

“CONTRACT WITH AMERICA” QUIZ

BY STEPHEN R. SHALOM

1. The 1994 election has been described by some as representing a decisive shift in U.S. politics, with landslide support for the Republican “Contract with America.” Which of the following statements is true?

- A. 20 percent of all eligible voters voted for Republican candidates for the House of Representatives.
- B. 52 percent of all votes cast for the House went to Republicans.
- C. On election day, fewer than 30 percent of Americans had heard of the “Contract with America.”
- D. All of the above.

2. When Republican Ronald Reagan entered the White House in 1981, the national debt stood at \$994 billion. By the time Republican George Bush left the White House 12 years later—after the longest period of uninterrupted control of the White House by one party in forty years—what had happened to the national debt?

- A. It had declined sharply.
- B. It had declined somewhat.
- C. It had stayed about the same.
- D. It had grown to \$4,003 billion, increasing more than three times as much as in the previous 200 years of the country’s history.

3. Polls show that more than 80 percent of the American people favor a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, as called for in the “Contract with America.” Which of the following is true?

- A. When the 80 percent were asked whether they would still favor a balanced budget amendment if it meant cutting social security, three out of five answered no.
- B. When the 80 percent were asked whether they would still favor a balanced budget amendment if it meant cutting Medicare, two out of three answered no.
- C. When the 80 percent were asked whether they would still favor a balanced budget amendment if it meant cutting spending on education, seven out of ten answered no.
- D. All of the above.

4. The “Contract with America” has a section called “Job Creation and Wage Enhancement.” Which of the following approaches to “job creation” does the Contract propose?

- A. Restricting plant closings and run-away shops.

- B. Providing job training and education.
- C. Using the government as the employer of last resort.
- D. Lowering taxes on the rich and reducing environmental and other regulations.

5. The “Contract with America” proclaims its concern for “Job Creation and Wage Enhancement.” How does the Contract propose to enhance wages?

- A. By raising the minimum wage, which currently stands at \$4.25 an hour or \$8,500 a year.
- B. By enforcing the Davis-Bacon Act which requires workers on federal construction projects to be paid the prevailing local wage.
- C. By outlawing the hiring of “replacement workers” during strikes.
- D. Lowering taxes on the rich and reducing environmental and other regulations.

6. The “Contract with America,” like the Reagan-Bush administrations, believes in “trickle down” economics, claiming that the way to help the American people is by helping corporations get rich. Which of the following was a recent New York Times front-page headline:

- A. “CEOs Take Cuts In Pay to Allow Workers to Earn More”
- B. “Corps. Raising Wages and Expanding Jobs”
- C. “Wall Street Calls for Sharing Its Profits with Workers”
- D. “Why Wall St. Cheers as Economy Slips”

7. The “Contract with America” pledges that the Republicans in Congress will end the “cycle of scandal and disgrace.” Which of the following have taken place since the election?

- A. Republican fund-raising dinner in February 1995 raised \$11 million from business interests, a new record for a political event.
- B. Newt Gingrich obtained a \$4.5 million advance on royalties from a publishing house owned by Rupert Murdoch, who met with Gingrich to discuss blocking FCC action against Murdoch’s Fox television network.
- C. The 4th ranking Republican in the House scheduled a weekly series of meetings with lobbyists from some of the country’s richest special interests.
- D. All of the above.

8. The owners of Southwire, a billion dollar company based in Georgia, are major financial backers of House

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Speaker Newt Gingrich, and Gingrich has said "Southwire automatically has my attention every morning." Which of the following is also true?

- A. Southwire has been found guilty of numerous violations of safety laws and environmental regulations, including shipping 3,400 tons of toxic waste to foreign countries, falsely labeled as fertilizer.
- B. As a professor of environmental studies before he entered Congress, Newt Gingrich criticized Southwire as a polluter.
- C. Southwire's founder got his crucial break in the form of a government contract.
- D. All of the above.

9. In the "Contract with America" Republicans pledge to restore "the faith and trust of the American people in their government." One reason Americans are so cynical about their government is because of the influence of campaign contributors. Which of the following statements about campaign financing is true?

- A. Spending by special-interest Political Action Committees on Senate and House races set a new record in 1994, and spending by congressional candidates reached new levels, nearly 20 percent higher than in 1992.
- B. Newt Gingrich (who has received more than \$2.5 million in special interest PAC contributions since 1978) helped lead the fight in the House of Representatives against campaign finance reform and against legislation that would have banned gifts from lobbyists and forced lobbyists to disclose their activities.
- C. Robert Dole (who has received more than \$3 million in special interest PAC contributions since 1978) helped lead the fight in the Senate against campaign finance reform and against legislation that would have banned gifts from lobbyists and forced lobbyists to disclose their activities.
- D. All of the above.

10. After Arlington, Virginia (the site of the federal government) and Brevard County in Florida (site of the Kennedy Space Center), the suburban Congressional district which receives the largest subsidy from the federal government is represented by which member of Congress?

- A. Socialist Bernie Sanders of Vermont.
- B. Liberal Barney Frank of Massachusetts.
- C. Clinton-supporter Robert Torricelli of New Jersey.
- D. Conservative Newt Gingrich of Cobb County, Georgia.

11. The "Contract with America" claims that there is too much social spending. Which of the following is true?

- A. Total federal and state spending on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (welfare) accounts for less than 10 percent of the amount spent on the military budget.
- B. The efficacy of U.S. social spending is indicated by the fact that life expectancy of black men in central Harlem is shorter than that of men in Bangladesh.
- C. More Americans want an expansion of domestic social spending than want cuts.
- D. All of the above.

12. The "Contract with America" promises to cut taxes and eliminate wasteful spending on welfare. Which of the following benefits accounts for the smallest amount of money?

- A. Government subsidies to corporations.
- B. The deductibility of state and local taxes, including real estate taxes, from federal income taxes—a benefit for middle and upper class families.
- C. The deductibility of mortgage interest—a benefit for middle and upper class families.
- D. Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a benefit for the poor.

13. Which of the following statements about welfare is true?

- A. The teen birth rate and the teen pregnancy rate in the United States are much higher than that in other industrialized countries which have more generous welfare benefits.
- B. Since 1970, the average monthly benefit has declined 45 percent in real dollars.
- C. The percentage of all children on AFDC who are black has gone from 43 percent in 1973 to 35 percent in 1992.
- D. All of the above.

14. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, the Republican leader, claims to be a staunch defender of "family values." Which of the following is true?

- A. Gingrich visited his first wife's hospital room to discuss divorce while she recovered from cancer surgery.
- B. In 1992, the National Council of Senior Citizens rated Gingrich's career legislative score on issues of concern to seniors at 11 percent.

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C. Gingrich believes it should be permissible for employers to discriminate against his sister, who is a lesbian.

D. All of the above.

15. Under the “Contract with America,” children born to unmarried women under the age of 18 are not eligible for welfare support. Which of the following is also true?

A. Under the Contract, every child born to a family making \$195,000 a year will be supported by a \$500 tax credit.

B. The Republicans eliminated child nutrition programs without allowing a separate vote or debate on the issue.

C. When Newt Gingrich separated from his first wife, friends had to raise money to support her and their children until a judge ordered Gingrich to pay adequate support.

D. All of the above.

16. The “Contract with America” calls for increasing the U.S. military budget. Which of the following statements is true?

A. The U.S. spends as much on the military as the rest of the world combined.

B. The F-22 fighter jet (despite being called unneeded by the General Accounting Office) will cost \$72 billion and be built by Lockheed, which employs many of Newt Gingrich’s constituents and is a major campaign contributor to Gingrich.

C. Tests on the Star Wars missile defense system—which has cost \$35 billion so far and which the Republicans want to start funding again—were falsified by the military.

D. All of the above.

17. The “Contract with America” calls for increasing the capacity of prisons. Which of the following is true:

A. One and a half million Americans are serving in federal, state, or local prisons and jails.

B. The U.S. has more prisoners per capita than any country except Russia.

C. One in five federal prisoners are low-level drug criminals, with no record of violence and no involvement with major drug organizations.

D. All of the above.

18. The Republican leadership says that their bill allowing prosecutors to use evidence illegally obtained without a search warrant poses no threat to our Fourth Amendment rights. On February 7, 1995, Rep. Mel Watt of the Congressional Black Caucus proposed adding to

the bill the exact language of the Fourth Amendment. What happened to Rep. Watt’s proposal?

A. It was endorsed by Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, who hurried back from hunting giraffes to shepherd the revised bill through the House.

B. It was immediately co-sponsored by Majority Leader Dick Armey, who, however, inadvertently used a racial epithet in place of Watt’s name.

C. It was adopted by acclamation.

D. It was defeated by a vote of 303-121.

19. The “Contract with America” calls for expanded use of the death penalty. Which of the following is true?

A. In the past five years, the only countries to have executed someone for a crime committed when a juvenile were Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the United States.

B. Texas, the state that has executed more people than any other in the years since 1977, has the third highest murder rate in the country.

C. Louisiana, the state with the highest murder rate, has executed more people per capita since 1977 than any other state.

D. All of the above.

20. Which of the following quotations comes from Newt Gingrich?

A. “Congressmen are not bribed anymore. They simply have a lot of friends who are willing to help them out whenever they find it necessary.”

B. “The idea that a congressman would be tainted by accepting money from private industry or private sources is essentially a socialist argument.”

C. “Suddenly the pouting sex kitten gave way to Diana the Huntress. She rolled onto him and somehow was sitting athwart his chest, her knees pinning his shoulders. ‘Tell me, or I will make you do terrible things,’ she hissed.”

D. All of the above.

Bonus Question: The “Contract with America” calls for cutting social programs, increasing the military budget, and expanding the use of the death penalty. Which of the following has been a policy of the Clinton administration?

A. Cutting social programs.

B. Increasing the military budget.

C. Expanding the use of the death penalty.

D. All of the above.

ANSWERS & SOURCES

1. D. 38.7 percent of eligible voters voted (Richard L. Berke, "The 1994 Election: The Voters; Religious-Right Candidates Gain As Republican Turnout Rises, *New York Times* (NYT), 12 Nov. 1994, p. 1:10), and of these 52 percent voted for Republicans (NYT, 10 Nov. 1994, p. B4), meaning that 20 percent of eligible voters voted Republican. C: Maureen Dowd, "Americans Like GOP Agenda But Split on How to Reach Goals," NYT, 15 Dec. 1994, p. A24.
2. D. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.: 1993*, p. 328.
3. D. *New York Times*/CBS News Poll, *Republican Contract Issues Poll*, Dec. 6-9, 1994, unpublished.
4. D.
5. D. The Republicans oppose legislation raising the minimum wage or banning use of replacement workers, and they want to repeal Davis-Bacon. Jerry Gray, "Panel Vote is Set on Repeal of a Federal Wage Act," NYT, 29 Mar. 1995, p. A19.
6. D. 25 Feb. 1995 NYT, p. 1.
7. D. A: Ken Silverstein, "Newt for Sale," *Progressive*, Apr. 1995, p. 30. B: Katharine Q. Seelye, "Murdoch, Joined by Lobbyist, Talked of Regulatory Problem at Meeting with Gingrich," NYT, 15 Jan. 1995, p. 1:18 (after criticism even from leading Republicans, Gingrich announced that he would forego the advance). C: Jeffrey H. Birnbaum, "The Thursday Regulars," *Time*, 27 Mar. 1995, p. 30.
8. D. See Jeff Gerth and Stephen Labaton, "The Local Forces That Helped Shape Gingrich as a Foe of Regulation," NYT, 12 Feb. 1995, p. 1:22.
9. D. Material from *Common Cause*, Mar. 1995.
10. D. Peter Applehome, "A Suburban Eden Where the Right Rules," NYT, 1 Aug. 1994, p. A1.
11. D. A: AFDC spending from NYT, 23 Mar. 1995, p. A23. B: C. McCord and H. P. Freeman, "Excess Mortality in Harlem," *New England Journal of Medicine*, vol. 322, 18 Jan. 1990. C: Richard Morin, "What the Public Really Wants," *Washington Post National Weekly Edition*, 9-15 Jan. 1995, p. 37.
12. D. A: Estimates vary with partisan affiliation. The free-market Cato Institute puts the figure at \$86 billion; the Democratic Leadership Council's Progressive Policy Institute estimates \$53 billion (Robert D. Hershey, Jr., "A Hard Look at Corporate Welfare," NYT, 7 Mar. 1995, pp. D1-D2). Both figures are egregious understatements, ignoring, for example, the military budget which is essentially a corporate subsidy. B: Christopher Howard, "The Hidden Side of the American Welfare State," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 108, no. 3, 1993, pp. 415, 417; Michael Wines, "Taxpayers Are Angry. They're Expensive, Too," NYT, 20 Nov. 1994, p. IV:5. The mortgage deduction cost the government \$49 billion in 1992. C: The state and local tax deduction was worth \$36 billion in 1992 (Wines, *op. cit.*). D: State and federal AFDC spending was \$25.2 billion in 1993 (NYT, 23 Mar. 1995, p. A23).
13. D. A: Alan Gutmacher Institute, *Sex and America's Teenagers* (New York: June 1994). B: NYT, 23 Mar. 1995, p. A23. C: *ibid.*
14. D. A: Katharine Q. Seelye, "Gingrich's Life: the Complications and Ideals," NYT, 24 Nov. 1994, p. A1; David Osborne, "Newt Gingrich: shining knight of the post-Reagan Right," *Mother Jones*, Nov. 1984 (also documenting Gingrich's extramarital affairs, and dumping of his first wife for being, in the words of a former aide, too "frumpy" for a hot-shot congressman). B: From data compiled by NewtWatch. C: Jerry Gray, "Gingrich Criticized for Opposing Job Protection for Homosexuals," NYT, 8 Mar. 1995, p. A19.
15. D. A: The "American Dream Restoration Act" of the "Contract with America" provides for a \$500 tax credit per child for families with incomes up to \$200,000. B: Robert Pear, "Debate in House on Welfare Bill Splits GOP Bloc," NYT, 23 Mar. 1995, p. A23. C: Same sources as 14A above.
16. D. A: Robert L. Borosage, "The Hungry Beast Growls," *Nation*, 3 Oct. 1994, p. 337. B: William D. Hartung, "The Speaker from Lockheed?" *Nation*, 30 Jan. 1995, p. 124. C: Tim Weiner, "Inquiry Finds 'Star Wars' Tried Plan to Exaggerate Test Results," NYT, 23 July 1994, p. 1:1.
17. D. A: Steven A. Holmes, "Ranks of Inmates Reach One Million in a 2-Decade Rise," NYT, 28 Oct. 1994, p. A1 (on June 30, 1994 there were 1,012,851 people in federal and state prisons; in 1992, the last time they were counted, there were 445,000 in local jails); B: *ibid.* C: Associated Press, "21 percent of U.S. Inmates Are Called Nonviolent," NYT, 5 Feb. 1994, p. 9.
18. D. *Nation*, 13 Mar. 1995, p. 332.
19. D. A: Amnesty International, *Report 1994*, (New York: 1994), p. 23. B and C: executions from James Stephan, "Capital Punishment 1993," *Bulletin* (U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics), Dec. 1994, p. 11; murder rates from U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the U.S.: 1994*, p. 199; Texas is tied for 3rd place with California.
20. D. A: Quoted in David Beers, "The Cases Against Gingrich," *Mother Jones*, Oct. 1989, from Gingrich's 1974 Congressional campaign. B: Quoted in David Beers, "The Real Ethics Debate," *Mother Jones*, Oct. 1989. C: From Gingrich's forthcoming novel, quoted in Maureen Dowd, "On Washington; Newt's Potboiler," NYT Magazine, 4 Dec. 1994, p. 44.

Bonus Question. D

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