

## Reagan and the Size of Federal Government

<http://www.icue.com/portal/site/iCue/chapter?cuecard=2444>



### General Information

<b>Source:</b>	NBC Today Show	<b>Resource Type:</b>	Video News Report
<b>Creator:</b>	Bryant Gumbel/Robert Hager/John Dancy	<b>Copyright:</b>	© NBC Universal, Inc.
<b>Event Date:</b>	02/24/1988	<b>Copyright Date:</b>	1988
<b>Air/Publish Date:</b>	02/24/1988	<b>Clip Length</b>	00:05:21

### Description

Former President Ronald Reagan's domestic policy is frequently debated and often poorly understood. The disparity lies between what he said he wanted to do and what he actually did. This retrospective considers the pros and cons of Reagan's domestic legacy.

### Keywords

Ronald Reagan, Federalism, Reagan Revolution, Legacy, Constitution, States, Domestic Policy, Arthur Schlesinger, Norman Ornstein, EPA, FTC, Environmental Protection, Consumer Protections, Bureaucracy, Budget, Department of Energy, Department of Education, David Stockman, Office of Management and Budget, Benefits, Welfare, Deficit, Debt, Republican, Conservative, GOP

### Transcript

Reagan and the Size of Federal Government

BRYANT GUMBEL, co-host:

This morning our attention is on domestic policy. It was the domestic front that Ronald Reagan promised to scale down back when he was a candidate in 1980.

President RONALD REAGAN: I pledge to you to restore to the federal government the capacity to do the

people's work without dominating their lives. The American people deserve better from those to whom they entrust our nation's highest offices.

GUMBEL: Nowhere is Ronald Reagan's legacy more debated or misunderstood than the domestic arena. The unintelligible result of the very real disparity between what the President actually did and what he said he wanted to do.

Mr. ARTHUR SCHLESINGER (Historian): Reagan came, as far as domestic policy is concerned, and said government is not the solution, government is the problem. In point of fact, after 8 years, the size of the federal government has increased by 7% under Reagan.

Mr. NORMAN ORNSTEIN (American Enterprise Institute): The reality is that the Federal government in absolute terms, and in proportional terms as a portion of our Gross National Product of our overall economy is larger after 8 years of Ronald Reagan than it was when he came in.

ROBERT HAGER reporting:

This is Robert Hager in Washington.

The Reagan camp promised a revolution in the way Washington does business, and at first, it resembled one. At the Environmental Protection Agency, Ann Burford was busy shooting down a decade's worth of anti-pollution rules. New leaders at the Federal Trade Commission virtually took the government out of consumer protection. There were promises to close down the Department of Energy. Close down the Department of Education, and cut government spending on health. Budget cuts did reduce the federal role in housing in welfare and in parklands.

But the early zeal gave way to the practical problems of running government. Instead of decreasing, spending on health increased, and the Departments of Energy and Education remained, and got bigger. So the revolution came only part way, but enough to change the terms of future engagement. Nowadays even liberal politicians, opponents of the Reagan record, no longer dare to advocate a return to the pre-Reagan days of regulation writing and fiery consumerism.

Mr. DAVID STOCKMAN (Former Reagan Budget Director): Our proposal here is for substantial retrenchment in obligations and entitlements and program elements that have been added one at a time over the last fifteen years.

GUMBEL: David Stockman was President Reagan's point man on the domestic front. Stockman's Capitol Hill showdowns may have dominated the headlines but they produced very few administration victories.

Mr. STOCKMAN: The thing I think is terribly important to understand as we go into 1988, is that that intention, or a very vague mandate that we had in 1980, or that the public gave in 1980 was tried, and the public itself decided that when they saw the details of what true cutback, true shrinkage in the federal domestic budget would mean, the public said no.

Mr. ORNSTEIN: It was clear at the time in public opinion surveys, it's clear now there's been no change there, that when you really get right down to it, the American people want a substantial government role in almost every area of public life.

Mr. STOCKMAN: His theory that you could have a dramatic reduction in the budget and the size of government without really harming any constituency or cutting any benefits to real people was utterly misbegotten, and unfortunately, he still believes it.

Pres. REAGAN: We have deficits because big government spends too much.

GUMBEL: President Reagan can still rail on about the size of the federal government. But after seven years, he is still part of the Washington establishment he rails against. It is his government that grew faster than he ever dreamed it would.

JOHN DANCY, reporting:

I'm John Dancy at the US Capitol. The size of the federal government is still growing, but it's growing as fast as it was before Ronald Reagan took office. Now, depending on your point of view, that's either good or bad. Some wasteful programs have been cut, but also some good ones. State governments are taking more responsibility for programs. That means government is closer to the people. But it also means higher state taxes and bigger state bureaucracies. Congress has just flatly resisted cutting some programs, like the urban development action grants, which finance projects in the cities. They are still around despite determined efforts to cut them. Perhaps the President's best weapon, intended or not, is the deficits run up during his administration. They fairly well insure that the cuts he made won't be restored once he leaves office.

Mr. SCHLESINGER: He was really running a kind of revolution against the New Deal, and against the welfare state. But I think at the end, when the smoke has cleared, that the main structure of change, the changes that had been brought in the Roosevelt years is there.

Mr. STOCKMAN: The real legacy will be beyond the deficit numbers and sizes. The real legacy will be that there wasn't a revolution at all. But there was a consolidation of the status quo.

GUMBEL: Tomorrow we'll conclude our series on the Reagan revolution with a look at how the President fared in his efforts to try to impose his efforts and his value system on this country.

## Related Cue Cards

Ronald Reagan's Economic Legacy  
<http://www.icue.com/portal/site/iCue/chapter/?cuecard=2446>

In 1981, the new Reagan economic plan emerged. It was based on four pillars: lower taxes, control spending, reduce regulation, and bring down inflation. The effectiveness of "Reaganomics" is still a source of debate among politicians.



Future of GOP at Stake in Election  
<http://www.icue.com/portal/site/iCue/chapter/?cuecard=5001>

As Republican candidates compete to take on Ronald Reagan's legacy, many Republicans believe the future direction of the party is at stake. NBC's David Gregory examines the men who are competing to lead it.



Romney Exits Stage Right, Can McCain Win Conservatives?  
<http://www.icue.com/portal/site/iCue/chapter/?cuecard=5990>

Mitt Romney suspends his presidential campaign at a conservative gathering. Will the presumptive GOP nominee, John McCain, be able to reach out to skeptical conservatives? Commentator Ann Coulter shares her strong opinions on McCain's candidacy.



Senator Barry Goldwater: Past and Present  
<http://www.icue.com/portal/site/iCue/chapter/?cuecard=3190>

Twenty years after Barry Goldwater was the Republican Party candidate for president in 1964, he addresses the Republican National Convention. Goldwater, called a "legend in his own time," is as independent as ever.

