

= John McCain =

John Sidney McCain III (born August 29 , 1936) is the senior United States Senator from Arizona . He was the Republican presidential nominee in the 2008 United States presidential election .

McCain followed his father and grandfather , both four @-@ star admirals , into the United States Navy , graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1958 . He became a naval aviator , flying ground @-@ attack aircraft from aircraft carriers . During the Vietnam War , he was almost killed in the 1967 USS Forrestal fire . In October 1967 , while on a bombing mission over Hanoi , he was shot down , seriously injured , and captured by the North Vietnamese . He was a prisoner of war until 1973 . McCain experienced episodes of torture , and refused an out @-@ of @-@ sequence early repatriation offer . His war wounds left him with lifelong physical limitations .

He retired from the Navy as a captain in 1981 and moved to Arizona , where he entered politics . Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1982 , he served two terms , and was then elected to the U.S. Senate in 1986 , winning re @-@ election easily four times , most recently in 2010 . While generally adhering to conservative principles , McCain at times has had a media reputation as a " maverick " for his willingness to disagree with his party on certain issues . After being investigated and largely exonerated in a political influence scandal of the 1980s as a member of the Keating Five , he made campaign finance reform one of his signature concerns , which eventually led to the passage of the McCain @-@ Feingold Act in 2002 . He is also known for his work towards restoring diplomatic relations with Vietnam in the 1990s , and for his belief that the Iraq War should be fought to a successful conclusion . McCain has chaired the Senate Commerce Committee , opposed spending that he considered to be pork barrel , and played a key role in alleviating a crisis over judicial nominations with the bi @-@ partisan group known as the Gang of 14 .

McCain ran for the Republican presidential nomination in 2000 but lost a heated primary season contest to George W. Bush . He secured the nomination in 2008 after coming back from early reversals , but fell to Democratic candidate Barack Obama in the general election , losing by a 365 ? 173 electoral college margin and by 53 ? 46 percent in the popular vote . He subsequently adopted more orthodox conservative stances and attitudes and largely opposed actions of the Obama administration , especially in regard to foreign policy matters . By 2013 , however , he had become a key figure in the Senate for negotiating deals on certain issues in an otherwise partisan environment . In 2015 , McCain became chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee .

= = Early life and military career , 1936 ? 1981 = =

= = = Formative years and education = = =

John McCain was born on August 29 , 1936 , at Coco Solo Naval Air Station in the Panama Canal Zone , to naval officer John S. McCain Jr . (1911 ? 1981) and Roberta (Wright) McCain (born 1912) . He has a younger brother named Joe and an elder sister named Sandy . At that time , the Panama Canal was under U.S. control .

McCain 's family tree includes Scots @-@ Irish and English ancestors . His father and his paternal grandfather , John S. McCain Sr. , both became four @-@ star United States Navy admirals . The McCain family followed his father to various naval postings in the United States and the Pacific . Altogether , he attended about 20 schools . In 1951 , the family settled in Northern Virginia , and McCain attended Episcopal High School , a private preparatory boarding school in Alexandria . He excelled at wrestling and graduated in 1954 .

Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather , McCain entered the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis . There , he was a friend and informal leader for many of his classmates , and sometimes stood up for targets of bullying . He also became a lightweight boxer . McCain did well in academic subjects that interested him , such as literature and history , but studied only enough to pass subjects he struggled with , such as mathematics . He came into conflict with higher @-@ ranking personnel and did not always obey the rules , which contributed to a low class rank (

894 of 899) , despite a high IQ . McCain graduated in 1958 .

= = = Naval training , first marriage , and Vietnam assignment = = =

McCain 's early military career began when he was commissioned an ensign and started two and a half years of training at Pensacola to become a naval aviator . While there , he earned a reputation as a partying man . He completed flight school in 1960 , and became a naval pilot of ground @-@ attack aircraft , assigned to A @-@ 1 Skyraider squadrons aboard the aircraft carriers USS Intrepid and USS Enterprise in the Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas . McCain began as a sub @-@ par flyer who was at times careless and reckless ; during the early to mid @-@ 1960s , the planes he was flying crashed twice and once collided with power lines , but he received no major injuries . His aviation skills improved over time , and he was seen as a good pilot , albeit one who tended to " push the envelope " in his flying .

On July 3 , 1965 , McCain married Carol Shepp , a model originally from Philadelphia . McCain adopted her two young children Douglas and Andrew . He and Carol then had a daughter named Sidney .

McCain requested a combat assignment , and was assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Forrestal flying A @-@ 4 Skyhawks . His combat duty began when he was 30 years old , in mid @-@ 1967 , when Forrestal was assigned to a bombing campaign , Operation Rolling Thunder , during the Vietnam War . Stationed in the Gulf of Tonkin , McCain and his fellow pilots became frustrated by micromanagement from Washington , and he would later write that " In all candor , we thought our civilian commanders were complete idiots who didn 't have the least notion of what it took to win the war . "

On July 29 , 1967 , McCain , by then a lieutenant commander , was near the epicenter of the USS Forrestal fire . He escaped from his burning jet and was trying to help another pilot escape when a bomb exploded ; McCain was struck in the legs and chest by fragments . The ensuing fire killed 134 sailors and took 24 hours to control . With the Forrestal out of commission , McCain volunteered for assignment with the USS Oriskany , another aircraft carrier employed in Operation Rolling Thunder . Once there , he would be awarded the Navy Commendation Medal and the Bronze Star for missions flown over North Vietnam .

= = = Prisoner of war = = =

McCain 's capture and subsequent imprisonment began on October 26 , 1967 . He was flying his 23rd bombing mission over North Vietnam when his A @-@ 4E Skyhawk was shot down by a missile over Hanoi . McCain fractured both arms and a leg ejecting from the aircraft , and nearly drowned when he parachuted into TrúC B?ch Lake . Some North Vietnamese pulled him ashore , then others crushed his shoulder with a rifle butt and bayoneted him . McCain was then transported to Hanoi 's main H?a Lò Prison , nicknamed the " Hanoi Hilton " .

Although McCain was badly wounded , his captors refused to treat his injuries , beating and interrogating him to get information ; he was given medical care only when the North Vietnamese discovered that his father was a high @-@ ranking admiral . His status as a prisoner of war (POW) made the front pages of major newspapers .

McCain spent six weeks in the hospital while receiving marginal care . By then having lost 50 pounds (23 kg) , in a chest cast , and with his gray hair turned white as snow , McCain was sent to a different camp on the outskirts of Hanoi in December 1967 , into a cell with two other Americans who did not expect him to live a week . In March 1968 , McCain was put into solitary confinement , where he would remain for two years .

In mid @-@ 1968 , John S. McCain Jr. was named commander of all U.S. forces in the Vietnam theater , and the North Vietnamese offered McCain early release because they wanted to appear merciful for propaganda purposes , and also to show other POWs that elite prisoners were willing to be treated preferentially . McCain turned down the offer ; he would only accept repatriation if every man taken in before him was released as well . Such early release was prohibited by the POW 's

interpretation of the military Code of Conduct : To prevent the enemy from using prisoners for propaganda , officers were to agree to be released in the order in which they were captured .

In August 1968 , a program of severe torture began on McCain . He was subjected to rope bindings and repeated beatings every two hours , at the same time as he was suffering from dysentery . Further injuries led to the beginning of a suicide attempt , stopped by guards . Eventually , McCain made an anti @-@ American propaganda " confession " . He has always felt that his statement was dishonorable , but as he later wrote , " I had learned what we all learned over there : Every man has his breaking point . I had reached mine . " Many American POWs were tortured and maltreated in order to extract " confessions " and propaganda statements ; virtually all of them eventually yielded something to their captors . McCain subsequently received two to three beatings weekly because of his continued refusal to sign additional statements .

McCain refused to meet with various anti @-@ war groups seeking peace in Hanoi , wanting to give neither them nor the North Vietnamese a propaganda victory . From late 1969 onward , treatment of McCain and many of the other POWs became more tolerable , while McCain continued actively to resist the camp authorities . McCain and other prisoners cheered the U.S. " Christmas Bombing " campaign of December 1972 , viewing it as a forceful measure to push North Vietnam to terms .

Altogether , McCain was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for five and a half years . He was released on March 14 , 1973 . His wartime injuries left him permanently incapable of raising his arms above his head .

= = = Commanding officer , liaison to Senate , and second marriage = = =

McCain 's return to the United States reunited him with his family . His wife Carol had suffered her own crippling ordeal due to an automobile accident in December 1969 . McCain became a celebrity of sorts , as a returned POW .

McCain underwent treatment for his injuries , including months of grueling physical therapy , and attended the National War College at Fort McNair in Washington , D.C. during 1973 ? 1974 . Having been rehabilitated , by late 1974 , McCain had his flight status reinstated , and in 1976 he became commanding officer of a training squadron stationed in Florida . He improved the unit 's flight readiness and safety records , and won the squadron its first @-@ ever Meritorious Unit Commendation . During this period in Florida , McCain had extramarital affairs , and the McCains ' marriage began to falter , for which he later would accept blame .

McCain served as the Navy 's liaison to the U.S. Senate beginning in 1977 . In retrospect , he has said that this represented his " real entry into the world of politics and the beginning of my second career as a public servant . " His key behind @-@ the @-@ scenes role gained congressional financing for a new supercarrier against the wishes of the Carter administration .

In April 1979 , McCain met Cindy Lou Hensley , a teacher from Phoenix , Arizona , whose father had founded a large beer distributorship . They began dating , and he urged his wife Carol to grant him a divorce , which she did in February 1980 , with the uncontested divorce taking effect in April 1980 . The settlement included two houses , and financial support for her ongoing medical treatments due to her 1969 car accident ; they would remain on good terms . McCain and Hensley were married on May 17 , 1980 , with Senators William Cohen and Gary Hart attending as groomsmen . McCain 's children did not attend , and several years would pass before they reconciled . John and Cindy McCain entered into a prenuptial agreement that kept most of her family 's assets under her name ; they would always keep their finances apart and file separate income tax returns .

McCain decided to leave the Navy . It was doubtful whether he would ever be promoted to the rank of full admiral , as he had poor annual physicals and had been given no major sea command . His chances of being promoted to rear admiral were better , but McCain declined that prospect , as he had already made plans to run for Congress and said he could " do more good there . " McCain retired from the Navy on April 1 , 1981 , as a captain . He was designated as disabled and awarded a disability pension . Upon leaving the military , he moved to Arizona . His 17 military awards and decorations include the Silver Star , Legion of Merit , Distinguished Flying Cross , Bronze Star and

Navy Commendation Medal , for actions before , during , and after his time as a POW .

= = House and Senate elections and career , 1982 ? 2000 = =

= = = U.S. Congressman = = =

McCain set his sights on becoming a congressman because he was interested in current events , was ready for a new challenge , and had developed political ambitions during his time as Senate liaison . Living in Phoenix , he went to work for Hensley & Co . , his new father @-@ in @-@ law Jim Hensley 's large Anheuser @-@ Busch beer distributorship . As vice president of public relations at the distributorship , he gained political support among the local business community , meeting powerful figures such as banker Charles Keating Jr . , real estate developer Fife Symington III and newspaper publisher Darrow " Duke " Tully . In 1982 , McCain ran as a Republican for an open seat in Arizona 's 1st congressional district , which was being vacated by 30 @-@ year incumbent Republican John Jacob Rhodes . A newcomer to the state , McCain was hit with charges of being a carpetbagger . McCain responded to a voter making that charge with what a Phoenix Gazette columnist would later describe as " the most devastating response to a potentially troublesome political issue I 've ever heard " :

Listen , pal . I spent 22 years in the Navy . My father was in the Navy . My grandfather was in the Navy . We in the military service tend to move a lot . We have to live in all parts of the country , all parts of the world . I wish I could have had the luxury , like you , of growing up and living and spending my entire life in a nice place like the First District of Arizona , but I was doing other things . As a matter of fact , when I think about it now , the place I lived longest in my life was Hanoi .

With the assistance of local political endorsements , his Washington connections , as well as money that his wife lent to his campaign , McCain won a highly contested primary election . He then easily won the general election in the heavily Republican district .

In 1983 , McCain was elected to lead the incoming group of Republican representatives , and was assigned to the House Committee on Interior Affairs . Also that year , he opposed creation of a federal Martin Luther King Jr . Day , but admitted in 2008 : " I was wrong and eventually realized that , in time to give full support [in 1990] for a state holiday in Arizona . "

McCain 's politics at this point were mainly in line with President Ronald Reagan , including support for Reaganomics , and he was active on Indian Affairs bills . He supported most aspects of the foreign policy of the Reagan administration , including its hardline stance against the Soviet Union and policy towards Central American conflicts , such as backing the Contras in Nicaragua . McCain opposed keeping U.S. Marines deployed in Lebanon citing unattainable objectives , and subsequently criticized President Reagan for pulling out the troops too late ; in the interim , the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing killed hundreds . McCain won re @-@ election to the House easily in 1984 , and gained a spot on the House Foreign Affairs Committee . In 1985 , he made his first return trip to Vietnam , and also traveled to Chile where he met with its military junta ruler , General Augusto Pinochet .

= = = Growing family = = =

In 1984 , McCain and Cindy had their first child together , daughter Meghan , followed two years later by son John Sidney (Jack) IV , and in 1988 by son James (Jimmy) . In 1991 , Cindy McCain brought an abandoned three @-@ month @-@ old girl needing medical treatment to the U.S. from a Bangladeshi orphanage run by Mother Teresa . The McCains decided to adopt her and named her Bridget .

= = = First two terms in U.S. Senate = = =

McCain 's Senate career began in January 1987 , after he defeated his Democratic opponent ,

former state legislator Richard Kimball , by 20 percentage points in the 1986 election . McCain succeeded longtime American conservative icon and Arizona fixture Barry Goldwater upon the latter 's retirement as U.S. senator from Arizona .

Senator McCain became a member of the Armed Services Committee , with which he had formerly done his Navy liaison work ; he also joined the Commerce Committee and the Indian Affairs Committee . He continued to support the Native American agenda . As first a House member and then a senator ? and as a lifelong gambler with close ties to the gambling industry ? McCain was one of the main authors of the 1988 Indian Gaming Regulatory Act , which codified rules regarding Native American gambling enterprises . McCain was also a strong supporter of the Gramm @-@ Rudman legislation that enforced automatic spending cuts in the case of budget deficits .

McCain soon gained national visibility . He delivered a well @-@ received speech at the 1988 Republican National Convention , was mentioned by the press as a short list vice @-@ presidential running mate for Republican nominee George H. W. Bush , and was named chairman of Veterans for Bush .

McCain became embroiled in a scandal during the 1980s , as one of five United States senators comprising the so @-@ called Keating Five . Between 1982 and 1987 , McCain had received \$ 112 @,@ 000 in lawful political contributions from Charles Keating Jr. and his associates at Lincoln Savings and Loan Association , along with trips on Keating 's jets that McCain belatedly repaid , in 1989 . In 1987 , McCain was one of the five senators whom Keating contacted in order to prevent the government 's seizure of Lincoln , and McCain met twice with federal regulators to discuss the government 's investigation of Lincoln . In 1999 , McCain said : " The appearance of it was wrong . It 's a wrong appearance when a group of senators appear in a meeting with a group of regulators , because it conveys the impression of undue and improper influence . And it was the wrong thing to do . " In the end , McCain was cleared by the Senate Ethics Committee of acting improperly or violating any law or Senate rule , but was mildly rebuked for exercising " poor judgment " . In his 1992 re @-@ election bid , the Keating Five affair was not a major issue , and he won handily , gaining 56 percent of the vote to defeat Democratic community and civil rights activist Claire Sargent and independent former governor , Evan Mecham .

McCain developed a reputation for independence during the 1990s . He took pride in challenging party leadership and establishment forces , becoming difficult to categorize politically .

As a member of the 1991 ? 1993 Senate Select Committee on POW / MIA Affairs , chaired by fellow Vietnam War veteran and Democrat , John Kerry , McCain investigated the Vietnam War POW / MIA issue , to determine the fate of U.S. service personnel listed as missing in action during the Vietnam War . The committee 's unanimous report stated there was " no compelling evidence that proves that any American remains alive in captivity in Southeast Asia . " Helped by McCain 's efforts , in 1995 the U.S. normalized diplomatic relations with Vietnam . McCain was vilified by some POW / MIA activists who , unlike the Arizona senator , believed large numbers of Americans were still held against their will in Southeast Asia . Since January 1993 , McCain has been Chairman of the International Republican Institute , an organization partly funded by the U.S. Government that supports the emergence of political democracy worldwide .

In 1993 and 1994 , McCain voted to confirm President Clinton 's nominees Stephen Breyer and Ruth Bader Ginsburg whom he considered to be qualified for the U.S. Supreme Court . He would later explain that " under our Constitution , it is the president 's call to make . " McCain had also voted to confirm nominees of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush , including Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas .

McCain attacked what he saw as the corrupting influence of large political contributions ? from corporations , labor unions , other organizations , and wealthy individuals ? and he made this his signature issue . Starting in 1994 , he worked with Democratic Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold on campaign finance reform ; their McCain @-@ Feingold bill attempted to put limits on " soft money " . The efforts of McCain and Feingold were opposed by some of the moneyed interests targeted , by incumbents in both parties , by those who felt spending limits impinged on free political speech and might be unconstitutional as well , and by those who wanted to counterbalance the power of what they saw as media bias . Despite sympathetic coverage in the media , initial versions of the McCain

@-@ Feingold Act were filibustered and never came to a vote .

The term " maverick Republican " became a label frequently applied to McCain , and he has also used it himself . In 1993 , McCain opposed military operations in Somalia . Another target of his was pork barrel spending by Congress , and he actively supported the Line Item Veto Act of 1996 , which gave the president power to veto individual spending items but was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1998 .

In the 1996 presidential election , McCain was again on the short list of possible vice @-@ presidential picks , this time for Republican nominee Bob Dole . The following year , Time magazine named McCain as one of the " 25 Most Influential People in America " .

In 1997 , McCain became chairman of the powerful Senate Commerce Committee ; he was criticized for accepting funds from corporations and businesses under the committee 's purview , but in response said the small contributions he received were not part of the big @-@ money nature of the campaign finance problem . McCain took on the tobacco industry in 1998 , proposing legislation that would increase cigarette taxes in order to fund anti @-@ smoking campaigns , discourage teenage smokers , increase money for health research studies , and help states pay for smoking @-@ related health care costs . Supported by the Clinton administration but opposed by the industry and most Republicans , the bill failed to gain cloture .

= = = Start of third term in the U.S. Senate = = =

McCain won re @-@ election to a third senate term in November 1998 , prevailing in a landslide over his Democratic opponent , environmental lawyer Ed Ranger . In the February 1999 Senate trial following the impeachment of Bill Clinton , McCain voted to convict the president on both the perjury and obstruction of justice counts , saying Clinton had violated his sworn oath of office . In March 1999 , McCain voted to approve the NATO bombing campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia , saying that the ongoing genocide of the Kosovo War must be stopped and criticizing past Clinton administration inaction . Later in 1999 , McCain shared the Profile in Courage Award with Feingold for their work in trying to enact their campaign finance reform , although the bill was still failing repeated attempts to gain cloture .

In August 1999 , McCain 's memoir Faith of My Fathers , co @-@ authored with Mark Salter , was published ; a reviewer observed that its appearance " seems to have been timed to the unfolding Presidential campaign . " The most successful of his writings , it received positive reviews , became a bestseller , and was later made into a TV film . The book traces McCain 's family background and childhood , covers his time at Annapolis and his service before and during the Vietnam War , concluding with his release from captivity in 1973 . According to one reviewer , it describes " the kind of challenges that most of us can barely imagine . It 's a fascinating history of a remarkable military family . "

= = 2000 presidential campaign = =

McCain announced his candidacy for president on September 27 , 1999 , in Nashua , New Hampshire , saying he was staging " a fight to take our government back from the power brokers and special interests , and return it to the people and the noble cause of freedom it was created to serve " . The leader for the Republican nomination was Texas Governor George W. Bush , who had the political and financial support of most of the party establishment .

McCain focused on the New Hampshire primary , where his message appealed to independents . He traveled on a campaign bus called the Straight Talk Express . He held many town hall meetings , answering every question voters asked , in a successful example of " retail politics " , and he used free media to compensate for his lack of funds . One reporter later recounted that , " McCain talked all day long with reporters on his Straight Talk Express bus ; he talked so much that sometimes he said things that he shouldn 't have , and that 's why the media loved him . " On February 1 , 2000 , he won New Hampshire 's primary with 49 percent of the vote to Bush 's 30 percent . The Bush campaign and the Republican establishment feared that a McCain victory in the crucial South

Carolina primary might give his campaign unstoppable momentum .

The Arizona Republic would write that the McCain ? Bush primary contest in South Carolina " has entered national political lore as a low @-@ water mark in presidential campaigns " , while The New York Times called it " a painful symbol of the brutality of American politics " . A variety of interest groups that McCain had challenged in the past ran negative ads . Bush borrowed McCain 's earlier language of reform , and declined to dissociate himself from a veterans activist who accused McCain (in Bush 's presence) of having " abandoned the veterans " on POW / MIA and Agent Orange issues .

Incensed , McCain ran ads accusing Bush of lying and comparing the governor to Bill Clinton , which Bush said was " about as low a blow as you can give in a Republican primary " . An anonymous smear campaign began against McCain , delivered by push polls , faxes , e @-@ mails , flyers , and audience plants . The smears claimed that McCain had fathered a black child out of wedlock (the McCains ' dark @-@ skinned daughter was adopted from Bangladesh) , that his wife Cindy was a drug addict , that he was a homosexual , and that he was a " Manchurian Candidate " who was either a traitor or mentally unstable from his North Vietnam POW days . The Bush campaign strongly denied any involvement with the attacks .

McCain lost South Carolina on February 19 , with 42 percent of the vote to Bush 's 53 percent , in part because Bush mobilized the state 's evangelical voters and outspent McCain . The win allowed Bush to regain lost momentum . McCain would say of the rumor spreaders , " I believe that there is a special place in hell for people like those . " According to one report , the South Carolina experience left McCain in a " very dark place " .

McCain 's campaign never completely recovered from his South Carolina defeat , although he did rebound partially by winning in Arizona and Michigan a few days later . He made a speech in Virginia Beach that criticized Christian leaders , including Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell , as divisive conservatives , declaring " ... we embrace the fine members of the religious conservative community . But that does not mean that we will pander to their self @-@ appointed leaders . " McCain lost the Virginia primary on February 29 , and on March 7 lost nine of the thirteen primaries on Super Tuesday to Bush . With little hope of overcoming Bush 's delegate lead , McCain withdrew from the race on March 9 , 2000 . He endorsed Bush two months later , and made occasional appearances with the Texas governor during the general election campaign .

= = Senate career , 2000 ? 2008 = =

= = = Remainder of third Senate term = = =

McCain began 2001 by breaking with the new George W. Bush administration on a number of matters , including HMO reform , climate change , and gun legislation ; McCain @-@ Feingold was opposed by Bush as well . In May 2001 , McCain was one of only two Senate Republicans to vote against the Bush tax cuts . Besides the differences with Bush on ideological grounds , there was considerable antagonism between the two remaining from the previous year 's campaign . Later , when a Republican senator , Jim Jeffords , became an Independent , thereby throwing control of the Senate to the Democrats , McCain defended Jeffords against " self @-@ appointed enforcers of party loyalty " . Indeed , there was speculation at the time , and in years since , about McCain himself leaving the Republican Party , but McCain has always adamantly denied that he ever considered doing so . Beginning in 2001 , McCain used political capital gained from his presidential run , as well as improved legislative skills and relationships with other members , to become one of the Senate 's most influential members .

After the September 11 , 2001 attacks , McCain supported Bush and the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan . He and Democratic senator Joe Lieberman wrote the legislation that created the 9 / 11 Commission , while he and Democratic senator Fritz Hollings co @-@ sponsored the Aviation and Transportation Security Act that federalized airport security .

In March 2002 , McCain @-@ Feingold passed in both Houses of Congress and was signed into

law by President Bush . Seven years in the making , it was McCain 's greatest legislative achievement .

Meanwhile , in discussions over proposed U.S. action against Iraq , McCain was a strong supporter of the Bush administration 's position . He stated that Iraq was " a clear and present danger to the United States of America " , and voted accordingly for the Iraq War Resolution in October 2002 . He predicted that U.S. forces would be treated as liberators by a large number of the Iraqi people . In May 2003 , McCain voted against the second round of Bush tax cuts , saying it was unwise at a time of war . By November 2003 , after a trip to Iraq , he was publicly questioning Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld , saying that more U.S. troops were needed ; the following year , McCain announced that he had lost confidence in Rumsfeld .

In October 2003 , McCain and Lieberman co @-@ sponsored the Climate Stewardship Act that would have introduced a cap and trade system aimed at returning greenhouse gas emissions to 2000 levels ; the bill was defeated with 55 votes to 43 in the Senate . They reintroduced modified versions of the Act two additional times , most recently in January 2007 with the co @-@ sponsorship of Barack Obama , among others .

In the 2004 U.S. presidential election campaign , McCain was once again frequently mentioned for the vice @-@ presidential slot , only this time as part of the Democratic ticket under nominee John Kerry . McCain said that Kerry had never formally offered him the position and that he would not have accepted it if he had . At the 2004 Republican National Convention , McCain supported Bush for re @-@ election , praising Bush 's management of the War on Terror since the September 11 attacks . At the same time , he defended Kerry 's Vietnam war record . By August 2004 , McCain had the best favorable @-@ to @-@ unfavorable rating (55 percent to 19 percent) of any national politician ; he campaigned for Bush much more than he had four years previously , though the two remained situational allies rather than friends .

McCain was also up for re @-@ election as senator , in 2004 . He defeated little @-@ known Democratic schoolteacher Stuart Starky with his biggest margin of victory , garnering 77 percent of the vote .

= = = Start of fourth Senate term = = =

In May 2005 , McCain led the so @-@ called Gang of 14 in the Senate , which established a compromise that preserved the ability of senators to filibuster judicial nominees , but only in " extraordinary circumstances " . The compromise took the steam out of the filibuster movement , but some Republicans remained disappointed that the compromise did not eliminate filibusters of judicial nominees in all circumstances . McCain subsequently cast Supreme Court confirmation votes in favor of John Roberts and Samuel Alito , calling them " two of the finest justices ever appointed to the United States Supreme Court . "

Breaking from his 2001 and 2003 votes , McCain supported the Bush tax cut extension in May 2006 , saying not to do so would amount to a tax increase . Working with Democratic Senator Ted Kennedy , McCain was a strong proponent of comprehensive immigration reform , which would involve legalization , guest worker programs , and border enforcement components . The Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act was never voted on in 2005 , while the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006 passed the Senate in May 2006 but failed in the House . In June 2007 , President Bush , McCain , and others made the strongest push yet for such a bill , the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 , but it aroused intense grassroots opposition among talk radio listeners and others , some of whom furiously characterized the proposal as an " amnesty " program , and the bill twice failed to gain cloture in the Senate .

By the middle of the 2000s (decade) , the increased Indian gaming that McCain had helped bring about was a \$ 23 billion industry . He was twice chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee , in 1995 ? 1997 and 2005 ? 2007 , and his Committee helped expose the Jack Abramoff Indian lobbying scandal . By 2005 and 2006 , McCain was pushing for amendments to the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act that would limit creation of off @-@ reservation casinos , as well as limiting the movement of tribes across state lines to build casinos .

Owing to his time as a POW , McCain has been recognized for his sensitivity to the detention and interrogation of detainees in the War on Terror . In October 2005 , McCain introduced the McCain Detainee Amendment to the Defense Appropriations bill for 2005 , and the Senate voted 90 ? 9 to support the amendment . It prohibits inhumane treatment of prisoners , including prisoners at Guantanamo Bay , by confining military interrogations to the techniques in the U.S. Army Field Manual on Interrogation . Although Bush had threatened to veto the bill if McCain 's amendment was included , the President announced in December 2005 that he accepted McCain 's terms and would " make it clear to the world that this government does not torture and that we adhere to the international convention of torture , whether it be here at home or abroad " . This stance , among others , led to McCain being named by Time magazine in 2006 as one of America 's 10 Best Senators . McCain voted in February 2008 against a bill containing a ban on waterboarding , which provision was later narrowly passed and vetoed by Bush . However , the bill in question contained other provisions to which McCain objected , and his spokesman stated : " This wasn 't a vote on waterboarding . This was a vote on applying the standards of the [Army] field manual to CIA personnel . "

Meanwhile , McCain continued questioning the progress of the war in Iraq . In September 2005 , he remarked upon Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers ' optimistic outlook on the war 's progress : " Things have not gone as well as we had planned or expected , nor as we were told by you , General Myers . " In August 2006 , he criticized the administration for continually understating the effectiveness of the insurgency : " We [have] not told the American people how tough and difficult this could be . " From the beginning , McCain strongly supported the Iraq troop surge of 2007 . The strategy 's opponents labeled it " McCain 's plan " and University of Virginia political science professor Larry Sabato said , " McCain owns Iraq just as much as Bush does now . " The surge and the war were unpopular during most of the year , even within the Republican Party , as McCain 's presidential campaign was underway ; faced with the consequences , McCain frequently responded , " I would much rather lose a campaign than a war . " In March 2008 , McCain credited the surge strategy with reducing violence in Iraq , as he made his eighth trip to that country since the war began .

= = 2008 presidential campaign = =

McCain formally announced his intention to run for President of the United States on April 25 , 2007 in Portsmouth , New Hampshire . He stated that : " I 'm not running for president to be somebody , but to do something ; to do the hard but necessary things not the easy and needless things . "

McCain 's oft @-@ cited strengths as a presidential candidate for 2008 included national name recognition , sponsorship of major lobbying and campaign finance reform initiatives , his ability to reach across the aisle , his well @-@ known military service and experience as a POW , his experience from the 2000 presidential campaign , and an expectation that he would capture Bush 's top fundraisers . During the 2006 election cycle , McCain had attended 346 events and helped raise more than \$ 10 @.@ 5 million on behalf of Republican candidates . McCain also became more willing to ask business and industry for campaign contributions , while maintaining that such contributions would not affect any official decisions he would make . Despite being considered the front @-@ runner for the nomination by pundits as 2007 began , McCain was in second place behind former Mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani in national Republican polls as the year progressed .

McCain had fundraising problems in the first half of 2007 , due in part to his support for the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007 , which was unpopular among the Republican base electorate . Large @-@ scale campaign staff downsizing took place in early July , but McCain said that he was not considering dropping out of the race . Later that month , the candidate 's campaign manager and campaign chief strategist both departed . McCain slumped badly in national polls , often running third or fourth with 15 percent or less support .

The Arizona senator subsequently resumed his familiar position as a political underdog , riding the Straight Talk Express and taking advantage of free media such as debates and sponsored events .

By December 2007 , the Republican race was unsettled , with none of the top @-@ tier candidates dominating the race and all of them possessing major vulnerabilities with different elements of the Republican base electorate . McCain was showing a resurgence , in particular with renewed strength in New Hampshire ? the scene of his 2000 triumph ? and was bolstered further by the endorsements of The Boston Globe , the New Hampshire Union Leader , and almost two dozen other state newspapers , as well as from Senator Lieberman (now an Independent Democrat) . McCain decided not to campaign significantly in the January 3 , 2008 , Iowa caucuses , which saw a win by former Governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee .

McCain 's comeback plan paid off when he won the New Hampshire primary on January 8 , defeating former Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney in a close contest , to once again become one of the front @-@ runners in the race . In mid @-@ January , McCain placed first in the South Carolina primary , narrowly defeating Mike Huckabee . Pundits credited the third @-@ place finisher , Tennessee 's former U.S. Senator Fred Thompson , with drawing votes from Huckabee in South Carolina , thereby giving a narrow win to McCain . A week later , McCain won the Florida primary , beating Romney again in a close contest ; Giuliani then dropped out and endorsed McCain .

On February 5 , McCain won both the majority of states and delegates in the Super Tuesday Republican primaries , giving him a commanding lead toward the Republican nomination . Romney departed from the race on February 7 . McCain 's wins in the March 4 primaries clinched a majority of the delegates , and he became the presumptive Republican nominee .

McCain , having been born in the Panama Canal Zone , if elected would have become the first president who was born outside the current 50 states . This raised a potential legal issue , since the United States Constitution requires the president to be a natural @-@ born citizen of the United States . A bipartisan legal review , and a unanimous but non @-@ binding Senate resolution , both concluded that he is a natural @-@ born citizen . Also , if inaugurated in 2009 at age 72 years and 144 days , he would have been the oldest U.S. president upon ascension to the presidency , and the second @-@ oldest president to be inaugurated .

McCain addressed concerns about his age and past health concerns , stating in 2005 that his health was " excellent " . He had been treated for a type of skin cancer called melanoma , and an operation in 2000 for that condition left a noticeable mark on the left side of his face . McCain 's prognosis appeared favorable , according to independent experts , especially because he had already survived without a recurrence for more than seven years . In May 2008 , McCain 's campaign briefly let the press review his medical records , and he was described as appearing cancer @-@ free , having a strong heart , and in general being in good health .

Upon clinching enough delegates for the nomination , McCain 's focus shifted toward the general election , while Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton fought a prolonged battle for the Democratic nomination . McCain introduced various policy proposals , and sought to improve his fundraising . Cindy McCain , who accounts for most of the couple 's wealth with an estimated net worth of \$ 100 million , made part of her tax returns public in May . After facing criticism about lobbyists on staff , the McCain campaign issued new rules in May 2008 to avoid conflicts of interest , causing five top aides to leave .

When Obama became the Democrats ' presumptive nominee in early June , McCain proposed joint town hall meetings , but Obama instead requested more traditional debates for the fall . In July , a staff shake @-@ up put Steve Schmidt in full operational control of the McCain campaign . Throughout these summer months , Obama typically led McCain in national polls by single @-@ digit margins , and also led in several key swing states . McCain reprised his familiar underdog role , which was due at least in part to the overall challenges Republicans faced in the election year . McCain accepted public financing for the general election campaign , and the restrictions that go with it , while criticizing his Democratic opponent for becoming the first major party candidate to opt out of such financing for the general election since the system was implemented in 1976 . The Republican 's broad campaign theme focused on his experience and ability to lead , compared to Obama 's .

Alaska Governor Sarah Palin was revealed as McCain 's surprise choice for running mate on August 29 , 2008 . McCain was only the second U.S. major @-@ party presidential nominee to

select a woman for running mate and the first Republican to do so ; Palin would have become the first female Vice President of the United States if she had been elected . On September 3 , 2008 , McCain and Palin became the Republican Party 's presidential and vice presidential nominees , respectively , at the 2008 Republican National Convention in Saint Paul , Minnesota . McCain surged ahead of Obama in national polls following the convention , as the Palin pick energized core Republican voters who had previously been wary of him . However , by the campaign 's own later admission , the rollout of Palin to the national media went poorly , and voter reactions to Palin grew increasingly negative , especially among independents and other voters concerned about her qualifications .

On September 24 , McCain said he was suspending his campaign , called on Obama to join him , and proposed delaying the first of the general election debates with Obama , in order to work on the proposed U.S. financial system bailout before Congress , which was targeted at addressing the subprime mortgage crisis and liquidity crisis . McCain 's intervention helped to give dissatisfied House Republicans an opportunity to propose changes to the plan that was otherwise close to agreement . After Obama declined McCain 's suspension suggestion , McCain went ahead with the debate on September 26 . On October 1 , McCain voted in favor of a revised \$ 700 billion rescue plan . Another debate was held on October 7 ; like the first one , polls afterward suggested that Obama had won it . A final presidential debate occurred on October 15 .

During and after the final debate , McCain compared Obama 's proposed policies to socialism and often invoked " Joe the Plumber " as a symbol of American small business dreams that would be thwarted by an Obama presidency . McCain barred using the Jeremiah Wright controversy in ads against Obama , but the campaign did frequently criticize Obama regarding his purported relationship with Bill Ayers . McCain 's rallies became increasingly vitriolic , with attendees denigrating Obama and displaying a growing anti @-@ Muslim and anti @-@ African @-@ American sentiment . After one female McCain supporter said she did not trust Obama because " he 's an Arab " , McCain pointedly replied to the woman , " No ma 'am . He 's a decent family man , citizen , that I just happen to have disagreements with on fundamental issues . " McCain 's response was considered one of the finer moments of the campaign and was still being viewed several years later as a marker for civility in American politics . Down the stretch , McCain was outspent by Obama by a four @-@ to @-@ one margin .

The election took place on November 4 , and Barack Obama was projected the winner at about 11 : 00 pm Eastern Standard Time ; McCain delivered his concession speech in Phoenix , Arizona about twenty minutes later . In it , he noted the historic and special significance of Obama becoming the nation 's first African American president . In the end , McCain won 173 electoral college votes to Obama 's 365 ; McCain failed to win most of the battleground states and lost some traditionally Republican ones . McCain gained 46 percent of the nationwide popular vote , compared to Obama 's 53 percent .

= = Senate career after 2008 = =

= = = Remainder of fourth Senate term = = =

Following his defeat , McCain returned to the Senate amid varying views about what role he might play there . In mid @-@ November 2008 he met with President @-@ elect Obama , and the two discussed issues they had commonality on . Around the same time , McCain indicated that he intended to run for re @-@ election to his Senate seat in 2010 . As the inauguration neared , Obama consulted with McCain on a variety of matters , to an extent rarely seen between a president @-@ elect and his defeated rival , and President Obama 's inauguration speech contained an allusion to McCain 's theme of finding a purpose greater than oneself .

Nevertheless , McCain emerged as a leader of the Republican opposition to the Obama economic stimulus package of 2009 , saying it had too much spending for too little stimulative effect . McCain also voted against Obama 's Supreme Court nomination of Sonia Sotomayor ? saying that while

undeniably qualified , " I do not believe that she shares my belief in judicial restraint " ? and by August 2009 was siding more often with his Republican Party on closely divided votes than ever before in his senatorial career . McCain reasserted that the Afghanistan War was winnable and criticized Obama for a slow process in deciding whether to send additional U.S. troops there .

McCain also harshly criticized Obama for scrapping construction of the U.S. missile defense complex in Poland , declined to enter negotiations over climate change legislation similar to what he had proposed in the past , and strongly opposed the Obama health care plan . McCain led a successful filibuster of a measure that would allow repeal of the military 's " Don 't ask , don 't tell " policy towards gays . Factors involved in McCain 's new direction included Senate staffers leaving , a renewed concern over national debt levels and the scope of federal government , a possible Republican primary challenge from conservatives in 2010 , and McCain 's campaign edge being slow to wear off . As one longtime McCain advisor said , " A lot of people , including me , thought he might be the Republican building bridges to the Obama Administration . But he 's been more like the guy blowing up the bridges . "

In early 2010 , a primary challenge from radio talk show host and former U.S. Congressman J. D. Hayworth materialized in the 2010 U.S. Senate election in Arizona and drew support from some but not all elements of the Tea Party movement . With Hayworth using the campaign slogan " The Consistent Conservative " , McCain said ? despite his own past use of the term on a number of occasions ? " I never considered myself a maverick . I consider myself a person who serves the people of Arizona to the best of his abilities . " The primary challenge coincided with McCain reversing or muting his stance on some issues such as the bank bailouts , closing of the Guantánamo Bay detention facility , campaign finance restrictions , and gays in the military .

When the health care plan , now called the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act , passed Congress and became law in March 2010 , McCain strongly opposed the landmark legislation not only on its merits but also on the way it had been handled in Congress . As a consequence , he warned that congressional Republicans would not be working with Democrats on anything else : " There will be no cooperation for the rest of the year . They have poisoned the well in what they 've done and how they 've done it . " McCain became a vocal defender of Arizona SB 1070 , the April 2010 tough anti @-@ illegal immigration state law that aroused national controversy , saying that the state had been forced to take action given the federal government 's inability to control the border . In the August 24 primary , McCain beat Hayworth by a 56 to 32 percent margin . McCain proceeded to easily defeat Democratic city councilman Rodney Glassman in the general election .

In the lame duck session of the 111th Congress , McCain voted for the compromise Tax Relief , Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization , and Job Creation Act of 2010 , but against the DREAM Act (which he had once sponsored) and the New START Treaty . Most prominently , he continued to lead the eventually losing fight against " Don 't ask , don 't tell " repeal . In his opposition , he sometimes fell into anger or hostility on the Senate floor , and called its passage " a very sad day " that would compromise the battle effectiveness of the military .

= = = Fifth Senate term = = =

While control of the House of Representatives went over to the Republicans in the 112th Congress , the Senate stayed Democratic and McCain continued to be the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee . As the Arab Spring took center stage , McCain urged that the embattled Egyptian president , Hosni Mubarak , step down and thought the U.S. should push for democratic reforms in the region despite the associated risks of religious extremists gaining power . McCain was an especially vocal supporter of the 2011 military intervention in Libya . In April of that year he visited the Anti @-@ Gaddafi forces and National Transitional Council in Benghazi , the highest @-@ ranking American to do so , and said that the rebel forces were " my heroes " . In June , he joined with Senator Kerry in offering a resolution that would have authorized the military intervention , and said : " The administration 's disregard for the elected representatives of the American people on this matter has been troubling and counterproductive . " In August , McCain voted for the Budget Control Act of 2011 that resolved the U.S. debt ceiling crisis . In November ,

McCain and Senator Carl Levin were leaders in efforts to codify in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 that terrorism suspects , no matter where captured , could be detained by the U.S. military and its tribunal system ; following objections by civil libertarians , some Democrats , and the White House , McCain and Levin agreed to language making it clear that the bill would not pertain to U.S. citizens .

In the 2012 Republican Party presidential primaries , McCain endorsed former 2008 rival Mitt Romney and campaigned for him , but compared the contest to a Greek tragedy due to its drawn @-@ out nature with massive Super PAC @-@ funded attack ads damaging all the contenders . He labelled the Supreme Court 's 2010 Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission decision as " uninformed , arrogant , naïve , " and , decrying its effects and the future scandals he thought it would bring , said it would become considered the court 's " worst decision ... in the 21st century " . McCain took the lead in opposing the defense spending sequestrations brought on by the Budget Control Act of 2011 and gained attention for defending State Department aide Huma Abedin against charges brought by a few House Republicans that she had ties to the Muslim Brotherhood .

McCain continued to be one of the most frequently appearing guests on the Sunday morning news talk shows . He became one of the most vocal critics of the Obama administration 's handling of the September 11 , 2012 , attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi , saying it was a " debacle " that featured either " a massive cover @-@ up or incompetence that is not acceptable " and that it was worse than the Watergate scandal . As part of this , he and a few other senators were successful in blocking the planned nomination of Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice to succeed Hillary Rodham Clinton as U.S. Secretary of State ; McCain 's friend and colleague John Kerry was nominated instead .

Regarding the Syrian civil war that had begun in 2011 , McCain repeatedly argued for the U.S. intervening militarily in the conflict on the side of the anti @-@ government forces . He staged a visit to rebel forces inside Syria in May 2013 , the first senator to do so , and called for arming the Free Syrian Army with heavy weapons and for the establishment of a no @-@ fly zone over the country . Following reports that two of the people he posed for pictures with had been responsible for the kidnapping of eleven Lebanese Shiite pilgrims the year before , McCain disputed one of the identifications and said he had not met directly with the other . Following the 2013 Ghouta chemical weapons attack , McCain argued again for strong American military action against the government of the Syrian president , Bashar al @-@ Assad , and in September 2013 cast a Foreign Relations committee vote in favor of Obama 's request to Congress that it authorize a military response . McCain took the lead in criticizing a growing non @-@ interventionist movement within the Republican Party , exemplified by his March 2013 comment that Senators Rand Paul and Ted Cruz and Representative Justin Amash were " wacko birds " .

During 2013 , McCain was a member of a bi @-@ partisan group of senators , the " Gang of Eight " , which announced principles for another try at comprehensive immigration reform . The resulting Border Security , Economic Opportunity , and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013 passed the Senate by a 68 ? 32 margin , but faced an uncertain future in the House . In July 2013 , McCain was at the forefront of an agreement among senators to drop filibusters against Obama administration executive nominees without Democrats resorting to the " nuclear option " that would disallow such filibusters altogether . However , the option would be imposed later in the year anyway , much to the senator 's displeasure . These developments and some other negotiations showed that McCain now had improved relations with the Obama administration , including the president himself , as well as with Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid , and that he had become the leader of a power center in the Senate for cutting deals in an otherwise bitterly partisan environment . They also led some observers to conclude that the " maverick " McCain had returned .

McCain was publicly skeptical about the Republican strategy that precipitated the U.S. federal government shutdown of 2013 and U.S. debt @-@ ceiling crisis of 2013 in order to defund or delay the Affordable Care Act ; in October 2013 he voted in favor of the Continuing Appropriations Act , 2014 , which resolved them and said , " Republicans have to understand we have lost this battle , as I predicted weeks ago , that we would not be able to win because we were demanding something that was not achievable . " Similarly , he was one of nine Republican senators who voted for the

Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 at the end of the year . By early 2014 , McCain 's apostasies were enough that the Arizona Republican Party formally censured him for having what they saw as a liberal record that had been " disastrous and harmful " . McCain remained stridently opposed to many aspects of Obama 's foreign policy , however , and in June 2014 , following major gains by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the 2014 Northern Iraq offensive , decried what he saw as a U.S. failure to protect its past gains in Iraq and called on the president 's entire national security team to resign . McCain said , " Could all this have been avoided ? ... The answer is absolutely yes . If I sound angry it 's because I am angry . "

McCain was a supporter of the Euromaidan protests against Ukraine leader Viktor Yanukovich and his government , and appeared in Independence Square in Kiev in December 2013 . Following the 2014 Russian military intervention in Ukraine , McCain became a vocal supporter of providing arms to Ukrainian military forces , saying the sanctions imposed against Russia were not enough . In 2014 , McCain led the opposition to the appointments of Colleen Bell , Noah Mamet , and George Tsunis to the ambassadorships in Hungary , Argentina , and Norway , respectively , arguing they were unqualified appointees being rewarded for their political fundraising . Unlike many Republicans , McCain supported the release and contents of the Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA torture in December 2014 , saying " The truth is sometimes a hard pill to swallow . It sometimes causes us difficulties at home and abroad . It is sometimes used by our enemies in attempts to hurt us . But the American people are entitled to it , nonetheless . " He added that the CIA 's practices following the September 11 attacks had " stained our national honor " while doing " much harm and little practical good " and that " Our enemies act without conscience . We must not . " He opposed the Obama administration 's December 2014 decision to normalize relations with Cuba .

As the 114th United States Congress assembled in January 2015 with Republicans in control of the Senate , McCain became chair of the Armed Services Committee , a longtime goal of his . In this position , he led the writing of proposed Senate legislation that sought to modify parts of the Goldwater @-@ Nichols Act of 1986 in order to return responsibility for major weapons systems acquisition back to the individual armed services and their secretaries and away from the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition , Technology and Logistics . As chair , McCain has tried to maintain a bipartisan approach and has forged a good relationship with ranking member Jack Reed . In April 2015 , McCain announced that he would run for a sixth term in Arizona 's 2016 Senate election . While there was still conservative and Tea Party anger at him , it was unclear if they would mount an effective primary challenge against him . During 2015 , McCain strongly opposed the proposed comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear program , saying that Secretary of State Kerry was " delusional " and " giv [ing] away the store " in negotiations with Iran . McCain supported the 2015 Saudi Arabian @-@ led military intervention in Yemen against the Shia Houthis and forces loyal to former President Ali Abdullah Saleh .

In the Republican Party presidential primaries , 2016 , McCain said he would support the Republican nominee even if it was Donald Trump , but following Mitt Romney 's March 3 speech , McCain endorsed the sentiments expressed in that speech , saying he had serious concerns about Trump 's " uninformed and indeed dangerous statements on national security issues " . Relations between the two had been fraught since early in the Donald Trump presidential campaign , 2016 , when the real estate mogul had said of McCain , saying " He 's not a war hero . He was a war hero because he was captured ? I like people who weren 't captured . " Following Trump becoming the presumptive nominee of the party on May 3 , McCain said that Republican voters had spoken and he would support Trump . McCain was expected to face a potentially strong challenge from Democratic Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick in the general election and privately expressed worry over the effect that Trump 's unpopularity among Hispanic voters might have on his own chances .

= = = Committee assignments = = =

Committee on Armed Services (Chair)

as chair of the full committee may serve as an ex @-@ officio member of any subcommittee

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations
Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight
Committee on Indian Affairs
Committee on Intelligence (ex @-@ officio)

= = = Caucus memberships = = =

International Conservation Caucus
Senate Diabetes Caucus
Senate National Security Caucus (Co @-@ Chair)
Sportsmen 's Caucus
Senate Wilderness and Public Lands Caucus
Senate Ukraine Caucus

= = Political positions = =

Various advocacy groups have given Senator McCain scores or grades as to how well his votes align with the positions of each group . The American Conservative Union has awarded McCain a lifetime rating of 82 percent through 2014 , while McCain has an average lifetime 12 percent " Liberal Quotient " from Americans for Democratic Action through 2014 .

The non @-@ partisan National Journal rates a Senator 's votes by what percentage of the Senate voted more liberally than he or she , and what percentage more conservatively , in three policy areas : economic , social , and foreign . For 2005 ? 2006 (as reported in the 2008 Almanac of American Politics) , McCain 's average ratings were as follows : economic policy : 59 percent conservative and 41 percent liberal ; social policy : 54 percent conservative and 38 percent liberal ; and foreign policy : 56 percent conservative and 43 percent liberal .

Columnists such as Robert Robb and Matthew Continetti have used a formulation devised by William F. Buckley Jr. to describe McCain as " conservative " but not " a conservative " , meaning that while McCain usually tends towards conservative positions , he is not " anchored by the philosophical tenets of modern American conservatism . " Following his 2008 presidential election loss , McCain began adopting more orthodox conservative views ; the magazine National Journal rated McCain along with seven of his colleagues as the " most conservative " Senators for 2010 and he achieved his first 100 percent rating from the American Conservative Union for that year .

From the late 1990s until 2008 , McCain was a board member of Project Vote Smart which was set up by Richard Kimball , his 1986 Senate opponent . The project provides non @-@ partisan information about the political positions of McCain and other candidates for political office . Additionally , McCain uses his Senate website to describe his political positions .

= = Cultural and political image = =

McCain 's personal character has been a dominant feature of his public image . This image includes the military service of both himself and his family , the circumstances and tensions surrounding the end of his first marriage and beginning of second , his maverick political persona , his temper , his admitted problem of occasional ill @-@ considered remarks , and his close ties to his children from both his marriages .

McCain 's political appeal has been more nonpartisan and less ideological compared to many other national politicians . His stature and reputation stem partly from his service in the Vietnam War . He also carries physical vestiges of his war wounds , as well as his melanoma surgery . When campaigning , he quips : " I am older than dirt and have more scars than Frankenstein . "

Writers often extolled McCain for his courage not just in war but in politics , and wrote sympathetically about him . McCain 's shift of political stances and attitudes during and especially after the 2008 presidential campaign , including his self @-@ repudiation of the maverick label , left many writers expressing sadness and wondering what had happened to the McCain they thought

they had known . By 2013 , some aspects of the older McCain had returned , and his image became that of a kaleidoscope of contradictory tendencies , including , as one writer listed , " the maverick , the former maverick , the curmudgeon , the bridge builder , the war hero bent on transcending the call of self @-@ interest to serve a cause greater than himself , the sore loser , old bull , last lion , loose cannon , happy warrior , elder statesman , lion in winter "

In his own estimation , the Arizona senator is straightforward and direct , but impatient . Other traits include a penchant for lucky charms , a fondness for hiking , and a sense of humor that has sometimes backfired spectacularly , as when he made a joke in 1998 about the Clintons widely deemed not fit to print in newspapers : " Do you know why Chelsea Clinton is so ugly ? ? Because Janet Reno is her father . " McCain subsequently apologized profusely , and the Clinton White House accepted his apology . McCain has not shied away from addressing his shortcomings , and apologizing for them . He is known for sometimes being prickly and hot @-@ tempered with Senate colleagues , but his relations with his own Senate staff have been more cordial , and have inspired loyalty towards him . He formed a strong bond with two senators , Joe Lieberman and Lindsey Graham , over hawkish foreign policy and overseas travel , and they became dubbed the " Three Amigos " .

McCain acknowledges having said intemperate things in years past , though he also says that many stories have been exaggerated . One psychoanalytic comparison suggests that McCain was not the first presidential candidate to have a temper , and cultural critic Julia Keller argues that voters want leaders who are passionate , engaged , fiery , and feisty . McCain has employed both profanity and shouting on occasion , although such incidents have become less frequent over the years . Senator Lieberman has made this observation : " It is not the kind of anger that is a loss of control . He is a very controlled person . " Senator Thad Cochran , who has known McCain for decades and has battled him over earmarks , expressed concern about a McCain presidency : " He is erratic . He is hotheaded . He loses his temper and he worries me . " Ultimately Cochran decided to support McCain for president , after it was clear he would win the nomination .

All of McCain 's family members are on good terms with him , and he has defended them against some of the negative consequences of his high @-@ profile political lifestyle . His family 's military tradition extends to the latest generation : son John Sidney IV (" Jack ") graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 2009 , becoming the fourth generation John S. McCain to do so , and is a helicopter pilot ; son James served two tours with the marines in the Iraq War ; and son Doug flew jets in the navy . His daughter Meghan became a blogging and Twittering presence in the debate about the future of the Republican Party following the 2008 elections , and showed some of his maverick tendencies .

= = Electoral history = =

= = Writings by McCain = =

= = Awards and honors = =

In addition to his military honors and decorations , McCain has been granted a number of civilian awards and honors .

In 1997 , Time magazine named McCain as one of the " 25 Most Influential People in America " . In 1999 , McCain shared the Profile in Courage Award with Senator Russ Feingold for their work towards campaign finance reform . The following year , the same pair shared the Paul H. Douglas Award for Ethics in Government . In 2005 , The Eisenhower Institute awarded McCain the Eisenhower Leadership Prize . The prize recognizes individuals whose lifetime accomplishments reflect Dwight D. Eisenhower 's legacy of integrity and leadership . In 2006 , the Bruce F. Vento Public Service Award was bestowed upon McCain by the National Park Trust . The same year , McCain was awarded the Henry M. Jackson Distinguished Service Award by the Jewish Institute for

National Security Affairs , in honor of Senator Henry M. " Scoop " Jackson . In 2007 , the World Leadership Forum presented McCain with the Policymaker of the Year Award ; it is given internationally to someone who has " created , inspired or strongly influenced important policy or legislation " . In 2010 , President Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia awarded McCain the Order of National Hero , an award never previously given to a non @-@ Georgian . In 2015 , the Kiev Patriarchate awarded McCain its own version of the Order of St. Vladimir . In 2016 , Allegheny College awarded McCain , along with Vice President Joe Biden , its Prize for Civility in Public Life .

McCain has received honorary degrees from colleges and universities in the United States and internationally . These include ones from Colgate University (2000) , The Citadel (2002) , Wake Forest University (2002) , the University of Southern California (2004) , Northwestern University (2005) , Liberty University (2006) , The New School 2006) , and the Royal Military College of Canada (2013) . He was also made an Honorary Patron of the University Philosophical Society at Trinity College Dublin in 2005 .