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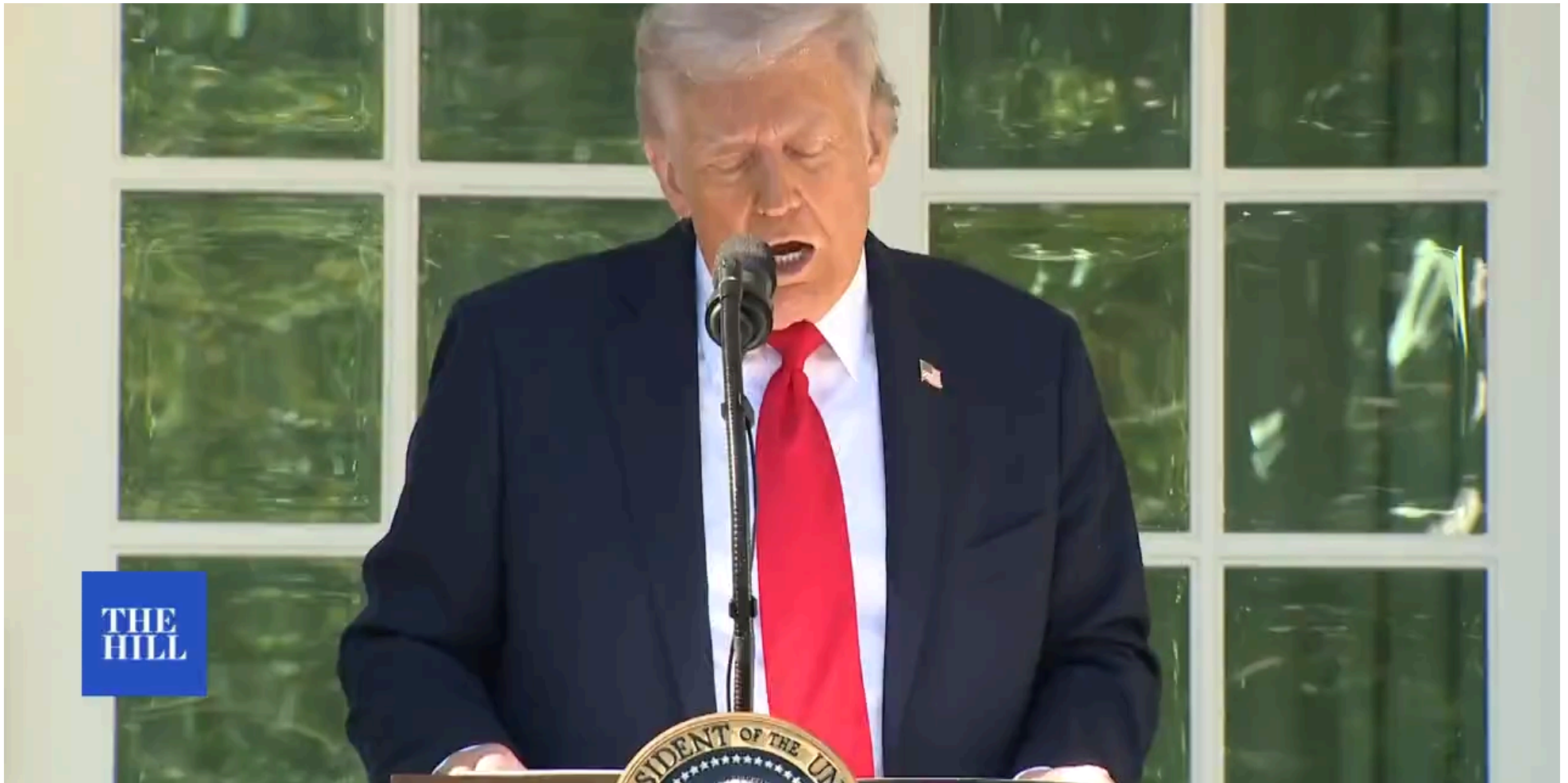
ADMINISTRATION

5 times the White House underwent major renovations

BY ASHLEIGH FIELDS - 10/22/25 2:25 PM ET



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President Trump's construction of a grand ballroom attached to the White House — starting with the demolition of part of the East Wing this week — will not be the first time a president has left a lasting mark on the people's house.

Presidents from [Teddy Roosevelt](#) to [Barack Obama](#) have remade parts of the building to their liking. And [Harry Truman](#) oversaw a major modernization of the White House, built in 1792.

"The South Portico, the North Portico, the East Wing, the West Wing, and the Truman Balcony all raised concerns at the time — but today, we can't imagine the White House without these iconic elements," the White House Historical Association said this week.

However, nothing done in the past matches Trump's ambitions, Ed Lengel, who served as the chief historian for the White House Historical Association from 2016-18, told The Hill.

"There's never been anything like that before. And I think I can say that with total confidence. There's been nothing on that scale, even close to that scale, has ever been done before," he said.

Trump envisions a massive ballroom, paid for by private donors, attached to the East Wing for entertaining world dignitaries and other guests.

The White House has hit back at criticism of the project, calling it "a bold, necessary addition that echoes the storied history of improvements and renovations from commanders-in-chief to keep the executive residence as a beacon of American excellence."

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Here's a timeline of other major White House renovations:

1902

The creation of the West Wing, which houses the offices of the president and his closest staff, started under former President [Theodore Roosevelt](#) and was completed under former President Taft.

Prior to 1902, presidents would work from different spaces in the executive mansion, but there was no designated spot for official business. Roosevelt wanted a central office for the commander in chief and hired workers to build a rectangular space on the west side of the White House for the first presidential office, which was later called the "Roosevelt Room."

The Roosevelt renovation was planned and carried out by the "famous" New York architectural firm McKim, Mead & White, according to the [White House](#).

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Roosevelt worked in his new office for the first time Nov. 5, 1902, and held his first Cabinet meeting there the next day, according to the White House Historical Association (WHHA).

Taft expanded what was called a temporary executive office building into the West Wing seven years later, placing an oval-shaped office at its center.

1933

Former President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) added 25,000 feet of permanent office space to the West Wing when he took office three decades later, according to [the White House](#).

“A ‘penthouse’ story and an enlarged subterranean office area with a light well were built,” the WHHA said. “The Oval Office was relocated to the West Wing’s southeast corner-its present location-to overlook the Wilson Rose Garden.”

Roosevelt also added an indoor pool in the West Terrace for the president to exercise amid his battle with polio, [according to the WHHA](#). The \$12,000 to build the pool was raised by The Daily News, which established the Roosevelt Swimming Pool Fund.

That pool has since been covered by the White House briefing room. But an outdoor pool, built under former President Ford, still exists on the South Lawn. It was funded through private

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1948

Truman oversaw the White House's most significant construction project, moving to the adjacent Blair House after parts of the normal residence were deemed unsafe.

Truman in March 1949 asked Congress to create the Commission on Renovation of the Executive Mansion to address severe architectural inadequacies in the White House. It comprised six members: two apiece appointed by the president, House and Senate.

Truman and his family moved out soon after his reelection in 1948, spending much of his second term in the nearby building that now hosts foreign dignitaries during their visits.

The renovations cost approximately \$5.7 million, which amounts to more than \$50 million in today's dollars, according to the [Truman Library Institute](#).

The White House was gutted, but the Trumans sought to preserve the building as much as possible, working together with architect Lorenzo Winslow.

Truman was happy with the result, if not the price tag.

"Bess & I looked over the East Room, Green Room, Blue Room, Red Room and State Dining Room. They are lovely. So is the hall and state stairway," he said of his return to the residence. "With all the trouble and worry it is worth it—but not 5 ½ million dollars."

"If I could have had charge of the construction it would have been done for half the money and in half the time!"

1973

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White House staffers and visitors can occasionally swing the bowling alley, located under the driveway leading to the North Portico.

The underground space was paid for by private donors, according to the [White House museum](#). However, it wasn't the White House's first bowling area.

Under Truman, a bowling lane was added to the space that is now used as the Situation Room in 1947. At the time, staff started a bowling league. Former President Eisenhower moved the alley to the basement beneath the Old Executive Office Building.

2009

Former President Obama converted the White House tennis court into a full scale basketball court in 2009. It was adapted for both tennis and basketball use, according to the [White House](#).

College basketball championship teams and Wounded Warriors have played on the court, according to Obama's White House.

During his first term, [President Trump](#) added a new White House tennis pavilion. The project, overseen by first lady Melania Trump, included a refurbishment of the existing tennis court and the adjacent "Grandchildren's Garden," according to a [press release](#) at the time.

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