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Bush Makes Pitch for Permanent Tax Cuts



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By JENNIFER LOVEN, Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON - President Bush ([news](#) - [web sites](#)) on Thursday pressed his election-year complaints against "tax raisers and spenders in Washington," arguing that failure to make administration-backed tax cuts permanent would raise taxpayers' bills by billions.



AP Photo

"When you hear people say, 'Oh, let's just let the tax cuts expire,' it's a tax increase," Bush said in an event at the White House to promote his economic record. "It's a code word for, 'I'm raising your taxes,' to increase the amount of money we have to spend here in Washington on new programs, on programs that meet a particular political desire of the appropriators."

Though Bush did not mention them, all the Democratic presidential candidates advocate repealing at least some of the reductions passed during Bush's presidency.

All the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts are to vanish by 2011.

Expiring at the end of this year are some of the most popular: most of the increase in the child tax credit to \$1,000, an expansion of the bottom 10 percent tax bracket that lowered taxes for virtually every worker, and some changes lessening the marriage penalty, which causes some couples to pay more than they would as two single individuals.

Bush promoted the benefits of the cuts passed over the past three years, saying they will give Americans a total of \$50 billion in higher refunds and lower tax payments once taxes are filed for 2003.

The president said allowing the expanded bracket, marriage penalty relief and higher child tax credit to disappear will cost people \$28 billion in 2005. That comes to an average of \$915 more for a family of four earning \$40,000, the president said.

"I'm ready to continue to lead on tax relief," he said of Congress. "They need to follow."

Bush promoted his economic stewardship at time when he has been under fire over the politically sensitive issue of jobs.

On Wednesday, the White House backed away from a prediction made only nine days earlier that the economy would add 2.6 million new jobs this year. Last week, Bush was forced to try to calm criticism over the assertion by a top economic aide that "outsourcing" American jobs overseas was good for the U.S. economy in the long run.

Democrats have relentlessly attacked Bush on the 2.2 million jobs lost during his presidency.

The decade-long cost of extending the 2001 and 2003 individual tax cuts is estimated at \$1 trillion. But even in the face of deficits estimated to reach a record \$521 billion this year, Bush said "there's plenty of money in Washington" to pay for making the cuts permanent.

As he spoke, five taxpayers who had met with the president before the event stood behind him.

"See, there's a human dimension to all the talk about numbers," Bush said as he recited facts about each. "And it's important for the people here in Washington to think about the people whose lives will be affected if they don't act."

The setup was a departure from his most recent economic events, in which the White House orchestrates public "conversations" for citizens to tell personal stories that compliment the president's policy agenda.



Reuters

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Sometimes, though, they are too slow. For instance, while at a Tampa, Fla., window and door manufacturer on Monday, the president jumped in to point out that one employee, Noemi Gonzalez, would pay \$1,200 more next year in taxes if the cuts are not made permanent. "And that's not right," he said, before stopping himself and turning the floor back to Gonzalez. "And she said — I'm putting words in your mouth."

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