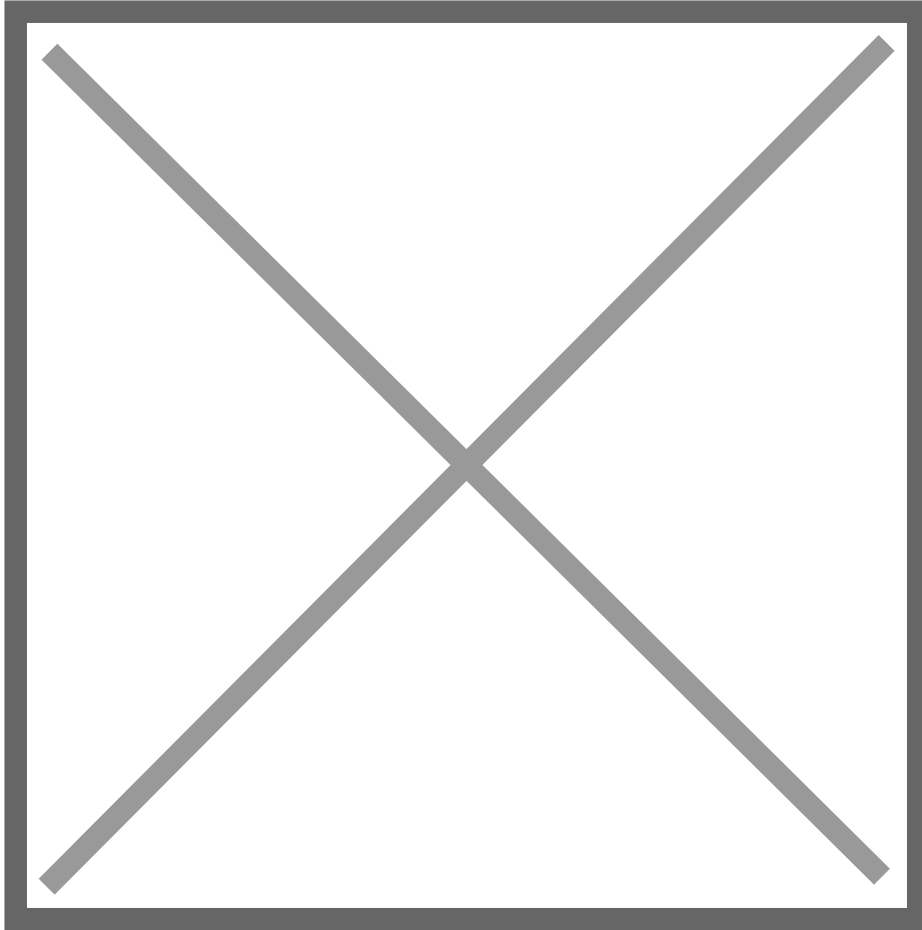




President Ford Committee Records, (1968, 1971-1974) 1975-1977 v.2

Collection Type

Personal Papers

Extent

401.7 linear feet

Record Type

Audio

Photographs

Textual

Videos

Access

Open. Researchers wishing to view Treasurer's Office series should consult with an archivist prior to their visit in order to request that specific folders be added to the Library's review-for-access queue. Some items are temporarily restricted under terms of President Ford Committee letter of gift, a copy of which is available on request.

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- People for Ford Office - Elizabeth Dawson, Kellee Green, and Leesa Tobin
- Press Office - Nancy Mirshah
- Research Office - William McNitt
- Delegate Office - William McNitt
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Scope and Content Note

The President Ford Committee Records partially document the election committee's activities on behalf of the President from the organization's creation in July 1975 until Committee staff filed final reports with the Federal Election Commission in 1978. The following sections briefly outline new regulations affecting the 1976 campaign for president, the history and organization of the President Ford Committee (PFC), PFC activities during the pre-nomination and post-nomination campaigns, and the nature of the files produced by the PFC staff. For more detailed descriptions of the functions and files of various divisions within the PFC organization, see the accompanying sections of this finding aid.

New Regulations Affecting the 1976 Campaign

Major differences between how presidential candidates conducted campaigns in 1976 and how they operated in previous contests were precipitated by passage of the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) Amendments of 1974. This legislation, signed into law by President Ford on October 15, 1974, established the first spending limits ever for candidates in presidential primary and general elections, provided for disclosure and reporting on campaign contributions and expenditures, introduced public financing for general election campaigns and matching funds to cover part of the costs of primary campaigns, and created the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to develop specific regulations implementing the law and enforcing its provisions.

The new restrictions on fundraising and spending by presidential campaign committees provided the organizations with new challenges during the 1976 campaign. The confusion concerning their implementation and the implications surrounding their application is directly and indirectly reflected in the records of President Ford's election organization.

An immediate impact of the new regulations had on the staffs of election committees is reflected in the structure of the PFC. From its inception, the Committee allocated a significant portion of staff resources to interpret and comply with FECA regulations. This particularly affected staffing of the counsel's office, the finance division, and the treasurer's operation but the concern for compliance is

reflected in other PFC divisions as well.

A less direct effect of the new regulations was on the level of the candidates' media spending. Strict limits placed on campaign expenditures (\$10.2 million for the pre-nomination campaign and \$23 million for the general election) made the allocation of resources even more important than in previous presidential campaigns. The level of spending on media and media experts for the 1976 campaign was proportionally larger than in previous presidential campaigns because media advertising was perceived as the most cost-effective means of reaching the voters. This is reflected in the large proportion of Committee records documenting the activities of Campaign '76 Inc., the in-house advertising agency. Other more traditional forms of campaigning, such as elaborate efforts to attract special interest or ethnic groups, the development of large grassroots volunteer organizations, and high levels of spending on campaign paraphernalia like bumper stickers, buttons, and literature were deemed as less cost-effective in attracting voters. The relatively small amount of Committee records on these topics reflects their relative insignificance.

Another provision of FECA which had direct impact on election committee staffing was the detailed reporting required by the Federal Election Commission to determine a candidate's eligibility for public funding and to monitor the candidate's election committee spending. Particularly during the primary campaign period of active fundraising, the compliance process was time intensive. In addition to contracting some bookkeeping tasks to outside operations, the PFC had staff members specializing in specific areas of compliance, such as certification of donations and preparation of applications for matching funds. During both the primary and general elections, the PFC headquarters staff dedicated large portions of their time monitoring the spending of the organization nationwide to be certain to stay within the FECA expenditure limits.

President Ford Committee History, Organization, and Activities

At the urging of members of his senior White House staff, President Ford authorized the creation of a campaign planning group in May 1975. Some of those advocating an early candidacy announcement were concerned about what impact new

regulations might have on the conduct of a campaign, others were hoping an early announcement might head off a divisive struggle for the Republican nomination. On June 20, 1975, Ford announced the creation of a President Ford Committee with Dean Burch, formerly counsellor to the president, as its temporary head. Secretary of the Army Howard "Bo" Callaway assumed the PFC chairmanship when President Ford formally declared his candidacy on July 8, 1975.

The President Ford Committee, headquartered in Washington, D.C., began as a low-budget operation with three paid employees. During the next sixteen months the size of the Committee's staff fluctuated, depending on the availability of funds and level of activity. During the heat of the general election campaign, the paid national headquarters staff numbered more than 200, assisted by nearly one thousand volunteers. In addition to orchestrating the campaign at the national level, the headquarters staff was also responsible for directing and funding the activities of a network of state and local salaried PFC workers and volunteers. Following President Ford's loss to Jimmy Carter in November 1976 most of the Committee organization disbanded. Only a few members of the finance and legal staffs remained on the Committee's payroll until filing final reports with the Federal Election Commission in 1978.

At various points during the campaign, the Committee was perceived as an inefficient, disorderly organization troubled by structural and personnel problems. These problems were dramatically apparent early in the primary campaign when, in the face of fundraising problems and a looming challenge by Ronald Reagan for the party nomination, the PFC's finance chairman and the director of political organization resigned over strategic differences with Chairman Callaway. In April 1976, Callaway also stepped down in the midst of charges that as secretary of the Army he had used his influence for personal gain. Rogers Morton took over as chairman until he too was replaced by James Baker five months later.

The PFC staff was organized primarily along functional lines, its size and activities alternately expanding and contracting to meet needs and control costs. Major activities of the organization during the primary campaign period included, 1) raising enough money to qualify for public matching funds, 2) building a national network of state and local campaign organizations and, 3) developing and implementing an effective strategic plan to win as much delegate support as

possible before the Republican National Convention in August 1976.

As the primary season ended and the political and financial workload decreased temporarily, the PFC headquarters staff was dramatically downsized in order to keep costs within mandated expenditure limits. From June 1976 until mid-August those still on the payroll focused on the delegate monitoring program in preparation for an anticipated nomination battle at the Republican National Convention. Following Ford's selection as the nominee, the PFC quickly expanded, overhauling its internal structure and reporting relationships, reopening all state headquarters, revamping the in-house advertising operation, and developing and implementing a strategic plan for the general election campaign.

Several significant changes in the Committee's structure and function occurred between the pre-nomination and post-nomination campaigns. One was the elimination of the fundraising apparatus developed to support the primary campaign. (The new FECA regulations prohibited candidates from accepting donations during the publicly-funded general election campaign.) Another major structural difference was the addition of a large internal operation responsible for developing specific appeals to various special voter groups. Additionally, Chairman James Baker significantly flattened the reporting structure of the organization. This resulted in all the division directors and office heads reporting directly to him throughout the fall campaign. (See Attachments 1 and 2)

The Records of the President Ford Committee

The records of the President Ford Committee housed at the Ford Library include nearly 350 linear feet of material divided among eleven office divisions. The files include material on finances, legal matters, public opinion polls, advertising, press relations, politics, a variety of domestic and foreign policy issues, and appeals to specific interest groups or segments of the population. The file for each office division might include material created and accumulated by as few as two staff members, in the case with the Counsel's Office, or as many as fifty individuals for an office as large as People for Ford or Campaign '76 Inc.

The President Ford Committee Records are to a study of the 1976 campaign. Researchers should be alerted however, that although the collection contains significant materials on various aspects of the campaign, the records are by no means complete as several senior staff members apparently removed files upon their departure from the Committee. The result is great variation in the quality and completeness of the documentary record from office to office. The extant files for example, do not reflect the activities of Rogers Morton and James Baker during their respective tenures as PFC chairman. In contrast, the files of PFC Counsel Robert Visser, are extensive and include no obvious gaps. Information on the strengths and weaknesses of a particular series of records is included in the finding aid for that office division.

The records provide researchers with some sense of the close but sometimes stormy relationship between the Committee and the White House staff. They also illustrate some of the problems intrinsic in simultaneously acting as both a president and a candidate. To research any election issue, or the campaign as a whole, it is important to examine the files of the campaign principals in both the White House and the Committee. For example, more high-level strategic and political information is in the files of the White House Chief of Staff Richard Cheney and his support staff than in the files of PFC Chairman Bo Callaway. Other important points of liaison where the documentary record is complementary include the PFC's General Counsel and the White House Office of the Counsel; the PFC's Communication Director and the White House Press Secretary; and the PFC's Political Director and the White House Scheduling Office, Domestic Council, and advance staff.

For a complete list of collections at the Ford Library which include material on the 1976 campaign researchers should refer to "The 1976 Presidential Election: A Guide to Manuscript Collections Available for Research." Copies of this publication are available at the Library.

At the time of this writing, (April 1992), 150 linear feet of files from the PFC Treasurer's Office remain unprocessed and unavailable for research use.

Last Modified Date

2026-08-19

The Chairman's Office Files provide documentation of administrative, fiscal and strategic issues handled by Howard (Bo) Callaway and his immediate staff from the formation of the election committee in June 1975 until Callaway resigned in March 1976. These extant files do not reflect the activities of Roger C.B. Morton, chairman from April to August 1976, and James Baker, chairman during the general election campaign. The only material from the post-Callaway period included in the Chairman's Office Files is a subject file maintained by Edward DeBolt, counsellor to all three chairmen.

President Ford appointed Callaway, secretary of the Army and an active Georgia Republican, as PFC chairman in June 1975. He remained as head of the Committee for eight months until charges that he had abused his office as Army secretary for purposes of private gain resulted in a Justice Department investigation and his resignation. Rogers C.B. Morton left his White House position as counsellor to the President to assume the Committee's leadership until the President won the Republican nomination in August. When Morton stepped aside citing poor health, James Baker replaced him as chairman. Baker, who directed the PFC's delegate office before the convention, served as chairman for the duration of the campaign.

The campaign chairman acted as the chief executive officer of the campaign organization. He kept the President and his staff informed about PFC activities, oversaw the development of a nationwide organization, contributed to strategy development, coordinated fundraising activities, served as a spokesman and representative for the President on campaign matters, acted as liaison with the Republican National Committee, and had responsibility for all major policy, program, personnel and budgetary matters.

Throughout the primary campaign, the President Ford Committee experienced factional strife. The chairman's files document the Committee's slow start with fundraising, several high-level staff resignations over policy differences, problems with White House communication and coordination, and the Reagan challenge. They also provide a record of the Committee's exhaustive early efforts to build a national organization.

The extant files of the Chairman's office, even for this early period, are not complete. They do not include Callaway's weekly written reports to the President, his notes or agendas for high-level campaign meetings, nor do they reflect input he

may have had on strategy development. (See section on "Related Material.")

The Callaway series include material accumulated by the chairman and his assistants, Mimi Austin and Judy Harbaugh. The work of Leo Thorsness, another of Callaway's assistants, is not represented in the files. A third series, the DeBolt Subject File, reflects the activities of Edward DeBolt, a Republican political consultant who acted as counsellor to all three chairmen throughout the campaign. DeBolt handled the PFC's special voter groups program, developing appeals to various racial and ethnic groups during the primary campaign. His extensive contacts with these groups, particularly blacks and Hispanics, are reflected in the file. He had miscellaneous administrative duties as well, although these are not as prominent in the file as is the record of his political activity.

Related Material (As of August 1991):

The White House files of Chief of Staff Richard Cheney reflect aspects of the PFC chairman's work not documented in the Chairman's Office Files. Cheney's Files, for example, include a complete set of weekly reports prepared by Callaway for the President. Callaway recently donated a small collection of personal papers (less than one foot) which reflect various aspects of his activity as chairman. This collection will be processed and made available to researchers soon.

The White House Central Files Subject File (PL - Political Affairs) and the PFC's Political Office File include material on PFC state organizations and delegate monitoring.

For material on appeals to special voter groups during the general election campaign, the researcher should consult the files of People for Ford, the volunteer arm of the PFC.

The Records of the President Ford Committee do not include files accumulated by Rogers C.B. Morton or James Baker during their tenure as chairmen. Portions of the Rogers Morton Papers, housed at the University of Kentucky, provide a record of his work as chairman. The Rogers Morton Files at the Ford Library reflect Morton's political activities as counsellor to the President before he assumed the chairman's post in April 1976. Baker, currently Secretary of State in the Bush administration, has yet to donate his personal papers to an archival repository.

Callaway Subject File, 1975-76.

Memoranda, correspondence, strategy papers, agendas, schedule proposals, clippings, and printed material compiled by Callaway and his assistants, Mimi Austin and Judy Harbaugh. Prominent topics include early organizational efforts at the national and state level, liaison with White House staff, administrative and personnel matters, support for the President among members of Congress, and campaign finance. Included in several folders is material created by Bryce Harlow, an informal advisor to the President, during the period before the President formally announced his candidacy.

Arranged alphabetically by subject.

A1

Status	Title
OPEN	Advertising
OPEN	Advisory Committee
OPEN	Bandouweris, Harry
OPEN	Bennett, Doug
OPEN	Black Voters
OPEN	Budget
OPEN	Burch, Dean
OPEN	Cabinet Involvement
OPEN	Campaign Strategy, April 1975
OPEN	Campaign Strategy, August 1975 (1)-(3)
OPEN	Cheney, Richard
OPEN	Christmas Card List - White House
OPEN	College Young Republicans
OPEN	Congressional Support (1)-(2)

A2

Status	Title
OPEN	Convention Planning
OPEN	Delegate Selection Information
OPEN	District of Columbia
OPEN	Domestic Issues
OPEN	Finance (1)-(3)

Status	Title
OPEN	Flanigan, Robert
OPEN	Ford, Betty
OPEN	Former Congressmen
OPEN	Gorog, William
OPEN	Greener, William
OPEN	Grenier, John
OPEN	Gubernatorial Support
OPEN	Harlow, Bryce
OPEN	Insurance
OPEN	Jones, Jerry
OPEN	Ladd, Bruce
OPEN	Legal Matters
OPEN	Mayoral Support
OPEN	Meetings: PFC Leadership, 8/2/75
OPEN	Meetings: Republican National Committee, 9/68/75
OPEN	Meetings: PFC Leadership, 9/7/75
OPEN	Meetings: Republican National Committee, 9/8/75