

A New Century: President's Clinton and Bush



William Jefferson Clinton, was the 42nd President of the United States, serving from 1993 to 2001. Clinton served five terms as the Governor of Arkansas. His wife, **Hillary Rodham Clinton**, is presently in her first term as the junior U.S. Senator from New York.

Clinton was the third-youngest president, behind Theodore Roosevelt (the youngest) and John F. Kennedy (the youngest *elected*). He was the first baby boomer president and the first Democratic president to be re-elected since Franklin Roosevelt in 1944. Clinton was one of only two Presidents in American history to be impeached, and was acquitted by a vote of the United States Senate on February 12, 1999. In both runs for the Presidency of the USA, Clinton never received a majority of the popular vote, though he ended his Presidential career with a 65% approval rating, the highest end-of-term approval rating of any President in the post-Eisenhower era.

- Shortly after taking office, Clinton fulfilled a campaign promise by signing the **Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993**, which required large employers to allow their employees to take unpaid leave because of pregnancy or serious medical condition.
- Clinton pushed another controversial issue during this period: that of free trade. In 1993, Clinton supported the **North American Free Trade Agreement** for ratification by the US Senate.
- Clinton also signed into law the **Brady Bill**, which imposes a five-day waiting period on handgun purchases so that background checks can be done to help keep handguns away from criminals.
- The most important item on Clinton's legislative agenda, however, **was a complex health care reform plan**, the result of a taskforce headed by **Hillary Clinton**, aimed at achieving universal coverage via a national healthcare plan. Though initially well-received in political circles, it was ultimately doomed by well-organized opposition from conservatives, the American Medical Association, and the health insurance industry. Despite his party holding a majority in the House and Senate, the effort to create a national healthcare system ultimately died under heavy public pressure.
- Two months later, after two years of Democratic party control under Clinton's leadership, the mid-term elections in 1994 proved disastrous for the Democrats. They lost control of both houses of Congress for the first time in 40 years, in large part due to the failed attempt to create a comprehensive health care system.

Significant events of the second term

- After the 1994 election, the spotlight shifted to the **Contract with America** spearheaded by Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich. This initiative presented a blanket of traditional Republican proposals, plus a number of anti-corruption measures. Without a friendly legislative body, Clinton shifted from pushing new policy to blocking the Republican (GOP) agenda.
- In August of 1993, Clinton had signed the **Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993** which passed Congress without a single Republican vote. It significantly raised taxes on the top 2% of taxpayers, without providing middle class tax cuts as he promised during the campaign. But more importantly, it mandated that the budget be balanced over a number of years, and put spending restraints in place. When Clinton left office the **federal budget was balanced**.
- In his 1996 State of the Union speech, Clinton promised to "end welfare as we know it". He later signed the **Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996**.
- In 1998, while investigating an unrelated real estate matter, Kenneth Starr, a special prosecutor, led an investigation that brought to light a personal relationship between President Clinton and a White House intern.
- Evidence showed the president may have lied under oath about the relationship. The Republican controlled House of Representatives despite widespread disagreement that the President's acts were grounds for impeachment, charged the President with "High Crimes and Misdemeanors: as stated in the Constitution as grounds for impeachment.
- Although the House voted to impeach the President, he was acquitted on both charges.

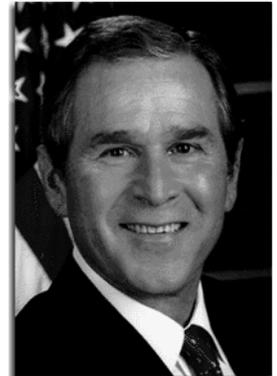
President's Clinton's Foreign Policy

- Clinton deployed the U.S. military hesitantly several times under hostile circumstances. In 1993, U.S. troops, initially deployed to **Somalia** by the Bush administration, fought the **Battle of Mogadishu (Black Hawk Down)** which attempted to capture local warlord Mohamed Farrah Aidid. The Clinton administration withdrew U.S. troops after suffering 19 deaths and 73 wounded at the hands of Somalia militiaman. These militia were later proved to have been trained by the **Al Qaeda** terrorist network.
- In 1994, Clinton sent U.S. troops into **Haiti** to restore Jean-Bertrand Aristide as president, ending a period of intense violence.
- After civil war erupted in the former Yugoslavia, bitter fighting followed in Bosnia, where Serbs engaged in ethnic-cleansing—forcibly killing the Muslim population. NATO air strikes brought the Serbs to the bargaining table where they signed the Dayton Accords in December 1995.
- In 1998, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic attempted to drive Muslims out of the Kosovo region. Clinton committed troops to act as peacekeepers twice to stop the ethnic violence.
- Clinton launched military strikes on Iraq several times to punish violations of UN sanctions and an attempt to have former President George H. W. Bush assassinated.

George W. Bush and the Election of 2000

George W. Bush became the 43rd president of the United States on the Republican ticket in the **election of 2000**. Like the **election of 1876**, (which ended Reconstruction and was also decided in Florida) it was one of the closest in U.S. history, decided by only several hundred votes in the swing state of Florida.

- On election night, the media prematurely declared a winner twice, based on exit polls, before finally conceding that the Florida race was too close to call.
- It required a Supreme Court decision (*Bush v. Gore*) on December 12 before the election was finally certified. The contest entailed numerous court challenges and recounts. Republican candidate Bush won Florida's 25 electoral votes by a razor-thin margin of the popular vote there, thereby defeating Democratic candidate Al Gore.
- The election was only the fourth in U.S. history in which a candidate had won the presidency while losing the nationwide popular vote.



George W. Bush

Domestic policy.

- President Bush signed the **No Child Left Behind Act** of 2001. The legislation requires school and teacher accountability, flexibility, local control, and more choices for parents. Detractors complain that the law is under funded.
- President Bush under Medicare, has provided a prescription drug benefit for seniors to help pay for medications.
- He has supported "faith-based" programs that encourage individuals to help their needy neighbors by giving donations to religious organizations.



Foreign policy.

- **On September 11, 2001**, Islamic terrorists attacked the **World Trade Center** and **Pentagon**, irrevocably altering the direction of the Bush presidency. Despite Islamic teachings against suicide and killing innocent people in battle, terrorist groups like al Qaeda have used a fundamentalist form of Islam to justify a **Jihad, a "holy war"** of terrorism against infidels (non-Islamists).
- **Al Qaeda** was responsible for the September 11 suicide terrorist attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people. On May 12, 2003, al Qaeda suicide terrorists set off bombs in three housing compounds in the capital of Saudi Arabia. The bombs killed 35 people, including 12 Americans. Al Qaeda has been linked to numerous other attacks and continues to be a threat to Americans and their allies worldwide.
- Under pressure from Democrats President Bush created a new cabinet-level agency, the Department of Homeland Security. The new entity consolidated 20 agencies under one cabinet umbrella.
- Following the September 11 attack, the controversial **Patriot Act** was proposed by President Bush and passed into law by the Congress. The law has given the intelligence and law enforcement communities powerful tools to enhance their anti-terrorism mandate. Increased surveillance and investigation capabilities appeared to erode some of the **rights guaranteed by the Constitution**.

Afghanistan and Iraq.

- Following the attacks on America on September 11, 2001, the Bush administration attacked al Qaeda, in Afghanistan. Then Iraq was attacked to eliminate dictator **Saddam Hussein** and his purported "weapons of mass destruction" — which were not found.
- The **Iraq War** (2003-present) is an ongoing conflict in Iraq, which began with the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and continues to the present in the form of an **insurgent rebellion**. The reasons for the insurgency are complex, and include resentment of the occupation itself, frustration at the (at least for many) worsened living conditions, and distrust of the elected government often due to sectarian concerns related to historical differences between the various peoples, customs, and religions that had been suppressed by the brutal Iraqi regime.

