

Big Government Under Obama Is a Big Lie

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Republicans accusing President Barack Obama of supporting "big government" should focus their attacks on President George W. Bush instead.

During a recent speech Sarah Palin [laid out](#) exactly what's at stake this November. "2012 is the race between big government and big freedom," Palin told hundreds of Tea Partiers gathered at the Wayne County Fairgrounds in Belleville, Mich.

Ah, there's that classic conservative scare tactic again, uttering the phrase "big government" to conjure up images of federal bureaucrats taking away our liberties. But just how does that apply to the Obama administration?

Perhaps Palin's referring to higher tax rates. But if so, how does she explain data from the Congressional Budget Office [showing](#) that overall federal taxes on middle-income households are near their lowest levels in decades? Or consider a 2011 [blog](#) from Bruce Bartlett, a former economic adviser to the White House, the Treasury Department and Congress: "The broadest measure of the tax rate is total federal revenues divided by the gross domestic product. By this measure, federal taxes are at their lowest level in more than 60 years. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that federal taxes would consume just 14.8 percent of the G.D.P. this year. The last year in which revenues were lower was 1950, according to the Office of Management and Budget. The postwar annual average is about 18.5 percent of G.D.P."

Could it be Obama's spending record? Impossible. In a Market Watch article headlined "Obama spending binge never happened," Rex Nutting [wrote](#), "Although there was a big stimulus bill under Obama, federal spending is rising at the slowest pace since Dwight Eisenhower brought the Korean War to an end in the 1950s. Even hapless Herbert Hoover managed to increase spending more than Obama has. . . Over Obama's four budget years, federal spending is on track to rise from \$3.52 trillion to \$3.58 trillion, an annualized increase of just 0.4 percent." Adjust for inflation and you'll find "spending under Obama is falling at a 1.4 percent annual pace - the first decline in real spending since the early 1970s, when Richard Nixon was returning from the quagmire in Vietnam."

If he hasn't sent taxes and spending skyrocketing, Obama has at least grown the size of government, right? Strike three and you're out, Sarah. PolitiFact.com [rated](#) as "True" economist Paul Krugman's assertion in a *New York Times* op-ed that the number of government employees actually decreased by half a million between Obama's January 2009 inauguration and June 2011.

Once again, Palin doesn't know what she's talking about. But guess who does understand big government? George W. Bush.

In his 2008 book *Great American Hypocrites* author Glenn Greenwald devoted a chapter to Republicans who abandon their alleged devotion to limited government once they gain power. The 43rd president is the chief offender. Greenwald cites an October 2007 article from McClatchy News Service declaring Bush "the biggest spending president since Lyndon B. Johnson." The article notes that discretionary spending increased by 48.5 percent, not adjusted for inflation, in Bush's first term, compared to a 21.6 percent increase in Bill Clinton's two terms. Greenwald also cites a 2003 assessment of federal government spending over 30 years by the libertarian Cato Institute, which concluded, "According to the new numbers, defense spending will have risen by about 34 percent since Bush came into office. But at the same time, non-defense discretionary spending will have skyrocketed by almost 28 percent." Yet another source Greenwald includes is a 2005 study by the right-wing American Enterprise Institute that found that even when not including homeland security costs there was a 36 percent increase in discretionary spending during Bush's first 5 years. The report included this insight: "It seems incontestable that we should conclude that the country's purse is worse off when Republicans are in power."

If Palin's audience really wants to take her advice and vote against big government, they'll have to vote for Barack Obama. How's that for irony?

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