Worked with Congress to secure $126 billion for rebuilding region
   2. Bush took full responsibility for inadequate response, though he didn’t need to
      1. “[f]our years after the frightening experience of September the 11th, Americans have every right to expect a more effective response in a time of emergency. When the federal government fails to meet such an obligation, I, as President, am responsible for the problem, and for the solution.”
   3. Why was Katrina so bad?
      1. Larger than most storms
         1. Hurricane force winds extended 103 miles from its center
         2. Compared to Camille, category 5 storm, 75 miles
      2. Impacted nearly 93,000 square miles across 138 parishes and counties
      3. Extreme intensity before landfall
      4. Storm surge overwhelmed levees
         1. Led to flooding of NOLA
      5. Communications suffered as well
         1. Crippled 911 call centers, phone lines, broadcast media, local emergency services
      6. Caused at least 10 oil spills
         1. Oil pollution, sewage, chemicals, hazardous waste

Time (1:10)

Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst natural disasters in United States history based on sheer size and geographic impact. Response to this disaster was seen as mishandled with failures noted at every level of management. Federal response plans were very new, after having just been overhauled since 9/11. The National Response Plan adopted in December 2004 provided the framework for federal response and was built on the premise that incidents should be handled at the lowest jurisdictional level possible. Although this plan recognized that there may be times where proactive federal response is required, there was no final plan in place for these circumstances. The mismanagement of Katrina was seen not only on the federal level, but also between local authorities. Yet in the face of all of these problems, Bush took full responsibility for this mismanagement.

“[f]our years after the frightening experience of September the 11th, Americans have every right to expect a more effective response in a time of emergency. When the federal government fails to meet such an obligation, I, as President, am responsible for the problem, and for the solution.”

Bush did not need to claim full responsibility for this crisis, yet he did so, demonstrating his capacity to lead a nation in times of domestic turmoil. Following this, Bush was able to make important changes to the National Response Plan and better prepare the nation for times of national disaster. In every crisis Bush faced as a president, he remained calm and sought solutions against overwhelming challenges.

Compassionate conservative – focus on underprivileged groups

President Bush was a success in his focus on underprivileged groups. Staying true to his philosophy of compassionate conservatism, Bush was able to act as an articulator of the Reagan Era while still supporting those in need.

Through the Medicare Modernization Act, Bush improved health care to be more affordable, transparent, and efficient. In this reform, Medicare provided extra help for low income beneficiaries. For instance, on average, Medicare will pay for more than 95 percent of the costs of prescription drugs for low-income beneficiaries.

President Bush also established the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, which has transformed the way the government addresses human need. This office worked to strengthen America’s “armies of compassion” and waged determined action on need. This initiative has done work to help addicts, former prisoners, disadvantaged students, homeless, and low-income individuals. When looking at homelessness, federal partnerships through this initiative led to a nearly 30 percent reduction in chronic homelessness from 2005 to 2007.

Following 9/11, President Bush created the USA Freedom Corps to encourage citizens to serve their country through volunteer work. Nearly 61 million Americans answered this call and served their nation by feeding the hungry, mentoring at-risk youth, and housing the homeless. President Bush also created the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation that promotes volunteerism and advances corporate social responsibility. By placing focus on national volunteer efforts, Bush helped to foster a culture of citizenship, responsibility, and service.

When looking at education, the Bush administration has made it clear that every child in America deserves an education. No Child Left Behind sought to close the achievement gap in education and ensure that every child could reach his or her full potential. This included a 63 percent increase in grants to support high poverty schools and a 67 percent increase in support for special education programs. This led to significant increases in the reading and math skills of students across the country. President Bush also created the Helping America’s Youth Initiative, which encouraged Americans to engage in helping young people become healthy adults.

As a President, Bush is often remembered for the wars he was forced to wage, but few remember his determination to support those in need in our own country. Working within his place in political time as well as external circumstance, Bush created measurable progress for many Americans that were most in need.