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## Principled conservatism vs. compassionate conservatism

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By Larry Klayman

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During the 2000 presidential campaign, George W. Bush and his Republican Party ran on a platform of "compassionate conservatism." Now that Mr. Bush has been elected president, he has forsaken this campaign promise and embarked on another course of action.

Imploring the nation to "move on" from the Clinton-Gore scandals, Mr. Bush's new brand of conservatism not only eliminates any emphasis on justice for the crimes committed against the United States during the last eight years, but incredibly is intent on mimicking and continuing many of the illegal fund-raising practices of the Clinton-Gore administration.

In this regard, during his first 100 days in office, Mr. Bush's operatives -- acting through House Majority Whip Tom DeLay, House Speaker Denny Hastert, the National Republican Congressional Committee and Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson -- are now offering meetings to special interest donors to lobby top Bush-Cheney administration officials, including but not limited to Vice President Dick Cheney, in exchange for money contributions to the Republican Party. This was confirmed not only by the Associated Press, but through Judicial Watch's inquiries with the office of Tom DeLay, as well as our review of the solicitations themselves.

In addition, HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson has been reported by the New York Times to be holding meetings with Republican donors in his government office, a charge which the Bush-Cheney administration does not deny, but instead unabashedly endorses as appropriate.

These fund-raising activities closely resemble the illegal campaign finance practices of the Clinton-Gore administration, which consisted of selling Democrat contributors seats on overseas trade missions, overnight stays in the White House, rides on Air Force One, judgeships and other perks. Indeed, it has also been reported by The New York Times that the Bush-Cheney administration is even offering ambassadorships to individuals who have

donated heavily to the "Grand Old Party," the GOP.

The similarities between the fund-raising practices of the two administrations is both regrettable and ironic, for it would now appear that President Bush's mantra of "move on" was politically designed only to allow his own administration to conduct "business as usual" in the nation's capitol.

Because Judicial Watch is a non-partisan organization, it could not turn a "blind eye" to these activities by the new Bush-Cheney administration, having filed over 80 lawsuits against the Clinton-Gore administration for similar misdeeds.

It was doubly important for Judicial Watch to respond by taking legal action against the Bush-Cheney administration for these indiscretions because, as a conservative foundation, Judicial Watch recognizes that for the movement to have the moral and ethical authority to be successful, conservatives must keep their own house in order.

Having taken strong action to stop the illegal fund-raising practices of the new Bush-Cheney administration, some so-called conservatives -- whose brand of conservatism consists merely of slavish loyalty to the Republican Party rather than to the rule of law and our nation's fundamental ideals -- have suggested that Judicial Watch and I are not really conservative. However, in the words of our first truly conservative President John Adams, written just 21 days before he signed the Declaration of Independence in my birthplace of Philadelphia,

Statesmen, my dear Sir, may plan and speculate for liberty, but it is Religion and Morality alone, which can establish the Principles upon which Freedom can securely stand.

The only foundation of a free Constitution is pure Virtue, and if this cannot be inspired into our People in a greater Measure, than they have it now, they may change their Rulers and the forms of Government, but they will not obtain a lasting liberty.

How prophetic President Adams was, since 225 years later the United States has again changed its ruler but continues down a path of the unprecedented ethical decline during the Clinton-Gore years.

President Adams, who was a deeply religious man, obviously based his comments on Biblical teachings. In the Old Testament, Isaiah writes,

How the faithful city has become a whore! She that was full of justice, righteousness lodged in her -- but now murderers! Your silver has become dross, your wine is mixed with water. Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not defend the orphan, and the widow's cause does not come before them. ... And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the

faithful city (Isaiah 1:21-23, 26).

Indeed, the American people and conservatives in general must recognize that, like Jerusalem, we will only continue as a great civilization if the prostitutes and moneychangers are eliminated from our temple, in Washington, D.C.

It is not enough, as President Bush promised during the presidential campaign, to hold his right hand high and place his left hand on the Bible and swear that he will uphold the Constitution of the United States. As the proverb goes, "actions speak louder than words," and the conduct of the Bush-Cheney administration during its first 100 days with regard to political influence peddling is perhaps even more "advanced" than what we knew of the Clinton-Gore administration during the equivalent period.

What we need now is not "compassionate conservatism," but "principled conservatism" -- particularly since a respect for ethics, morality and the rule of law are the lynchpins of the conservative ideology held dear by Judicial Watch and its supporters.

To those who say that Judicial Watch and I are not conservative because we hold the Republican Party accountable to the same standards that we have held the Democratic Party under the Clinton-Gore administration, we say look in the mirror.

You, my dear friends, are the ones who are not conservative, but instead simply "yes men," slavishly trading off of and pocketing consulting fees and other riches from your masters, the Bush-Cheney administration and the Republican Party.

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