

## Ronald Reagan And the Conservative Revolution

- Born in 1911 in Illinois
- Began a film career in 1937
- Married and divorced actress Jane Wyman in 1940s
- Married Nancy Davis in 1952
- Voted for Democrat FDR in 1932
- Became active in actor's union
- Became a Republican after WWII
- Elected governor of California in 1966
- Ran for president in 1980 against Jimmy Carter
- Appealed to growing conservative movement
- This "New Right" wanted smaller government, less social programs
- Since the Depression the size of government had grown
- FDR's New Deal
- Ike's "Modern Republicanism"
- LBJ's Great Society
- Government grew under Nixon, too
- Some of New Right stressed traditional Christian values in reaction to:
  - Rock lyrics more explicit
  - Rise in drug use
  - Sexual revolution
  - *Roe v. Wade* 1973
  - Gay and lesbian rights
  - Women's rights
  - Affirmative action
- In campaign stressed 3 policies
  - Cutting taxes
  - Getting rid of unnecessary gov. programs
  - Increase US defense
- Beat Carter in a landslide in 1980
- Economy
  - Main goal was to create growth of businesses
  - His plan was based on supply-side economics; called "Reaganomics"
  - If businesses have more money due to tax cuts, they will hire people to produce more
  - Congress passed biggest tax cuts in history
  - Benefited wealthy Americans most

Believed the extra money would “trickle down” to others  
Government

Favored deregulation—get rid of government regulations on business

Felt regulations hurt business, which meant fewer jobs and higher prices

Cut many social programs created by LBJ

Foreign Policy

Wanted to defend US against USSR—an “evil empire”

Spent huge amounts building the military

Developed new weapons, including Strategic Defense Initiative, or “Star Wars”  
program

First Term Outcomes

During first 2 years in office US faced worst recession since Depression

Economy began to improve in 1983

But...tax cuts and defense spending led to deficit spending=budget deficits and  
massive debt

Despite troubles, Americans loved Ronnie

Destroyed Walter Mondale in election of 1984

Some key issues from Reagan’s second term...

Stressed patriotism

Unequal wealth—biggest gap between rich and poor ever

Resisted civil rights for minorities, women, gays

Conservative judges

Failure of savings and loan banks

Iran-contra scandal

Better relationship with USSR

Stock market crash of 1987