

# Free argumentative essay on the progressive presidents

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Progressivism is a reform movement that arose in the late 19th century and ran through the first decades of the early 20th century. Proponents of progressivism sought to address social, political and economic reforms. This was necessitated by the need to address the changes brought upon by industrial revolution and capitalism. There was also the need to prohibit child labor and create better conditions at home and at work. Among the first proponents of the progressive movement were Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson (frontrunners of the 1912 US presidential election). Both men were fortunate enough to serve as the presidents of United States of America, and implement their vision for the country. Although Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson were progressives, both presidents' policies while in office differed from the rhetoric on the campaign trail, thus exposing the complex nature of progressivism.

During the late 19th century, progressives, social reformers and some leading intellectuals in United States agreed that there was need to overhaul the old system and make the constitution an instrument of social change. Woodrow Wilson was specific on this during his quest for the presidency, and he wrote, " All that progressives ask is to interpret the constitution and ask for recognition of the fact that a nation is a living thing and not a machine." Woodrow Wilson rode on the wave of reform agenda, and got elected as the 28th president of United States of America. During his inaugural address, President Wilson outlined the vision of his reformist agenda with a promise to overhaul the taxation system, modernize the banking system, and renovate agricultural and industrial systems for the general welfare of all the people in the society. However, to the great disappointment of many progressives,

President Wilson's policies while in office turned out to be controversial, with many people questioning the extent of his progressivism.

The president's policies did not reform social injustices. For example, the president did not ratify the suffrage movement. He also regarded enfranchisement as a morally objectionable behaviour. Surprisingly, President Wilson appointed several racists from the southern states to his cabinet, which complicated efforts to fight for black suffrage. President Wilson also failed to make good his plans to cut down on government corruption. Instead, the president encouraged government corruption and sycophancy by rewarding his loyalists, and punishing his opponents. By disregarding some of the promises made on the campaign trail, President Wilson was following in the footsteps of another progressive: President Theodore Roosevelt.

President Theodore Roosevelt was the 26th president of United States of America. Roosevelt rode to the presidency on the promise to provide a square deal for the Americans and regulate capitalism. President Roosevelt saw the problem of capitalism as the big businesses, which he promised to deal with. In one of his penning, the president wrote "this means that our government must be freed from the control of special interests" Roosevelt voiced the concern that the cotton industry had threatened the country's political integrity earlier during the Civil War, and such a scenario should not be let to happen again. However, in a surprising turn of events, the policies President Roosevelt implemented strengthened monopolies, and the power of business.

For instance, the president's Anti-Trust Law which was received with mixed

reactions, did not bust as many trusts as President Taft later did. The Anti-Trust Law only went for the high-profile cases. It was also during President Roosevelt's tenure as the president that the steel industry became a monopoly, serving the interests of a few billionaires. What many thought would be a reform-minded presidency turned out to be a farce. However, the experiences of President Roosevelt and President Wilson while in office depict the complex nature of progressivism.

Progressives agreed on the role of government in implementing the reform agenda, but had varying views on how to assess the problems and resolve them. For example, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson differed on the priorities for the US federal government, capitalism and the best means to control big businesses. Both presidents also managed to take advantage of the electorate's vulnerability by promising to bring reform change changes which they did not deliver on. However, despite criticisms to their policies, President Roosevelt and President Wilson managed to attain a considerable degree of success.

President Roosevelt, for instance, managed to restore public's confidence in using the government to bring powerful people in the country to account.

The same thing happened to President Wilson, who despite criticisms to his legacy in office also managed to achieve some degree of success. For

example, Wilson managed to push through his agenda on reducing taxes.

The president convened congress and managed to convince the legislators to pass the bill on reducing tariffs immediately. Under his tenure, President

Wilson also managed to set the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC

has been operational for many years, and helped to regulate big businesses.

However, the progressive era has receded, and new challenges requiring a different approach have come up.

Altogether, progressivism, a philosophical concept that arose in the late 19th century to advance reforms in the United States of America, managed to produce a new dimension in the political arena, which the leftists (liberals) and the rightists (conservatives) had failed to consider. It also gave politicians a new platform to deceive the public with promises which they could not deliver once elected into office.

## **References**

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