

Thomas Jefferson



Governor of
Virginia
(1779-1781)



President of the
United States
(1801-1808)

Thomas Jefferson was one of the intellectual leaders during the founding period and left his mark on most of the major events that created America. Jefferson's career included many important political posts on both the state and federal levels. His accomplishments ranged from authoring the Declaration of Independence and helping write the Virginia state constitution to serving in Virginia's legislature and as the first foreign minister to France. Jefferson was the first president to have served previously as a governor of an American state.

Born in Virginia pre-Revolution, Jefferson attended The College of William & Mary and then became a highly respected colonial lawyer. When early American independence efforts began, he distinguished himself with his eloquent and brilliant writings. He entered into the House of Burgesses, the pre-Revolution legislature of Virginia, in 1769, and then attended the Second Continental Congress, where he famously penned the first draft of the Declaration of Independence.

After returning to the legislature, now called the Virginia House of Delegates, Jefferson was elected by the two chambers of the state legislature to be the second Governor of Virginia and served two one-year terms, beginning in July 1779 and ending in June 1781. He was a war-time governor, taking responsibility for protecting Virginia from British armies under the command of Generals Benedict Arnold and Lord Cornwallis. As governor, Jefferson faced constant requests from the Continental Congress for more troops to press the war, and similar requests from his own state's citizens for defense against the British. He transferred the state capital from Williamsburg to Richmond, believing that the British were planning an attack on Williamsburg; and then from Richmond to Charlottesville when it became apparent that Richmond had been their true target all along.

Jefferson's time as governor ended with investigations into whether he had been too slow to raise the militia to protect Richmond, and whether he had abandoned the governorship before a successor had been named. While he was ultimately acquitted, the episode left Jefferson bitter and disappointed. After leaving the governorship, he declared that he would never serve in public office again, and in fact his time as governor was his last position as an elected member of Virginia's government.

Indeed, 20 years passed between Jefferson's governorship and his presidency. Following the Revolutionary War, he served as an original member of Congress under the Articles of Confederation, and then as an ambassador to France for four years. He then became the nation's first Secretary of State under the new Constitution in 1789, and the second vice-president under John Adams in 1796. In 1800, Jefferson used his newly formed Democratic-Republican Party to force Adams and his Federalists from power, creating one of the first peaceful transitions in power in history.

Jefferson's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of Virginia	1779-1781
Member, State House of Delegates	1782
Member, Continental Congress	1783-1784
Minister Plenipotentiary to France	1784
Sole Minister to the King of France	1785-1787
U.S. Secretary of State	1789-1793
Vice President of the United States	1797-1800
President of the United States	1801-1809

For more information

Hitchens, Christopher. *Thomas Jefferson: Author of America*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.

Kukla, Amy, and Jon Kukla. *Thomas Jefferson: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*. 1st. New York, NY: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc., 2005.

Peterson, Merrill D. *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc. , 1970.

Schouler, James. *Thomas Jefferson*. 1st. New York, NY: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1919.

James Monroe



Governor of
Virginia
(1799-1802)



President of the
United States
(1817-1824)

The fifth president, James Monroe, served as governor of the state of Virginia. Like Jefferson, Monroe filled many roles on both the state and federal level, providing him an abundance and wide variety of political experience prior to his presidency.

While studying law under Thomas Jefferson, Monroe began his political career, first winning election to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1782. He served a year there before moving to the Continental Congress, where he served for three years. After being term-limited out of Congress, Monroe became a central figure in the ratification debates over the newly-proposed federal Constitution in 1788. Though he generally opposed the Constitution, he advocated accepting the document as long as a Bill of Rights was added through amendments. His support led to the eventual ratification in Virginia.

In the first round of federal elections, Monroe ran against James Madison for a seat in the House of Representatives, but was defeated. The following year, he successfully ran for the United States Senate,, and became a leader within that body. Monroe left the Senate after accepting the role of ambassador to France in 1794 and served three years abroad. During his time in France, Monroe became a supporter of the French Revolution, but also successfully evacuated all Americans being held in French prisons during the time.

After returning home, Monroe was elected by the Virginia legislature to the governorship in 1799 and served three successive one-year terms, the maximum permitted under the Virginia Constitution of 1776. Perhaps the most significant event of his governorship occurred in his first year, when Monroe was informed of an imminent slave rebellion organized by Gabriel Prosser, a slave in Richmond. In response, the governor organized a militia to prevent the uprising, leading to the capture and execution of Prosser and 26 other slaves. The event led to laws that removed many of the rights and privileges provided even to free Blacks in Virginia, further entrenching differences between the races.

Following his first three one-year terms in office, Monroe became ambassador to Britain. He was influential first in negotiating the Louisiana Purchase and then in renegotiating trade agreements with Britain. After returning to America, Monroe re-entered the Virginia House of Delegates in 1810 and returned to the governorship in 1811. Just four months later, he accepted the position of Secretary of State in President James Madison's administration, ending his service in Virginia. During the War of 1812 Monroe

also assumed the role of Secretary of War, ultimately holding both positions during the war until the American victory.

Monroe was elected to the presidency in 1816 and reelected four years later, becoming the only president other than George Washington to run unopposed for re-election. His two terms as President were heavily involved with foreign policy and American expansionism, but were relatively uneventful domestically. Under his tenure, five new states were added to the Union, as was the territory of Florida. Partisanship was generally low, as a result of both Democratic dominance and Monroe's general opposition to strong federal intervention in domestic politics. He favored leaving internal decisions up to the states, while the federal government protected trade, expanded borders and negotiated favorable treaties.

Monroe's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of Virginia	1799-1802
Minister Plenipotentiary to France	1803
Minister Plenipotentiary to England,	1803-1807
Returned home	1808
Member, Virginia State Assembly	1810-1811
Governor of Virginia	1811
U.S. Secretary of State	1811-1817
U.S. Secretary of War	1814-1815
President of the United States	1817-1825

For More Information

Ammon, Harry. *James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1971.

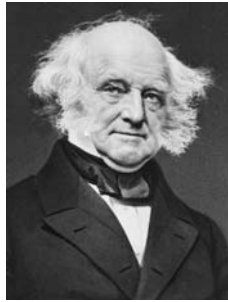
Levy, Debbie. *James Monroe*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Group, 2005.

Gilman, Daniel C. *James Monroe in his Relations to the Public Service During Half a Century*. New York, NY: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899.

Martin Van Buren



Governor of
New York
(1829)



President of the
United States
(1837-1840)

The eighth president, Martin Van Buren, was the third governor – and the first from a state other than Virginia - to ascend to the presidency. His term as governor of New York, however, is best characterized by its brevity, since Van Buren only served about 10 weeks in office.

Van Buren worked his way up the political ladder, beginning his political career as a county surrogate in 1808 and moving on to the New York State Senate in 1812. He continued in the legislature for eight years, simultaneously serving as attorney general for the state from 1815 to 1820. In 1821, Van Buren was elected to the United States Senate where he was recognized and reportedly well-liked for his leadership and keen political skills.

After serving in the United States Senate for eight years, Van Buren resigned to assume the governorship of New York on January 1, 1829. Just nine weeks later, President Andrew Jackson appointed him as his Secretary to State; Van Buren accepted on March 12, resigning his governorship and served in the post for two years, before becoming involved in the Petticoat Affair, which eventually forced him and nearly the entire presidential cabinet to resign their positions. President Jackson subsequently nominated Van Buren as ambassador to Great Britain, but, though he travelled to England and assumed his duties, his nomination was never ratified by the Senate.

Upon returning home, Van Buren was nominated at President Jackson's insistence to replace John Calhoun as the vice presidential nominee for the Democratic Party. The duo won election in 1832, and Van Buren served as vice-president for four years. He then accepted the party's nomination for president in 1836. He was elected overwhelmingly but was defeated when he ran for reelection.

Van Buren's presidency was dominated by internal strife and a massive economic collapse. With the onset of an economic recession, Van Buren pushed for lower tariffs and an increase in free trade, but these measures did little to improve the damaged economy. He also tried to decrease regional tensions by rejecting Texas' attempt to join the Union, at least in part as an attempt to strengthen relations with Mexico. Nevertheless, partisan and regional tensions inflamed during Van Buren's term, leaving him deeply unpopular.

Van Buren ran for reelection in 1840, again against William Henry Harrison. He lost, but did not give up on the office. He ran for the presidency again in 1848, this time under the banner of the Free Soil Party. After losing again, he retired from politics for good.

Van Buren's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of New York	January to March, 1829
U.S. Secretary of State	1829-1831
Minister to Great Britain*	1831-1832
Vice President of the United States	1833-1837
President of the United States	1837-1841
*(Senate rejected his nomination in January 1832, forcing him to return home)	

For More Information

Lazo, Caroline. E. *Martin Van Buren*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Group. (2005).

Shepard, E. M. *Martin Van Buren: American statesman*. Cambridge, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company. (1896).

Widmar, T. *Martin Van Buren*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. LLC. (2005).

John Tyler



Governor of
Virginia
(1825-1827)



President of the
United States
(1841-1844)

The 10th American president, John Tyler, served two terms as the governor of Virginia.

Tyler began his political career as a Democrat in the Virginia General Assembly, serving five consecutive terms in the lower chamber and winning election to the Governor's Council of State, a small group elected out of the legislature to provide advice to the governor. He earned the respect of his party and peers for his defense of states' rights and in 1816 won election to the United States House of Representatives. Following three terms in the federal legislature, Tyler returned to the Virginia legislature, this time in the House of Delegates. In 1825, he was nominated for and elected to the governorship out of that body, and he was unanimously re-elected for a second term a year later.

Tyler's governorship was not particularly notable, as the Virginia governor had few powers that would allow him to influence government. Without a veto or strong legislative influence, Tyler's main power was his ability to deliver public speeches, but he found few issues to champion during his two terms. He supported an expansion of the state's road infrastructure and supported education reform, but in practice accomplished little. Perhaps his most notable action as governor was to deliver the funeral address for former Governor and President Thomas Jefferson, who died in 1826.

Tyler resigned his governorship just a few months into his second term to join the United States Senate in 1827, where he went on to national fame. While in the Senate, Tyler came into repeated conflict with the Jacksonian Democrats. He opposed President Jackson's use of the spoils system and objected to several of his policies on constitutional grounds. By the early 1830's, these disagreements led Tyler to abandon the Democratic Party for the newly formed Whigs. The split also forced him to resign his seat in the Senate.

Tyler remained popular and was considered but not chosen for the vice-presidential nomination by the Whig party in 1836; he won the nomination in 1840. Elected as vice-president under President William Henry Harrison, Tyler became the first person to ascend from the vice presidency to the presidency after Harrison died just two months into his term.

Becoming the first president to gain the office without having been elected in his own right created challenges for Tyler. Some argued that the Constitution only granted him powers as "Acting President" or that he should remain vice-president but be able to use the powers of the presidency. The conflict earned him the inglorious nickname of "His Ascendency."

As President, Tyler broke with the Whigs, refusing to endorse policies they passed in Congress and vetoing many of them. He had been expected to follow the lead of party leadership, particularly Senator Henry Clay. Tyler's refusal to bow to the demands of the Whigs led to his expulsion from the party in 1842, the first and only time a sitting president has been expelled from his own party.

Tyler completed Harrison's term, but did not run for re-election. His frequent use of the presidential veto to block Whig legislation led to the first impeachment proceedings ever carried out against a president, though they failed. The Democratic Party was similarly not willing to welcome him back, leaving him without a strong party apparatus to support his policies or his candidacy. His presidency was further damaged when, in February 1844, he and his cabinet were aboard the USS Princeton when a naval gun misfired, killing several of his top cabinet members. The incident further damaged his administration's ability to function effectively.

Tyler left office in 1845 and retired quietly to private life in Virginia. He later re-emerged to support the Confederacy at the beginning of the Civil War and earned election to the Confederate Congress. En route to accept his post he died, most likely of a stroke. Due to his endorsement of the Confederacy, Tyler's death was not officially recognized in Washington D.C., making him the sole president not to receive this honor.

Tyler's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of Virginia	1825-1827
United States Senator	1827-1836
Member, State Constitutional Convention	1829 and 1830
Member, State House of Delegates	1839
Vice President of the United States	March-April 1841
President of the United States	1841-1845

For More Information

Crapol, Edward, P. *John Tyler: The Accidental President*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press. (2005).

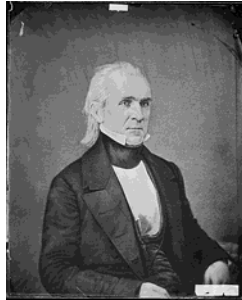
May, G. *John Tyler*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. LLC. (2008).

Nelson, Lyle. *John Tyler: A Rare Career*. New York, NY: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2008.

James Polk



Governor of
Tennessee
(1839-1841)



President of the
United States
(1845-1848)

The 11th president, James Polk, served one term as governor of Tennessee. In addition to being one of seventeen presidents to have previously been a governor, he is also the only president to have served as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Polk began both his political career, and his lifelong support of and friendship with Andrew Jackson, in the Tennessee state legislature in 1823. Among his first actions in the legislature was helping to elect the future president, Jackson, to the United States Senate. After three years,, Polk successfully ran for Congress in 1825, earning a seat in the House of Representatives. In his sixth term in the House, Polk was elected by his peers to be the Speaker of the House, granting him strong influence over national policy. He continued as speaker for four years, until he resigned to pursue the governorship of Tennessee.

In 1835 the Democratic party had lost the governorship of Tennessee for the first time in that state's history. Seeing the need for a strong candidate to recapture the governor's seat in his home state, Polk aided his party by seeking the position himself, despite having to leave the speakership. He won a narrow victory over his Whig opponent and began his two-year term in October of 1839.

As governor, Polk did not match his Congressional success and saw the vast majority of his policies fail. Polk was defeated for re-election and subsequently lost another attempt to recapture the governorship two years later in 1843.

In 1844, Polk anticipated being nominated for the vice-presidency at the Democratic convention, behind the leading contender for the presidency, former President Martin Van Buren. Van Buren's candidacy stalled however, and, on the sixth ballot, Polk won the nomination. He went on to defeat his Whig opponent, Henry Clay, in the general election. While winning the presidency, Polk was unable to carry his own state, becoming the first of only three presidents to date to lose their own home states while winning the national election. (The other two were Woodrow Wilson, who lost New Jersey in his successful reelection bid in 1916 and Richard Nixon, who carried California in his two successful presidential races but was by then a legal resident of New York State. Polk also became the first president to move from the governorship to the presidency without holding any other political office in between.

As president, Polk focused on expanding the nation's borders by acquiring territories in the West and on reducing tariffs to increase trade. He was successful in both these attempts. He succeeded in adding land that would become the states of Arizona, California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Washington, along with portions of Colorado, Montana, New Mexico and Wyoming. Tariffs were decreased, increasing trade and aiding the economy.

At the end of his four years, Polk fulfilled a campaign pledge to retire from the office without seeking a second term. He died barely 100 days later, apparently exhausted from his presidential term. His record of accomplishing his stated platform ranks among the highest of all presidents and he is remembered as being the strongest president between Andrew Jackson and Abraham Lincoln.

Polk's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of Tennessee	1839-1841
President of the United States	1844-1848

For More Information

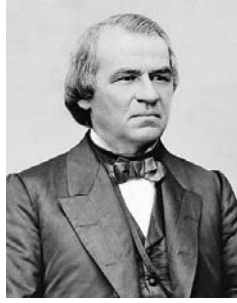
Behrman, Carol H. *James K. Polk*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Group, 2005.

Seigenthaler, John. *James K. Polk*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. LLC., 2004.

Andrew Johnson



Governor of
Tennessee
(1853-1857)



President of the
United States
(1865-1868)

After James Polk left the White House in 1849, no present or former governors would be elected to the presidency for almost 40 years. However, Andrew Johnson ascended to the presidency following Abraham Lincoln's assassination in 1865, becoming the 17th president. Johnson had served as governor of Tennessee twice, under two different systems.

Andrew Johnson began his political career in the Tennessee House of Representatives, winning his first election in 1835. He lost his subsequent re-election two years later, largely because he refused to commit to either the Democrats or Whigs. In the next election, he again waffled, first announcing his intention to run as a Whig, but then committing to the Democratic Party. Johnson was victorious under the Democratic label and never wavered in his partisanship again. He moved to the Tennessee Senate in 1841 and then to the House of Representatives in 1843, where he spent five terms in office. While in Congress, Johnson championed several stances that made him well-known, including advocating providing free farm land to the poor, protecting the institution of slavery, and staunchly opposing most federal spending programs.

Back home in Tennessee, the state legislature changed partisan hands in 1851, leading to a gerrymandering of congressional districts that effectively eliminated Johnson's hopes of a sixth term in Congress. Instead, he accepted the Democratic nomination for governor, won the election and served two successive terms as the elected governor of Tennessee from 1853 to 1857. Instead of running for a third term, he decided to pursue Federal office again, this time in the Senate. Johnson invested a great deal of effort in working to elect a Democratic majority to the state legislature, particularly the state Senate, which at that time was responsible for electing Senators. His campaign was successful, and a newly elected Democratic State Senate sent him to the United States Senate in 1857.

In the Senate, the slavery issue was paramount, forcing Johnson to take a public stand. Unlike most of his southern Democratic colleagues, Johnson bridged the divide, both championing the right of citizens to own slaves and the need to keep the Union whole. When the southern states, including Tennessee, seceded from the Union, Johnson was the lone senator to remain in Congress, becoming the sole Democratic voice continuing to advocate for the Union. During the Civil War, President Lincoln appointed Johnson to become the military governor of Tennessee after Union forces captured the state. He left

the United States Senate to assume the position, and served as military governor of Tennessee for two years, beginning in March 1862.

In 1864, President Lincoln aimed to demonstrate his commitment to unifying the nation by including a southern Democrat on his presidential ticket. Johnson seemed like a natural fit, as he had remained in Congress advocating for the Union even following his state's secession. At Lincoln's request, the Republican Convention replaced the current vice-president, Hannibal Hamlin, with Johnson and changed the name of the party from the Republican Party to the National Union Party, reflecting their desire for reunification. Despite early fears that the ticket would not be able to win amid Union struggles in the war, once General Sherman captured Atlanta in late August, 1864, the Lincoln-Johnson ticket was swept into office.

When Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865, just one month after the inauguration, Johnson assumed the presidency. Initially Johnson worked well with the "Radical Republicans" in control of Congress and the Executive departments. As the Civil War drew to a close however, and Reconstruction began, Johnson's lenient attitude towards the South and refusal to advocate for the rights and safety of freedmen in the south angered the Republicans.

By 1866, tensions rose to a breaking point, with Johnson using his presidential powers to veto, block or delay most Congressional attempts to institute control over the now conquered southern states. In 1867, Congress launched the first attempt to impeach President Johnson, but it failed. A year later, a second attempt was successful, and a trial was held in the Senate. Johnson was able to secure enough support for the impeachment vote to fail three successive times, each time by one vote.

Following his impeachment trial, Johnson continued to oppose Reconstruction, believing that he was protecting the people of the South. Animosity to his presidency was so widespread, however, that his own Democratic party refused to nominate him for re-election, and he was unable to run for the presidency in 1868. Among his last acts as president was to issue a general and unconditional amnesty for all Confederates who had fought in the Civil War.

Johnson's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of Tennessee	1853-1857
United States Senate	1857-1862
Military Governor of Tennessee	1862-1865
Vice President of the United States	March 1865-April 1865
President of the United States	April 1865-March 1869

For More Information

Gordon- Reed, Annette. *Andrew Johnson*. 1st. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company LLC, 2011.

Hall, Clifton R. *Andrew Johnson: Military Governor of Tennessee*. Oxford, England: Princeton University Press, 1916.

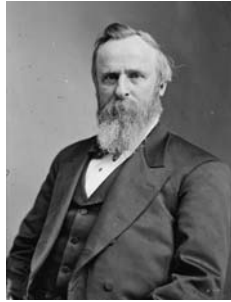
Havelin, Kate. *Andrew Johnson*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Group, 2005.

Jones, Rev. James S. *Life of Andrew Johnson*. East Tennessee Publishing Company, 1901.

Rutherford B. Hayes



Governor of
Ohio
(1868-1871, 1876)



President of the
United States
(1877-1880)

Rutherford B. Hayes began his career in the military, serving in the Union forces during the Civil War and rising to the position of brigadier general. He would later become the commander-in-chief of the American military when he won election as the 18th president of the United States in the most hotly contested election in American history. In between these posts, he served as a congressman and then as governor of the state of Ohio, becoming the first sitting governor to move into the presidency.

When the Civil War erupted in 1861, Hayes left his law practice and entered the military as a major in the Union army. (Among his soldiers was a young private who would also become president, William McKinley.) He served well, distinguishing himself on the battlefield, and received a personal commendation from another future president, Ulysses S. Grant. As the war draw to a close, he was nominated by the Republican Party to run for a congressional seat in Ohio, but refused to leave the battlefield to actively seek the position. He was elected in 1865 without having campaigned, other than writing some letters explaining his political views to his constituents.

Hayes served two terms in Congress, joining the more moderate wing of the Republican majority in the House of Representatives. He supported the re-incorporation of southern states back into the Union, but only after they had assured the safety and political rights of freedmen. In 1867, Hayes resigned his position in Congress to return home and actively campaign for governor. His political positions were more moderate than the Republican Party in Ohio, but he did advocate for the passage of referendum granting suffrage to Blacks in the state. On Election Day, the referendum was defeated and the Republican Party lost control of the state legislature, but Hayes won a narrow victory.

Hayes' first term as governor was disappointing. The Ohio governor had few powers and, with Democrats in control of the legislature, Hayes could do little more than advocate for his beliefs. He ran again for a second term in 1869, winning re-election with a larger majority and also aided his party in retaking control of the legislature. His second term, with Republicans in control of the legislature, was more satisfying to Hayes since he oversaw numerous accomplishments, including Ohio's ratification of the 15th Amendment and the creation of The Ohio State University. Declining to seek a third term or a Senate seat, Hayes retired in 1872 and expected to remain in private practice for the rest of his life. The massive economic collapse of 1873 changed this, however, and he was drafted by the Republican Party to run again for governor in 1875. He won and began his third term as governor.

In 1876 the Republican Party needed a strong candidate for the presidency, and Hayes, with his impressive military and political credentials, was a top contender. He won the Republican nomination and competed against Samuel Tilden for the presidency in what became the closest and most hotly contested election up to that time in American history. On Election Day the vote was so close that three states, Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina, could not declare a winner. Tilden led in both the popular vote and the Electoral College, but if the three contested states swung to Hayes, the Republican would claim the presidency. For nearly four months the fight for the final three states waged on, with no clear end in sight. Just two days before Inauguration Day, a deal was brokered between the parties, giving Hayes the presidency, but removing federal troops from the South, effectively ending Reconstruction.

Hayes served only one term in office as president, fulfilling a campaign pledge. That term proved to be as contentious as his election. The Democratic Party controlled Congress and conflicted with most of Hayes' beliefs and policy program. They steadfastly opposed the military occupation of the southern states and sought an immediate removal of Union troops, even before protections were in place for newly freed and enfranchised Blacks.

As Hayes pushed to dismantle the spoils system and eliminate political corruption, he was opposed both by Congress and members within his own party who sought to take advantage of a Republican administration. Using executive orders, Hayes achieved some of his agenda, but largely set the stage for future progress by working with labor unions, foreign policy and regulating financial currency. At the end of his term Hayes had accomplished little of his agenda, but had set the foundations for some fundamental changes in American politics.

Hayes' Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of Ohio	1868-1872
	1876-1877
President of the United States	1877-1881

For More Information

Conwell, Russell H. *Life and Public Services of Rutherford B. Hayes, President of the United States*. Boston, MA: B.B. Russell & Co, 1877.

Hooganboom, Ari. *Rutherford B. Hayes: Warrior and President*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995.

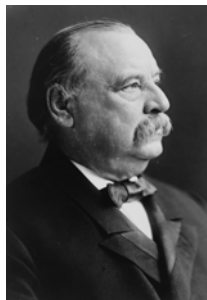
Levy, Debbie. *Rutherford B. Hayes*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Group, 2007.

Trefousse, Hans L. *Rutherford B. Hayes*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. LLC, 2002.

Grover Cleveland



Governor of
New York
(1883-1884)



President of the
United States
(1885-1888, 1893-1896)

The only president to serve two non-consecutive terms, Grover Cleveland also had prior experience as the governor of New York, as well as being mayor of Buffalo. Most notable for being honest and trustworthy in an era known for political corruption, Cleveland rose meteorically through all levels of political executive positions, serving as mayor, governor and president within four short years. His terms as president presaged immense shifts in the political landscape.

Grover Cleveland was born in New Jersey, but moved to New York in his early childhood. When his father passed away, he left school and entered into work at a young age, first as a teacher's assistant and later as a legal clerk. Cleveland was admitted to the New York bar in 1859 and opened his own practice a short while later. To avoid serving in the Civil War, he paid another man to take his place, a common practice at the time. He continued his legal practice for the next 20 years and also served a two-year term as Sheriff of Buffalo. Cleveland's legal practice grew, earning him a strong reputation as one of the most accomplished lawyers in Buffalo, and developing him a personal reputation as an honest and trustworthy figure.

By 1881 both the Democratic and Republican political machines in Buffalo had become notoriously corrupt, leading the public to become disenchanted with both parties. When the Republican Party nominated a particularly disreputable candidate for mayor, the Democrats wanted to win over the public by nominating an honest and respectable figure. They turned to Cleveland, who accepted the nomination on the condition that he could dictate other political nominations, ensuring their credibility. He won election and assumed his position as mayor of Buffalo in January of 1882.

As mayor, Cleveland solidified his honest credentials, blocking corrupt bargains and limiting the spoils system in the city. His moves to block wasteful spending enhanced his reputation throughout New York, gaining him statewide recognition in a short time. Just half a year into his term as mayor, Cleveland's good reputation earned him the Democratic nomination for governor of New York, and he won election later that year in a landslide. He resigned as mayor and moved into the governor's mansion in 1883.

As governor, Cleveland continued to burnish his reputation. He vetoed acts of the legislature, which was controlled by his own Democratic Party, that he felt were wasteful or unjust. He limited his own use of the spoils system and proposed ethical reforms in government. His popularity soared as he fought the most notorious political machine in

the state, Tammany Hall and gained the support of reformers in the Republican Party, including a legislator named Theodore Roosevelt, who would later follow Cleveland's path through the New York governorship into the White House.

Cleveland's reputation spread and, when the Republican Party nominated an allegedly corrupt politician for the presidency in 1884, Cleveland's name again rose to the top of the Democratic list of alternatives. He was nominated and ran against Republican James G. Blaine, a former Speaker of the U.S. House with a checkered history of supporting companies in which he held stock. Cleveland won a close election and assumed the presidency in 1885.

During his first term in office Cleveland maintained his honest reputation, vetoing bills from the Republican Congress that he felt were wasteful or spent excessively and issuing far more vetoes than any previous president. He also became the second president to marry in office when he wedded the daughter of one of his supporters. While his honest reputation earned him national respect, a dispute with Congress over national tariffs became a defining issue. In his 1888 reelection campaign, the tariff dominated discussion. Despite winning the national popular vote, Cleveland lost in the Electoral College, becoming only one of three presidential candidates to do so.

Four years later, Cleveland ran again, this time defeating incumbent president Benjamin Harrison, becoming the first presidential candidate in American history to win three popular elections. Cleveland's second term was marked by the Panic of 1893, a stock market crash that led to one of the worst economic depressions in the nation's history. Labor unrest and financial panics dominated the next few years, leading the Democratic Party to abandon Cleveland in 1896 in favor of William Jennings Bryan. Cleveland retired from office with his reputation as an honest and trustworthy figure intact in an age notable for its corruption.

Cleveland's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of New York	1883-1885
President of the United States	1885-1889 1893-1897

For More Information

Brodsky, Alyn. *Grover Cleveland: A Study in Character*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Graff, Henry Franklin. *Grover Cleveland*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. LLC, 2002.

Parker, George F. *A Life of Grover Cleveland*. New York, NY: Cassell Publishing Company, 1892.

Stoddard, William O. *Grover Cleveland*. New York, NY: Frederick A. Stokes & Brother, 1888.

Whittle, James Lowry. *Grover Cleveland*. London, England: Bliss, Sands & Co, 1896.

William McKinley



Governor of
Ohio
(1892-1896)



President of the
United States
(1897-1901)

William McKinley won election in 1896, rising from the governorship of Ohio to become the 25th president of the United States. The election itself was considered transformative, moving the nation beyond the issues and coalitions that arose during the Civil War and Reconstruction and towards a new era of American politics.

McKinley, like so many others, enlisted in the Union army at the outset of the Civil War. He entered service as a private, but during the course of the war rose quickly through the ranks. By the war's end he had been awarded a commission and reached the rank of Brevet Major, earning the respect of his soldiers and a reputation for strong leadership. During the war, McKinley found a mentor and friend in Rutherford B. Hayes, one of his commanding officers. The two became lifelong friends and worked together to further both of their political careers.

Following the war, McKinley studied law and began his own legal practice. His entry into politics began with his campaigning on behalf of Hayes, first for governor and then for president. While campaigning for Hayes in Ohio for the presidential election of 1876, McKinley also won a congressional nomination himself and was elected into the House at the same time Hayes won the presidency. McKinley distinguished himself among his party in Congress and quickly rose through the party ranks.

In 1880, when fellow House member James A. Garfield was elected president, McKinley was selected to take Garfield's position on the powerful Ways and Means Committee, an honor and privilege after just two terms in office. Nine years later he challenged for the position of speaker of the House. Though he lost, he was made chairman of the Ways and Means Committee and used his post to usher the McKinley Tariff of 1890 into law, the most significant achievement of that congressional session.

As his name gained national prominence, McKinley began eyeing the presidency. However, when the Democratic Party gained a majority in the state legislature in 1890, they attempted to derail his ambitions by gerrymandering him out of his congressional seat. McKinley, realizing that he could not win in his newly remodeled district, instead focused on winning the governorship of Ohio. He lost his congressional seat in 1890, but in 1891 he challenged and defeated the incumbent Democratic governor.

The governor of Ohio was not powerful within the state, having no veto power and little ability to influence the course of legislation. As a swing state with a growing population

however, it granted its governor a prominent position in national politics, which McKinley used to his advantage. He met with important political leaders and frequently consulted with members of Ohio's congressional delegation, as well as freely voicing his opinions on the issues and troubles facing America.

Following the Panic of 1893, McKinley sought to balance the interests of labor and business, and his actions further increased his national reputation. When he ran for reelection in 1893, governor McKinley won by a huge margin. Two years later he opted not to run for a third term, instead turning his energies toward a presidential run.

McKinley's 1896 presidential campaign transformed the way campaigns were run. His campaign manager, Mark Hanna, began organizing early, and by the time most other Republican challengers began their nomination campaigns, McKinley's team had already met with and secured commitments from the convention delegates. The 1896 Republican convention became a formality, with McKinley overwhelmingly selected on the first ballot. When the Democratic Party met, they nominated William Jennings Bryan following his legendary "Cross of Gold" speech.

The two candidates, one a brilliant strategist and the other a legendary orator, ran sharply contrasting campaigns. McKinley stayed at home in Canton, Ohio, allowing his supporters to travel to his front porch where he gave daily addresses. Meanwhile, Hanna organized a centralized campaign from Chicago, sending out instructions to Republicans throughout the country to follow in support of McKinley. Bryan toured the nation, making hundreds of stops and delivering a dozen speeches a day as he crisscrossed the country. His relentless pace came at a cost though, and as the campaign wore on the Democratic candidate became exhausted and ill, eventually having to limit his travel and daily appearances.

Ultimately, McKinley's organization prevailed, leading to his convincing win in the Electoral College. His election is considered a realigning election, bringing new issues to the fore of American politics and ushering in an era where a stronger, more centralized national government would work to protect and grow American business interests. While Bryan would run again twice again for the presidency, this would be his closest finish.

McKinley worked to enact his agenda quickly during his first term, signing off on legislation increasing tariffs, forcibly opening new markets in China, and establishing the gold standard in America. The United States, recognizing its growing international trade and power, entered into a contract with Panama to build a canal connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans that would facilitate global trade. The United States also entered into the third declared war in its history, this time against Spain and its occupation in Cuba. The war raged for just eight months, demonstrating the United States commitment to protecting and defending its own sovereignty as well as the regions around its borders.

In 1900, McKinley appeared in a strong position for reelection, but faced one dilemma. His vice president, Garret Hobart, had died in 1899, leaving him in need of a running mate. The leading contender for the position was a rising star in the Republican Party, a brilliant, adventurous, military hero named Theodore Roosevelt. As the wildly popular governor of New York, Roosevelt would carry a critical constituency, and his national fame could only boost the ticket. Mark Hanna, now a senator from Ohio and also eyeing a presidential run in 1904, starkly opposed the nomination, seeing it as an impediment

to his own future chances. Ultimately, the Republican convention nominated Roosevelt, and the combined McKinley-Roosevelt ticket defeated a re-nominated Bryan by a larger margin than the previous contest.

McKinley's second term would be brief, as he was assassinated on September 6, 1901 while touring Buffalo, New York. McKinley, despite being shot twice in the abdomen, restrained the crowd from lynching the shooter and insisted that he was not badly hurt. He was brought to a hospital for medical treatment, and for several days his health improved. On September 13, one week after being shot, the president's health suddenly and rapidly deteriorated. By the end of that night, he had succumbed to his wounds and died, becoming the fifth president to die in office and the third president to have been assassinated.

McKinley's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of Ohio	1892-1896
President of the United States	1897-1901

For More Information

Davis, Oscar King, and John Kimberly Mumford. *The Life of William McKinley*. New York, NY: P. F. Collier & Son, 1901.

Halstead, Murat. *Life and Distinguished Services of William McKinley*. Memorial Edition. Memorial Association, 1901.

Marshall, Everett. *Complete Life of William McKinley and the Story of his Assassination*. Memorial Edition. 1901.

Morgan, H. Wayne. *William McKinley and his America*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2003.

Olcott, Charles Sumner. *William McKinley*. New York, NY: AMS Publishing,

Theodore Roosevelt



Governor of
New York
(1899-1900)



President of the
United States
(1901-1908)

Theodore Roosevelt, a national icon during the late 1800's and early 1900's, served as New York's 33rd governor and the 26th president of the United States. His accolades stretch from the fields of history, botany, and naturalism to the political, social and military sciences. He held office on the local, state and federal levels, led military forces in the Spanish-American War, and is the only American to have received both the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award, and the Nobel Peace Prize.

Born into a wealthy New York family, Roosevelt was home schooled as a child as a result of medical infirmities. His early interest in science and nature was mixed with encouragement to exercise rigorously to battle his weak health. He became both an avid scholar and athlete, particularly fond of the outdoors. He attended Harvard College, where he began writing a book about the Naval War of 1812. He completed that work shortly after finishing school, and it went on to become a standard text in the study of military history, solidifying his credentials as a scholar.

After school, Roosevelt was elected to the New York State Assembly, where he served three one-year terms. He was known as being an active member, avidly opposing all political corruption and submitting more bills for consideration than any other legislator. In 1884, following the deaths of his mother and wife on the same day, Roosevelt moved west to the Dakota Territories, where he built two ranches and raised cattle. He lived as a cowboy and rancher, also serving as the local sheriff until a severe winter destroyed his entire herd. He returned home to New York City, where he entered into city politics for the first time, but lost in his bid to become mayor of New York City.

In 1889, Roosevelt was appointed by President Benjamin Harrison as United States civil service commissioner, empowering him to target political corruption in the federal government. Roosevelt was more active than anticipated, earning the respect of both parties and reformers across the nation as he actively attacked entrenched corruption wherever he found it. At the end of Harrison's term, incoming Democratic president Grover Cleveland re-appointed Roosevelt to the position, a rare act of retaining a member from the opposing party.

Roosevelt served as the civil service commissioner for seven years, and then moved to become a Commissioner of the New York City Police Department. He revamped the department, instituting professional reforms and helping to create the modern police force. Again demonstrating his anti-corruption fervor, Roosevelt even walked police

beats himself, making sure that officers were doing their jobs and behaving in a respectable manner. His fame grew nationally, as did his reputation for honesty, dedication and brilliance. Roosevelt's rising stardom caught the eye of President McKinley, leading to his appointment as assistant secretary to the Navy in 1897. In this position, Roosevelt prepared the nation for impending war with Spain, reportedly taking on a more active role than the secretary of the Navy himself.

When war broke out, Roosevelt left his government position and formed the "Rough Riders," a dedicated group of cattleman and Ivy League graduates who trained under Roosevelt's leadership. The group gained fame for their charge up San Juan Hill, an act of gallantry that earned Roosevelt a nomination for the Medal of Honor (which was initially declined but awarded posthumously in 2001). Following the war, Colonel Roosevelt, as he preferred to be known for the rest of his life, returned to private life in New York.

His fame ensured that any return to private life would be short-lived, and it was. Roosevelt was almost immediately drafted by the Republican Party to run as their candidate for governor of New York in 1898. He won the position easily and took office on January 1, 1899 as the 33rd governor of the state. He launched into the position as anticipated, pushing reforms to government and attempting to root out the political spoils system. His attempts were so successful, and he grew so popular within the state, that both his Democratic and Republican opponents decided that their only likely chance of removing the governor was through getting him promoted to higher office. Just such an opportunity arose when Vice President Garret Hobart died in office in 1899.

President McKinley, needing to nominate a new vice presidential candidate for his ticket, was forced to consider Roosevelt. The governor had impeccable credentials, growing national reputation, and would guarantee the support of New York and the northeastern states. On the other hand, Roosevelt was a rising star in his own right, threatening to eclipse any successor McKinley might want to choose (particularly Senator Mark Hanna, McKinley's longtime friend and campaign manager.) McKinley also feared that Roosevelt was liable to follow his conscience, even if it conflicted with the needs of the Party. Ultimately, Roosevelt proved too popular to ignore, and the party selected him as the vice presidential nominee in 1900. The McKinley-Roosevelt team swept to victory, but would prove to be a brief pairing.

Roosevelt's first six months in office were quiet, but that changed when President McKinley was assassinated in 1901. Upon McKinley's death, Roosevelt succeeded to the presidency, promising to continue McKinley's program and carry out the policies the two had campaigned on in 1900. He retained McKinley's administration, but added to his predecessor's program what became known as "The Square Deal," a plan to ensure that everyone in the country, and not just large corporations, received fair treatment from the government. Roosevelt again focused on weeding out political corruption and limited the spoils system within federal government, and also began "trust busting" - forcibly breaking up corporations that had grown so large they stifled all competition. As president, Roosevelt grew immensely popular, and he was easily nominated for a full term in 1904.

President Roosevelt won a landslide re-election in 1904, promising to use the power of government to fight for the betterment of the people of the country, rather than just the

corporations. He supported some of the first consumer protections, including standards for the production and quality of food and medicine sold in the nation. He supported labor unions over corporations, fighting for higher wages and safer working conditions for the average American. His progressive approach to government transformed the political landscape, but despite his popularity Roosevelt deferred to tradition and opted not to run for a third term in office, instead supporting fellow Republican William Taft in 1908. When Taft won the presidency, Roosevelt retired from public life and departed for a year-long African safari.

Roosevelt's support for Taft was not long-lived. When he returned from Africa, Roosevelt was dismayed to find that Taft had not carried out the progressive reforms he had anticipated. Taft preferred using the court system to make gradual gains in "fairness" rather than more active uses of legislative and executive power. Roosevelt revolted against Taft and the more conservative element of the Republican Party. When he failed to reclaim the Republican presidential nomination in 1912, Roosevelt split off and created his own "Bull Moose Party," fracturing the Republicans in the process.

The three-way epic election of 1912 featured incumbent Republican president Taft, former president and now "Bull Moose" Roosevelt, and future Democratic president and New Jersey governor Woodrow Wilson. The contest was as dramatic as any in American history, featuring fiery speeches, whirlwind travel by the candidates to every corner of the country, and bold plans to remake America. The campaigns culminated with an assassination attempt on Roosevelt who, despite being shot in the chest, first subdued and then protected his assailant, refusing to receive medical attention until he had completed his 45-minute campaign speech. In the end, the split between the two Republicans enabled Wilson to win a landslide Electoral College victory.

Roosevelt spent the remaining years of his life traveling extensively, commanding expeditions throughout South America. He also continually denounced the Wilson administration, first for its conservative nature and second for its reluctance to enter the first World War. His health deteriorated slowly, largely related to the gunshot wound from the 1912 campaign. Roosevelt died in his sleep in 1919. Upon hearing of his death, then Vice President Thomas Marshall perhaps summed up the moment best, saying "Death had to take him sleeping, because were he awake, there would have been a fight."

Roosevelt's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of New York	1898-1900
Vice President of the United States	March-September 1901
the United States	1901-1909
	President of

For More Information

Chardwood, Lord. *Theodore Roosevelt*. Boston, MA: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1923.

Dalton, Kathleen. *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life*. First Vintage Ed. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 2004.

Miller, Nathan. *Theodore Roosevelt*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992.

Morris, Edmund. *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*. 2nd. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 2001.

Pringle, Henry F. *Theodore Roosevelt: A Biography*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt Inc., 1931.

Woodrow Wilson



Governor of
New Jersey
(1911-1912)



President of the
United States
(1913-1920)

Woodrow Wilson holds many notable honors, including being the first president to hold a press conference and the only president to hold an earned doctorate. He is also the only president to date to have served in political office in New Jersey, as the 34th governor of the Garden State. He is remembered as a reformer on the state, national and international levels, and also as the president who led the nation through the first great world war.

Wilson was born in Virginia, the son of a Presbyterian minister, just before the start of the Civil War. He grew up in the post-civil war south, moving from Virginia to Georgia, South Carolina and then North Carolina as his father changed congregations and teaching positions. Wilson was not a talented student and struggled through his early studies, largely as a result of poor health and possibly dyslexia. When his father obtained a teaching position at Princeton College, he enrolled there and completed his undergraduate studies. He returned to the south and went on to study law, passing the Georgia bar in 1882 and working in a small law practice in Atlanta.

The legal business was not lucrative, and Wilson feared that constant legal studies would inhibit his future political ambitions, so he left the profession and enrolled in Johns Hopkins University for graduate studies. In three years Wilson completed his doctoral dissertation examining the United States Congress, earning his PhD in both history and political science. His studies led him to look disdainfully at the American constitution, believing that it was both outdated and prevented the American people from being able to hold responsible parties accountable for the actions, or inactions, of government.

Wilson moved between academic appointments until returning to Princeton as a faculty member in 1890. He continued studying American political institutions and jurisprudence, and gradually his faith in the American system improved. President Cleveland's administration showed Wilson that a strong executive could be the source of leadership that his earlier scholarship feared the American system lacked. Even as a committed Democrat, Wilson was impressed by the leadership of president's McKinley and Roosevelt, seeing their strength as necessary to the health of American democracy.

In 1902, Wilson was elevated to be president of Princeton, and began restructuring the college for future growth. He implemented reforms to the curriculum, hired additional faculty and attempted to democratize the way Princeton functioned. While not all of his

reforms were successful, and were often blocked by the Trustees, Wilson is often credited with putting Princeton on the path to becoming a national academic leader.

By 1910, Wilson had grown tired of battling the administration and Trustees of Princeton and, despite having just been elected president of the American Political Science Association, retired from academia to enter into politics. His key credential, aside from having studied American politics for two decades, was that he was not beholden to the political machines that dominated New Jersey politics. He won the Democratic nomination for New Jersey governor and then the general election, moving him from the presidency of Princeton to the 34th governor of New Jersey within a year.

Even while electing Wilson governor, New Jersey remained a Republican state, providing overwhelming support for William Taft in 1908 and electing Republican majorities to the state legislature in 1910. Wilson immediately used his status as a political outsider and attacked political corruption and the spoils system within New Jersey, despite this bringing him into direct conflict with his own party. Within his first year in office he pushed through progressive reforms, installing a system of primary elections in the state, restructuring the public utility commission and installing a system of worker's compensation. All of these reforms weakened the hold of party bosses on New Jersey politics.

These actions caught the eye of the national press, providing Wilson nationwide acclaim for his independence from political machines and progressive reforms. The Democratic Party was badly split before the presidential nominating convention. Having lost the previous four presidential elections, three of which while nominating William Jennings Bryan as their candidate, the Democrats were seeking a new direction. Wilson's name quickly rose to the top of the list of potential nominees. When the convention deadlocked between several candidates for 46 successive ballots, Bryan used his remaining influence to pull additional votes for Wilson, guaranteeing him the nomination.

The 1912 presidential election was epic, pitting former president and now "Bull Moose" Theodore Roosevelt against Republican incumbent president Howard Taft and Democrat Woodrow Wilson. With the Republican's divided, Wilson won a narrow plurality of the popular vote, but a massive victory in the Electoral College. He entered into office under a promise of a "New Freedom" program, using a limited federal government to oppose business monopolies and spread democratic power to the American people.

Wilson, using large Democratic majorities in Congress, pushed through progressive reforms rapidly. His legislative accomplishments, including the Federal Reserve Act, the Clayton Antitrust Act, and the Federal Farm Loan Act, were among the most transformative to pass between the Civil War and the New Deal. In addition to pushing progressive reforms that gave political power and economic protections to the masses of America, Wilson also pushed to avoid American entry into the rapidly escalating war in Europe. His actions on that front gave birth to his re-election slogan in 1916, "He kept us out of war."

Re-elected narrowly in 1916, Wilson soon faced the realities of the first World War and quickly mobilized the nation to fight alongside its allies. As he mobilized the nation for war, he also prepared for peace, issuing his "14 Points" plan for achieving a lasting world peace through, among other things, the creation of an international governing

organization that would mediate disputes and prevent future conflicts - the League of Nations. While the world embraced the plan, Congress did not, and it refused to ratify the treaty that earned Wilson the 1919 Nobel Peace Prize.

Disappointed over Congress's failure to ratify the treaty, Wilson fought back, delivering speeches across the nation in favor of ratification. The effort proved to be too much. Exhausted by the travel and pressures of numerous speaking engagements, Wilson was soon incapacitated by a series of strokes. Suffering from weakness and the effects of multiple strokes, Wilson's last year as president took place largely out of the public eye. Infirm and refusing to accept his deteriorating health, Wilson became a figurehead in the administration, with his cabinet carrying out his previous plans. He left office in 1920 and died four years later.

Wilson's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of New Jersey	1911-1913
President of the United States	1913-1921

For More Information

Cooper, Jr., John Minton. *Woodrow Wilson: A Biography*. First Vintage ed. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 2011.

Commermuth-Costa, Carol. *Woodrow Wilson*. New York, NY: Lerner Publications Group, 2003.

Hale, William Bayard. *Woodrow Wilson: The Story of His Life*. New York, NY: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1912.

Hosford, Hester E. *Woodrow Wilson: His Career, His Statesmanship, and His Public Policies*. 2nd. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1912.

Nordholt, Jan Willem Schulte. *Woodrow Wilson: A Life for World Peace*. The Regents of the University of California, 1991.

Calvin Coolidge



Governor of
Massachusetts
(1919-1920)



President of the
United States
(1923-1928)

Calvin Coolidge rose through the ranks of government, holding nearly every political office from local town council to the presidency of the United States. Noted for his cool, calm demeanor, Coolidge was famous for his pragmatic approach and conservative, small-government beliefs. In addition to being one of the 17 governors who moved on to the presidency, Coolidge is also one of the four governors who entered the nation's highest office by ascending from the vice presidency following the death of the president, and is one of only two to have then won the office through his own election.

Coolidge was born in Vermont, but moved with to Massachusetts for college and then remained there to practice law. He entered into politics in 1898 as a Republican, winning election to his local town council, and then moved on to be elected city solicitor and then clerk of the courts in 1902. In 1904 he lost the only election he would ever lose, failing to earn a position on his local school board. Coolidge recounted later that he lost because his neighbors voted against him because he had no children of his own at the time.

Over the next 10 years, Coolidge worked his way up the political ranks in the state, winning election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives, then as mayor of Northampton, and finally to the Massachusetts State Senate. After serving several terms, Coolidge was elected president of the Senate, winning the office unanimously. In 1915, he was nominated to run as the Republican Party nominee for lieutenant governor. The ticket was successful and went on to win the next two elections as well, serving three successive one-year terms in office.

In 1918, Coolidge's running mate declined to seek the governorship again and Coolidge decided to seek the office himself. He won the election and assumed the office in 1919. Almost immediately he confronted an event of national importance - the Boston Police Strike. The Boston police had been pushing towards unionization, but were opposed by the police commissioner. When the American Federation of Labor granted the police department a union charter, the commissioner immediately suspended the union leaders. A few days later, the Boston police went on strike, leaving the city unprotected. Crime and sporadic violence erupted in the city, followed by unrestrained riots.

In reaction, the mayor called on National Guard troops to enforce the law. Coolidge, who at that point had been following the situation from a distance, was furious that the mayor had given orders to the state's militia, which only the governor had power to do.

He immediately ordered more Guard units to report to Boston, took personal control of their actions, and removed all striking police officers from their jobs. When the head of the AFL, Samuel Gompers, contacted Coolidge saying that the previous days events were a result of the police commissioner's denial of police officers' rights, Coolidge issued a reply that instantly made him a national figure, saying:

Your assertion that the Commissioner was wrong cannot justify the wrong of leaving the city unguarded. That furnished the opportunity; the criminal element furnished the action. There is no right to strike against the public safety by anyone, anywhere, any time.

Almost immediately, the Republican Party began considering Coolidge as a presidential contender for the upcoming 1920 election. His actions as governor, including vetoing a raise for legislators, issuing tax cuts while producing a budget surplus, and supporting prohibition were popularly heralded across the country. At the 1920 Republican nominating convention, Coolidge was passed over as the party's presidential nominee, in favor of Warren Harding, but he won a surprising nomination for vice president. The duo went on to win election in a landslide.

As vice president, Coolidge earned the nickname "Silent Cal" for his quiet manner. He was the first vice president to attend cabinet meetings with the president, but, despite being known as a skilled orator, rarely spoke in meetings or in public. Famously, when confronted by a dinner guest who said, "Mr. Coolidge, I've made a bet against a fellow who said it was impossible to get more than two words out of you," replied simply and characteristically, "You lose."

Coolidge's quietness made him a background figure during Harding's presidency, but he was thrust into the spotlight when the President suddenly died on August 2, 1923. Coolidge assumed the presidency, vowing to continue Harding's legacy. He even permitted many of Harding's appointees to keep their positions despite becoming linked to scandals such as the Teapot Dome scandal, arguing that he would execute the elected president's program as it had been set out.

During this time, Coolidge benefited from the onset of the "Roaring Twenties," an unparalleled economic boom. With the economy on sound footing, Coolidge's conservative approach to government regulation allowed businesses to thrive. At the completion of Harding's term, Coolidge accepted the Republican nomination for his own presidential term and rode the good economic times to a convincing victory.

Coolidge continued his conservative policies throughout his term in office, as well as his quiet, reserved manner. His economic policy was largely invisible, as he eschewed almost any regulations of business and pushed only to reduce the income tax, both in terms of who had to pay it and how much they had to pay. As the economy continued to surge, this still produced surpluses in the treasury.

At the end of his first term in office, Coolidge was perceived to have allowed the economy to grow unimpeded, having maintained a thoroughly conservative approach to governance. While Coolidge was on vacation in the summer of 1928, a reporter asked him about the upcoming presidential election. The soft-spoken president thought for a

moment, then replied that he had decided not to seek another term. "Silent Cal" left the office in 1928, while the economy was still roaring and with the country in high spirits

Coolidge's Pathway from Governor to President

Governor of Massachusetts	1919-1920
Vice President of the United States	1921-1923
President of the United States	1923-1929

For More Information

Greenberg, David. *Calvin Coolidge*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. LLC, 2006.

Otfinoski, Steven. *Calvin Coolidge*. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2009.

Sobel, Robert. *Coolidge: An American Enigma*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1931.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt



Governor of
New York
(1929-1932)



President of the
United States
(1933-1944)

Franklin Delano Roosevelt transformed the presidency. Elected to four consecutive terms, he is the only president to have won more than two terms in office. Under his leadership, the United States emerged from the greatest economic collapse in American history, fought the Second World War and transitioned from a growing nation into a world superpower. Like his cousin Teddy Roosevelt, FDR first gained executive experience as the governor of New York, serving as the state's 44th executive.

Born into one of the wealthiest families in fashionable New York society, FDR grew up in a life of privilege. He attended the best schools, where he earned mediocre grades, but distinguished himself for his leadership skills. While FDR was in college his uncle "Teddy" became the president of the United States, gaining him access to the elite world of national politics. That world attracted Roosevelt, and he ran for his first elected office in 1910. Despite running in a district that had not elected a Democrat in almost 30 years, FDR rode a Democratic wave that year and won office in the state Senate. As soon as he entered the Senate, FDR involved himself in a power struggle for control of the chamber, helping defeat the favored candidate of the powerful Tammany Hall faction of the Democratic Party.

While in the Senate, FDR distinguished himself by supporting agriculture, labor and social welfare policies, portending the New Deal programs of his presidency. During the 1912 election, he aligned himself with Woodrow Wilson's presidential campaign, earning him credibility with the administration and opening up opportunities to join Wilson's team. In 1913, he was offered a position as the assistant US secretary of the Navy and accepted, moving into federal government.

As assistant secretary, Roosevelt pushed to expand the Navy through the creation of the Navy Reserves, and particularly through the use of submarines to counter the growing German submarine menace. He was an early proponent of war with Germany, but was denied by Wilson in his attempt to fit the Navy for war prior to a declaration of war. After war was declared, waged, and then concluded, Roosevelt was put in charge of demobilizing the Navy, which he did only reluctantly. Throughout the rest of his career, Roosevelt worked to maintain a strong and active Navy.

In 1920, Roosevelt left his position as assistant secretary to campaign for the vice presidential nomination, which he won. At just 38 years of age, Roosevelt was one of the youngest vice-presidential nominees ever, and joined a ticket topped by James M. Cox,

governor of Ohio. Cox and Roosevelt favored continuing the policies of President Wilson, but following Wilson's popular decline were not competitive nationally and lost the election by nearly 30 percent of the national vote to Republicans Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge.

Following the 1920 loss, FDR left politics for several years and joined a law firm in New York City. During this time he contracted what was thought to be polio which left him paralyzed below the waist for the remainder of his life. Fearing that his disability would bar him from winning future elections, FDR hid his paralysis and took to wearing iron leg braces that he was able to walk in for short distances with a cane, while only using a wheelchair when in private. He also used this time to repair his relationship with Tammany Hall, endorsing their candidate for governor, Al Smith, in 1922.

When Governor Smith ran for the presidency in 1928, he in turn endorsed Roosevelt for the governorship of New York. FDR ran and won the office, even as Smith lost the national election and Democrats around the country faced tough losses. As governor, FDR became known as a reformer who actively pushed progressive policies. He lacked a specific plan however, and eagerly embraced new ideas as they were recommended by his advisers. His approach was based upon trying programs that sounded promising to see if they worked, pragmatically keeping those that succeeded while eliminating those that did not.

When the stock market crashed in 1929, FDR pushed for an active government intervention to stave off depression. He increased state government spending, funding new construction projects to stimulate job production and facilitate business growth. He also supported the creation of new government agencies that would provide unprecedented protections for the average New Yorker, such as old age insurance and unemployment benefits.

In 1932, Roosevelt campaigned for the Democratic nomination for the presidency. As a popular governor from a populous state, FDR was an appealing presidential candidate for the Democratic Party. His reformist credentials added to his attractiveness as the country spiraled into its greatest depression ever. The sitting president, Herbert Hoover, declared that the federal government had little constitutional power to intervene in the depression, and instead advocated greater state government action. Roosevelt set a clear distinction, arguing that the constitution had proven to be a "flexible document" and that the federal government would have to be transformed in order to overcome the depression. His appeals were successful, and Roosevelt and his running mate, John Nance Garner, won a decisive victory.

Once in office, FDR began to transform how the federal government operated with his "New Deal," first providing relief to millions of unemployed and homeless Americans, next by pushing unprecedented efforts to promote a national economic recovery, and finally by reforming the regulation of the economy to prevent future crashes. All of these moves were controversial, but most were also extremely popular. While his expansion of federal government's power and activity led to constitutional challenges with the Supreme Court of the United States, FDR's sustained popularity demonstrated that public opinion remained on his side. Roosevelt won one of the largest landslide victories in American presidential history in 1936, sending him into his second term along with strong majorities of Democrats in Congress. In 1937, following Roosevelt's first

reelection, the Supreme Court relented, affirming that FDR's New Deal programs would remain in effect.

Roosevelt continued to push New Deal programs through his second term, but foreign affairs also took precedence during this term. The rise of a powerful German dictator, Adolf Hitler, introduced fears of another broad European war, and the launch of war between China and Japan in 1937 set the stage for a global conflict. Roosevelt rejected isolationism and instead began arming the United States allies in Europe, as well as preparing to defend the nation from an increasingly belligerent Japanese Empire. In part due to his growing fears of an impending World War, FDR decided to seek a third term in 1940.

The traditional two-term presidency had been set down by convention when George Washington declined a third term in 1796. Since then, no American president had won more than two terms in office, and the few who had sought third terms were battered at the polls. Facing the possibility of a second world war, FDR defied convention and decided to accept the Democratic nomination if it were offered, which it was. He went on to win his third term handily over Republican challenger Wendell Willkie, largely by pledging to do all that he could to keep the country out of war. A year into that term FDR's intentions to avoid war became moot. On December 7, 1941, the Japanese navy struck Pearl Harbor, forcing the United States into World War II.

FDR transitioned his presidency during his third term from a domestic focus to overseeing the largest military expansion in the nation's history, and its greatest war. The war erased the unemployment that had plagued the nation as the armed forces swelled to meet military threats to both the east and west. The allied efforts lasted throughout his third term in office, leading him to seek yet another term in 1944 to avoid, as Lincoln had put it, "Changing horses mid-stream." Roosevelt was elected to his fourth presidential term by the smallest margin of his four victories, this time alongside vice president Harry A. Truman.

Roosevelt's fourth and final term proved brief. The strain of 12 years in office, coupled with more than two decades of attempting to hide his paralysis by wearing heavy leg braces, had drained FDR of his strength. He toured allied-occupied Europe and northern Africa in early 1943, but his advisers were stunned by how tired and thin the president looked. When he returned to the United States to brief Congress about his trip abroad, the weary president was too tired to stand during his address. A month later, while sitting for a portrait, Roosevelt died of a brain hemorrhage.

About a month after Roosevelt's death, the war in Europe ended, followed by the end of the Pacific War later that year. Shortly thereafter, the United States Congress passed an amendment to the Constitution formerly capping the number of terms a president can serve at two, cementing FDR's place in history. Roosevelt led the nation through two of the greatest challenges in its history, the Great Depression and World War II, though he did not survive to see the conclusion of the latter.

While he is best known as the country's longest serving president, Roosevelt got his first executive experience as governor of New York and used his time there to form the basis of his presidency. Following his death, it would take another 30 years for another governor to return to the presidency.

Roosevelt's Transition from Governorship to Presidency

Governor of New York	1929-1933
President of the United States	1933-1945

For More Information

Black, Conrad. *Franklin Delano Roosevelt: Champion of Freedom*. New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2003.

Brinkley, Alan. *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2010.

Burns, James MacGregor. *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox*. Vol.1, 1882-1940. New York, NY: Harcourt Inc., 1956.

Jenkins, Roy, and Arthur M. Schlesinger. *Franklin Delano Roosevelt*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. LLC, 2003.

Smith, Jean Edward. *FDR*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 2007.

Jimmy Carter



Governor of
Georgia
(1972-1974)



President of the
United States
(1977-1980)

The 39th president of the United States, James Earl Carter, came to the presidency directly from the Georgia governorship, becoming the first governor in three decades to hold the nation's highest office. Ending a 30-year long period during which no governor had won the office, Carter ushered in a 30-year era when governors would dominate presidential elections.

Born in a rural section of Georgia, Carter was raised by a prominent peanut farmer and a registered nurse. After graduating high school, he earned entry to the United States Naval Academy. After completing studies in the Naval Academy, Carter was admitted to the nuclear submarine program within the Navy, which greatly shaped his views on nuclear technology. He excelled in the program but, despite the promise of a successful career in the Navy, resigned his commission following his father's death to return home and run the family farm.

Once back home in Georgia, Carter became involved in local politics, serving on the boards for local libraries, schools and hospitals. He enjoyed politics and in 1961 decided to run for the state senate as a Democrat, the dominant party in the one-party state. He was successful, but defeated his opponent only after a court ruling invalidated hundreds of fraudulent votes cast for his opponent. He went on to serve two terms in the state senate, rising to chair the senate's education committee, before turning his attention to higher office.

In 1966 Carter ran for the governorship. At the time, governors in Georgia were limited to a single term, though they could run again after sitting a term out of office, forcing Governor Carl Sanders to leave the governorship. Carter's strong third place finish forced a runoff between the top two finishers, allowing runner-up candidate Lester Maddox, a strict segregationist businessman, to topple ex-governor Ellis Arnall for the Democratic nomination. The in-party strife led to unprecedented difficulty in the general election, where the Republican party's nominee won a plurality of the vote. As Georgia's election laws required the winner to earn a majority, the election was thrown into the Democratic-controlled state senate, which selected Maddox as the next governor.

Four years later Carter ran again, successfully winning the Democratic nomination, this time over former governor Sanders, and then the governorship. After the campaign, Carter's refusal to join the "White Citizens' Council," which publicly opposed the move towards desegregation, alienated him from the strongly segregationist wing of his own

party. Governor Maddox moved into the lieutenant governorship, where he publicly feuded with Carter throughout his term.

As governor, Carter vastly transformed Georgia government, consolidating government agencies and reducing over 300 separate government entities to just 30. He rooted out corruption, particularly by insisting that appointments and promotions in government be made based upon merit and not partisanship. Carter also promoted equality throughout the state, spreading education funding equally throughout school districts and, in his inauguration speech, insisting that the time for racial segregation was over.

Carter's populist governorship made him stand out within the Democratic Party and won him recognition as one of the "New Southern Governors" who were able to move beyond the issues of race and segregation. He endorsed the newly-handed-down decision in *Roe v. Wade* and then, reacting to the United States Supreme Court's decision striking down the death penalty, instituted life imprisonment in the state for the first time. Later, opposition to the death penalty would become a hallmark of Carter's career.

Soon after the 1972 elections when the Democratic nominee Senator George McGovern was overwhelmingly defeated by incumbent President Richard Nixon, Carter decided to run in 1976. Despite being a vast underdog, he courted the news media and worked tirelessly before other campaigns had even begun. He rose from relative obscurity to gain the nomination and then narrowly defeated President Gerald Ford. Ford, who had taken office after President Nixon resigned, had at first been very popular but then was widely criticized for pardoning the former president.

Carter's term as president was a difficult one. Assuming office during an economic downturn, Carter struggled to deal first with "stagflation," then an energy crisis, and then multiple crises in the Middle East. Domestically, Carter drew upon his previous experience and created the departments of Education and Energy. He created a national energy policy for the first time, focusing on conservation and keeping prices low, particularly through innovation and the development of new technologies such as nuclear energy.

Much of Carter's presidency was devoted to foreign policy, where he developed into an ardent supporter of human rights across the globe. He brokered major treaties with the Soviet Union, Israel and Egypt, and Panama. However, his tenure was also marked by notable crises including the 1979 oil embargo, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis.

In 1980, President Carter faced challenges from both the left and right. He fought off a strong primary challenge from Senator Ted Kennedy, but then lost the general election to Ronald Reagan, former governor of California. After leaving office, Carter continued his efforts to advance human rights, and in 2002 became the first United States president to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize after leaving office.

Carter's Transition from Governor to President

Governor of Georgia	1971-1975
President of the United States	1977-1981

For More Information

Bourne, Peter G. *Jimmy Carter: A Comprehensive Biography from Plains to Post-Presidency*. 1997.

Mercer, Charles E. *Jimmy Carter*. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977.

Morris, Kenneth E. *Jimmy Carter: American Moralist*. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996.

Zelizer, Julian E. *Jimmy Carter*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. LLC, 2010.

Ronald Reagan



Governor of
California
(1967-1974)



President of the
United States
(1981-1988)

Remembered as one of the most significant presidents of the twentieth century, Ronald Reagan held no other elected office before successfully seeking the governorship of California in 1966 and then winning reelection four years later.

Born in Illinois, Reagan moved west following college to pursue a career in entertainment, first in radio and then in television. He started in Iowa, calling the home football games for the Iowa Hawkeyes as well as voicing the radio play-by-play for the Chicago Cubs. During a trip to California with the Cubs, he took a screen test that landed him a film contract, leading him to become a screen star, first in movies and then later in television.

During World War II, Reagan served in the First Motion Picture Unit of the Army Air Force, where he helped to make training and morale-boosting films for the troops. Following the war, Reagan rejoined the Screen Actors Guild, becoming the president of the organization in 1947. During this time he testified in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, reporting on the activities of suspected communists within the motion picture industry.

During the 1950's, Reagan left the film industry and entered television, hosting a popular TV show. He also began changing his politics. Reagan had been an ardent Democrat for most of his life and a strong supporter of the progressive policies of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. After touring General Electric plants throughout the nation, Reagan became increasingly conservative, adopting the ideology of his employers at GE, as well as his new wife, Nancy. Part of Reagan's job as a spokesperson for GE was to deliver pro-business speeches throughout the country, which he excelled at, refining a skill that would benefit his future political career.

In 1964 Reagan endorsed Barry Goldwater for president and, after delivering a speech extolling the virtues of economic freedom at a fundraiser on Goldwater's behalf, launched his own political career. In 1966, Reagan won the Republican nomination for governor of California and went on to defeat two-term incumbent Democrat Pat Brown in the general election. He campaigned primarily on three issues: reducing the size of government; getting people off of welfare and back to work; and ending the student protests at the University of California, Berkeley.

As governor, Reagan found challenges implemented some of his campaign promises. He immediately froze state hiring, but found that this was insufficient to meet a budget gap in his first year. With few alternative options, he signed one of the largest tax increases in state history during his first year in office. He championed welfare reform, but with an uninterested legislature, was not able to enact strong reform legislation. Reagan also championed the death penalty, but despite his attempts, only a single inmate was executed during his term in office, as California and the rest of the nation struggled to adapt to new Supreme Court restrictions.

One of the first issues Reagan faced as governor was whether to sign an act legalizing abortion under certain circumstances in order to limit the number of illicit, medically dangerous "back-alley" abortions performed in California. After agonizing over the decision, Reagan agreed to sign the legislation. Later, he viewed his decision as a mistake and regretted it, turning his opposition to abortion into a central component of his platform.

Reagan did follow through with his promise to "clean up" Berkeley. When a large protest erupted in 1969, the governor sent in California Highway Patrol officers to quell the protests. The governor then activated 2,000 National Guard troops to occupy the city for two weeks in order to maintain the peace. While the events became remembered by the protesters as "Bloody Thursday," order was restored to the city.

Reagan made his first foray into presidential politics in 1968, midway through his first term, seeking to become a compromise candidate if neither Nelson Rockefeller nor Richard Nixon were able to cement the Republican nomination before the Republican convention. When Nixon was able to amass sufficient votes to secure the nomination, Reagan prepared for a later challenge. After winning reelection as governor in 1970, Reagan chose not to run again for the governor's office in 1974. That year Jerry Brown, son of governor Pat Brown, whom Reagan had defeated eight years earlier, won the election, making Reagan the only governor to have been preceded and followed by a father and son.

In 1976 Reagan ran for office again, this time attempting to unseat incumbent president Gerald Ford for the Republican nomination. He was unsuccessful, but by this time had made a nationally-recognized name for himself. In 1980, when he ran a third time, he secured the Republican nomination and soundly defeated Democratic incumbent and former governor Jimmy Carter for the presidency.

Reagan's presidency experienced dramatic highs and tragic lows very early on. During his inaugural address, Iran released 59 American hostages, ending a year-long standoff with that nation. Just two months later, however, the President narrowly survived an assassination attempt by a deranged gunman. By summer the president had recovered and begun movement on the "Reagan Revolution."

During his two terms in office Reagan sharply reduced the role of government in domestic policy while expanding the military, cutting taxes and boosting business in the country. He worked with a divided Congress, however, and compromised on many issues, such as signing off on tax increases for six successive years following a massive tax cut in 1981.

Domestically, the president sought to strengthen the economy by aiding business. He weakened the grip of unions, firing air traffic controllers who refused to return to work during a strike in 1981, and he repeatedly pushed to reduce the capital gains tax. He pushed to eliminate regulations hampering business growth, and cut spending on non-defense programs such as Medicaid and environmental protection.

Reagan left a legacy of ending the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. He directed attacks against threats in Libya and Grenada, and he directed covert arms assistance to allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

His reelection victory in 1984 was the greatest landslide in American presidential history, with Reagan winning 525 electoral votes and nearly 60% of the popular vote. Following the completion of his second term, he retired to California, where he was ultimately diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He spent the last decade of his life largely in seclusion and passed away in 2004.

Reagan's Transition from Governorship to Presidency

Governor of California	1967-1975
President of the United States	1981-1989

For More Information

Cannon, Lou. *Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power*. New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2003.

Diggins, John Patrick. *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2007.

Walsh, Kenneth T. *Ronald Reagan*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group, 1997.

Bill Clinton



Governor of
Arkansas
(1979-1980,
1983-1992)



President of the
United States
(1993-2000)

The 42nd president, William Jefferson Clinton, served four elected terms as the Arkansas governor, running in five successive elections spanning three decades, and was the youngest American governor at the time of his initial election, just 32 years old. He moved directly from the governorship to the presidency, then presided over one of the greatest economic booms in American history.

Born in Hope, Arkansas, Bill Clinton never knew his father, William Jefferson Blythe, Jr., who died in a car accident before Bill was born. He was raised by his grandparents during his childhood while his mother attended nursing school. When she returned home and married, Bill eventually took his step-father Roger's surname, Clinton, as his own.

Clinton was a bright student, excelling in music and student leadership. He went to Georgetown University, won a Rhodes scholarship to attend Oxford University, and then attended Yale Law school. At Yale he met Hillary Rodham, whom he later married. After being hired at the University of Arkansas law school, the two returned to Arkansas, Clinton's home state.

In 1974, Clinton ran for his first public office, competing for the U.S. House of Representatives. He lost a close election to the Republican incumbent, but in 1976 then ran for Arkansas attorney general and won. The following election cycle, Clinton ran for governor, defeating his Republican opponent by an almost 2-1 margin.

In his first term, Clinton tackled some popular issues, such as beginning to reform education in the state, improving roads, and appointing his wife Hillary, now regarded as one of the top lawyers in the country, to head a committee studying health care reform in the state. While these moves proved popular, Clinton also enacted a highly unpopular motor vehicle tax and suffered from the escape of Cuban refugees from an Arkansas Army base. Clinton failed to direct voter attention to his positive accomplishments and was defeated in his reelection bid in November, losing to Republican Frank White.

Two years later, Clinton ran again, this time defeating White and reclaiming the governorship. Having learned a lesson from his previous defeat, Clinton conscientiously maintained a positive public relations campaign as governor, touting his accomplishments. He continued to focus on strengthening the state's infrastructure and reforming health care, but his greatest accomplishments were in education reform.

Clinton remained in the governor's office for a full decade following his reelection, never again facing a serious challenge for the office. He won election to two-year terms in 1978, 1982, and 1984, and then to four-year terms in 1986 and 1990 after a constitutional amendment lengthened the term in office. In 1992, after Clinton had declared his intention to run for the presidency, the state passed a constitutional amendment installing a term limit of eight years on governors.

Clinton entered the Democratic primaries for the presidential nomination and was an early front-runner in 1992, but did not fare well in the opening Iowa caucus, finishing in a distant third. He rebounded in New Hampshire, finishing a close second to earn the nickname "the Comeback Kid." He rode the momentum of his near-win in New Hampshire to seize the Democratic nomination over California governor Jerry Brown. He then went on to defeat incumbent Republican President George H.W. Bush in the general election. Bush, who after presiding over both the fall of the Soviet Union and the victorious Persian Gulf War had been considered a shoo-in for reelection, was defeated largely due to breaking a promise not to raise taxes and the insurgent candidacy of independent Ross Perot.

As president, Clinton tackled many major issues, beginning with the burgeoning deficit. He signed off on tax cuts for lower class families and small businesses, while raising taxes on the upper classes to compensate. He then moved to confront health care, an issue that had been stalled in Congress for decades. Hillary Clinton led the effort to reform the nation's health care system, but the effort ultimately failed.

In the middle of his first term, the Democratic Party lost control of Congress for the first time since the 1950's, forcing Clinton to work across the aisle with the Republican Party for the remainder of his time in office. On some issues, the two parties were able to come to an agreement or compromise. Significantly, they agreed to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), opening up the borders between Canada and Mexico for unfettered trade, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), which dramatically increased the availability of health insurance for children.

The Democratic President and Republican Congress deadlocked over several issues, however, leading to a government shutdown in 1995, and contributing to a presidential impeachment in 1998. A series of scandals, some tied to financial improprieties and others from sexual behavior, had damaged Clinton's reputation and become a target for congressional Republicans. When news of an ongoing affair with a White House intern emerged and Clinton denied the affair during a sworn deposition for another alleged affair that had supposedly occurred while he was governor, Clinton was impeached by Congress for perjury and obstruction of justice. Though the impeachment passed the House, the vote to convict him failed in the Senate, largely along party lines. Ironically, Clinton's public approval ratings peaked just after his acquittal, marking the high point of his presidency.

During Clinton's presidency, the national economy boomed, aiding his popularity. He won reelection in 1996 over Republican Robert Dole, and at the end of his second term had approval ratings that matched those of presidents Fraagenda that helped reinforce his image as a successful and pragmatic president, a lesson he had learned from his days as governor.

Bill Clinton's Transition from Governorship to Presidency

Governor of Arkansas	1979-1981
	1983-1993
President of the United States	1993-2001

For More Information

Benson, Michael. *Bill Clinton*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Group, 2004.

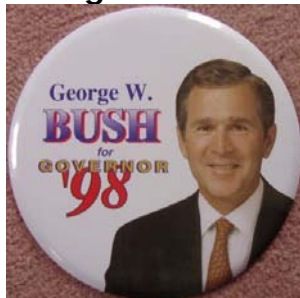
Clinton, William Jefferson. *My Life*. New York, NY: Knopf Publishing Group, 2004.

Levin, Robert E. *Bill Clinton: The Inside Story*. New York, NY: Shapolsky Publishers, Inc., 1992.

Martin, Gene L. *Bill Clinton: President from Arkansas*. Tudor Publishers, 1993.

Takiff, Michael. *A Complicated Man: The Life of Bill Clinton as Told by Those Who Know Him*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.

George W. Bush



Governor of
Texas
(1995-2000)



President of the
United States
(2001-2008)

The 43rd president, George W. Bush, was a two-term governor of Texas and the son of the 41st president, George H.W. Bush. Born into a well-known political dynasty from Texas and Connecticut, Bush followed in his family's footsteps, pursuing a political career that brought him to executive office at both the federal and state levels.

Born in New Haven, Connecticut while his father attended Yale University, Bush was raised in Texas and spent most of his life in that state. He attended Yale University, before joining the Air National Guard in 1968. He then attended Harvard Business School, earning an MBA in 1975. After leaving Harvard, Bush began his business and political careers.

Bush ran for his first political office in 1978, seeking a seat in the House of Representatives, but was defeated. He then formed his own oil company and remained in the industry in various capacities until the late 1980's. He was strongly involved with his father's presidential bid in 1988 and then returned to Texas, where he bought a share in the Texas Rangers professional baseball team. In 1994, Bush ran for public office again, this time seeking the governorship.

Bush ran against a popular incumbent Democrat, Ann Richards, who seemed to be well positioned to retain her seat. His campaign focused a few key issues where he could draw a distinction between himself and the sitting governor, particularly her veto of a bill that would allow Texans to carry concealed firearms, which he promised to enact. The tactic was successful, and on Election Day Bush won by a comfortable margin.

In office, Bush worked to improve the quality of life for the average Texan, pushing through the largest tax cut in the state's history, encouraging the growth of the economy, primarily through the expansion of the energy industry, and by investing in improvements to education in the state. His policies were both successful and popular, leading him to win a landslide reelection in 1998, making him the first governor to win two four-year terms in the state's history.

During his second term, Bush continued to register policy successes. He supported a new law expanding renewable energy production in the state and also began promoting volunteerism and faith-based collaborations between government and non-profit agencies. The programs made him very popular within the state and added to his national appeal.

In 2000, Bush pursued the presidency, winning the Republican nomination handily and facing off against vice-president Al Gore in the general election. Bush pushed his credentials as a “compassionate conservative,” endorsing a smaller government that worked to empower Americans to improve their own lives, rather than rely on the federal government. The two candidates were both moderate, providing few strong contrasts for voters to choose between.

In November the election proved close, with Gore winning more popular votes nationally, but Bush gaining a majority of electoral votes, thanks in part to a razor-thin 537-vote victory in Florida. When Gore challenged the Florida results, seeking a recount, court challenges rose all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States. In one of the most controversial decisions in its history, the court barred Florida from conducting a recount, effectively delivering the presidency to Bush.

Though Bush campaigned on a promise of keeping his focus on domestic policy, rather than foreign affairs, he was unable to do so. Just eight months into his presidency, the nation was struck by the worst terrorist attacks in its history on September 11, 2001. Bush responded by launching attacks against Afghanistan, the country known to harbor the mastermind behind the attacks, Osama Bin Laden. A year later, the United States also invaded Iraq, a country with which Bush’s father had engaged in a limited war in the 1990’s and one that was still considered a threat to American national security.

Domestically, Bush pushed through massive tax cuts, landmark education reform, and a prescription drug benefit to aid senior citizens. Despite these accomplishments, he was largely known as a “wartime” president focused on foreign affairs and the “War on Terror.” In 2004 he won a narrow reelection over Senator John Kerry, largely due to domestic support for his efforts to protect the nation.

By 2006, however, the nation had soured on the two stagnating conflicts abroad and a lackluster domestic economy. The Republican Party suffered a devastating midterm election defeat, returning the Democratic Party to power in both chambers of Congress and limiting what Bush could accomplish on his own for the remainder of his term. His approval ratings steadily declined and, when the nation suffered a massive financial collapse in 2008, his presidential approval ratings sank to the lowest levels ever recorded.

At the end of his eight years as president, Bush had a mixed record as reflected in public opinion. In September of 2001, following the attacks of September 11, he achieved the highest presidential approval ratings in history, 90 percent. From there he steadily declined, suffering the largest decline in approval in presidential history, falling 65 points to a 25 percent approval level near the end of his term. Bush’s skill in domestic politics, developed as governor of Texas was ultimately overshadowed by foreign policy issues that were not part of his original platform.

George W. Bush’s Transition from Governorship to Presidency

Governor of Texas	1995-2001
President of the United States	2001-2009

For More Information

McCall, Brian. *The Power of the Texas Governor: Connally to Bush*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2009.

Roundtree, Clarke. *George W. Bush: A Biography*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2011.