

Barack Obama
Obama standing in the Oval Office with his arms folded and smiling
Official portrait, 2012
44th President of the United States
In office
January 20, 2009 – January 20, 2017
Vice President Joe Biden
Preceded by George W. Bush
Succeeded by Donald Trump
United States Senator
from Illinois
In office
January 3, 2005 – November 16, 2008
Preceded by Peter Fitzgerald
Succeeded by Roland Burris
Member of the Illinois Senate
from the 13th district
In office
January 8, 1997 – November 4, 2004
Preceded by Alice Palmer
Succeeded by Kwame Raoul
Personal details
Born Barack Hussein Obama II
August 4, 1961 (age 62)
Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S.
Political party Democratic
Spouse Michelle Robinson (m. 1992)
Children
Malia Sasha
Parents
Barack Obama Sr.
Ann Dunham
Relatives Obama family
Residence Kalorama, Washington, D.C.
Alma mater
Columbia University (BA)
Harvard University (JD)
Occupation
Politician lawyer author
Awards Full list
Signature Cursive signature in ink
Website
Official website
Obama Foundation
White House Archives
Barack Obama's voice
Duration: 9 minutes and 28 seconds.9:28
Obama on the death of Osama bin Laden
Recorded May 2, 2011

This article is part of
a series about
Barack Obama
Pre-presidency
44th President of the United States

Policies

Appointments

First term

Second term

Presidential campaigns

Post-presidency

Publications

Personal

Others

Seal of the President of the United States

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Barack Hussein Obama II (/bərkˈhuːsənoʊbɑːm/ b -RAHK hoo-SAYN oh-BAH-m;[1] born August 4, 1961) is

American politician who served as the 44th president of the United States from 2009 to 2017. A member of the Democratic Party, he was the first African-American president in U.S. history. Obama previously served as a U.S. senator representing Illinois from 2005 to 2008, as an Illinois state senator from 1997 to 2004, and as a civil rights lawyer and university lecturer.

Obama was born in Honolulu, Hawaii. He graduated from Columbia University in 1983 with a B.A. in political science and later worked as a community organizer in Chicago. In 1988, Obama enrolled in Harvard Law School, where he was the first black president of the Harvard Law Review. He became a civil rights attorney and an academic, teaching constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School from 1992 to 2004. He also went into elective politics. Obama represented the 13th district in the Illinois Senate from 1997 until 2004, when he successfully ran for the U.S. Senate. In 2008, after a close primary campaign against Hillary Clinton, he was nominated by the Democratic Party for president and chose Delaware Senator Joe Biden as his running mate. Obama was elected president, defeating Republican Party nominee John McCain in the presidential election and was inaugurated on January 20, 2009. Nine months later he was named the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, a decision that drew a mixture of praise and criticism.

Obama's first-term actions addressed the global financial crisis, and included a major stimulus package, to guide the economy in recovering from the Great Recession, a partial extension of George W. Bush's tax cuts, legislation to reform health care, a major financial regulation reform bill, and the end of a major U.S. military presence in Iraq. Obama also appointed Supreme Court justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, the former being the first Hispanic American on the Supreme Court. He ordered the counterterrorism raid which killed Osama bin Laden and downplayed Bush's counterinsurgency model, expanding air strikes and making extensive use of special forces, while encouraging greater reliance on host-government militaries. Obama also ordered military involvement in Libya in order to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1973, contributing to the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi.

After winning re-election by defeating Republican opponent Mitt Romney, Obama was sworn in for a second term on January 20, 2013. In his second term, Obama took steps to combat climate change, signing a major international climate agreement and an executive order to limit carbon emissions. Obama also presided over the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and other legislation passed in his first term. He negotiated a nuclear agreement with Iran and normalized relations with Cuba. The number of American soldiers in Afghanistan fell dramatically during Obama's second term, though U.S. soldiers remained in the country throughout Obama's presidency. Obama promoted inclusion for LGBT Americans, and during his presidency the Supreme Court struck down same-sex marriage bans as unconstitutional in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

Obama left office on January 20, 2017, and continues to reside in Washington, D.C. His presidential library in Chicago began construction in 2021. Since leaving office, Obama has remained active in Democratic politics. He has campaigned for candidates in various American elections, such as his former vice president Joe Biden in his successful bid for president in 2020. Outside of politics, Obama has published three bestselling books: *Dreams from My Father* (1995), *The Audacity of Hope* (2006), and *A Promised Land* (2020). Rankings by scholars and historians, in which he has been featured since 2010, place him in the middle to upper tier of American presidents.[2][3][4]

Early life and career

Main article: Early life and career of Barack Obama

Photo of a young Obama sitting on grass with his grandfather, mother, and half-sister.

Obama (right) with grandfather Stanley Armour Dunham, mother Ann Dunham, and half-sister Maya Soetoro, mid-1970s in Honolulu

Obama was born on August 4, 1961,[5] at Kapiolani Medical Center for Women and Children in Honolulu, Hawaii.[6][7][8][9] He is the only president born outside the contiguous 48 states.[10] He was born to an American mother and a Kenyan father. His mother, Ann Dunham (1942–1995), was born in Wichita, Kansas and was of English, Welsh, German, Swiss, and Irish descent. In 2007 it was discovered her great-great-grandfather Falmouth Kearney emigrated from the village of Moneygall, Ireland to the US in 1850.[11] In July 2012, Ancestry.com found a strong likelihood that Dunham was descended from John Punch, an enslaved African man who lived in the Colony of Virginia during the seventeenth century.[12][13] Obama's father, Barack Obama Sr. (1934–1982),[14][15] was a married[16][17][18] Luo Kenyan from Nyang'oma Kogelo.[16][19] His last name, Obama, was derived from his Luo descent.[20] Obama's parents met in 1960 in a Russian language class at the University of Hawai i at Mānoa, where his father was a foreign student on a scholarship.[21][22] The couple married in Wailuku, Hawaii, on February 2, 1961, six months before Obama was born.[23][24]

In late August 1961, a few weeks after he was born, Barack and his mother moved to the University of Washington in Seattle, where they lived for a year. During that time, Barack's father completed his undergraduate degree in economics in Hawaii, graduating in June 1962. He left to attend graduate school on a scholarship at Harvard University, where he earned an M.A. in economics. Obama's parents divorced in March 1964.[25] Obama Sr. returned to Kenya in 1964, where he married for a third time and worked for the Kenyan government as the Senior Economic Analyst in the Ministry of Finance.[26] He visited his son in Hawaii only once, at Christmas 1971,[27] before he was killed in an automobile accident in 1982, when Obama was 21 years old.[28] Recalling his early childhood, Obama said: "That my father looked nothing like the people around me—that he was black as pitch, my mother white as milk—barely registered in my mind." [22] He described his struggles as a young adult to reconcile social perceptions of his multiracial heritage.[29]

In 1963, Dunham met Lolo Soetoro at the University of Hawaii; he was an Indonesian East–West Center graduate student in geography. The couple married on Molokai on March 15, 1965.[30] After two one-year extensions of his J-1 visa, Lolo returned to Indonesia in 1966. His wife and stepson followed sixteen months later in 1967. The family initially lived in the Menteng Dalam neighborhood in the Tebet district of South Jakarta. From 1970, they lived in a wealthier neighborhood in the Menteng district of Central Jakarta.[31]

Education

Scan of Obama's elementary school record, where he is wrongly recorded as Indonesian and Muslim. Obama's Indonesian school record in St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Elementary School. Obama was enrolled as "Barry Soetoro" (no. 1), and was wrongly recorded as an Indonesian citizen (no. 3) and a Muslim (no. 4).[32]

At the age of six, Obama and his mother had moved to Indonesia to join his stepfather. From age six to ten, he was registered in school as "Barry"[32] and attended local Indonesian-language schools: Sekolah Dasar Katolik Santo Fransiskus Asisi (St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Elementary School) for two years and Sekolah Dasar Negeri Menteng 01 (State Elementary School Menteng 01) for one and a half years, supplemented by English-language Calvert School homeschooling by his mother.[33][34] As a result of his four years in Jakarta, he was able to speak Indonesian fluently as a child.[35] During his time in Indonesia, Obama's stepfather taught him to be resilient and gave him "a pretty hardheaded assessment of how the world works".[36]

In 1971, Obama returned to Honolulu to live with his maternal grandparents, Madelyn and Stanley Dunham. He attended Punahou School—a private college preparatory school—with the aid of a scholarship from fifth grade until he graduated from high school in 1979.[37] In high school, Obama continued to use the nickname "Barry" which he kept until making a visit to Kenya in 1980.[38] Obama lived with his mother and half-sister, Maya Soetoro, in Hawaii for three years from 1972 to 1975 while his mother was a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Hawaii.[39] Obama chose to stay in Hawaii when his mother and half-sister returned to Indonesia in 1975, so his mother could begin anthropology field work.[40] His mother spent most of the next two decades in Indonesia, divorcing Lolo Soetoro in 1980 and earning a PhD degree in 1992, before dying in 1995 in Hawaii following unsuccessful treatment for ovarian and uterine cancer.[41]

Of his years in Honolulu, Obama wrote: "The opportunity that Hawaii offered — to experience a variety of

cultures in a climate of mutual respect — became an integral part of my world view, and a basis for the values that I hold most dear." [42] Obama has also written and talked about using alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine during his teenage years to "push questions of who I was out of my mind". [43] Obama was also a member of the "Choom Gang" (the slang term for smoking marijuana), a self-named group of friends who spent time together and smoked marijuana. [44] [45]

College and research jobs

After graduating from high school in 1979, Obama moved to Los Angeles to attend Occidental College on a full scholarship. In February 1981, Obama made his first public speech, calling for Occidental to participate in the disinvestment from South Africa in response to that nation's policy of apartheid. [46] In mid-1981, Obama traveled to Indonesia to visit his mother and half-sister Maya, and visited the families of college friends in Pakistan for three weeks. [46] Later in 1981, he transferred to Columbia University in New York City as a junior, where he majored in political science with a specialty in international relations [47] and in English literature [48] and lived off-campus on West 109th Street. [49] He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1983 and a 3.7 GPA. After graduating, Obama worked for about a year at the Business International Corporation, where he was a financial researcher and writer, [50] [51] then as a project coordinator for the New York Public Interest Research Group on the City College of New York campus for three months in 1985. [52] [53] [54]

Community organizer and Harvard Law School

Two years after graduating from Columbia, Obama moved from New York to Chicago when he was hired as director of the Developing Communities Project, a faith-based community organization originally comprising eight Catholic parishes in Roseland, West Pullman, and Riverdale on Chicago's South Side. He worked there as a community organizer from June 1985 to May 1988. [53] [55] He helped set up a job training program, a college preparatory tutoring program, and a tenants' rights organization in Altgeld Gardens. [56] Obama also worked as a consultant and instructor for the Gamaliel Foundation, a community organizing institute. [57] In mid-1988, he traveled for the first time in Europe for three weeks and then for five weeks in Kenya, where he met many of his paternal relatives for the first time. [58] [59]

External videos

video icon Derrick Bell threatens to leave Harvard, April 24, 1990, 11:34, Boston TV Digital Archive [60]
Student Barack Obama introduces Professor Derrick Bell starting at 6:25.

Despite being offered a full scholarship to Northwestern University School of Law, Obama enrolled at Harvard Law School in the fall of 1988, living in nearby Somerville, Massachusetts. [61] He was selected as an editor of the Harvard Law Review at the end of his first year, [62] president of the journal in his second year, [56] [63] and research assistant to the constitutional scholar Laurence Tribe while at Harvard. [64] During his summers, he returned to Chicago, where he worked as a summer associate at the law firms of Sidley Austin in 1989 and Hopkins & Sutter in 1990. [65] Obama's election as the first black president of the Harvard Law Review gained national media attention [56] [63] and led to a publishing contract and advance for a book about race relations, [66] which evolved into a personal memoir. The manuscript was published in mid-1995 as *Dreams from My Father*. [66] Obama graduated from Harvard Law in 1991 with a Juris Doctor magna cum laude. [67] [62]

University of Chicago Law School

In 1991, Obama accepted a two-year position as Visiting Law and Government Fellow at the University of Chicago Law School to work on his first book. [66] [68] He then taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School for twelve years, first as a lecturer from 1992 to 1996, and then as a senior lecturer from 1996 to 2004. [69]

From April to October 1992, Obama directed Illinois's Project Vote, a voter registration campaign with ten staffers and seven hundred volunteer registrars; it achieved its goal of registering 150,000 of 400,000 unregistered African Americans in the state, leading Crain's Chicago Business to name Obama to its 1993 list of "40 under Forty" powers to be. [70]

Family and personal life

Main article: Family of Barack Obama

In a 2006 interview, Obama highlighted the diversity of his extended family: "It's like a little mini-United Nations," he said. "I've got relatives who look like Bernie Mac, and I've got relatives who look like Margaret Thatcher." [71] Obama has a half-sister with whom he was raised (Maya Soetoro-Ng) and seven other half-siblings from his Kenyan father's family, six of them living. [72] Obama's mother was survived by her Kansas-born mother, Madelyn Dunham, [73] until her death on November 2, 2008, [74] two days

before his election to the presidency. Obama also has roots in Ireland; he met with his Irish cousins in Moneygall in May 2011.[75] In *Dreams from My Father*, Obama ties his mother's family history to possible Native American ancestors and distant relatives of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War. He also shares distant ancestors in common with George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, among others.[76][77][78]

Obama lived with anthropologist Sheila Miyoshi Jager while he was a community organizer in Chicago in the 1980s.[79] He proposed to her twice, but both Jager and her parents turned him down.[79][80] The relationship was not made public until May 2017, several months after his presidency had ended.[80] Picture of Obama, his wife, and their two daughters smiling at the camera. Obama wears a dress shirt and tie.

Obama poses in the Green Room of the White House with wife Michelle and daughters Sasha and Malia, 2009.

In June 1989, Obama met Michelle Robinson when he was employed Sidley Austin.[81] Robinson was assigned for three months as Obama's adviser at the firm, and she joined him at several group social functions but declined his initial requests to date.[82] They began dating later that summer, became engaged in 1991, and were married on October 3, 1992.[83] After suffering a miscarriage, Michelle underwent in vitro fertilization to conceive their children.[84] The couple's first daughter, Malia Ann, was born in 1998,[85] followed by a second daughter, Natasha ("Sasha"), in 2001.[86] The Obama daughters attended the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. When they moved to Washington, D.C., in January 2009, the girls started at the Sidwell Friends School.[87] The Obamas had two Portuguese Water Dogs; the first, a male named Bo, was a gift from Senator Ted Kennedy.[88] In 2013, Bo was joined by Sunny, a female.[89] Bo died of cancer on May 8, 2021.[90]

Obama is a supporter of the Chicago White Sox, and he threw out the first pitch at the 2005 ALCS when he was still a senator.[91] In 2009, he threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the All-Star Game while wearing a White Sox jacket.[92] He is also primarily a Chicago Bears football fan in the NFL, but in his childhood and adolescence was a fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers, and rooted for them ahead of their victory in Super Bowl XLIII 12 days after he took office as president.[93] In 2011, Obama invited the 1985 Chicago Bears to the White House; the team had not visited the White House after their Super Bowl win in 1986 due to the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster.[94] He plays basketball, a sport he participated in as a member of his high school's varsity team,[95] and he is left-handed.[96]

In 2005, the Obama family applied the proceeds of a book deal and moved from a Hyde Park, Chicago condominium to a \$1.6 million house (equivalent to \$2.4 million in 2022) in neighboring Kenwood, Chicago.[97] The purchase of an adjacent lot—and sale of part of it to Obama by the wife of developer, campaign donor and friend Tony Rezko—attracted media attention because of Rezko's subsequent indictment and conviction on political corruption charges that were unrelated to Obama.[98]

In December 2007, Money Magazine estimated Obama's net worth at \$1.3 million (equivalent to \$1.8 million in 2022).[99] Their 2009 tax return showed a household income of \$5.5 million—up from about \$4.2 million in 2007 and \$1.6 million in 2005—mostly from sales of his books.[100][101] On his 2010 income of \$1.7 million, he gave 14 percent to non-profit organizations, including \$131,000 to Fisher House Foundation, a charity assisting wounded veterans' families, allowing them to reside near where the veteran is receiving medical treatments.[102][103] Per his 2012 financial disclosure, Obama may be worth as much as \$10 million.[104]

Religious views

Obama is a Protestant Christian whose religious views developed in his adult life.[105] He wrote in *The Audacity of Hope* that he "was not raised in a religious household." He described his mother, raised by non-religious parents, as being detached from religion, yet "in many ways the most spiritually awakened person ... I have ever known", and "a lonely witness for secular humanism." He described his father as a "confirmed atheist" by the time his parents met, and his stepfather as "a man who saw religion as not particularly useful." Obama explained how, through working with black churches as a community organizer while in his twenties, he came to understand "the power of the African-American religious tradition to spur social change." [106]

Obama and his wife standing in a crowded Church, looking forward, with their mouths open mid-sentence while reciting a prayer.

The Obamas worship at African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., January 2013

In January 2008, Obama told Christianity Today: "I am a Christian, and I am a devout Christian. I believe

in the redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I believe that faith gives me a path to be cleansed of sin and have eternal life." [107] On September 27, 2010, Obama released a statement commenting on his religious views, saying:

I'm a Christian by choice. My family didn't—frankly, they weren't folks who went to church every week. And my mother was one of the most spiritual people I knew, but she didn't raise me in the church. So I came to my Christian faith later in life, and it was because the precepts of Jesus Christ spoke to me in terms of the kind of life that I would want to lead—being my brothers' and sisters' keeper, treating others as they would treat me. [108] [109]

Obama met Trinity United Church of Christ pastor Jeremiah Wright in October 1987 and became a member of Trinity in 1992. [110] During Obama's first presidential campaign in May 2008, he resigned from Trinity after some of Wright's statements were criticized. [111] Since moving to Washington, D.C., in 2009, the Obama family has attended several Protestant churches, including Shiloh Baptist Church and St. John's Episcopal Church, as well as Evergreen Chapel at Camp David, but the members of the family do not attend church on a regular basis. [112] [113] [114]

In 2016, he said that he gets inspiration from a few items that remind him "of all the different people I've met along the way", adding: "I carry these around all the time. I'm not that superstitious, so it's not like I think I necessarily have to have them on me at all times." The items, "a whole bowl full", include rosary beads given to him by Pope Francis, a figurine of the Hindu deity Hanuman, a Coptic cross from Ethiopia, a small Buddha statue given by a monk, and a metal poker chip that used to be the lucky charm of a motorcyclist in Iowa. [115] [116]

Legal career

Civil rights attorney

He joined Davis, Miner, Barnhill & Galland, a 13-attorney law firm specializing in civil rights litigation and neighborhood economic development, where he was an associate for three years from 1993 to 1996, then of counsel from 1996 to 2004. In 1994, he was listed as one of the lawyers in *Buycks-Roberson v. Citibank Fed. Sav. Bank*, 94 C 4094 (N.D. Ill.). This class action lawsuit was filed in 1994 with Selma Buycks-Roberson as lead plaintiff and alleged that Citibank Federal Savings Bank had engaged in practices forbidden under the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and the Fair Housing Act. The case was settled out of court.

From 1994 to 2002, Obama served on the boards of directors of the Woods Fund of Chicago—which in 1985 had been the first foundation to fund the Developing Communities Project—and of the Joyce Foundation. [53] He served on the board of directors of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge from 1995 to 2002, as founding president and chairman of the board of directors from 1995 to 1999. [53] Obama's law license became inactive in 2007. [117] [118]

Legislative career

Illinois Senate (1997–2004)

Main article: Illinois Senate career of Barack Obama

Photo of Obama and others carrying a streetsign that reads "Honorary: Milton Davis Blvd."

State Senator Obama and others celebrate the naming of a street in Chicago after ShoreBank co-founder Milton Davis in 1998.

Obama was elected to the Illinois Senate in 1996, succeeding Democratic State Senator Alice Palmer from Illinois's 13th District, which, at that time, spanned Chicago South Side neighborhoods from Hyde Park–Kenwood south to South Shore and west to Chicago Lawn. [119] Once elected, Obama gained bipartisan support for legislation that reformed ethics and health care laws. [120] [121] He sponsored a law that increased tax credits for low-income workers, negotiated welfare reform, and promoted increased subsidies for childcare. [122] In 2001, as co-chairman of the bipartisan Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, Obama supported Republican Governor Ryan's payday loan regulations and predatory mortgage lending regulations aimed at averting home foreclosures. [123] [124]

He was reelected to the Illinois Senate in 1998, defeating Republican Yesse Yehudah in the general election, and was re-elected again in 2002. [125] [126] In 2000, he lost a Democratic primary race for Illinois's 1st congressional district in the United States House of Representatives to four-term incumbent Bobby Rush by a margin of two to one. [127]

In January 2003, Obama became chairman of the Illinois Senate's Health and Human Services Committee when Democrats, after a decade in the minority, regained a majority. [128] He sponsored and led unanimous, bipartisan passage of legislation to monitor racial profiling by requiring police to record the

race of drivers they detained, and legislation making Illinois the first state to mandate videotaping of homicide interrogations.[122][129][130][131] During his 2004 general election campaign for the U.S. Senate, police representatives credited Obama for his active engagement with police organizations in enacting death penalty reforms.[132] Obama resigned from the Illinois Senate in November 2004 following his election to the U.S. Senate.[133]

2004 U.S. Senate campaign

Main article: 2004 United States Senate election in Illinois

In May 2002, Obama commissioned a poll to assess his prospects in a 2004 U.S. Senate race. He created a campaign committee, began raising funds, and lined up political media consultant David Axelrod by August 2002. Obama formally announced his candidacy in January 2003.[134]

Obama was an early opponent of the George W. Bush administration's 2003 invasion of Iraq.[135] On October 2, 2002, the day President Bush and Congress agreed on the joint resolution authorizing the Iraq War,[136] Obama addressed the first high-profile Chicago anti-Iraq War rally,[137] and spoke out against the war.[138] He addressed another anti-war rally in March 2003 and told the crowd "it's not too late" to stop the war.[139]

Decisions by Republican incumbent Peter Fitzgerald and his Democratic predecessor Carol Moseley Braun to not participate in the election resulted in wide-open Democratic and Republican primary contests involving 15 candidates.[140] In the March 2004 primary election, Obama won in an unexpected landslide—which overnight made him a rising star within the national Democratic Party, started speculation about a presidential future, and led to the reissue of his memoir, *Dreams from My Father*.^[141] In July 2004, Obama delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention,^[142] seen by nine million viewers. His speech was well received and elevated his status within the Democratic Party.^[143]

Obama's expected opponent in the general election, Republican primary winner Jack Ryan, withdrew from the race in June 2004.^[144] Six weeks later, Alan Keyes accepted the Republican nomination to replace Ryan.^[145] In the November 2004 general election, Obama won with 70 percent of the vote, the largest margin of victory for a Senate candidate in Illinois history.^[146] He took 92 of the state's 102 counties, including several where Democrats traditionally do not do well.

U.S. Senate (2005–2008)

See also: United States Senate career of Barack Obama and List of bills sponsored by Barack Obama in the United States Senate

Photo of Obama smiling with his arms crossed, with the Capitol building and the sky in the background

Official portrait of Obama as a member of the United States Senate

Obama was sworn in as a senator on January 3, 2005,^[147] becoming the only Senate member of the Congressional Black Caucus.^[148] He introduced two initiatives that bore his name: Lugar–Obama, which expanded the Nunn–Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction concept to conventional weapons;^[149] and the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, which authorized the establishment of USAspending.gov, a web search engine on federal spending.^[150] On June 3, 2008, Senator Obama—along with Senators Tom Carper, Tom Coburn, and John McCain—introduced follow-up legislation: Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in Federal Spending Act of 2008.^[151] He also cosponsored the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act.^[152]

In December 2006, President Bush signed into law the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act, marking the first federal legislation to be enacted with Obama as its primary sponsor.^{[153][154]} In January 2007, Obama and Senator Feingold introduced a corporate jet provision to the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act, which was signed into law in September 2007.^{[155][156]}

Later in 2007, Obama sponsored an amendment to the Defense Authorization Act to add safeguards for personality-disorder military discharges.^[157] This amendment passed the full Senate in the spring of 2008.^[158] He sponsored the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act supporting divestment of state pension funds from Iran's oil and gas industry, which was never enacted but later incorporated in the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010;^[159] and co-sponsored legislation to reduce risks of nuclear terrorism.^[160] Obama also sponsored a Senate amendment to the State Children's Health Insurance Program, providing one year of job protection for family members caring for soldiers with combat-related injuries.^[161]

Obama held assignments on the Senate Committees for Foreign Relations, Environment and Public

Works and Veterans' Affairs through December 2006.[162] In January 2007, he left the Environment and Public Works committee and took additional assignments with Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.[163] He also became Chairman of the Senate's subcommittee on European Affairs.[164] As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Obama made official trips to Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. He met with Mahmoud Abbas before Abbas became President of the Palestinian National Authority, and gave a speech at the University of Nairobi in which he condemned corruption within the Kenyan government.[165]

Obama resigned his Senate seat on November 16, 2008, to focus on his transition period for the presidency.[166]

Presidential campaigns

2008

Main articles: 2008 United States presidential election, Barack Obama 2008 presidential primary campaign, and Barack Obama 2008 presidential campaign

Electoral college map, depicting Obama winning many states in the Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific West, and Florida, and McCain winning many states in the South and Rocky Mountains.

2008 electoral vote results. Obama won 365–173.

Official portrait, 2009

On February 10, 2007, Obama announced his candidacy for President of the United States in front of the Old State Capitol building in Springfield, Illinois.[167][168] The choice of the announcement site was viewed as symbolic, as it was also where Abraham Lincoln delivered his "House Divided" speech in 1858.[167][169] Obama emphasized issues of rapidly ending the Iraq War, increasing energy independence, and reforming the health care system.[170]

Numerous candidates entered the Democratic Party presidential primaries. The field narrowed to Obama and Senator Hillary Clinton after early contests, with the race remaining close throughout the primary process, but with Obama gaining a steady lead in pledged delegates due to better long-range planning, superior fundraising, dominant organizing in caucus states, and better exploitation of delegate allocation rules.[171] On June 2, 2008, Obama had received enough votes to clinch his nomination. After an initial hesitation to concede, on June 7, Clinton ended her campaign and endorsed Obama.[172] On August 23, 2008, Obama announced his selection of Delaware Senator Joe Biden as his vice presidential running mate.[173] Obama selected Biden from a field speculated to include former Indiana Governor and Senator Evan Bayh and Virginia Governor Tim Kaine.[173] At the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado, Hillary Clinton called for her supporters to endorse Obama, and she and Bill Clinton gave convention speeches in his support.[174][175] Obama delivered his acceptance speech at Invesco Field at Mile High stadium to a crowd of about eighty-four thousand; the speech was viewed by over three million people worldwide.[176][177][178] During both the primary process and the general election, Obama's campaign set numerous fundraising records, particularly in the quantity of small donations.[179] On June 19, 2008, Obama became the first major-party presidential candidate to turn down public financing in the general election since the system was created in 1976.[180]

John McCain was nominated as the Republican candidate, and he selected Sarah Palin as his running mate. Obama and McCain engaged in three presidential debates in September and October 2008.[181]

On November 4, Obama won the presidency with 365 electoral votes to 173 received by McCain.[182]

Obama won 52.9 percent of the popular vote to McCain's 45.7 percent.[183] He became the first African-American to be elected president.[184] Obama delivered his victory speech before hundreds of thousands of supporters in Chicago's Grant Park.[185][186] He is one of the three United States senators moved directly from the U.S. Senate to the White House, the others being Warren G. Harding and John F. Kennedy.[187]

2012

Main articles: 2012 United States presidential election and Barack Obama 2012 presidential campaign

Electoral college map, depicting Obama winning many states in the Northeast, Midwest, and Pacific West, and Florida, and Romney winning many states in the South and Rocky Mountains.

2012 electoral vote results. Obama won 332–206.

On April 4, 2011, Obama filed election papers with the Federal Election Commission and then announced his reelection campaign for 2012 in a video titled "It Begins with Us" that he posted on his

website.[188][189][190] As the incumbent president, he ran virtually unopposed in the Democratic Party presidential primaries,[191] and on April 3, 2012, Obama secured the 2778 convention delegates needed to win the Democratic nomination.[192] At the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, Obama and Joe Biden were formally nominated by former President Bill Clinton as the Democratic Party candidates for president and vice president in the general election. Their main opponents were Republicans Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts, and Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin.[193]

On November 6, 2012, Obama won 332 electoral votes, exceeding the 270 required for him to be reelected as president.[194][195][196] With 51.1 percent of the popular vote,[197] Obama became the first Democratic president since Franklin D. Roosevelt to win the majority of the popular vote twice.[198][199] Obama addressed supporters and volunteers at Chicago's McCormick Place after his reelection and said: "Tonight you voted for action, not politics as usual. You elected us to focus on your jobs, not ours. And in the coming weeks and months, I am looking forward to reaching out and working with leaders of both parties." [200][201]

Presidency (2009–2017)

Main article: Presidency of Barack Obama

For a chronological guide, see Timeline of the Barack Obama presidency.

First 100 days

Main article: First 100 days of Barack Obama's presidency

Photo of Obama raising his left hand for the oath of office

Obama takes the oath of office administered by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. at the Capitol, January 20, 2009.

The inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th president took place on January 20, 2009. In his first few days in office, Obama issued executive orders and presidential memoranda directing the U.S. military to develop plans to withdraw troops from Iraq.[202] He ordered the closing of the Guantanamo Bay detention camp,[203] but Congress prevented the closure by refusing to appropriate the required funds[204][205] and preventing moving any Guantanamo detainee.[206] Obama reduced the secrecy given to presidential records.[207] He also revoked President George W. Bush's restoration of President Ronald Reagan's Mexico City policy which prohibited federal aid to international family planning organizations that perform or provide counseling about abortion.[208]

Domestic policy

See also: Social policy of the Barack Obama administration

The first bill signed into law by Obama was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, relaxing the statute of limitations for equal-pay lawsuits.[209] Five days later, he signed the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program to cover an additional four million uninsured children.[210] In March 2009, Obama reversed a Bush-era policy that had limited funding of embryonic stem cell research and pledged to develop "strict guidelines" on the research.[211]

Photo of Obama giving a speech to Congress, with Pelosi and Biden clapping behind him

Obama delivers a speech at a joint session of Congress with Vice President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on February 24, 2009.

Obama appointed two women to serve on the Supreme Court in the first two years of his presidency. He nominated Sonia Sotomayor on May 26, 2009, to replace retiring Associate Justice David Souter. She was confirmed on August 6, 2009,[212] becoming the first Supreme Court Justice of Hispanic descent.[213] Obama nominated Elena Kagan on May 10, 2010, to replace retiring Associate Justice John Paul Stevens. She was confirmed on August 5, 2010, bringing the number of women sitting simultaneously on the Court to three for the first time in American history.[214]

On March 11, 2009, Obama created the White House Council on Women and Girls, which formed part of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, having been established by Executive Order 13506 with a broad mandate to advise him on issues relating to the welfare of American women and girls. The council was chaired by Senior Advisor to the President Valerie Jarrett. Obama also established the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault through a government memorandum on January 22, 2014, with a broad mandate to advise him on issues relating to sexual assault on college and university campuses throughout the United States. The co-chairs of the Task Force were Vice President Joe Biden and Jarrett. The Task Force was a development out of the White House Council on Women and Girls and Office of the Vice President of the United States, and prior to that the 1994 Violence Against Women Act

first drafted by Biden.

In July 2009, Obama launched the Priority Enforcement Program, an immigration enforcement program that had been pioneered by George W. Bush, and the Secure Communities fingerprinting and immigration status data-sharing program.[215]

In a major space policy speech in April 2010, Obama announced a planned change in direction at NASA, the U.S. space agency. He ended plans for a return of human spaceflight to the moon and development of the Ares I rocket, Ares V rocket and Constellation program, in favor of funding earth science projects, a new rocket type, research and development for an eventual crewed mission to Mars, and ongoing missions to the International Space Station.[216]

Photo of Obama smiling at a hospital patient while hugging her friend

Obama visits an Aurora shooting victim at University of Colorado Hospital, 2012.

On January 16, 2013, one month after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, Obama signed 23 executive orders and outlined a series of sweeping proposals regarding gun control.[217] He urged Congress to reintroduce an expired ban on military-style assault weapons, such as those used in several recent mass shootings, impose limits on ammunition magazines to 10 rounds, introduce background checks on all gun sales, pass a ban on possession and sale of armor-piercing bullets, introduce harsher penalties for gun-traffickers, especially unlicensed dealers who buy arms for criminals and approving the appointment of the head of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for the first time since 2006.[218] On January 5, 2016, Obama announced new executive actions extending background check requirements to more gun sellers.[219] In a 2016 editorial in The New York Times, Obama compared the struggle for what he termed "common-sense gun reform" to women's suffrage and other civil rights movements in American history.

In 2011, Obama signed a four-year renewal of the Patriot Act.[220] Following the 2013 global surveillance disclosures by whistleblower Edward Snowden, Obama condemned the leak as unpatriotic,[221] but called for increased restrictions on the National Security Agency (NSA) to address violations of privacy.[222][223] Obama continued and expanded surveillance programs set up by George W. Bush, while implementing some reforms.[224] He supported legislation that would have limited the NSA's ability to collect phone records in bulk under a single program and supported bringing more transparency to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC).[224]