

# Saving our Country in Seven Easy Steps



During his recent State of the Union address, President Bush cut short his numerous visionary policy proposals and awkward grammatical constructions to strike a more personal note. He described a letter sent by a ten-year-old girl named Ashley Pearson, who asked the President what she could do “to save our country.” Mr. Bush responded, “Study hard in school, listen to your mom or dad, help someone in need, and when you and your friends see a man or woman in uniform, say, ‘thank you.’” These were surely stirring words for the millions of pre-teens who watch the State of the Union each year to gain frank and practical advice from the Commander-in-Chief. I only wish that President Clinton had offered similar guidance to my own youthful generation during his State of the Union addresses. Would a similar appeal have altered the path I irrevocably embarked upon that fateful day in 5<sup>th</sup> grade when the cool kids offered me some spray paint to huff? Perhaps so.

And yet I feel that the President’s advice to young Ashley somehow missed the mark. After all, in today’s world—fraught as it is with terrorism, war, and weapons of mass destruction-related program activities—can such simple deeds as studying hard and listening to your parents actually effect real change in America? After weeks of deeply personal rumination, I’ve developed the following step-by-step instructions that, if followed, will put anyone in the position to help “save our country.” And Ashley, if you’re reading this—and something deep inside of me tells me that you are—this one’s for you.

**Step 1: Be the son of a United States Representative.** Although some may argue that this is more a matter of “luck of the draw” than personal accomplishment, it seems fairly obvious that being the son of a Representative, CIA Director, Vice-President, or President—if you’re lucky, all four—can greatly enhance one’s ability to effect real change in America.

**Step 2: Go to Andover, Yale, and Harvard Business School.** Nothing is more important than an education. While all of these schools have extremely low acceptance rates, if you carefully followed step 1, things will probably go a bit smoother. And don’t feel too much pressure to get straight A’s, because nobody likes a know-it-all.

**Step 3: Dodge the draft.** This one is a bit tricky, because it could cut either way. I know it sounds strange, but if you sit out a global conflict while studying at Oxford, you’re a draft dodger, but if you get your Representative father (see Step 1) to secure a coveted spot for you in the Texas Air National Guard, you’re practically an American hero! All of us fear the ever-growing threat posed by the barbarous Oklahomans, biding their time out in the fields until the order is given to launch a sneak attack across the border. And feel free to go AWOL a few years into your tour of duty—the media will never take a draft dodging story seriously as long as you stay off drugs.

**Step 4: Snort cocaine.** Okay, scratch that. But they probably won’t care anyway.

**Step 5: Run a few businesses into the ground.** Although you’re already in your mid-thirties by now, don’t feel any pressure to strike out on your own. If you’ve closely followed the plan so far, by this time your CIA Director father has probably become Vice President, making it much easier for him to set you up in the oil industry. As the old saying goes, there’s no better way to learn valuable life lessons than through abject failure—and since you didn’t earn the job anyway, if the company goes bankrupt, it’s not *really* your fault.

**Step 6: Get elected Governor and President.** Fairly self-explanatory. In case your victory is a close one, have Dad’s old hunting buddies make a few calls. Trust me, it

will all work out.

At this point, you’re probably thinking that you’ve got what it takes to help “save our country.” Unfortunately, one painful-yet-necessary ingredient is still missing...

**Step 7: Wait for the terrorists to attack.** In the old days, there was a funny thing called “checks and balances” (if you paid attention at Andover, you might have heard something about it). It’s the biggest hurdle preventing you from being able to save our country. Strangely, even though the nation agrees that you are the President (more or less), the rest of the government usually won’t let you do whatever you want—even if it’s for their own good! Ever hear of the saying “you can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs”? No? Well, anyways, I might as well just lay it out for you: if you really want to save America, a few thousand citizens are going to have to die. But don’t worry—you can always claim that all your country-saving is being done to honor their memories, protect the survivors, yadda yadda yadda. Who’s going to contradict you in a time like that? Certainly not the loyal opposition... wouldn’t be too loyal, now would it?

Whew. That’s a lot—but no one ever said that saving our country would be easy. One question remains, though: what if your father *isn’t* a U.S. Representative? Hell, what if he isn’t even a CIA Director? I know, I know, that’s a pretty crazy idea, but sometimes it does happen. In this rare instance, I guess the only thing you actually *can* do to help save our country is to study hard, listen to your mom or dad, and give a little encouragement to our brave men and women serving in the armed forces. Because trust me, where they’re heading, they’re gonna need it.

*Copeland Wade*