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Gerald Ford

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This article is about the 38th U.S. President. For other uses, see [Gerald Ford \(disambiguation\)](#).

Gerald Rudolph Ford Jr. (born **Leslie Lynch King Jr.**; July 14, 1913 – December 26, 2006) was an American politician who served as the [38th President of the United States](#) from August 1974 to January 1977. Before his accession to the presidency, he served as the 40th [Vice President of the United States](#) from December 1973 to August 1974. Ford is the only person to have served as both vice president and president without being elected to either office. His [895 day-long presidency is the shortest](#) in U.S. history for any president who did not die in office.

Ford was born in [Omaha](#), Nebraska, and attended the [University of Michigan](#) and [Yale Law School](#). After the [Attack on Pearl Harbor](#), he enlisted in the [U.S. Naval Reserve](#), serving from 1942 to 1946; he left as a [lieutenant commander](#). Ford began his political career in 1949 as the [U.S. Representative](#) from [Michigan's 5th congressional district](#). He served in this capacity for 25 years, the final nine of them as the [House Minority Leader](#). Following the [resignation of Spiro Agnew](#), he was the first person appointed to the vice presidency under the terms of the [25th Amendment](#). After the resignation of [Richard Nixon](#), Ford automatically assumed the presidency.

As president, Ford signed the [Helsinki Accords](#), which marked a move toward [détente](#) in the [Cold War](#). With the collapse of South Vietnam nine months into his presidency, U.S. involvement in [Vietnam](#) essentially [ended](#). Domestically, Ford presided over the worst economy in the four decades since the [Great Depression](#), with growing inflation and a [recession](#) during his tenure.^[1] In one of his most controversial acts, he granted a [presidential pardon](#) to President Richard Nixon for his role in the [Watergate scandal](#). During Ford's

Gerald Ford



38th President of the United States

In office

August 9, 1974 – January 20, 1977

Vice President None (Aug–Dec. 1974)
[Nelson Rockefeller](#) (1974–1977)

Preceded by [Richard Nixon](#)

Succeeded by [Jimmy Carter](#)

40th Vice President of the United States

In office

December 6, 1973 – August 9, 1974

President [Richard Nixon](#)

Preceded by [Spiro Agnew](#)

Succeeded by [Nelson Rockefeller](#)

House Minority Leader

In office

January 3, 1965 – December 6, 1973

Deputy [Leslie C. Arends](#)

Preceded by [Charles A. Halleck](#)

Succeeded by [John Jacob Rhodes](#)

Chair of the House Republican Conference

presidency, foreign policy was characterized in procedural terms by the increased role Congress began to play, and by the corresponding curb on the powers of the President.^[2] In the Republican presidential primary campaign of 1976, Ford defeated former California Governor **Ronald Reagan** for the Republican nomination. He narrowly lost the **presidential election** to the **Democratic** challenger, former Georgia Governor **Jimmy Carter**.

Following his years as president, Ford remained active in the Republican Party. His moderate views on various social issues increasingly put him at odds with conservative members of the party in the 1990s and early 2000s. After experiencing a series of health problems, he **died at home** on December 26, 2006. At the time of his death he was the **longest-lived president** in American history.

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In office

January 3, 1963 – January 3, 1965

Leader **Charles A. Halleck**

Preceded by **Charles B. Hoeven**

Succeeded by **Melvin Laird**

Member of the

U.S. House of Representatives
from **Michigan's 5th district**

In office

January 3, 1949 – December 6, 1973

Preceded by **Bartel J. Jonkman**

Succeeded by **Richard Vander Veen**

Personal details

Born **Leslie Lynch King Jr.**

July 14, 1913

Omaha, Nebraska, U.S.

Died **December 26, 2006**

(aged 93)

Rancho Mirage, California, U.S.

Cause of death **Cerebrovascular disease** and
diffuse **arteriosclerosis**

Resting place **Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum**

Political party **Republican**

Spouse(s) **Betty Bloomer** (m. 1948)

Children **Michael · Jack · Steven · Susan**

Parents **Leslie Lynch King Sr.**
Dorothy Ayer Gardner Ford


Education **University of Michigan (BA)**
Yale University (JD)

Signature



Military service

Allegiance  **United States**


Service/branch  **United States Navy**

Years of service **1942–1946**

Rank  **Lieutenant Commander**

Battles/wars **World War II**

Awards  **American Campaign Medal**

 **Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal (9 campaign stars)**

 **World War II Victory**

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Early life [[edit](#)]

Ford was born Leslie Lynch King Jr. on July 14, 1913, at [3202 Woolworth Avenue](#) in [Omaha, Nebraska](#), where his parents lived with his paternal grandparents. He was the child of [Dorothy Ayer Gardner](#) and [Leslie Lynch King Sr.](#), a wool trader. His father was the son of prominent banker [Charles Henry King](#) and Martha Alicia King (née Porter). Gardner separated from King just sixteen days after her son's birth. She took her son with her to [Oak Park, Illinois](#), home of her sister Tannis and brother-in-law, Clarence Haskins James. From there, she moved to the home of her parents, Levi Addison Gardner and Adele Augusta Ayer, in [Grand Rapids, Michigan](#). Gardner and King divorced in December 1913, and she gained full custody of her son. Ford's paternal grandfather Charles Henry King paid child support until shortly before his death in 1930.^[3]



Ford in 1916

Ford later said that his biological father had a history of hitting his mother.^[4] In a biography of Ford, [James M. Cannon](#)—a member of the Ford administration—wrote that the separation and divorce of Ford's parents were sparked when, a few days after Ford's birth, Leslie King took a [butcher knife](#) and threatened to kill his wife, his infant son, and Ford's nursemaid. Ford later told confidantes that his father had first hit his mother when she smiled at another man during their honeymoon.^[5]

After living with her parents for two-and-a-half years, Gardner married [Gerald Ford](#) on February 1, 1916; Gerald was a salesman in a family-owned paint and varnish company. They now called her son Gerald Rudolff Ford Jr. The future president was never formally [adopted](#) and did not legally change his name until December 3, 1935; he also used a more conventional spelling of his middle name.^[6] He was raised in [Grand Rapids](#) with his three half-brothers from his mother's second marriage:

[Thomas Gardner "Tom" Ford](#) (1918–1995), Richard Addison "Dick" Ford (1924–2015), and James Francis "Jim" Ford (1927–2001).^[7]

Ford also had three half-siblings from the second marriage of Leslie King Sr., his biological father: Marjorie King (1921–1993), Leslie Henry King (1923–1976), and Patricia Jane King (1925–1980). They never saw one another as children and he did not know them at all. Ford was not aware of his biological father until he was 17, when his parents told him about the circumstances of his birth. That year his biological father, whom Ford described as a "carefree, well-to-do man who didn't really give a damn about the hopes and dreams of his firstborn son", approached Ford while he was waiting tables in a Grand Rapids restaurant. The two "maintained a sporadic contact" until Leslie King Sr.'s death in 1941.^{[4][8]}

Ford said, "My stepfather was a magnificent person and my mother equally wonderful. So I couldn't have written a better prescription for a superb family upbringing."^[9]

Ford was involved in the [Boy Scouts of America](#), and earned that program's highest rank, [Eagle Scout](#).^[10] He is the only Eagle Scout to have ascended to the U.S. Presidency.^[10]

Ford attended Grand Rapids South High School, where he was a star athlete and [captain](#) of the [football](#) team.^[11] In 1930, he was selected to the All-City team of the [Grand Rapids City League](#). He also attracted the attention of college recruiters.^[9]

College and law school [\[edit \]](#)

Ford attended the [University of Michigan](#) and joined the [Delta Kappa Epsilon](#) fraternity (Omicron chapter). He washed dishes at his fraternity house to earn money for college expenses.

Ford played [center](#), [linebacker](#), and [long snapper](#) for the school's football team^[12] and helped the [Wolverines](#) to two undefeated seasons and [national titles](#) in [1932](#) and [1933](#). In his senior year of [1934](#), the team suffered a steep decline and won only one game, but Ford was still the team's star player. In one of those games, Michigan held heavily favored [Minnesota](#)—the eventual national champion—to a scoreless tie in the first half. After the game, assistant coach [Bennie Oosterbaan](#) said, "When I walked into the dressing room at halftime, I had tears in my eyes I was so proud of them. Ford and [Cedric] Sweet played their hearts out. They were everywhere on defense." Ford later recalled, "During 25 years in the rough-and-tumble world of politics, I often thought of the experiences before, during, and after that game in 1934. Remembering them has helped me many times to face a tough situation, take action, and make every effort possible despite adverse odds." His teammates later voted Ford their most valuable player, with one assistant coach noting, "They felt Jerry was one guy who would stay and fight in a losing cause."^[13]

During Ford's senior year, a controversy developed when [Georgia Tech](#) said that it would not play a scheduled game with Michigan if a black player named [Willis Ward](#) took the field. Students, players, and alumni protested, but university officials condescended to the Georgia Tech request and opted to keep Ward out of the game. Ford was



Eagle Scout Gerald Ford (circled in red) in 1929; [Michigan Governor Fred W. Green](#) at far left, holding hat



Ford during practice as a center on the University of Michigan [football](#) team, 1933

This article is part of [a series](#) on

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Ward's best friend on the team and they roomed together while on road trips. Ford reportedly threatened to quit the team in response to the university's decision, but he eventually agreed to play against Georgia Tech when Ward personally asked him to play.^[14]

In 1934, Ford was selected for the Eastern Team on the Shriner's [East West Shrine Game](#) at San Francisco (a benefit for physically disabled children), played on January 1, 1935. As part of the 1935 Collegiate All-Star football team, Ford played against the [Chicago Bears](#) in the [Chicago College All-Star Game](#) at [Soldier Field](#).^[15] In honor of his athletic accomplishments and his later political career, the University of Michigan retired Ford's No. 48 jersey in 1994. With the blessing of the Ford family, it was placed back into circulation in 2012 as part of the [Michigan Football Legends](#) program and issued to sophomore linebacker Desmond Morgan before a home game against [Illinois](#) on October 13.^[16]

Throughout life, Ford remained interested in his school and football; he occasionally attended games. Ford also visited with players and coaches during practices; at one point, he asked to join the players in the huddle.^[17] Before state events, Ford often had the Navy band play the University of Michigan fight song, *The Victors*, instead of *Hail to the Chief*.^[18]

Ford graduated from Michigan in 1935 with a [Bachelor of Arts](#) degree in [economics](#). He turned down offers from the [Detroit Lions](#) and [Green Bay Packers](#) of the [National Football League](#). Instead, he took a job in September 1935 as the boxing coach and assistant varsity football coach at [Yale University](#)^[19] and applied to its law school.^[20]

Ford hoped to attend Yale Law School beginning in 1935. Yale officials at first denied his admission to the law school because of his full-time coaching responsibilities. He spent the summer of 1937 as a student at the [University of Michigan Law School](#)^[21] and was eventually admitted in the spring of 1938 to [Yale Law School](#).^[22] Ford earned his LL.B. degree in 1941 (later amended to [Juris Doctor](#)), graduating in the top 25 percent of his class.

While attending Yale Law School, Ford joined a group of students led by [R. Douglas Stuart Jr.](#), and signed a petition to enforce the 1939 [Neutrality Act](#). The petition was circulated nationally and was the inspiration for the [America First Committee](#), a group determined to keep the U.S. out of [World War II](#).^[23] In the summer of 1940 he worked in [Wendell Willkie](#)'s presidential campaign.

Ford graduated from law school in 1941 and was admitted to the Michigan [bar](#) shortly thereafter. In May 1941, he opened a Grand Rapids law practice with a friend, [Philip W. Buchen](#),^[19] who would later serve as Ford's White House counsel.

U.S. Naval Reserve [\[edit \]](#)

Following the [December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor](#), Ford enlisted in the navy.^[24] He received a commission as [ensign](#) in the [U.S. Naval Reserve](#) on April 13, 1942. On April 20, he reported for active duty to the V-5 instructor school at [Annapolis, Maryland](#). After one month of training, he went to Navy Preflight School in [Chapel Hill, North Carolina](#), where he was one of 83 instructors and taught elementary navigation skills, ordnance,



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gunnery, first aid, and military drill. In addition, he coached in all nine sports that were offered, but mostly in swimming, boxing and football. During the year he was at the Preflight School, he was promoted to [Lieutenant, Junior Grade](#), on June 2, 1942, and to lieutenant, in March 1943.

Sea duty [[edit](#)]

After Ford applied for sea duty, he was sent in May 1943 to the pre-commissioning detachment for the new aircraft carrier [USS Monterey \(CVL-26\)](#), at New York Shipbuilding Corporation, [Camden, New Jersey](#). From the ship's commissioning on June 17, 1943, until the end of December 1944, Ford served as the assistant navigator, Athletic Officer, and antiaircraft battery officer on board the *Monterey*. While he was on board, the carrier participated in many actions in the [Pacific Theater](#) with the [Third](#) and [Fifth Fleets](#) in late 1943 and 1944. In 1943, the carrier helped secure [Makin Island](#) in the Gilberts, and participated in carrier strikes against [Kavieng](#), New Ireland in 1943. During the spring of 1944, the *Monterey* supported landings at [Kwajalein](#) and [Eniwetok](#) and participated in carrier strikes in the [Marianas](#), [Western Carolines](#), and northern [New Guinea](#), as well as in the [Battle of the Philippine Sea](#).^[25] After an overhaul, from September to November 1944, aircraft from the *Monterey* launched strikes against [Wake Island](#), participated in strikes in the Philippines and [Ryukyu](#)s, and supported the landings at [Leyte](#) and [Mindoro](#).^[25]



Ford in [Navy](#) uniform, 1945 [[edit](#)]

Although the ship was not damaged by [Japanese](#) forces, the *Monterey* was one of several ships damaged by the [typhoon](#) that hit [Admiral William Halsey's](#) Third Fleet on December 18–19, 1944. The Third Fleet lost three [destroyers](#) and over 800 men during the typhoon. The *Monterey* was damaged by a fire, which was started by several of the ship's aircraft tearing loose from their cables and colliding on the hangar deck. During the storm, Ford narrowly avoided becoming a casualty himself. As he was going to his battle station on the bridge of the ship in the early morning of December 18, the ship rolled twenty-five degrees, which caused Ford to lose his footing and slide toward the edge of the deck. The two-inch steel ridge around the edge of the carrier slowed him enough so he could roll, and he twisted into the catwalk below the deck. As he later stated, "I was lucky; I

could have easily gone overboard."

Ford was serving as General Quarters Officer of the Deck and was ordered to go below to assess the raging fire. He did so safely, and reported his findings back to the ship's commanding officer, [Captain Stuart Ingersoll](#). The ship's crew was able to contain the fire, and the ship got underway again.^[26]

After the fire, the *Monterey* was declared unfit for service, and the crippled carrier reached [Ulithi](#) on December 21 before continuing across the Pacific to [Bremerton, Washington](#) where it

The Gunnery officers of [USS Monterey](#). Ford is second from the right, in the front row. [[edit](#)]



Navy pilots playing basketball in the forward elevator well, mid-1944. Jumper at left is Gerald Ford. [[edit](#)]

underwent repairs. On December 24, 1944, at Ulithi, Ford was detached from the ship and sent to the Navy Pre-Flight School at [Saint Mary's College of California](#), where he was assigned to the Athletic Department until April 1945. One of his duties was to coach football. From the end of April 1945 to January 1946, he was on the staff of the Naval Reserve Training Command, [Naval Air Station, Glenview, Illinois](#), as the Staff Physical and Military Training Officer. On October 3, 1945, he was promoted to [lieutenant commander](#).

Ford received the following military awards: the [American Campaign Medal](#), the [Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal](#) with nine ³/₁₆" [bronze stars](#) (for operations in the [Gilbert Islands](#), [Bismarck Archipelago](#), Marshall Islands, Asiatic and Pacific carrier raids, [Hollandia](#), Marianas, Western Carolines, Western New Guinea, and the Leyte Operation), the [Philippine Liberation Medal](#) with two ³/₁₆" [bronze stars](#) (for Leyte and Mindoro), and the [World War II Victory Medal](#).^[24]

Post-war [\[edit \]](#)

In January 1946, Ford was sent to the Separation Center, [Great Lakes](#) to be processed out. He was released from active duty under honorable conditions on February 23, 1946. On June 28, 1946, the [Secretary of the Navy](#) accepted Ford's resignation from the Naval Reserve. Ford remained in the inactive Naval Reserve until 1963.

Marriage and children [\[edit \]](#)

On October 15, 1948, Ford married [Elizabeth Bloomer Warren](#) (1918–2011) at Grace [Episcopal Church](#) in Grand Rapids; it was his first and only marriage and his wife's second marriage. Warren was a department store fashion consultant. She had also been a [John Robert Powers](#) fashion model and a dancer in the auxiliary troupe of the [Martha Graham](#) Dance Company. She had previously been married and divorced from William G. Warren.

At the time of his engagement, Ford was campaigning for what would be his first of thirteen terms as a member of the United States House of Representatives. The wedding was delayed until shortly before the elections because, as [The New York Times](#) reported in a 1974 profile of Betty Ford, "Jerry was running for Congress and wasn't sure how voters might feel about his marrying a divorced ex-dancer."^[27]

The couple had four children:^[28]

- [Michael Gerald](#), born in 1950
- [John Gardner](#), known as Jack, born in 1952
- [Steven Meigs](#), born in 1956
- [Susan Elizabeth](#), born in 1957

House of Representatives (1949–1973) [\[edit \]](#)

After Ford returned to Grand Rapids in 1946, he became active in local Republican politics, and supporters urged him to challenge [Bartel J. Jonkman](#), the incumbent Republican congressman. Military service had changed his view of the world. "I came back a converted [internationalist](#)",



The Fords on their wedding day, October 15, 1948 [\[edit \]](#)

Ford wrote, "and of course our congressman at that time was an avowed, dedicated [isolationist](#). And I thought he ought to be replaced. Nobody thought I could win. I ended up winning two to one."^[9]

During his first campaign in [1948](#), Ford visited voters at their doorsteps and as they left the factories where they worked.^[29] Ford also visited local farms where, in one instance, a wager resulted in Ford spending two weeks milking cows following his election victory.^[30]



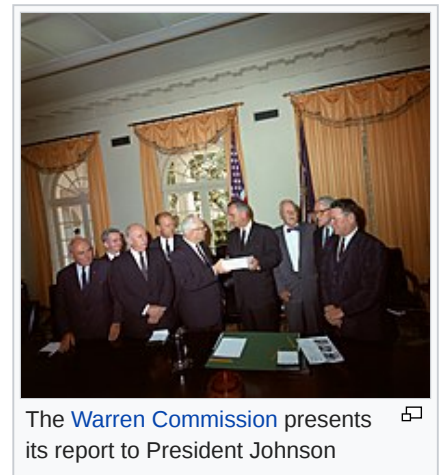
Ford was a member of the House of Representatives for 25 years, holding the Grand Rapids [congressional district](#) seat from 1949 to 1973. It was a tenure largely notable for its modesty. As an editorial in *The New York Times* described him, Ford "saw himself as a negotiator and a reconciler, and the record shows it: he did not write a single piece of major legislation in his entire career."^[31] Appointed to the [House Appropriations Committee](#) two years after being elected, he was a prominent member of the [Defense Appropriations Subcommittee](#). Ford described his philosophy as "a moderate in domestic affairs, an internationalist in foreign affairs, and a conservative in fiscal policy."^[32] Ford was known to his colleagues in the House as a "Congressman's Congressman".^[33]

In the early 1950s, Ford declined offers to run for either the Senate or the Michigan governorship. Rather, his ambition was to become [Speaker of the House](#),^[34] which he called "the ultimate achievement. To sit up there and be the head honcho of 434 other people and have the responsibility, aside from the achievement, of trying to run the greatest legislative body in the history of mankind ... I think I got that ambition within a year or two after I was in the House of Representatives".^[35]

Warren Commission [[edit](#)]

Further information: [Warren Commission](#) and [Assassination of John F. Kennedy](#)

On November 29, 1963, President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) appointed Ford to the [Warren Commission](#), a special task force set up to investigate the [assassination](#) of President [John F. Kennedy](#).^[36] Ford was assigned to prepare a biography of accused assassin [Lee Harvey Oswald](#). According to a 1963 [FBI](#) memo that was released to the public in 2008, Ford was in contact with the FBI throughout his time on the Warren Commission and relayed information to the deputy director, [Cartha DeLoach](#), about the panel's activities.^{[37][38][39]} In the preface to his book, *A Presidential Legacy and The Warren Commission*, Ford defended the work of the commission and reiterated his support of its conclusions.^[40]



House Minority Leader (1965–1973) [[edit](#)]

In 1964, Lyndon Johnson led a landslide victory for his party, secured another term as president and took 36 seats from Republicans in the House of Representatives. Following the election, members of the Republican caucus looked to select a new Minority Leader. Three members

approached Ford to see if he would be willing to serve; after consulting with his family, he agreed. After a closely contested election, Ford was chosen to replace [Charles Halleck](#) of [Indiana](#) as Minority Leader.^[41]

With a Democratic majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Johnson Administration proposed and passed a series of programs that was called by Johnson the "[Great Society](#)." During the first session of the [Eighty-ninth Congress](#) alone, the Johnson Administration submitted 87 bills to Congress, and Johnson signed 84, or 96%, arguably the most successful legislative agenda in Congressional history.^[42]

In 1966, criticism over the Johnson Administration's handling of the [Vietnam War](#) began to grow, with Ford and Congressional Republicans expressing concern that the United States was not doing what was necessary to win the war. Public sentiment also began to move against Johnson, and the [1966 midterm elections](#) saw a 47-seat swing in favor of the Republicans. This was not enough to give Republicans a majority in the House, but the victory gave Ford the opportunity to prevent the passage of further Great Society programs.^[41]

Ford's private criticism of the Vietnam War became public knowledge after he spoke from the floor of the House and questioned whether the White House had a clear plan to bring the war to a successful conclusion.^[41] The speech angered President Johnson, who accused Ford of having played "too much football without a helmet".^{[41][43]}

As Minority Leader in the House, Ford appeared in a popular series of televised press conferences with [Illinois](#) Senator [Everett Dirksen](#), in which they proposed Republican alternatives to Johnson's policies. Many in the press jokingly called this "The Ev and Jerry Show."^[44] Johnson said at the time, "Jerry Ford is so dumb he can't fart and chew gum at the same time."^[45] The press, used to sanitizing Johnson's salty language, reported this as "Gerald Ford can't walk and chew gum at the same time."^[46]

After [Nixon](#) was elected President in November 1968, Ford's role shifted to being an advocate for the White House agenda. Congress passed several of Nixon's proposals, including the [National Environmental Policy Act](#) and the [Tax Reform Act of 1969](#). Another high-profile victory for the Republican minority was the State and Local Fiscal Assistance act. Passed in 1972, the act established a [Revenue Sharing](#) program for state and local governments.^[47] Ford's leadership was instrumental in shepherding revenue sharing through Congress, and resulted in a bipartisan coalition that supported the bill with 223 votes in favor (compared with 185 against).^{[41][48]}

During the eight years (1965–1973) that Ford served as Minority Leader, he won many friends in the House because of his fair leadership and inoffensive personality.^[41]



Ford meets with President Richard Nixon as [House Minority Leader](#). ✂



Congressman Gerald Ford, MSFC ✂ director [Wernher von Braun](#), Congressman [George H. Mahon](#), and NASA Administrator [James E. Webb](#) visit the [Marshall Space Flight Center](#) for a briefing on the Saturn program, 1964.

Vice presidency (1973–1974) [[edit](#)]

To become House Speaker, Ford worked to help Republicans across the country get a majority in the chamber, often traveling on the [rubber chicken circuit](#). After a decade of failing to do so, he promised his wife that he would try again in 1974 then retire in 1976.^[35] On October 10, 1973, Vice President [Spiro Agnew](#) resigned and then pleaded [no contest](#) to criminal charges of tax evasion and money laundering, part of a negotiated resolution to a scheme in which he accepted \$29,500 in bribes while governor of Maryland. According to *The New York Times*, Nixon "sought advice from senior Congressional leaders about a replacement." The advice was unanimous. "We gave Nixon no choice but Ford," [House Speaker Carl Albert](#) recalled later.^[31] Ford agreed to the nomination, telling his wife that the Vice Presidency would be "a nice conclusion" to his career.^[35]

Ford was nominated to take Agnew's position on October 12, the first time the vice-presidential vacancy provision of the [25th Amendment](#) had been implemented. The [United States Senate](#) voted 92 to 3 to confirm Ford on November 27. Only three Senators, all Democrats, voted against Ford's confirmation: [Gaylord Nelson](#) of [Wisconsin](#), [Thomas Eagleton](#) of [Missouri](#) and [William Hathaway](#) of [Maine](#). On December 6, 1973, the House confirmed Ford by a vote of 387 to 35. One hour after the confirmation vote in the House, Ford took the oath of office as Vice President of the United States.

Ford became Vice President as the [Watergate scandal](#) was unfolding. On Thursday, August 1, 1974, [Chief of Staff Alexander Haig](#) contacted Ford to tell him that "[smoking gun](#)" evidence had been found. The evidence left little doubt that President Nixon had been a part of the Watergate cover-up. At the time, Ford and his wife, Betty, were living in suburban Virginia, waiting for their expected move into the newly designated [vice president's residence](#) in Washington, D.C. However, "Al Haig asked to come over and see me," Ford later said, "to tell me that there would be a new tape released on a Monday, and he said the evidence in there was devastating and there would probably be either an impeachment or a resignation. And he said, 'I'm just warning you that you've got to be prepared, that things might change dramatically and you could become President.' And I said, 'Betty, I don't think we're ever going to live in the vice president's house.'"^[9]

Presidency (1974–1977) [[edit](#)]

Main article: [Presidency of Gerald Ford](#)

For a chronological guide to this subject, see [Timeline of the presidency of Gerald Ford](#).

Swearing-in [[edit](#)]

When Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974, Ford automatically assumed the presidency. This made him the only person to become the nation's chief executive without having been previously voted into either the presidential or vice presidential office. Immediately after Ford took the oath of office in the [East Room](#) of the White House, he spoke to the assembled audience in a speech that was broadcast live to the nation.^[49] Ford noted the



Gerald and Betty Ford with the President and First Lady [Pat Nixon](#) after President Nixon nominated Ford to be Vice President, October 13, 1973 [\[1\]](#)



Gerald Ford is sworn in as the 38th President of the United States by [Chief](#) [\[1\]](#)

peculiarity of his position: "I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your president by your ballots, and so I ask you to confirm me as your president with your prayers."^[50] He went on to state:

Justice Warren Burger in the White House [East Room](#), while Betty Ford looks on.



Ford and his [golden retriever](#), [Liberty](#), in the [Oval Office](#), 1974

I have not sought this enormous responsibility, but I will not shirk it. Those who nominated and confirmed me as Vice President were my friends and are my friends. They were of both parties, elected by all the people and acting under the Constitution in their name. It is only fitting then that I should pledge to them and to you that I will be the President of all the people.^[51]

He also stated:

My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over. Our Constitution works; our great Republic is a government of laws and not of men. Here, the people rule. But there is a higher Power, by whatever name we honor Him, who ordains not only righteousness but love, not only justice, but mercy. ... let us restore the golden rule to our political process, and let brotherly love purge our hearts of suspicion and hate.^[52]

A portion of the speech would later be memorialized with a plaque at the entrance to [his presidential museum](#).

On August 20, Ford nominated former New York Governor [Nelson Rockefeller](#) to fill the vice presidency he had vacated.^[53] Rockefeller's top competitor had been [George H. W. Bush](#). Rockefeller underwent extended hearings before Congress, which caused embarrassment when it was revealed he made large gifts to senior aides, such as [Henry Kissinger](#). Although conservative Republicans were not pleased that Rockefeller was picked, most of them voted for his confirmation, and his nomination passed both the House and Senate. Some, including [Barry Goldwater](#), voted against him.^[54]

Pardon of Nixon [[edit](#)]

Main article: [Pardon of Richard Nixon](#)

On September 8, 1974, Ford issued [Proclamation 4311](#), which gave Nixon a full and unconditional [pardon](#) for any crimes he might have committed against the United States while president.^{[55][56][57]} In a televised broadcast to the nation, Ford explained that he felt the pardon was in the best interests of the country, and that the Nixon family's situation "is a tragedy in which we all have played a part. It could go on and on and on, or someone must write the end to it. I have concluded that only I can do that, and if I can, I must."^[58]



Message to Congress nominating Nelson A. Rockefeller to be Vice President (August 20, 1974)

Ford's decision to pardon Nixon was highly controversial. Critics derided the move and said a "[corrupt bargain](#)" had been struck between the men.^[9] They said that Ford's pardon was granted in exchange for Nixon's resignation, which had elevated Ford to the presidency. Ford's first press secretary and close friend [Jerald terHorst](#) resigned his post in protest after the pardon. According to [Bob Woodward](#), Nixon Chief of Staff Alexander Haig proposed a pardon deal to Ford. He later decided to pardon Nixon for other reasons, primarily the friendship he and Nixon shared.^[59] Regardless, historians believe the controversy was one of the major reasons Ford lost the [1976 presidential election](#), an observation with which Ford agreed.^[59] In an editorial at the time, *The New York Times* stated that the Nixon pardon was a "profoundly unwise, divisive and unjust act" that in a stroke had destroyed the new president's "credibility as a man of judgment, candor and competence".^[31] On October 17, 1974, Ford testified before Congress on the pardon. He was the first sitting president since [Abraham Lincoln](#) to testify before the [House of Representatives](#).^{[60][61]}



President Ford appears at a [House Judiciary Subcommittee](#) hearing in reference to his pardon of Richard Nixon



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[The Nixon Pardon](#)

In the months following the pardon, Ford often declined to mention President [Nixon](#) by name, referring to him in public as "my predecessor" or "the former president." When, on a 1974 trip to California, White House correspondent [Fred Barnes](#) pressed Ford on the matter, Ford replied in surprisingly frank manner: "I just can't bring myself to do it."^[62]

After Ford left the White House in January 1977, he privately justified his pardon of Nixon by carrying in his wallet a portion of the text of *[Burdick v. United States](#)*, a 1915 [U.S. Supreme Court](#) decision which stated that a pardon indicated a presumption of guilt, and that acceptance of a pardon was tantamount to a confession of that guilt.^[63] In 2001, the [John F. Kennedy Library Foundation](#) awarded the John F. Kennedy [Profile in Courage Award](#) to Ford for his pardon of Nixon.^[64] In presenting the award to Ford, Senator [Edward Kennedy](#) said that he had initially been opposed to the pardon, but later decided that history had proved Ford to have made the correct decision.^[65]

Draft dodgers and deserters [\[edit \]](#)

On September 16 (shortly after he pardoned Nixon), Ford issued Presidential Proclamation 4313, which introduced a conditional [amnesty](#) program for military deserters and Vietnam War [draft dodgers](#) who had fled to countries such as Canada. The conditions of the amnesty required that those reaffirm their allegiance to the United States and serve two years working in a public service job or a total of two years service for those who had served less than two years of honorable service in the military.^[66] The program for the Return of Vietnam Era Draft Evaders and Military Deserters^[67] established a Clemency Board to review the records and make recommendations for receiving a Presidential Pardon and a change in [Military discharge](#) status. Full pardon for draft dodgers came in the [Carter administration](#).^[68]



Pardon given by President Ford under Proclamation 4313

Administration [\[edit \]](#)

When Ford assumed office, he inherited Nixon's [Cabinet](#). During his brief administration, he replaced all members except [Secretary of State Kissinger](#) and [Secretary of the Treasury William E. Simon](#). Political commentators have referred to Ford's dramatic reorganization of his Cabinet in the fall of 1975 as the "[Halloween Massacre](#)". One of Ford's appointees, [William Coleman](#)—the [Secretary of Transportation](#)—was the second black man to serve in a presidential cabinet (after [Robert C. Weaver](#)) and the first appointed in a Republican administration.^[69]

Ford selected George H. W. Bush as [Chief of the US Liaison Office](#) to the People's Republic of China in 1974, and then [Director](#) of the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) in late 1975.^[70]

Ford's transition chairman and first Chief of Staff was former congressman and ambassador [Donald Rumsfeld](#). In 1975, Rumsfeld was named by Ford as the youngest-ever [Secretary of Defense](#). Ford chose a young [Wyoming](#) politician, [Richard Cheney](#), to replace Rumsfeld as his new Chief of Staff; Cheney became the [campaign manager](#) for Ford's [1976 presidential campaign](#).^[71]

Midterm elections [[edit](#)]

Main articles: [United States House elections, 1974](#) and [United States Senate elections, 1974](#)

The 1974 Congressional midterm elections took place in the wake of the Watergate scandal and less than three months after Ford assumed office. The Democratic Party turned voter dissatisfaction into large gains in the [House elections](#), taking 49 seats from the Republican Party, increasing their majority to 291 of the 435 seats. This was one more than the number needed (290) for a two-thirds majority, the number necessary to override a Presidential veto or to propose a constitutional amendment. Perhaps due in part to this fact, the [94th Congress](#) overrode the highest percentage of vetoes since [Andrew Johnson](#) was President of the United States (1865–1869).^[72] Even Ford's former, reliably Republican House seat was won by a Democrat, [Richard Vander Veen](#), who defeated [Robert VanderLaan](#). In the [Senate elections](#), the Democratic majority became 61 in the 100-seat body.^[73]



Ford in the Oval Office, 1974 [[edit](#)]

Domestic policy [[edit](#)]

Inflation [[edit](#)]

The [economy](#) was a great concern during the Ford administration. One of the first acts the new president took to deal with the economy was to create, by [Executive Order](#) on September 30, 1974, the Economic Policy Board.^[74] In October 1974, in response to rising inflation, Ford went before the American public and asked them to "[Whip Inflation Now](#)". As part of this program, he urged people to wear "[WIN](#)" buttons.^[75] At the time, inflation was believed to be the primary threat to the economy, more so than growing unemployment; there was a belief that controlling inflation would help reduce unemployment.^[74] To rein in inflation, it was necessary to control the public's



Ford meeting with his [Cabinet](#), 1975 [[edit](#)]

spending. To try to mesh service and sacrifice, "WIN" called for Americans to reduce their spending and consumption.^[76] On October 4, 1974, Ford gave a speech in front of a joint session of Congress; as a part of this speech he kicked off the "WIN" campaign. Over the next nine days 101,240 Americans mailed in "WIN" pledges.^[74] In hindsight, this was viewed as simply a [public relations](#) gimmick which had no way of solving the underlying problems.^[77] The main point of that speech was to introduce to Congress a one-year, five-percent income tax increase on corporations and wealthy individuals. This plan would also take \$4.4 billion out of the budget, bringing federal spending below \$300 billion.^[78] At the time, inflation was over twelve percent.^[79]

Budget [[edit](#)]

The federal budget ran a [deficit](#) every year Ford was President.^[80] Despite his reservations about how the program ultimately would be funded in an era of tight [public budgeting](#), Ford signed the [Education for All Handicapped Children Act](#) of 1975, which established [special education](#) throughout the United States. Ford expressed "strong support for full educational opportunities for our handicapped children" according to the official White House press release for the bill signing.^[81]

The economic focus began to change as the country sank into the worst [recession](#) since the [Great Depression](#) four decades earlier.^[82] The focus of the Ford administration turned to stopping the rise in unemployment, which reached nine percent in May 1975.^[83] In January 1975, Ford proposed a 1-year tax reduction of \$16 billion to stimulate economic growth, along with spending cuts to avoid inflation.^[78] Ford was criticized greatly for quickly switching from advocating a tax increase to a tax reduction. In Congress, the proposed amount of the tax reduction increased to \$22.8 billion in tax cuts and lacked spending cuts.^[74] In March 1975, Congress passed, and Ford signed into law, these [income tax](#) rebates as part of the [Tax Reduction Act of 1975](#). This resulted in a federal deficit of around \$53 billion for the 1975 fiscal year and \$73.7 billion for 1976.^[84]

When New York City faced bankruptcy in 1975, [Mayor Abraham Beame](#) was unsuccessful in obtaining Ford's support for a federal bailout. The incident prompted the New York *[Daily News](#)*' famous headline "Ford to City: Drop Dead", referring to a speech in which "Ford declared flatly ... that he would veto any bill calling for 'a federal bail-out of New York City'".^{[85][86]}

Swine flu [[edit](#)]


Main article: [1976 swine flu outbreak](#)

Ford was confronted with a potential [swine flu pandemic](#). In the early 1970s, an [influenza](#) strain [H1N1](#) shifted from a form of flu that affected primarily pigs and crossed over to humans. On February 5, 1976, an [army](#) recruit at [Fort Dix](#) mysteriously died and four fellow soldiers were hospitalized; [health officials](#) announced that "swine flu" was the cause. Soon after, public health officials in the Ford administration urged that every person in the United States be [vaccinated](#).^[87] Although the vaccination program was plagued by delays and public relations problems, some 25% of the population was vaccinated by the time the program was canceled in December 1976. The vaccine was blamed for twenty-five deaths; more people died from the shots than from the swine flu.^[88]

Other domestic issues [[edit](#)]

Ford was an outspoken supporter of the [Equal Rights Amendment](#), issuing Presidential Proclamation no. 4383 in 1975:



Cheney, Rumsfeld and Ford in the Oval Office, 1975 

In this Land of the Free, it is right, and by nature it ought to be, that all men and all women are equal before the law.

Now, therefore, I, Gerald R. Ford, President of the United States of America, to remind all Americans that it is fitting and just to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment adopted by the Congress of the United States of America, in order to secure legal equality for all women and men, do hereby designate and proclaim August 26, 1975, as Women's Equality Day.^[89]

As president, Ford's position on abortion was that he supported "a federal constitutional amendment that would permit each one of the 50 States to make the choice".^[90] This had also been his position as House Minority Leader in response to the 1973 Supreme Court case of *Roe v. Wade*, which he opposed.^[91] Ford came under criticism for a *60 Minutes* interview his wife Betty gave in 1975, in which she stated that *Roe v. Wade* was a "great, great decision".^[92] During his later life, Ford would identify as *pro-choice*.^[93]


Foreign policy [edit]

Ford continued the détente policy with both the *Soviet Union* and China, easing the tensions of the Cold War. Still in place from the Nixon administration was the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT).^[94] The thawing relationship brought about by *Nixon's visit to China* was reinforced by Ford's December 1975 visit to that communist country.^[95] In 1975, the Administration entered into the Helsinki Accords^[96] with the Soviet Union, creating the framework of the *Helsinki Watch*, an independent non-governmental organization created to monitor compliance that later evolved into *Human Rights Watch*.^[97]


Ford attended the inaugural meeting of the *Group of Seven* (G7) industrialized nations (initially the G5) in 1975 and secured membership for Canada. Ford supported international solutions to issues. "We live in an interdependent world and, therefore, must work together to resolve common economic problems," he said in a 1974 speech.^[98]

According to internal White House and Commission documents posted in February 2016 by the National Security Archive at The George Washington University,^[99] the Gerald Ford White House significantly altered the final report of the supposedly independent 1975 Rockefeller Commission investigating CIA domestic activities, over the objections of senior Commission staff. The changes included



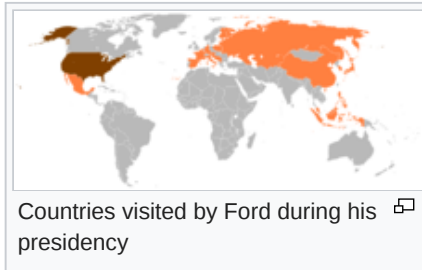
Ford meets with Soviet leader *Leonid Brezhnev* to sign a joint communiqué on the SALT treaty during the *Vladivostok Summit*, November 1974 



Ford makes remarks at a Reciprocal Dinner in Beijing on December 4, 1975. 

removal of an entire 86-page section on CIA assassination plots and numerous edits to the report by then-deputy White House Chief of Staff [Richard Cheney](#).^[100]

Middle East [\[edit \]](#)



In the Middle East and eastern Mediterranean, two ongoing international disputes developed into crises. The [Cyprus dispute](#) turned into a crisis with the [Turkish invasion of Cyprus](#), causing extreme strain within the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization](#) (NATO) alliance. In mid-August, the [Greek government](#) withdrew Greece from the NATO military structure; in mid-September 1974, the Senate and House of Representatives

overwhelmingly voted to halt military aid to Turkey. Ford, concerned with both the effect of this on Turkish-American relations and the deterioration of security on NATO's eastern front, vetoed the bill. A second bill was then passed by Congress, which Ford also vetoed, although a compromise was accepted to continue aid until the end of the year.^[2] As Ford expected, Turkish relations were [considerably disrupted until 1978](#).

In the continuing [Arab–Israeli conflict](#), although the initial [cease fire](#) had been implemented to end active conflict in the [Yom Kippur War](#), Kissinger's continuing [shuttle diplomacy](#) was showing little progress. Ford considered it "stalling" and wrote, "Their [Israeli] tactics frustrated the Egyptians and made me mad as hell."^[101] During Kissinger's shuttle to Israel in early March 1975, a last minute reversal to consider further withdrawal, prompted a cable from Ford to Prime Minister [Yitzhak Rabin](#), which included:

I wish to express my profound disappointment over Israel's attitude in the course of the negotiations ... Failure of the negotiation will have a far reaching impact on the region and on our relations. I have given instructions for a reassessment of United States policy in the region, including our relations with Israel, with the aim of ensuring that overall American interests ... are protected. You will be notified of our decision.^[102]



Ford with [Anwar Sadat](#) in Salzburg, [1975](#)

On March 24, Ford informed congressional leaders of both parties of the reassessment of the administration policies in the Middle East. "Reassessment", in practical terms, meant canceling or suspending further aid to Israel. For six months between March and September 1975, the United States refused to conclude any new arms agreements with Israel. Rabin notes it was "an innocent-sounding term that heralded one of the worst periods in American-Israeli relations".^[103] The announced reassessments upset the American Jewish community and Israel's well-wishers in Congress. On May 21, Ford "experienced a real shock" when seventy-six U.S. senators wrote

him a letter urging him to be "responsive" to Israel's request for \$2.59 billion in military and economic aid. Ford felt truly annoyed and thought the chance for peace was jeopardized. It was, since the September 1974 ban on arms to Turkey, the second major congressional intrusion upon the President's foreign policy prerogatives.^[104] The following summer months were described by Ford as an American-Israeli "war of nerves" or "test of wills".^[105] After much bargaining, the [Sinai Interim Agreement](#) (Sinai II), was formally signed on September 1, and aid resumed.

Vietnam [\[edit \]](#)

One of Ford's greatest challenges was dealing with the continuing [Vietnam War](#). American offensive operations against North Vietnam had ended with the [Paris Peace Accords](#), signed on January 27, 1973. The accords declared a cease fire across both North and South Vietnam, and required the release of American [prisoners of war](#). The agreement guaranteed the territorial integrity of Vietnam and, like the [Geneva Conference](#) of 1954, called for national elections in the North and South. The Paris Peace Accords stipulated a sixty-day period for the total withdrawal of U.S. forces.^[106]



Ford and his daughter Susan watch ↗ as Henry Kissinger (right) shakes hands with [Mao Zedong](#), December 2, 1975

The accords had been negotiated by [United States National Security Advisor](#) Kissinger and North Vietnamese [politburo](#) member [Lê Đức Thọ](#). South Vietnamese President [Nguyen Van Thieu](#) was not involved in the final negotiations, and publicly criticized the proposed agreement. However, anti-war pressures within the United States forced Nixon and Kissinger to pressure Thieu to sign the agreement and enable the withdrawal of American forces. In multiple letters to the South Vietnamese president, Nixon had promised that the United States would defend Thieu's government, should the North Vietnamese violate the accords.^[107]

In December 1974, months after Ford took office, North Vietnamese forces invaded the province of [Phuoc Long](#). General [Trần Văn Trà](#) sought to gauge any South Vietnamese or American response to the invasion, as well as to solve logistical issues, before proceeding with the invasion.^[108]

As North Vietnamese forces advanced, Ford requested Congress approve a \$722 million aid package for South Vietnam, funds that had been promised by the Nixon administration. Congress voted against the proposal by a wide margin.^[94] Senator [Jacob K. Javits](#) offered "...large sums for evacuation, but not one nickel for military aid".^[94] President Thieu resigned on April 21, 1975, publicly blaming the lack of support from the United States for the fall of his country.^[109] Two days later, on April 23, Ford gave a speech at [Tulane University](#). In that speech, he announced that the Vietnam War was over "...as far as America is concerned".^[107] The announcement was met with thunderous applause.^[107]

1,373 U.S. citizens and 5,595 [Vietnamese](#) and third country nationals were evacuated from the South Vietnamese capital of [Saigon](#) during [Operation Frequent Wind](#). In that operation, military and [Air America](#) helicopters took evacuees to [U.S. Navy](#) ships off-shore during an approximately 24-hour period on April 29 to 30, 1975, immediately preceding the [fall of Saigon](#). During the operation, so many South Vietnamese helicopters landed on the vessels taking the evacuees that some were pushed overboard to make room for more people. Other helicopters, having nowhere to land, were deliberately crash landed into the sea after dropping off their passengers, close to

the ships, their pilots bailing out at the last moment to be picked up by rescue boats.^[110]

Many of the Vietnamese evacuees were allowed to enter the United States under the [Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act](#). The 1975 Act appropriated \$455 million toward the costs of assisting the settlement of Indochinese refugees.^[111] In all, 130,000 Vietnamese refugees came to the United States in 1975. Thousands more escaped in the years that followed.^[112]

Mayaguez and Panmunjom [[edit](#)]

North Vietnam's victory over the South led to a considerable shift in the political winds in Asia, and Ford administration officials worried about a consequent loss of U.S. influence there. The administration proved it was willing to respond forcefully to challenges to its interests in the region on two occasions, once when [Khmer Rouge](#) forces seized an American ship in [international waters](#) and again when American military officers were killed in the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea.^[113]

The first crisis was the [Mayaguez incident](#). In May 1975, shortly after the fall of Saigon and the Khmer Rouge conquest of [Cambodia](#), Cambodians seized the American merchant ship *Mayaguez* in international waters.^[114] Ford dispatched [Marines](#) to rescue the crew, but the Marines landed on the wrong island and met unexpectedly stiff resistance just as, unknown to the U.S., the *Mayaguez* sailors were being released. In the operation, two military transport helicopters carrying the Marines for the assault operation were shot down, and 41 U.S. servicemen were killed and 50 wounded while approximately 60 Khmer Rouge soldiers were killed.^[115] Despite the American losses, the operation was seen as a success in the United States and Ford enjoyed an 11-point boost in his approval ratings in the aftermath.^[116] The Americans killed during the operation became the last to have their names inscribed on the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#) wall in Washington, D.C.

Some historians have argued that the Ford administration felt the need to respond forcefully to the incident because it was construed as a Soviet plot.^[117] But work by Andrew Gawthorpe, published in 2009, based on an analysis of the administration's internal discussions, shows that Ford's national security team understood that the seizure of the vessel was a local, and perhaps even accidental, provocation by an immature Khmer government. Nevertheless, they felt the need to respond forcefully to discourage further provocations by other Communist countries in Asia.^[118]

The second crisis, known as the [axe murder incident](#), occurred at [Panmunjom](#), a village which stands in the DMZ between the two Koreas. Encouraged by U.S. difficulties in Vietnam, North Korea had been waging a campaign of diplomatic pressure and minor military harassment to try and convince the U.S. to withdraw from South Korea.^[119] Then, in August 1976, North Korean forces killed two U.S. officers and injured South Korean guards who were engaged in trimming a tree in Panmunjom's [Joint Security Area](#). The attack coincided with a meeting of the Conference of [Non-Aligned Nations](#) in [Colombo](#), Sri Lanka, at which [Kim Jong-il](#), the son of North Korean leader [Kim Il-sung](#), presented the incident as an example of American aggression, helping secure the passage of a motion calling for a U.S. withdrawal from the South.^[120]

At administration meetings, Kissinger voiced the concern that the North would see the U.S. as "the paper tigers of Saigon" if they did not respond, and Ford agreed with that assessment. After



South Vietnamese refugees arrive on a U.S. Navy vessel during Operation Frequent Wind 🔍

mulling various options the Ford administration decided that it was necessary to respond with a major [show of force](#). A large number of ground forces went to cut down the tree, while at the same time the air force was deployed, which included [B-52 bomber](#) flights over Panmunjom. The North Korean government backed down and allowed the tree-cutting to go ahead, and later issued an unprecedented official apology.^[121]

Indonesian invasion of East Timor [[edit](#)]

[East Timor](#)'s decolonization due to political instability in Portugal saw Indonesia posture to annex the new state in 1975. Just hours before the Indonesian invasion of East Timor (now Timor Leste) on December 7, 1975, Ford and Kissinger had visited Indonesian President Suharto in Jakarta and guaranteed American compliance with the Indonesian operation. Suharto had been a key supporter of American influence in Indonesia and Southeast Asia and Ford did not desire to place pressure on the American-Indonesian relationship.^[122]

Under Ford, a policy of arms sales to the Suharto regime began in 1975, before the invasion. "Roughly 90%" of the Indonesian army's weapons at the time of East Timor's invasion were provided by the U.S. according to George H. Aldrich, a former State Department deputy legal advisor.^[123] Post-invasion, Ford's military aid averaged about \$30 million annually throughout [East Timor's occupation](#), and arms sales increased exponentially under President Carter. This policy continued until 1999.^[124]

Assassination attempts [[edit](#)]

Main articles: [Gerald Ford assassination attempt in Sacramento](#) and [Sara Jane Moore](#)

Ford was the target of two assassination attempts during his presidency. In [Sacramento, California](#), on September 5, 1975, [Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme](#), a follower of [Charles Manson](#), pointed a [Colt .45-caliber handgun](#) at Ford and pulled the trigger at [point-blank range](#).^{[28][125]} As she did, [Larry Buendorf](#),^[126] a Secret Service agent, grabbed the gun, and Fromme was taken into custody. She was later convicted of attempted assassination of the President and was sentenced to life in prison; she was paroled on August 14, 2009, after serving 34 years.^[127]



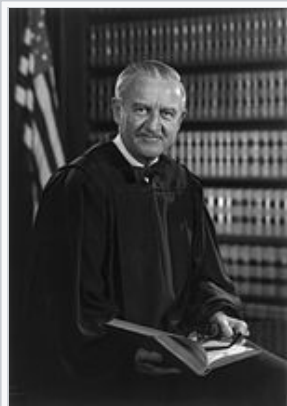
In reaction to this attempt, the Secret Service began keeping Ford at a more secure distance from anonymous crowds, a strategy that may have saved his life seventeen days later. As he left the [St. Francis Hotel](#) in downtown San Francisco, [Sara Jane Moore](#), standing in a crowd of onlookers across the street, fired a [.38-caliber revolver](#) at him. The shot missed Ford by a few feet.^{[28][128]} Before she fired a second round, retired Marine [Oliver Sipple](#) grabbed at the gun and deflected her shot; the bullet struck a wall about six inches above and to the right of Ford's head, then ricocheted and hit a taxi driver, who was slightly wounded. Moore was later sentenced to life in prison. She was paroled on December 31, 2007, after serving 32 years.^[129]

Judicial appointments [[edit](#)]

Further information: [Gerald Ford judicial appointment controversies](#)

Supreme Court [[edit](#)]

Main article: [Gerald Ford Supreme Court candidates](#)



John Paul Stevens was Ford's only Supreme Court appointment.

In 1975, Ford appointed [John Paul Stevens](#) as [Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States](#) to replace retiring Justice [William O. Douglas](#). Stevens had been a judge of the [United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit](#), appointed by President Nixon.^[130] During his tenure as House Republican leader, Ford had led efforts to have Douglas impeached.^[131] After being confirmed, Stevens eventually disappointed some conservatives by siding with the Court's liberal wing regarding the outcome of many key issues.^[132] Nevertheless, in 2005 Ford praised Stevens. "He has served his nation well," Ford said of Stevens, "with dignity, intellect and without partisan political concerns."^[133]

Other judicial appointments [\[edit \]](#)

Main article: [List of federal judges appointed by Gerald Ford](#)

Ford appointed 11 judges to the United States Courts of Appeals, and 50 judges to the [United States district courts](#).^[134]

1976 presidential election [\[edit \]](#)

Main article: [United States presidential election, 1976](#)

Ford reluctantly agreed to run for office in 1976, but first he had to counter a challenge for the Republican party nomination. Former [Governor of California Ronald Reagan](#) and the party's [conservative](#) wing faulted Ford for failing to do more in [South Vietnam](#), for signing the Helsinki Accords, and for negotiating to cede the [Panama Canal](#). (Negotiations for the canal continued under President Carter, who eventually signed the [Torrijos–Carter Treaties](#).) Reagan launched his campaign in autumn of 1975 and won numerous [primaries](#), including [North Carolina](#), [Texas](#), [Indiana](#), and [California](#), but failed to get a majority of delegates; Reagan withdrew from the race at the [Republican Convention](#) in [Kansas City, Missouri](#). The conservative insurgency did lead to Ford dropping the more [liberal](#) Vice President Nelson Rockefeller in favor of U.S. Senator [Bob Dole](#) of [Kansas](#).^[135]



Governor [Ronald Reagan](#) congratulates President Ford after the president successfully wins the 1976 Republican nomination, while [Bob Dole](#), [Nancy Reagan](#), and [Nelson Rockefeller](#) look on.

In addition to the pardon dispute and lingering anti-Republican sentiment, Ford had to counter a plethora of negative media imagery. [Chevy Chase](#) often did [pratfalls](#) on [Saturday Night Live](#), imitating Ford, who had been seen stumbling on two occasions during his term. As Chase commented, "He even mentioned in his own autobiography it had an effect over a period of time that affected the election to some degree."^[136]

Ford's 1976 election campaign benefitted from his being an incumbent president during several anniversary events held during the period leading up to the [United States Bicentennial](#). The Washington, D.C. [fireworks](#) display on the [Fourth of July](#) was presided over by the President and televised nationally.^[137] On July 7, 1976, the President and First Lady served as hosts at a White House state dinner for [Queen Elizabeth II](#) and [Prince Philip](#) of the United Kingdom, which was televised on the [Public Broadcasting Service](#) network. The 200th anniversary of the [Battles of Lexington and Concord](#) in Massachusetts gave Ford the opportunity to deliver a speech to