President Ronald Reagan: The Rise of the New Conservative Right

The Old Republican Right
- In 1964, Republican Barry Goldwater ran on the notion that the government should have less control over the states, businesses, and individuals. He urged for the government to reduce taxes. Yet, he lost to Democrat Lyndon Baines Johnson.
- Government social programs to assist the poor, elderly, and others, such as Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare, made many people frustrated because the programs cost a massive amount of tax payer money.

Social Concerns of the New Republican Right
- While Republicans before 1980 championed a smaller government to reduce taxes, the agenda of the Republicans expanded to include other issues by 1980.
- Many of these concerns came from Evangelical Christians. The Supreme Court outlawed staff led prayers in schools in 1962, abortion was federally legalized due to Roe vs. Wade in 1973, and the sexual ethics of the USA had shifted radically during the 1960s. Conservatives wanted to reverse the momentum of these movements.

The Religious Wing of the New Right
- An Evangelical pastor from Virginia, Jerry Falwell, urged fellow Fundamentalist Christians, who interpreted the Bible rigidly, to unite and support the Republican Party. He started a group called The Moral Majority.
- Falwell believed that the Republican Party could challenge abortion, return prayer to schools, and champion the ethics of the Religious Right in the USA.
Other Issues of the New Right
- The New Right stood against the Equal Rights Amendment and Affirmative Action. They claimed these endeavors did not recognize traditional gender roles and practiced reverse discrimination.
- The Equal Rights Amendment was written to ensure gender discrimination would not occur. The Religious Right asserted that it would have effects beyond that goal, such as removing gender distinction for public restrooms.

The Election of 1980
- In the Election of 1980, the Republican, Ronald Reagan, challenged the incumbent Democrat, Jimmy Carter.
- The New Religious Right heavily backed Ronald Reagan. Ironically, Jimmy Carter stressed that he was a born again Evangelical Christian. Yet, the Religious Right leaders, like Jerry Falwell, believed Reagan was more likely to implement their goals.
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- Government social programs to assist the poor, elderly, and others, such as Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare, made many people frustrated because the programs cost a massive amount of tax payer money.
- Therefore, the old Republican model was to reduce funding for government programs and allow people to keep more of their income by reducing taxes and decreasing funding for social and other programs.

Social Concerns of the New Republican Right
- While Republicans before 1980 championed a smaller government to reduce taxes, the agenda of the Republicans expanded to include other issues by 1980.
- Republicans still wanted lower taxes. Yet, many were concerned with the social changes that occurred in the Mid-20th Century.
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- Falwell believed that the Republican Party could challenge abortion, return prayer to schools, and champion the ethics of the Religious Right in the USA.
- Falwell had massive exposure due to televising his sermons nationwide. The New Religious Right supported low taxes. Yet, they longed to change many social patterns that had come about in the USA as well.
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- Affirmative Action meant that businesses and government entities had to hire a quota of minorities. The New Right opposed this as discrimination against some who were qualified for jobs, but not a member of the group the business needed a quota for due to the government rules.

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- Under Jimmy Carter, the economy was struggling and the Iran Hostage Crisis was still going on. These factors damaged his political popularity and Ronald Reagan won the Election of 1980.