

Presidential Profiles



Dwight D. Eisenhower

The best-known commanding general of the World War II era, Dwight D. Eisenhower was born in Abilene, Kansas, as the third child in a family that swelled to seven boys.

He'd eventually leverage his leadership skills and familiarity with international issues to achieve a series of major goals as president. He was an accomplished student-athlete in high school before securing a spot at West Point. He then met Mamie Geneva Doud while stationed in Texas as a second lieutenant, and she would later become Eisenhower's wife.

A RISING LEADER

During the early years of his military career, Eisenhower grew as a leader under the watchful eyes of the era's most distinguished generals, including John J. Pershing, Walter Krueger and Douglas MacArthur. He was called to Washington by General George C. Marshall to take on a role in war planning following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Eisenhower then directed the Allied Forces making landfall in North Africa in November 1942, and subsequently took command of the troops during the invasion of France on D-Day in 1944. In peacetime, Eisenhower shifted his focus to academia, becoming president at Columbia University.

BECOMING PRESIDENT

By the early 1950s, Eisenhower was being encouraged to run for president. He ended

Dwight D. Eisenhower

President No. 34

Served: 1953-1961

Born: October 14, 1890

Died: March 28, 1969

up with a resounding victory under the simple, yet effective campaign slogan "I Like Ike." Before his first term was over, however, Eisenhower experienced a sudden heart attack. He'd spend some seven weeks in the hospital before finally recovering. Still beloved, Eisenhower then won re-election for a second term.

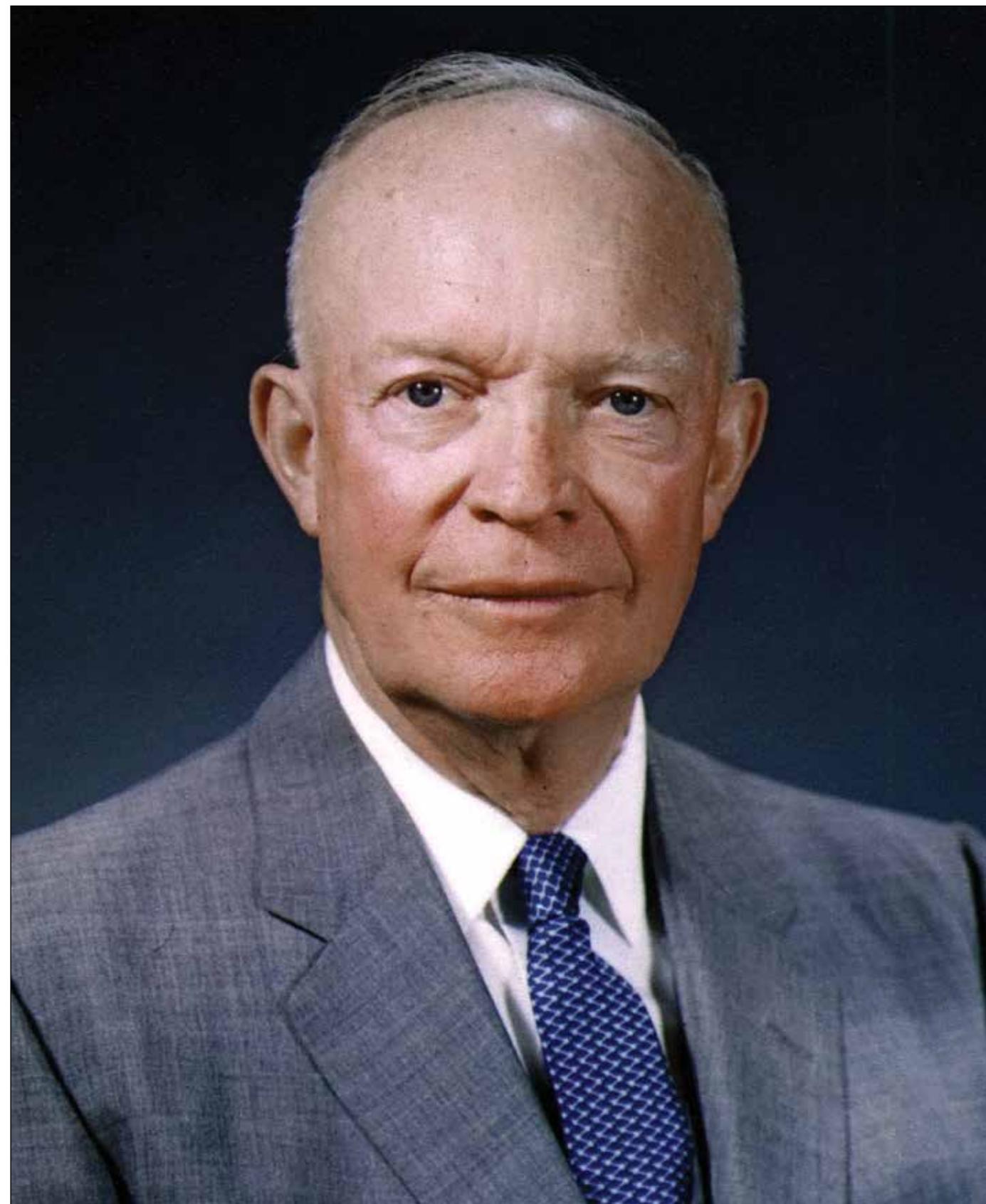
BIG ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Among Eisenhower's most notable presidential accomplishments was negotiating a truce in Korea through a series of strategic discussions. In July 1955, he gathered in Geneva with leaders from Britain, France and Russia to suggest that Cold War powers share more strategic and military information with one another to foster peace. Eisenhower deployed troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce the federal court's desegregation orders for public schools, while mandating the complete desegregation of U.S. Armed Forces.

His administration proposed and developed the nation's interstate highway

system. Along the way, Eisenhower would come to embody the moderate principles of

modern Republicanism, before passing away following a prolonged illness.



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Presidential Words of Wisdom

Presidents of the United States occupy an outsized place in any era's conversation.

When they open a dialogue with the public, presidents attract attention both at home and abroad.

Over the years, some of these addresses have become so well known that they speak to future generations.

Here are three examples of their words of wisdom:

GEORGE WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS Sept. 19, 1796

"The name of American, which belongs to you in your national capacity, must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations. With slight shades of difference, you have the same religion, manners, habits, and political principles. You have in a common cause fought and triumphed together. The independence and liberty you possess are the work of joint councils and joint efforts, of common dangers, sufferings and successes."

WOODROW WILSON'S FOURTEEN POINTS Jan. 8, 1918

"We have spoken now, surely, in terms too concrete to admit of any



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Wilson

FRANK GRAHAM COOTES/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Kennedy

CECIL STOUGHTON/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

further doubt or question. An evident principle runs through the whole program I have outlined. It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak. Unless this principle be made its foundation, no part of the structure of international justice can stand."

JOHN F. KENNEDY'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS Jan. 20, 1961

"In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility; I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation.

The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it — and the glow from that fire can truly light the world. And so, my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world: Ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man."

Abraham Lincoln

Forged in a time of unimaginable conflict, Abraham Lincoln's legacy was shaped by his daring decisions.

Just two years into his presidency, Abraham Lincoln issued the groundbreaking Emancipation Proclamation that sought freedom for slaves. He then led the U.S. into a civil war to resolve the issue forever.

Abraham Lincoln
President No. 16
Served: 1861-1865
Born: Feb. 12, 1809
Died: April 15, 1865

MODEST BEGINNINGS

Given his modest beginnings, Lincoln's eventual rise to power was quite remarkable. He was born in the frontierland of Kentucky and faced serious hardships during his formative years – including stark poverty and the early death of a parent. Writings from the White House Historical Association revealed that his father moved the family to Indiana when Lincoln was eight. The future president described their new home as “a rugged area, inhabited by many bears and other wild creatures. This is where I spent my youth.” Less than two years later, Lincoln's mother died.

LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

Lincoln initially earned a living as a simple farmer. He'd rise to the rank of captain in the 1830s-era Native American conflict known as the Black Hawk War, before serving eight years in the Illinois legislature. Along the way, Lincoln wed Mary Todd and they had four sons, though only one survived to adulthood. Lincoln lost a Senate race to Stephen A. Douglas in the late 1850s, but he'd gained enough national attention

through a series of debates to help secure the nomination for a successful run to the presidency. Lincoln then stood fast against secession, declaring it unlawful. He also promised to use force to uphold federal laws.

PRESIDENTIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Lincoln helped shape American history through a series of memorable actions and speeches, including the Emancipation Proclamation from Jan. 1, 1863, and the Gettysburg Address on Nov. 19, 1863. A portion of his acceptance speech from his second inauguration in 1864 is etched into a wall at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.: “With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds.” He never got the chance to bring the country back together after the Civil War. Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth in 1865 at Ford's Theatre in Washington.





George W. Bush

ERIC DRAPER/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Carter

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Presidents by Any Other Name

Every president has a nickname these days, given to them as a code by the Secret Service.

Some brought nicknames to the White House from their previous lives, while others gained theirs through the legacy of their tenure. That's why George Washington is now known as the Father of Our Country. Andrew Jackson's famous tenacity earned him the moniker, Old Hickory. Abraham Lincoln was known as Honest Abe and later as the Great Emancipator for his actions in office.

But not every nickname was so endearing. It's said that Jackson was also known as Jackass, and the donkey eventually came to symbolize his Democratic Party. Rutherford Hayes was called Rutherford by his opponents. Prior to his eventual resignation from the presidency, Richard Nixon was known in some circles as Tricky Dick.

For some presidents, initials were enough to become identifying alternate names: Franklin D. Roosevelt was known as FDR. John F. Kennedy became JFK and his successor, Lyndon Baines Johnson, was LBJ. George H.W. Bush had always been known as Poppy before his son George W. Bush

later rose to the nation's highest office. They'd later be differentiated by their middle initials, H.W. and W.

Ronald Reagan arrived with one nickname (the Gipper) and left with two more, the Great Communicator and the Teflon President. Arkansas native Bill Clinton was colloquially known as Bubba before his surprise election and then became known as the Comeback Kid. Barack Obama's low-key style in office led some to call him No Drama Obama. Donald Trump arrived with the Donald nickname and was later known by numbers associated with his two separate terms, 45 and 47.

Presidents are also known by code

names given to them by the Secret Service.

The first to be assigned a code name was Harry Truman, who selected General. John F. Kennedy was known as Lancer, then Richard Nixon was called Searchlight. The deeply religious Jimmy Carter chose Deacon. George H.W. Bush was Timberwolf while his son George W. Bush was Trailblazer.

Barack Obama was Renegade while his one-time vice president Joe Biden was Celtic. Bill Clinton was Eagle and Donald Trump chose Mogul. Other family members are also given code names. For instance, Eleanor Roosevelt was known as Rover.

Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan thrived in Hollywood before channeling his communication skills into success as a politician, first in California and then in Washington.

Later known as the Great Communicator, he was able to rally the nation around the idea of “peace through strength,” eventually hastening the end of the Cold War.

HIS EARLY YEARS

Reagan grew up and attended college in Illinois, then parlayed early radio work into a successful late-1930s screen test in Hollywood. Over the next two decades, Reagan was featured in more than 50 films. After rising to the presidency of the Screen Actors Guild, he gained notice for his stance against communism in the film industry. Reagan eventually abandoned his entertainment career to focus full-time on politics. He won the governorship of California in 1966 by the remarkable margin of one million votes and was re-elected in 1970. Reagan had to bide his time, however, before making the leap to the national stage.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

His so-called Reagan Revolution was meant to grow the



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economy and diminish the American public's dependence on governmental support, all while directly confronting Cold War

opponents. Reagan's sunny disposition carried the message far and wide: His 1980 campaign promised to revive “the great, confident roar of

American progress and growth and optimism.” His communication skills were critical in congressional negotiations. Reagan oversaw the

Ronald Reagan

President No. 40
Served: 1981-1989
Born: Feb. 6, 1911
Died: June 5, 2004

passage of a raft of important legislation like significant income tax reform over two consecutive terms in office. His stated priorities included stimulating business growth, reducing inflation and bolstering defense. This approach to the nation's economic growth eventually became known as “Reaganomics.”

‘PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH’

Reagan engaged in pivotal negotiations with Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev that resulted in a treaty aimed at eliminating intermediate-range nuclear missiles. In keeping with his “peace through strength” agenda, Reagan advocated for huge increases in defense funding, invaded Grenada and authorized airstrikes against Libya. The Soviet Union eventually fell and Reagan was credited with the longest peacetime economic expansion in American history. He survived an assassination attempt early in his presidency before defeating former vice president Walter Mondale for a second term in one of the largest landslide victories in U.S. electoral history.

VPs Who Became President

Dozens of people have served as vice president since the office was established in 1789.

Initially, the role was filled by whoever earned the second-highest number of Electoral College votes. The office was finally codified after a contentious election in 1800, as the Twelfth Amendment created a separate ballot.

Through it all, the number of vice presidents who then became president remains remarkably small. Sometimes, they were duly elected after serving while others ascended to the office because of the president's death, resignation or removal.

JOHN ADAMS

John Adams served as the first U.S. vice president under George Washington, then was president between 1797 and 1801. He'd become the only member of the Federalist Party to be elected to the nation's highest office, completing one term before being succeeded by Thomas Jefferson.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Thomas Jefferson was John Adams' vice president but also a prominent rival. He was



Nixon (far left)

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president from 1801 until 1809 and had two vice presidents, but for the first time in American history, neither became president.

MARTIN VAN BUREN

Former vice president Martin Van Buren was the country's eighth president from 1837 to 1841. He faced significant challenges with the Panic of 1837, which at the time sparked one of the worst economic depressions in U.S. history.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

Harry S. Truman had only just become the 34th American vice president in 1945 when Franklin D. Roosevelt died, and then served from 1945 to 1953.

RICHARD NIXON

Richard Nixon served as vice president under Dwight D. Eisenhower between 1953 and 1961 before mounting a political comeback. He was the 37th president from 1969 until his resignation in 1974 amid the Watergate scandal.

GERALD FORD

Gerald Ford had recently been appointed by Nixon to replace Spiro Agnew before Nixon's resignation thrust Ford into the presidency.

GEORGE H.W. BUSH

George H.W. Bush became the first sitting vice president to be elected to the presidency since Martin Van Buren in the



Biden (right)

PETE SOUZA/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Bush (right)

PETE SOUZA/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

1830s, following his boss Ronald Reagan into the office from 1989 to 1993.

JOE BIDEN

Like Nixon before him, Joe

Biden returned to serve as president from 2021-2025 after a few years away. He'd been vice president during Barak Obama's two terms in 2009-2017.

Harry S. Truman

Harry S. Truman became an unlikely war hero before returning to his hometown to open a retail shop.

When the business failed, Truman methodically worked his way toward the presidency with a combination of grit, trustworthiness and unwavering faith.

LONG ROAD TO SUCCESS

Truman was too old by a couple of years when World War I began, yet remained determined to serve. He decided to enlist in the National Guard and ended up playing a crucial role with the 129th Field Artillery, rapidly ascending to the rank of captain. Under Truman's leadership, Battery D became one of the most renowned units in the war. Following his time in the armed forces, Truman returned to Kansas City and established a hat shop – but challenging economic conditions led to the business's closure in 1922.

A STIRRING COMEBACK

Truman emerged with \$20,000 in debt, an incredible amount back then, but he refused to declare bankruptcy. Instead, he repaid the entire sum – though it took Truman some 15 years. This commitment to doing what was right would soon bolster Truman's entry into the world of politics.



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He was elected county judge in 1926, then was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1934. There,

Truman served on the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, where he was instrumental

in funding New Deal initiatives proposed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Harry S. Truman

President No. 33
Served: 1945-1953
Born: May 8, 1884
Died: Dec. 26, 1972

OVERCOMING CONTROVERSY

Truman had a close political association with Democratic leader Thomas Pendergast, who was later found guilty of tax evasion and voter fraud. Some wondered if that would jeopardize Truman's 1940 reelection bid, but his long history as an ethical public servant paved the way for a second term. He was later appointed vice president by Roosevelt and assumed the presidency when Roosevelt died while leading the country through World War II.

A TIME OF CONFLICT

Truman had been sworn in for about a month when Germany surrendered, leaving only the Asian theater of war. Truman then made the historic decision to drop atomic bombs on two sites in Japan, quickly bringing World War II to a close. Driven by concerns over Soviet aggression, Truman oversaw the start of the Korean War. At the same time, Truman implemented the Marshall Plan to rebuild Europe's economy and helped establish NATO to contain the spread of Soviet communism.