



America, once again, finds itself at 'a time for choosing'

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This year will mark the 50th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan's landmark speech, "A Time for Choosing," which he delivered on behalf of then Republican presidential nominee Sen. Barry M. Goldwater.

In 1964, Goldwater was running against President Lyndon B. Johnson, and during the campaign he outlined a policy agenda that called for a return to constitutional limited government. Reagan's speech, which echoed Goldwater's defense of constitutional principles against New Deal-style liberalism, is still relevant in today's political battle of ideas. Reagan understood that the growth of the welfare state, high levels of taxation, and massive increases in government spending are detrimental to any society.

The conservative crusade against the federal leviathan fought by Goldwater, Reagan and others continues today, but the stakes are even higher than when Reagan delivered his historic speech. In the 21st century, the federal government has escalated in size because of the policies initiated by both presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama. Obama especially has radically changed the course of American government in a socialist direction.

The argument to justify the continued massive increase in spending is "investment" in job creation, but the economic record demonstrates that the current policies have failed to bring about a strong recovery from the Great Recession. The unemployment crisis is still very real, wages have not increased, and the number of Americans having to depend on some form of government assistance is at record levels. As the economy continues to struggle, it is clear that America faces a choice in what direction to turn.

Reagan argued that at the heart of the 1964 election was the issue of "whether we believe in our capacity for self-government or whether we abandon the American Revolution and confess that a little intellectual elite in a far-distant capital can plan our lives for us better than we can plan them ourselves." Goldwater would lose the election of 1964 in a landslide to Johnson, who would then unleash his Great Society.

A key component of the Great Society was Johnson's war on poverty and as Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute notes, that "over the past 50 years the government has spent more than \$16 trillion to fight poverty." Obama's policies, just as with the Great Society, are not solving policy problems.

America is indeed facing "a time for choosing" and as Goldwater warned in "The Conscience of a Conservative": "We can be conquered by bombs or by subversion; but we can also be conquered by neglect - by ignoring the Constitution and disregarding the principles of limited government."