

The 1976 Campaign

President Ford's decision to run for a full term in 1976 placed him before a national electorate for the first time in his political career. The subsequent campaign proved to be one of the most intensely fought in American history. To win his own party's nomination, Ford had to turn back the formidable challenge posed by former California Governor Ronald Reagan. Having narrowly defeated Reagan in the Republican primary, Gerald Ford faced an uphill battle against former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter.

Once, presidential candidates campaigned by Whistle Stop. Today, jet planes whisk them from one end of the country to the other in a matter of hours, campaigning as they go.

Coming down the homestretch, the Ford-Carter race dramatically narrowed. Election night was long and agonizingly uncertain. But when the votes were tallied, Ford fell just short. He received 39.1 million popular votes (240 electoral votes), or 48 percent, to Carter's 40.8 million popular votes (297 electoral votes), or 50.1 percent. Had 9,245 votes in Hawaii and Ohio shifted to the Republican column, Ford would have been elected President by a majority of two electoral votes.

In two and a half years in the White House, Gerald Ford had quietly and confidently steered a battered ship of state on a course of domestic tranquillity and international peace. He had demonstrated that our democratic system of government works in times of trial as well as triumph.

January 20, 1977 was a cold and sunny day in the nation's capital. In his first words as President, Jimmy Carter thanked his predecessor for restoring America's spirits:

*For myself and for our nation I want to thank my predecessor
for all he has done to heal our land.*

Jimmy Carter
January 20, 1977

Gallery Nine Activity

The 1976 Campaign Presidential Speeches Activity Description

METHOD

Have students practice giving a speech during your visit to the Museum. In the 1976 Campaign Gallery. There is a teleprompter, you could also have students take turns reading portions of it. When else might a President give a speech?

While at the Museum., have students select a topic for a speech and take detailed notes in the exhibit. Some topics include the Fall of Saigon, the Amnesty Program, or WIN Campaign.

SUGGESTED PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

- Read Gerald Ford's acceptance speech, given at the Republican Convention in Kansas City, Missouri on August 19, 1976.

SUGGESTED POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES

- Write a campaign speech, or a speech on a significant issue during the Ford Administration.
 - Ford/ Carter Race
 - Amnesty program
 - WIN Campaign
- Analyze a televised/ radio speech given by President Obama, another notable American, or other world leader.
 - What point did they want to convey?
 - Were they successful?
 - Presentation: How were they dressed, where were they? What was their tone of voice? Did you notice other physical characteristics?
 - Were they persuasive?
 - Our Documents: (www.ourdocuments.gov) Look at President Roosevelt's Radio Address unveiling the second half of the New Deal. Is it relevant now? Does it still have impact today?

President Gerald Ford's Acceptance Speech

Kansas City Missouri—August 19, 1976

Delegates and alternates to this Republican convention: I am honored by your nomination and I accept it. *applause*

I accept with pride, with gratitude and with a total will to win a great victory for the American people. *applause*

We will wage a winning campaign in every region of the country—from the snowy banks of Minnesota to the sandy plain of Georgia. *applause*

We concede not a single state. We concede not a single vote. *applause*

This evening I am proud to stand before this convention as the first incumbent President since Dwight D. Eisenhower who can tell the American people: America is at peace. *applause*

Tonight I can tell you straight away: This nation is sound. This nation is secure. This nation is on the march to full economic recovery and a better quality of life for all Americans. *applause*

I will tell you one more thing. This year the issues are on your side. I am ready, I am eager to go before the American people and debate the real issues face to face with Jimmy Carter. *applause*

The people have a right to know first hand exactly where *both* of us stand. *applause*

I am deeply grateful to those who stood with me in winning the nomination of the party whose cause I have served all my adult life.

I respect the convictions of those who want a change in Washington. I want a change too. After 22 long years of majority misrule, lets change the United States Congress. *applause*

My gratitude tonight reaches far beyond this arena, to countless friends whose confidence, hard work and unselfish support have brought me to this moment.

It would be unfair to single out anyone. But may I make an exception for my wonderful family, Mike,

Jack, Steve and Susan—and especially my dear wife Betty. *applause*

We Republicans have some tough competition. We not only preach the virtues of competition, we practice them. *applause*

But tonight we come together, not on a battlefield to conclude a cease-fire, but to join forces on a training field that has conditioned us all for the contest ahead. *applause*

Let me say this from the bottom of my heart: After the scrimmages of the past few months it really feels good to have Ron Reagan on the same side of the line. *applause*

To strengthen our championship lineup the convention has wisely chosen on of the ablest Americans as our next vice-president, Sen. Bob Dole of the great state of Kansas. *applause*

With his help, with your help, with the help of millions of Americans who cherish peace, who want freedom preserved, prosperity shared and pride in America we will win this election. *applause*

I speak not of a Republican victory, but of a victory for the American people.

You are at home, listening tonight—you are the people who pay the taxes and obey the laws. You are the people who make our system work. You are the people who make America what it is. It is from your ranks that I come and on your side I stand. *applause*

Something wonderful happened to this country of ours these past two years. We all came to realize it on the Fourth of July.

Together, out of years of turmoil and tragedy, of wars and riots, assassinations and wrongdoing in high places, Americans recaptured the spirit of 1776. We saw again the pioneer vision of our revolutionary forefathers and of our immigrant ancestors. *applause*

Their vision was of free men and free women enjoying limited government and unlimited opportunity. *applause*

The mandate I want in 1976 is to make that

vision a reality. But it will take the voices and the votes of many more Americans, who are not republicans to make that mandate binding and my mission possible.

I have been called an unselected President, an accidental president. We may even hear that again from the other party despite that fact that its elected official in Congress certified my fitness for our highest office. *applause* They voted for me 387 to 35 in the House of Representatives and 92 to 3 in the Senate.

Having become vice-president and President, without expecting or seeking either, I have a special feeling toward these high offices.

To me the presidency and the vice-presidency were not prizes to be won, but a duty to be done. *applause*

So tonight it is not the power and glamour of the presidency that leads me to ask another four years. It is something every hard-working American will understand—The challenge of a job well begun but far from finished. *Applause*

Two years ago on Aug. 9, 1974, I placed my hand on the bible that Betty held and took the same constitutional oath that was administered to George Washington. I had faith in our people, in our institutions and in myself.

“My fellow Americans,” I said, “or long national nightmare is over.” *applause*
It was an hour of our history that troubled our minds and tore at our hearts. Anger and hatred had risen to dangerous levels, dividing friends and families. The polarization of our political order had aroused unworthy passions of reprisal and revenge.

Our governmental system was closer to stalemate than at any time since Abraham Lincoln took that same oath of office.

Our economy was in the throes of runaway inflation, taking us headlong into the worst recession since Franklin D. Roosevelt took the same oath.

On that dark day I told my fellow countrymen: “I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your president by your ballots, so I ask you to confirm me as your president with your prayers.” *applause*

On a marble fireplace in the White House is carved a prayer which John Adams wrote. It

concludes: “May none but honest and wise men ever rule under this roof.”

Since I have resided in that historic house I have tried to live by that prayer. *applause*

I have faced many problems. I probably made some mistakes but on balance America and Americans have made an incredible comeback since August, 1974. *applause*

Nobody can honestly say otherwise.

And the plain truth is that the great progress we have made at home and abroad was in spite of the majority who run congress. *applause*

For two years I have stood for all the people against the vote-hungry, free-spending congressional majority. *applause*

Fifty-five times I vetoed extravagant and unwise legislation. Forty-four times I made those vetoes stick. *applause* Those vetoes have saved Americans billions and billions of dollars.

I am against the big taxspender and for the little taxpayer. *applause*

I called for a permanent tax cut coupled with spending reductions to stimulate the economy and relieve hard-pressed middle-income taxpayers. Your personal exemption must be raised from \$750 to \$1,000. *applause*

The other party's platform talks about tax reform, but there's one big problem—their own Congress won't act.

I called for reasonable, constitutional restrictions on court-ordered bussing of school children.

The other party's platform conceded that bussing should be a “last resort;” but there's the same problem—their own Congress won't act. *applause*

I called for a major overhaul of criminal laws to crack down on crime and illegal drugs.

The other party's platform talks about a strong defense; now here's the other side of the problem—their own Congress did act. They slashed \$50 billion from our national defense needs in the past decade.

My friends, Washington is not the problem—their Congress is the problem. *applause*

You know the president of the United States is not a magician who can wave a wand, or sign a paper that will instantly end a war, cure a recession, or make a bureaucracy disappear. A President has immense powers under the Constitution but all of them ultimately come from the American people and their mandate to him.

That is why tonight I come to the American people and ask not only for your prayers but also for your strength and support... for your voice and for your vote. *applause*

I come before you with a 2-year record of performance, without your mandate. I offer you a 4-year pledge of greater performance, with your mandate. *applause*

As Gov. Al Smith used to say: "Let's look at the record."

Two years ago inflation was 12 percent.

Sales fell off, plants shut down, thousands were being laid off every week.

Fear of the future was throttling down our economy and threatening millions of families.

Let's look at the record since August, 1974.

Inflation has been cut in half.

Payrolls are up, profits are up, production is up, purchases are up.

Since the recession was turned around, almost 4 million of our fellow Americans have found new jobs or got their old jobs back.. This year more men and women have jobs than ever before in the history of the United States. *applause*

Confidence has returned. We are in the full surge of a sound recovery to steady prosperity.

Two years ago America was mired in withdrawal from Southeast Asia. A decade of Congresses has shortchanged our global defenses and threatened our strategic posture. Mounting tension between Israel and Arab nations made another war seem inevitable.

The whole world watched and wondered where America was going. Did we in our domestic turmoil have the will, the stamina, the unity to stand up for freedom?

Look at the record since August two years ago.

Today America is at peace and seeks peace for all nations. Not a single American is at war on the face of this earth tonight. *applause*

Our ties with Western Europe and Japan, economic as well as military, were never stronger. Our relations with Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and mainland China are firm, vigilant and forward-looking. Policies I have initiated offer sound progress for the peoples of the Pacific, Africa and Latin America.

Israel and Egypt, both trusting the United States, have taken an historic first step that promises an eventual just settlement for the whole middle East.

The world now respects America's policy of peace through strength. The United States is again the confident leader of the free world. *applause*

Nobody questions our dedication to peace, but nobody doubts our willingness to use our strength when our vital interests are at stake. *applause*

I called for an up-to-date, powerful army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps that will keep America secure for decades to come. A strong military posture is always the best insurance for peace. *applause*

But America's strength was never rested on arms alone. It is rooted in mutual commitment of citizens and leaders to the highest standards of ethics and morality. *applause*

Two years ago people's confidence in their highest officials, to whom they had overwhelmingly entrusted power, had twice been shattered. Losing faith in the word of their elected leaders, Americans lost some of their own faith in themselves.

Again, look at the record since August, 1974.

From the start administration has been open, candid, forthright. *applause*

While my entire public and private life was under searching examination for the vice-presidency, I reaffirmed my lifelong conviction that truth is the glue that holds government together—not only government, but civilization itself. *applause*

In the 24 years of serving my Michigan neighbors, I learned to listen to them and level with them. As your president I have met with thousands of citizens from all walks of life, from all 50 states. I

have listened to disagreements, to criticisms. I have answered all questions and explained my positions to the nation freely and fully.

I have demanded honesty, decency and personal integrity from everybody in the Executive Branch of the government. The House and the Senate have the same duty. *applause* The American people will not accept a double standard in the United States Congress.

Those who make our laws today must not debase the reputation of our great legislative bodies which have given us such great giants as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, Sam Rayburn and Robert A. Taft. *applause* Whether in the nation's capital or the state capital or city hall, private morality and public trust must go together. *applause*

From August, 1974 to August, 1976, the record shows steady upward progress toward prosperity, peace and public trust.

My record is one of progress, not platitudes.

My record is one of performance, not promises. *applause*

It is a record I am proud to run on.

It is a record the American people—Democrats, Independents and Republicans alike—will support on Nov. 2. *applause*

For the next four years I pledge to you that I will hold to the steady course we have begun.

But I have no intention of standing on the record alone.

We will continue winning the fight against inflation.

We will go on reducing the dead weight and the impudence of bureaucracy. *applause*

We will submit a balanced federal budget by 1978.

We will improve our quality of life at work, at play and in our homes and neighborhoods.

We will not abandon our cities. We will encourage urban programs which assure safety in the streets, create healthy environments and restore neighborhood pride. *applause*

We will return control of our children's education to parents and local school authorities. *applause*

We will make sure the party of Lincoln remains the party of equal rights. *applause*

We will create a tax structure that's fair for all our citizens, one that preserves the continuity of the family home, the family farm and the family business. *applause*

We will ensure the integrity of the Social Security system and improve Medicare so that our older citizens can enjoy the health and happiness they have earned. There is no reason they should have to go broke just to get well! *applause*

We will make sure that this rich nation does not neglect citizens who are less fortunate, but provides for their needs with compassion and dignity.

We will reduce the growth and the cost of government, and allow individual breadwinners and businesses to keep more of the money they earn *applause*

We will create a climate in which our economy will provide a meaningful job for everyone who wants work and a decent standard of life for all Americans.

We will ensure that all of our young people have a better chance in life than we had—an education they can use and a career they can be proud of. *applause*

We will carry out a farm policy that assures a fair market price for the farmer, encourages full production, leads to record exports, and eases the hunger within the human family.

We will never use the bounty of America's farmers as a pawn in international diplomacy. *applause* No embargoes! *applause*

We will continue our strong leadership to bring peace, justice and economic progress where there is turmoil, especially in the Middle East.

We will build a safer and saner world, through patient negotiations and dependable arms agreements, which reduce the danger of conflict and the horror of thermonuclear war. While I am President we will not return to a collision course that

could reduce civilization to ashes. *applause*

We will build an America where people feel rich in spirit as well as in worldly goods. We will build an America where people feel proud, about themselves and about their country.

We will build on performance, not promise; experience, not expediency; real progress instead of mysterious plans to be revealed in some dim and distant future. *applause*

The American people are wise, wiser than our opponents think. They know who pays for every campaign promise. They are not afraid of the truth. We will tell them the truth. *applause*

From start to finish, our campaign will be credible. It will be responsible. We will come out fighting. And we will win! *applause*

Yes, we have all seen the polls and the pundits who say our party is dead. I've heard that before. So did Harry Truman. I'll tell you what I think: The only polls that count are the polls the American people can go to on Nov. 2. *applause*

And I predict right now that the American people are going to say that night: Jerry, you've done a good job. Keep right on doing it. *applause*

As I try, in my imagination, to look into all the homes where families are watching the end of this convention, I can't tell which faces are Republicans, which are Democrats and which are independents. I

cannot see their color or their creed. I see only Americans. *applause*

I see Americans who love their husbands, their wives and their children.

I see Americans who love their country for what it has been and what it must become.

I see Americans who work hard but who are willing to sacrifice all they have worked for to keep their children and their country free. *applause*

I see Americans who in their own quiet way pray for peace among nations and peace among themselves. We do love our neighbors and we do forgive those who have trespassed against us. *applause*

I see a new generation that knows what is right and knows itself—a generation determined to preserve its ideal, its environment, our nation and our world.

My fellow Americans, I like what I see. *applause*

I have no fear for the future if this great country. And as we go forward, together, I promise you once more what I promised before: to uphold the Constitution; to do what is right, as God gives me to see the right; and to do the very best I can for America.

God helping me, I will not let you down. *applause*