

## Tom Ridge

### RIDGE RAISED GAS TAXES

**Ridge Proposed 6.5 Cent Increase in Gas Tax, As Gas Prices Were Rising.** “Last week, legislative leaders said Ridge's proposal to raise the gas tax by 6.5 cents would not be considered anytime soon. The proposal, which came in an election year for House and many Senate members, appeared dead on arrival. It did not help that the administration seemed to hold some road projects hostage when it announced that PennDOT could not afford \$ 2.2 billion in planned highway improvements without increased revenues. But the gas tax also fell victim to bad timing. Nationally, gas prices are rising, angering consumers and prompting Republican presidential nominee Bob Dole, whom Ridge supports, to call for a reduction in the federal gas tax.” [[Morning Call](#), 5/5/95]

**In 1996, Ridge Tried Again to Raise Gas Tax.** In 1996, Gov. Ridge unsuccessfully proposed a \$12 increase in automobile registration and title fees and an oil tax increase that would have meant an additional 3.5 cents per gallon at the gas pump. [[Philadelphia Inquirer](#), 2/21/97; 3/12/96]

**Ridge Pushed Through a Gas Tax Increase in 1997.** Ridge and his Republican-controlled state legislature pushed through a 3.5 cent per gallon gas tax increase and a 50% hike in vehicle registration fees to raise \$404 million a year for highway repair in 1997. The tax increase also went towards a \$150 million mass transit subsidy. [[Philadelphia Inquirer](#), 4/18/97; 4/17/97; 4/14/97]

### RIDGE MISMANAGED HOMELAND SECURITY

**Ridge’s Tenure Saw Variety of Failures.** “DHS came under criticism repeatedly during Ridge's tenure. Groups ranging from the Government Accountability Office to independent homeland security analysts, privacy advocates and lawmakers found fault with the department and Ridge's leadership of it. He has had to defend the department's work to integrate its own systems, merge terrorist watch lists, create an entry-exit system for the nation's borders, and craft systems for pinpointing risky passengers and cargo.” [[Washington Technology](#), 12/13/04]

**DHS Fractured and Poorly Managed Under Ridge.** “Homeland Security is fractured into warring fiefdoms – a competition that's hindering internal intelligence-sharing, between, the Customs and Border Security agency and its Immigration and Customs Enforcement counterpart, for example. And FEMA often freelances without telling top department management what it's up to. The department hasn't even been able to establish an integrated network of field representatives, because each undersecretary already has representatives out there and doesn't want to give them up. ... Staff turnover has been debilitating. The deputy secretary left after less than a year. The chief financial officer quit. Since November, the office responsible for the National Capitol Region has had no leader. The top

intelligence officer at the Transportation Security Administration left early this year.” ” [National Journal, 5/1/04]

**Ridge Criticized for Not Handling Terrorist Concerns Well.** “But while the foreign policy team has shined in dealing with terrorist threats abroad, Bush's domestic advisers have been less successful dealing with such threats at home. ... And the president's newly appointed director of homeland security, Tom Ridge, has been criticized for not being forceful enough in dealing with local concerns about potential terrorist attacks.” [Houston Chronicle, 12/28/04]

**Ridge Ignored Pre-Katrina Warning About FEMA Weaknesses.** “On Sept. 15, 2003, one of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge's deputies lobbed a bureaucratic hand grenade across his desk. In a seven-page memo, the new department's undersecretary for emergency preparedness and response told Ridge that his organizational plan would cripple America's ability to respond to disasters. The memo, like so many that flew around Washington during the largest government reshuffling in decades, involved turf: Ridge had decided to move some of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's preparedness functions to an office less than one-fifteenth its size. The writer warned that the shift would make a mockery of FEMA's new motto, ‘A Nation Prepared,’ and would ‘fundamentally sever FEMA from its core functions,’ ‘shatter agency morale,’ and ‘break longstanding, effective and tested relationships with states and first responder stakeholders.’ The inevitable result, he wrote, would be ‘an ineffective and uncoordinated response’ to a terrorist attack or a natural disaster. The author was Michael D. Brown, who was FEMA's director as well as a Department of Homeland Security undersecretary. Two years later, Brown would lose both titles after Hurricane Katrina, when his prophecies of doom came true.” [Washington Post, 12/23/05]

#### **Ridge Left DHS With “Security Gaps in Every Sector.”**

“ZAHN [Paula, CNN correspondent]: What is your chief concern about our continuing vulnerability here in America as a terrorist target?

ERVIN [Clark, former Inspector General for DHS]: Well, my chief concern is that security gaps remain in every sector, in terms of aviation security, in port security, in terms of mass transit security. ...

ZAHN (voice-over): Besides aviation security, another investigation revealed huge gaps in screening for nuclear materials at U.S. ports. And then there was the money. One of Ervin's investigations concluded there was \$49 million in excessive profit paid to the Boeing company by the Transportation Security Administration for the installation and maintenance of equipment that detects explosives. And his investigation into immigration and customs enforcement concluded the agency couldn't keep track of its money, spending at least \$150 million more than it had, which he says didn't leave the agency with enough money to perform its counterterrorism role.

ERVIN: To be fair, there was outrage on the part of the relevant congressional committees that, even after pointing out weaknesses and problems and shortcomings like this, we continued to find a pattern of spending abuses and a pattern of inattention on the department's part to correcting these kinds of problems.

ZAHN (on camera): Whose fault is that?

ERVIN: Well, it's a combination of things. First of all, and most importantly, I think it's a failure of leadership in management attention. ... the department as a whole, the whole leadership of the department, starting with the secretary, I think that the department did not live up to its promise. And I think we have a ways to go, a considerable distance to go before we're as safe as we need to be in this post-9/11 environment with a determined enemy like the one that we have." [CNN, 1/11/05]

**"Sec. Duct Tape" -- Ridge Security Solutions Met With Ridicule.** "Mr. Ridge was best known as the public face for the nation's color-coded terror alerts, warning for months that another terrorist attack was likely. The government raised the alert to "high," or orange, status six times on his watch, even as domestic security officials sometimes squabbled with the Justice Department about what they felt were overly dire warnings from Attorney General John Ashcroft. His role in issuing the warnings raised the profile of Mr. Ridge -- a confidant of President Bush and former Pennsylvania governor -- but it also brought skepticism and ridicule at times. When his department suggested in 2003 that Americans buy emergency items like duct tape to guard against chemical attacks, Mr. Ridge became fodder for late-night comedians and was roasted at Washington's annual Gridiron dinner by a performer who wrapped himself in plastic before an audience that included Mr. Bush." [New York Times, 12/1/04]

**Ridge Left DHS With Large Security Deficiencies.** "Current and former Bush administration officials, as well as homeland security experts, were divided yesterday in assessing the department's first 20 months. ... a former White House official, who requested anonymity, said, 'There's not a lot of accountability there [at the department] now because people can hide behind the fact that the kinks haven't been worked out. . . . With the new secretary, people will be responsible for things, which is what the president wants.'... blue-ribbon panels and internal government studies have pointed to a number of areas in which the department has made only halting progress. They include not creating gaps in securing U.S. ports against attack, especially from a nuclear weapon, and slowness in addressing the need to monitor cargo flown on commercial aircraft." [Houston Chronicle, 12/28/01]

**Bush Insider Said DHS "Sliding Backwards" Under Ridge.** "[T]he rate of progress has been declining ever since the department [of Homeland Security] opened for business on March 1, 2003. One Bush administration veteran says the White House's announcement of the new department marked the start of an 'era of great promise,' but added that an 'era of retrenchment' began as soon as the department actually came into existence. ... critics say the department's bureaucracy is already calcifying, making real change even more difficult. 'The department is sliding' backward, contends one administration insider. 'What will happen is, if there's a huge [terrorist] incident, they'll find the department does not have the authority to accomplish the mission they had assigned to it. That'll be the [subject of the] next 9/11 commission.'" [National Journal, 5/1/04]

#### RIDGE USED HOMELAND SECURITY FOR PARTISAN PURPOSES

**Ridge Raised Terror Alert Level While Bush Faced Pressure To Enact 9-11 Commission Reforms.** On August 1<sup>st</sup>, Ridge announced he was raising the terror alert level to orange for the financial services sectors in New York City, Washington and Newark, citing intelligence that al Qaeda was plotting to blow up specific buildings with car or truck bombs. [Washington Post, 8/2/04]

**Republicans “Privately Questioned Ridge’s Timing.”** “...Doubts were raised ... even [by] some senior Republicans who privately questioned Ridge’s timing. The announcement came three days after the close of the Democratic National Convention, which helped increase Kerry’s terrorism-fighting poll ratings and less than two weeks after a scathing report by the Sept. 11 Commission.” [AP, 8/3/04]

**Voters “Smell Politics Behind the Warning.”** “One top GOP operative, who works closely with Bush’s political team, said the White House appeared to overplay its hand, and voters may smell politics behind the warning.” [AP, 8/3/04]

**At Terror Press Conference Ridge Was Cheerleading for Bush.** “...We are better protected than we ever have been before.,, But we must understand that the kind of information available to us today is the result of the president’s leadership in the war against terror, the reports that have led to this alert are the result of offensive intelligence and military operations overseas, as well as strong partnerships with our allies around the world, such as Pakistan.” [Ridge Remarks, 8/1/04]

**Sunday Capture of Al Qaeda Operative Announced On Friday, Immediately Following DNC Convention.** U.S. officials announced on Friday, July 30, just as the Democrats were wrapping up their convention, that they had captured Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, an Al Qaeda operative “sought by the United States as a suspect in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.” Though Ghailani had been captured the previous Sunday and had been immediately identified, U.S. authorities had waited to make the announcement until after the Democratic National Convention. [Wash Post, 7/30/04]

**Ridge Held Domestic Security Meeting with Jeb Bush in Florida.** Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge visited Orlando, Florida in February for a meeting with Governor Jeb Bush and Florida mayors about domestic security issues. Ridge’s spokesperson, Gordon Johndroe, explained Ridge was “[getting] on the road more,” but it was unclear whether Ridge planned to hold similar meetings with other governors. [Orlando Sentinel, 2/7/02]

**Ridge Accompanied Bush to IA for Ganske Event.** Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge accompanied President Bush to Des Moines, Iowa in June for a speech on creation of the Department of Homeland Security. Representative Greg Ganske (R-IA), challenger to Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), accompanied President Bush and Director Ridge to the World Pork Expo for the speech. [Orlando Sentinel, 6/8/02]

**Ridge, Whitman Accompanied Bush on “Symbolic” Tour of Kansas City Water Works.** Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge and EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman visited Kansas City, Missouri with President Bush in June. Bush was in Kansas City for a speech at Oak Park High School and tour of Kansas City Water Works described as a “symbolic gesture” during the day. That night, Bush attended a fund-raiser for Jim Talent, who is challenging Senator Jean Carnahan (D-MO) for her Senate seat. The fund-raiser raised \$500,000. [Springfield News-Leader, 6/12/02]

**Ridge Visited Mt. Rushmore with Bush for Event with Janklow, Thune.** President Bush visited Mt. Rushmore National Memorial in August to deliver a speech about homeland security. Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge, Governor Bill Janklow, and Representative John Thune, who is running against Senator Tim Johnson (D-SD) to represent South Dakota in the Senate, joined President Bush. [Associated Press State & Local Wire, 8/15/02]