

U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee
Larry E. Craig, Chairman Jade West, Staff Director

John Ashcroft — Integrity, Experience, and Justice For All

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“I’m going to vote for him. ... [H]e was a legislator. His opinions at that time were the opinions of someone who writes the laws. He is now going to be an officer who enforces the laws. He will put his hand on the Bible, he will swear to uphold the law, that he will enforce the law. He has said so, and I take him at his word.

“I’m a legislator. I can have different opinions, but if I were thrust in the position of being attorney general and I took that oath, I could forget my opinions. God gave man a will. That’s what Milton was writing about in ‘Paradise Lost.’ He has the will to put his opinions aside and to uphold his oath to enforce that law.

“This is not a time for filibuster. This is a time for us to work together. The president has nominated this man. He has had hearings. He’s had an opportunity to explain his positions. He has [said] time and time again that his opinion was one thing when he enacted the laws but he is swearing an oath to enforce them now. There are two different things, two different offices. And I believe Ashcroft means what he says.”

(West Virginia Democrat Senator Robert Byrd, Larry King Live, 1/18/01)

“Former Sen. John Ashcroft is a courageous choice for attorney general. He is principled and not afraid to take unpopular stands. That can be a plus, given that his job will be to uphold the law, even if it means crossing his boss. Despite criticism of Mr. Ashcroft, there is simply no evidence he will not faithfully uphold the law.”

(The Detroit News, Editorial, 1/7/01)

“In fact, not only did Senator Ashcroft oppose the nominee on philosophical grounds, Judge [Ronnie] White voted to overturn several capital convictions, his public record on civil rights should halt such outrageous implications. As attorney general of Missouri, Mr. Ashcroft was a vigorous enforcer of the state’s anti-discrimination laws. As governor, he appointed innumerable African-Americans to high office, including the first black justice on the state supreme court. And during his time in the U.S. Senate, Mr. Ashcroft voted to confirm 26 of the 28 black appointments to the federal bench during the Clinton administration. Opposing two out of 28 black judicial appointees is hardly evidence of racial bias.

“Two of Justice Clarence Thomas’s most vociferous critics when he was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court were Senators Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts and Patrick Leahy of Vermont, both of whom voted against his nomination.

“If John Ashcroft is to be branded a racist for his principled opposition to Ronnie White, may we assume that Edward Kennedy and Patrick Leahy opposed Clarence Thomas because he was black?”
(The Providence Journal-Bulletin, Editorial, 1/14/01)

“Ashcroft is certainly conservative, and he is certainly religious. But 88 percent of his fellow citizens report that religion is important or very important in their lives, a figure that has barely varied over the past 20 years. Seventy percent or more believe the nation would be better off if it were more religious, and 79 percent favor prayer or at least a moment of silence in the public schools. So who’s out of the mainstream on this?”

“Ashcroft strongly opposes abortion on moral grounds; 55 percent of the people say it is ‘morally wrong most of the time.’ The nominee would like to see sharp restrictions on when an abortion would be legal; only 28 percent of Americans think it should be legal under any circumstances. He absolutely opposes partial-birth abortion; so do 66 percent of Americans. Who are the extremists on this issue? [...]

“Actually, none of these left-wing, ideological attacks on Ashcroft's beliefs has much real meaning, because he has already demonstrated, as attorney general of Missouri, that he is perfectly capable of following the law as it is, rather than as he might wish it were. [...]

“Maybe it is difficult for his liberal opponents to believe that he could so carefully separate his personal views from his task as chief enforcer of the nation's laws, because liberals have so much trouble doing that themselves. But we believe he can and will do so, and that the American ‘mainstream’ which was invoked so frequently at his hearings will be well served, and satisfied with the job he will do.”
(The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, Editorial, 1/18/01)

“Extremists committed to tearing Mr. Ashcroft down should pause to remember the Senate’s role in reviewing the president’s choice. Sen. Joseph Biden, now a leading Democratic opponent of his former Senate colleague, John Ashcroft, once observed that ‘the advise and consent responsibility of the Senate does not permit us to deprive the president of the United States from being able to appoint that person or persons who have a particular point of view unless it can be shown that their temperament does not fit the job, that they are morally incapable, or unqualified for the job or that they have committed crimes of moral turpitude.’ No one believes this of Mr. Ashcroft. In 1993, Republicans overwhelmingly supported Mr. Clinton's choice for attorney general, Janet Reno, despite her opposition to the death penalty.

“Mr. Biden should remember his own words. He should call off the special interest, partisan attack dogs. Now. The president should have his choice for an attorney general who is pre-eminently qualified and who will enforce all laws evenhandedly.

“John Ashcroft will clean up the Justice Department after eight years of scandal. He will recommend judges who interpret, not rewrite the law. Under John Ashcroft, we will have a Justice Department which does not look away, but looks to put criminals away. Under John Ashcroft, we will have a Justice Department which seeks cooperation with state and local

officials rather than usurpation of state and local authority. Under John Ashcroft, we will have an attorney general who will adhere to the rule of law faithfully and enforces the rule of law fearlessly.”

(Charlie Condon, The Washington Times, 1/18/01)

RPC Staff Contact: Lauren DeBellis - 4-2429