

= Richard Nixon presidential campaign , 1968 =

The 1968 presidential campaign of Richard Nixon , the 36th Vice President of the United States , began when Nixon , the Republican nominee of 1960 , formally announced his candidacy following a year 's preparation and five years ' political reorganization following defeats in the 1960 presidential election , and the 1962 California gubernatorial election .

En route to the Republican Party 's presidential nomination , Nixon faced challenges from Governor George Romney of Michigan , Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York , Governor Ronald Reagan of California , and Senator Charles Percy of Illinois . Nixon won nine of the thirteen state primaries held that season , although due to the population of his state , Governor Reagan won the popular vote while carrying only California . These victories , along with pledged delegate support from states not holding primaries , secured Nixon the nomination on the first ballot of the Republican National Convention , where he named Governor Spiro Agnew of Maryland as his running mate .

In the general election , Nixon emphasized " law and order , " positioning himself as the champion of what he called the " silent majority . " Running well ahead of his opponent , incumbent Vice President Hubert Humphrey , his support slipped in the polls following his refusal to partake in presidential debates , and following an announcement from President Lyndon B. Johnson that a halt in bombing of Vietnam had been negotiated .

Winning a close election on November 5 , 1968 , Nixon and Agnew were inaugurated as the 37th President of the United States and 39th Vice President of the United States , respectively , on January 20 , 1969 . He was the first Vice President elected President since Martin Van Buren in 1836 , and the only one to do so while not an incumbent .

= = Background = =

Nixon was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1946 , representing California 's 12th congressional district from 1947 until his election to the Senate in 1950 . As a member of Congress , he gained a reputation as a firm anti @-@ Communist . In 1952 , he was selected by General Dwight D. Eisenhower , the Republican nominee for president , as his vice presidential nominee . Elected together with Eisenhower , he served as Vice President during the height of the Cold War . In office , he traveled the world on " goodwill tours " , promoting pro @-@ American policies ; he was re @-@ elected with Eisenhower in 1956 . At the end of Eisenhower 's second term in 1960 , Nixon ran unopposed for the Republican nomination , which he received . He lost a close race to Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts , which many credited in part to his unhealthy appearance during the first televised debate .

Nixon ran for Governor of California against incumbent Pat Brown , and was defeated handily , leading the media to label him as a " loser . " This defeat was widely believed to be the end of his career ; in an impromptu concession speech the morning after the election , Nixon famously blamed the media for favoring his opponent , saying , " you won 't have Nixon to kick around anymore because , gentlemen , this is my last press conference . " In September , the New York Post published an article claiming that campaign donors were buying influence with Nixon by providing him with a secret cash fund for his personal expenses . He moved to New York , joining the Mudge Rose Guthrie Alexander & Ferdon law firm , and regrouped , considering but decided against a run for president in 1964 , beginning to plan for a 1968 presidential campaign .

= = Campaign developments = =

= = = Early stages = = =

On January 7 , 1967 , Nixon held a secret meeting with his closest advisers to discuss a potential campaign , brainstorming strategies to obtain sufficient delegates to win the Republican nomination . He asked the attendees not to discuss the meeting with anyone , but to spread subtle hints that he

would run for president . The next month , during an interview with the Saturday Evening Post , Nixon flatly denied he was running for president . Nevertheless , polls suggested that he was the front @-@ runner for the nomination . The Gallup poll from February 1967 showed Nixon leading Governor George Romney , his closest rival , 52 % to 40 % . At this time , he quietly began efforts to organize in Indiana , Nebraska , New Hampshire , Oregon , and Wisconsin , positioning to secure victories in those states ' primaries the following year . In March , he gained the support of the 1964 Republican nominee , Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona A " Nixon for President Committee " formed that month , and headquarters for the organization opened in Washington D.C. in late May .

During the spring and summer , Nixon traveled to Eastern Europe and Latin America to bolster his foreign policy credentials . He returned in August to conduct meetings with his advisers to formulate a solid campaign strategy . Two days later , his campaign manager , Gaylord Parkinson , left his position to care for his ailing wife . Political commentators speculated that the vacancy built " an element of instability " for the campaign . The position was soon temporarily filled by former Governor Henry Bellmon of Oklahoma . The next week , five staff members were fired after private investigators determined that information had been leaked to the campaigns of potential primary rivals Governors Rockefeller and Reagan . The news did not stall the progression of the campaign , and soon Nixon , Mudge , Rose , Guthrie & Alexander member Leonard Garment assembled an advertising team that included CBS Television president Frank Shakespeare .

= = = = Fall 1967 = = = =

By mid @-@ September 1967 , the Nixon campaign had organized headquarters in four states deemed critical to the Republican primaries . Nixon hoped the moves would increase his delegate strength and demonstrate his " ability to win . " He notified the media that his decision on whether to run for president would be formally announced anytime between early December and February . Meanwhile , Nixon and his staff discussed handling the topic of the Vietnam War . They advised him to soften his stance on the war , and encouraged him to shift his focus from foreign affairs to domestic policy to avoid the divisive war issue . Observers noted that this move potentially hurt Nixon by straying from his reputation " as a foreign policy expert . "

In October , political experts predicted that Nixon would gain delegates in the important states of New Hampshire , Wisconsin and Nebraska during the primary season , scheduled to begin in March 1968 . They noted that in the other critical state of Oregon , Ronald Reagan would have an advantage due to the proximity of his home state . Like Nixon , rival George Romney began to organize in these states . Romney officially announced his candidacy in November , prompting Nixon to step up his efforts . He spent most of this period on the campaign trail in New Hampshire . Those following Nixon noted that during this period , he seemed more relaxed and easygoing than in his past political career . One commentator examined that he was not " the drawn , tired figure who debated Jack Kennedy or the angry politician who conceded his California [ gubernatorial ] defeat with such ill grace . " Making appearances at fundraisers in his adopted home state of New York , Nixon helped to raise \$ 300 @,@ 000 for the re @-@ election campaign of Senator Jacob K. Javits . At the end of December , Time labeled Nixon as the " man to beat . "

= = = = 1968 begins = = = =

Nixon entered 1968 as the front @-@ runner for the Republican nomination . However , polls suggested that in a head @-@ to @-@ head match up with incumbent President Lyndon Johnson , Nixon trailed 50 % to 41 % . Later in January , Nixon embarked on a tour of Texas , where he lampooned President Johnson 's State of the Union address , asking : " Can this nation afford to have four more years of Lyndon Johnson 's policies that have failed at home and abroad ? " At this time , reports suggested that Nixon would formally announce his bid in February .

= = = Primary campaign = = =

On February 1 in New Hampshire , Nixon announced his candidacy for the Republican nomination , commenting that problems " beyond politics " needed to be addressed . Immediately following his entrance , the media team prepared for an advertising campaign . They analyzed video of Nixon , determining that he was at his best when speaking spontaneously . The team organized a question and answer session with seven members of the New Hampshire Republican Party , taping Nixon 's responses for editing and use in advertisements . He campaigned in the state , although polls suggested that he would easily win its primary . As a result , he began campaigning in Wisconsin where the second primary would be held . During a stop , he briefly discussed Vietnam , although not in detail , stating that the United States " must prevent [ such ] confrontations , " but that the nation must also " help people in the free world fight against aggression , but not do their fighting for them . " He used those dictatorships in Latin America as an example , stating : " I am talking not about marching feet but helping hands . " As military operations increased in Vietnam in mid @-@ February , Nixon 's standing against President Johnson improved . A Harris poll showed that he trailed the president 43 % to 48 % . Near the end of the month , Nixon 's opponent George Romney exited the race , mostly due to comments he made about being " brainwashed " during a visit to Vietnam . This left Nixon nearly unopposed for the upcoming primaries , narrowing his opponents to Nelson Rockefeller and Ronald Reagan , neither of whom had announced their candidacies .

Due to Romney 's exit , Nixon declared in early March that he would " greatly expand [ his ] efforts in the non @-@ primary states , " with Time observing that Nixon could now focus his political attacks solely on President Johnson . However , the void also caused problems for Nixon ; Time argued that the prospect of soundly defeating second @-@ tier candidates such as former Governor Harold Stassen of Minnesota in the primaries , would not " electrify the voters . " The Nixon campaign countered this claim stating that Romney 's withdrawal was a " TKO " at the hands of Nixon . Meanwhile , Rockefeller began to be viewed more as a candidate , articulating that while not wishing to split the party , he was " willing to serve ... if called . " As talks of other candidates persisted , Nixon continued to campaigning and discussion of the issues . He pledged to end the war in Vietnam , but would not go into detail , drawing some criticism . Nixon easily won the New Hampshire primary on March 12 , pulling in 80 % of the vote with a write @-@ in campaign for Rockefeller receiving 11 % . At the end of March , Rockefeller announced that he would not campaign for the presidency , but would be open to being drafted . Nixon doubted a draft stating that it would only be likely if " I make some rather serious mistake . " Reports suggested that the decision caused " Nixon 's political stock [ to ] skyrocket . " Polling by Gallup at this time revealed that Nixon led President Johnson 41 % to 39 % in a three @-@ way race with American Independent Party candidate and former Governor George Wallace of Alabama .

As the Wisconsin primary loomed in early April , Nixon 's only obstacle seemed to be preventing his supporters from voting in the Democratic primary for Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota as a protest against President Johnson . However , Johnson withdrew from the race before the primary , meanwhile Governor Reagan 's name was on the ballot in Wisconsin , but he did not campaign in the state and was still not a declared candidate . Nixon won the primary with 80 % followed by Reagan with 11 % and Stassen with 6 % . With Johnson removed from the race , Nixon fell behind Democratic candidates Eugene McCarthy , Hubert Humphrey and Robert Kennedy in head @-@ to @-@ head match @-@ ups . At the end of April , Nixon called for a moratorium on criticism of the Johnson policy in Vietnam as negotiations were underway : " The one man who can do anything about peace is Lyndon Johnson , and I 'm not going to do anything to undercut him . " However , the Democratic candidates for president remained fair game for criticism . He argued that " A divided Democratic Party cannot unite a divided country ; a united Republican Party can . " He also began to discuss economics more frequently , announcing plans to cut spending while criticizing the Democrats ' policy of raising taxes . During a question and answer session with the American Society of Newspaper Editors , Nixon spoke out of turn , receiving numerous interruptions of applause . The largest came when he addressed the issue of crime , proclaiming that " there cannot be order in a free society without progress , and there cannot be progress without order . "

On the last day of April , Rockefeller announced that he would campaign for the presidency , despite his previous statement to the contrary . Immediately following his entrance , he defeated

Nixon in the Massachusetts primary 30 % to 26 % . New Harris polls found that Rockefeller fared better against Democratic candidates than Nixon , but the outlook started to appear better for Nixon after he won the Indiana primary over Rockefeller . Off the victory , Nixon campaigned in Nebraska where he criticized the three leading Democratic candidates as " three peas in a pod , prisoners of the policies of the past . " He then proposed a plan to tackle crime that included wiretapping , legislation to reverse previous Supreme Court decisions , and the formation of a congressional committee targeting crime and reforms to the criminal justice system . He did not connect crime to racial rioting , drawing praise from Civil Rights leaders . Nixon won the primary in Nebraska , defeating the undeclared Reagan 71 % to 22 % . At the following primary in Oregon , Reagan seemed more willing to compete with Nixon , and Rockefeller sat out . But Nixon won with 72 % , fifty points ahead of Reagan .

In early June , Nixon continued to be regarded as the favorite to win the nomination , but observers noted that he had not yet locked up the nomination . He still faced challenges from Nelson Rockefeller and Ronald Reagan , and was not on the ballot in California , where Reagan won a large slate of delegates . Behind the scenes , Nixon staff lobbied for delegates from " favorite son " candidates , resulting , in the backing of Senator Howard Baker of Tennessee , and his 28 pledged delegates , as well as those 58 delegates supporting Senator Charles Percy of Illinois . After the assassination of Robert Kennedy , like the other candidates , Nixon took a break from campaigning . Reports suggested that the assassination all but assured his nomination . Upon returning to the trail , Nixon found that Rockefeller had begun attacking him . Rockefeller described Nixon as a man " of the old politics " who has " great natural capacity not to do the right thing , especially under pressure . " Nixon refused to respond to the jabs , stating that he would not participate in attacks . As he edged closer to the nomination , discussions about his running mate arose . Republicans in the Midwest pushed for Mayor John Lindsay of New York City . The endorsement of Nixon by Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon raised speculation that he might be chosen . Congressman George Bush of Texas and Senator Percy were also mentioned as possible selections . At the end of the month , Nixon had two thirds of the required 667 delegates necessary to win the nomination .

On July 1 , Nixon received the endorsement of Senator John G. Tower of Texas , handing him at least 40 delegates . With his nomination all but assured , Nixon 's ad team began preparing for the general election . A series of advertisements featuring question and answer sessions with Nixon and friends of campaign staffers were filmed in New York . The tapes were sent to the swing states of Illinois , Michigan , and Ohio , giving Nixon the advantage of advertising long before the Democratic Party settled on a candidate . At this time , Nixon decided with a group of legislators that " crime and disorder " would be presented as the number one issue in the nation . This continued to be a major theme of the Nixon campaign , and would continue to be used extensively during the general election . Nixon publicly announced his opposition to the military draft , proposing to replace the current system with a volunteer army encouraged with higher pay . President Eisenhower endorsed Nixon in mid @-@ July , breaking his tradition of waiting until after the primary , due to the election 's importance . By July 's end , reports circulated that Nixon had 691 probable delegates for the convention , placing him over the 667 delegate threshold , Rockefeller , however , disputed these numbers . Sources within Washington reported that Reagan caused greater concern for the Nixon campaign than Rockefeller . A possible scenario surfaced where Nixon 's southern delegates would drop their support to back the more conservative Reagan . Nonetheless , Nixon staffers believed that if such a scenario occurred , liberal Rockefeller delegates in the Northeast would support Nixon to prevent a Reagan nomination .

= = Republican National Convention = =

The 1968 Republican National Convention was held from August 5 to 9 at the Miami Beach Convention Center in Miami Beach , Florida . At the convention , Richard Nixon won the nomination for President on the first ballot with 692 delegates . Behind him finished Governor Rockefeller , second with 277 delegates , followed by Governor Ronald Reagan , in third place , having just entered the race , accruing 182 delegates . Nixon 's early nomination occurred partly because he

held on to delegates in the South largely influenced by Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina , and delegate Charlton Lyons of Louisiana .

Following nomination , Nixon held his hands in the air with his trademark " V " sign of victory , delivering an acceptance speech written over the preceding weeks . In his speech , he remarked :

" Tonight I do not promise the millennium in the morning . I don 't promise that we can eradicate poverty and end discrimination in the space of four or even eight years . But I do promise action . And a new policy for peace abroad , a new policy for peace and progress and justice at home . " - Fmr . Vice President Richard Nixon , 1968 Republican Nominee for President

He called for a new era of negotiation with communist nations , and a strengthening of the criminal justice system to restore law and order . Marking himself as a champion of the American Dream , he stressed greater unity , invoking the silent majority . Nixon also discussed economics , articulating his opposition to social welfare , advocating programs designed to help African Americans start their own small businesses . By the end of his address , he promised that " the long dark night for America is about to end . "

Following the speech , Nixon formally selected Governor Spiro Agnew of Maryland as his running mate , who received 1119 delegate votes , with the distant second being Governor Romney with 186 . Agnew was relatively unknown nationally , and was selected due to his purported appeal to African Americans , and work for the Nixon campaign after an embarrassing experience as the head of the Draft Rockefeller movement . It was later noted that the convention had featured Nixon as the centrist candidate with Rockefeller to his left and Reagan to his right . The same analysis applied to the general campaign , as commentators noted that Nixon would stand to the right of the still undecided Democratic nominee but would fall to the left of American Independent Party candidate George Wallace .

= = General election = =

As the general election season began , Nixon focused his efforts on the " big seven " states : California , Illinois , Michigan , New York , Ohio , Pennsylvania , and Texas . He hired Roger Ailes , whom he had first encountered during an appearance on the The Mike Douglas Show , to produce one hour television programs to advertise the campaign in strategic regions . The campaign also continued to use televised town hall segments throughout the campaign , which aired live , featuring real voters whom were instructed to ask tough questions , following the campaign 's belief that Nixon would respond well to such questions . Starting the ground campaign tour , during his first stop in Springfield , Illinois , he discussed the importance of unity , stating that " America [ now ] needs to be united more than any time since Lincoln . " He then traveled to Michigan , Ohio and Pennsylvania before returning to New York , meeting with Governor Rockefeller . In those Gallup polls following the convention , Nixon led Humphrey 45 % to 29 % and topped McCarthy 42 % to 37 % . At the end of the month , Hubert Humphrey narrowly won Democratic presidential nominee over McCarthy at the Democratic convention , which was filled with protest and riots . Analysts saw the Democrat 's split , along with lacking " law and order " at the convention , positioning Nixon well . Shortly before the convention and throughout the general election , Nixon received regular briefings from President Johnson on developments in the Vietnam War . The President made it clear to Nixon that he did not want the war to be politicized , to which Nixon agreed , although questioning Humphrey 's eventual compliance .

Following the Democratic convention , Nixon was consistently labeled the favorite , described as " relaxed [ and ] confident , " counter to his " unsure " self from 1960 . Even observers speculated as to the President 's possible favoring Nixon to Humphrey . In a visit to Chicago shortly after the Democratic convention , Nixon received a large welcome and ticker tape parade , with crowds estimated at several hundred thousand .

Before his visit , he called upon Senator Edward Brooke of Massachusetts , the highest ranking African American in U.S. government , to campaign with him on trips to Illinois and California . Referring to Brooke as " one of my top advisers , " he accompanied campaign stops in Chicago and San Francisco , a move critics described as an attempt to further gain favor within the African

American community .

= = = September = = =

In mid @-@ September , Nixon 's running mate Spiro Agnew went on the offensive against Humphrey ; he referred to the Vice President as being " soft on Communism , " along with softness on inflation , and " law and order , " comparing him to former British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain . At this time , Nixon sent his adviser , former Governor William Scranton of Pennsylvania , on a fact finding trip to Europe to gather intelligence on Western alliance and Soviet issues . In response to Humphrey 's calls for a face to face debate , Nixon remarked : " Before we can have a debate between Nixon and Humphrey , Humphrey 's got to settle his debate with himself . " Nixon campaigned in San Francisco , in front of 10 @,@ 000 supporters amidst an array of protests . The candidate took on the protesters first hand , and delivered his " forgotten American " speech , declaring that election day would be " a day of protest for the forgotten American , " a group which included those that " obey the law , pay their taxes , go to church , send their children to school , love their country and demand new leadership . " By month 's end , many in the Nixon campaign believed his election was guaranteed , beginning to prepare for the transition period , despite Nixon 's warning that " the one thing that can beat us now is overconfidence . " Gallup showed Nixon leading Humphrey 43 % to 28 % at the end of September .

= = = October = = =

In early October , commentators weighed Nixon 's advantage , arguing that placement of blame for the Vietnam War strictly on the Johnson administration was acceptable ? avoiding discussion of war with the excuse that he did not want to disrupt the peace talks in Paris . However , anti @-@ war protesters heckled Nixon repeatedly on the campaign trail . Nixon addressed the American Conservative Union on October 9 , and argued that George Wallace 's American Independent Party candidacy could split the anti @-@ Administration vote , and help the Democrats . The Union decided to back Nixon over Wallace , labeling the third party candidate 's beliefs as " Populist . " As Democratic Vice Presidential nominee Edmund Muskie criticized Nixon for his connections to Strom Thurmond , Nixon continued to oppose a possible debate with Humphrey and Wallace , as well as between running mates , on the basis that he did not want to give Wallace more exposure . It was also argued that Nixon opposed debating due to his experience during the 1960 encounter with John F. Kennedy , which many cited as a factor in his defeat . In another lesson learned from 1960 , the campaign employed 100 @,@ 000 workers to oversee election day polling sites to prevent a recurrence of what many Republicans viewed as 1960 's stolen election . Nixon went on a whistle @-@ stop train tour of Ohio near the end of October . From the back of the " Nixon Victory Special " car , he bashed Vice President Humphrey as well as the Secretary of Agriculture and Attorney General of the Johnson cabinet , for farmers ' debt and rising crime . At this time , the campaign released two controversial television advertisements , juxtaposing a smiling Humphrey with images of the Vietnam War and the chaos at the 1968 Democratic National Convention ; the advertisements aroused protests from the Humphrey campaign . By October 's end , Nixon began to lose his edge over Humphrey ; Gallup showing he led 44 % to 36 % , down five points from a few weeks earlier , a decline observers attributed to Nixon 's refusal for a debate with Humphrey .

= = = November = = =

At the beginning of November , President Johnson announced that a bombing had been halted in Vietnam ; observers noted that the development significantly helped Humphrey although Nixon had endorsed such talks . At this time , Nixon operative Anna Chennault secretly spoke with the South Vietnamese , explaining that they could receive a better deal under Nixon . The charge that , along with remarks from Nixon supporter and future Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird , Johnson had deliberately misinformed Nixon during briefs angered the President . He spoke with Nixon

supporters Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen and Senator George Smathers of Florida , informing Nixon of the President 's frustration . On the Sunday preceding the election , Nixon appeared on Meet the Press , explaining that he would cooperate completely with Johnson , phoning the President shortly thereafter to personally reassure him . The final Harris poll before the election indicated that Nixon was trailing Humphrey 43 % to 40 % , but Gallup 's final poll showed Nixon leading 42 % to 40 % . On the eve of the election , Nixon and Humphrey bought time on rival television networks , Nixon appearing on NBC , Humphrey on ABC , where each made his final appeal to voters . Nixon used this appearance to counter Humphrey 's ' October surprise ' , a polling surge following the bombing halt , claiming that he had just received " a very disturbing report " , which detailed that tons of supplies were being moved into South Vietnam by the North . Humphrey labeled this charge as " irresponsible " , causing Nixon to counter that Humphrey " doesn 't know what 's going on . " Overall , Nixon spent \$ 6 @, @ 270 @, @ 000 on television advertising , most of which was judged to have only reinforced supporters .

= = Election Day = =

On November 5 , it was a three way race between Nixon , Humphrey , and Wallace . The results were very close , and not until early the following morning could news organizations call the election . In the end , Nixon won 301 electoral votes , with Humphrey receiving 191 , and Wallace receiving 46 . In a margin 43 @. @ 42 % to 42 @. @ 72 % , Nixon edged Humphrey in the popular vote , with Wallace earning 13 @. @ 53 % . Nixon 's victory came with a margin of less than three percent in California , Illinois , and Ohio ; had Humphrey carried these three , Nixon would have lost his election . Nixon won most of the West and mid @- @ West but lost parts of the Northeast and Texas to Humphrey and lost the deep South to Wallace . After the election was conceded by Vice President Humphrey , Nixon said the following in his press conference :

" As you will probably have heard , I have received a very gracious message from the Vice President , congratulating me for winning the election . I congratulated him for his gallant and courageous fight against great odds ... I also told him that I know exactly how he felt . I know how it feels to lose a close one . " - President @- @ Elect Richard Nixon

= = Aftermath = =

Nixon and Agnew took office as President and Vice President during their inauguration on January 20 , 1969 . Following the election , the slogan " Bring Us Together " , referencing a poster held by a 13 @- @ year @- @ old girl at a rally during his campaign , was used as a basis for the theme of his inauguration , although it would later be seized by Democrats to attack later Nixon policies . In his inaugural address , Nixon said that " the greatest honor history can bestow is the title of peacemaker , " outlining the direction Nixon sought to take , such as his visit to the People 's Republic of China in 1972 , opening diplomatic relations between the two nations , and détente plus the Anti @- @ Ballistic Missile Treaty with the Soviet Union , all in his first term .

While overseeing an initial escalation of American involvement in the Vietnam War , he subsequently ended U.S. involvement in 1973 , and eliminated the draft . Domestically , his administration generally embraced policies that transferred power from Washington to the states . Among other things , he initiated wars on cancer and drugs , imposed wage and price controls , enforced desegregation of Southern schools and established the Environmental Protection Agency . Though he presided over Apollo 11 and the subsequent lunar landings , he later scaled back manned space exploration . In 1972 , he was reelected by a landslide , the largest to that date . The Watergate scandal , which would consume the larger part of his second term , resulted in his ultimate resignation on August 4 , 1974 .

= = Endorsements = =