

Timeline of Changes in the Presidency

While historians have often noted the changes in the *power* of the presidency, other important aspects of the office have changed as well. These include how the President is selected, when the President takes office, how many terms the President may serve, and how the office of the President is to be filled when vacant.

- 1796** George Washington does not run for a third term, setting a precedent of a two-term limit for the presidency.
- 1796** John Adams is elected President. Thomas Jefferson, losing to Adams by three electoral votes, becomes Vice President.
- 1800** Political parties begin to transform the electoral system by choosing elector candidates. In the 1800 election this evolving system fails. Elector candidates have to cast two different votes for President, but because they are selected by the parties, they also have to vote for their parties' candidates. As a result, the two Democratic-Republican candidates are tied in the election. After 36 ballots, the House of Representatives breaks the tie. Thomas Jefferson becomes President, and Aaron Burr Vice President.
- 1804** The 12th Amendment, which requires separate ballots for President and Vice President, is passed to ensure that the election fiasco of 1800 is not repeated.
- 1831** The Anti-Masonic Party holds the first national convention to nominate a presidential candidate.
- 1933** The 20th Amendment moves the presidential inauguration from March to January.
- 1944** Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) wins a fourth term. Congress will act in 1947 to limit a president to two terms in office.
- 1947** Presidential Succession Act defines the officials who would succeed to the presidency after the Vice President.
- 1947** Congress drafts an amendment to the Constitution which will limit a President to two terms in office. The proposed amendment is sent to the states for approval.
- 1951** The 22nd Amendment, which limits a President to two terms, is ratified.
- 1967** The 25th Amendment sets up procedures to follow when a President is disabled or when the vice presidency is vacant.
- 1973** President Nixon, following the 25th Amendment, nominates Gerald Ford to replace Vice President Agnew, who had resigned.
- 1974** The 25th Amendment is invoked again as President Ford nominates Nelson Rockefeller as his successor in the vice presidency.
- 1982** In *Nixon v. Fitzgerald* the Supreme Court decides that a President or former President has absolute immunity from liability based on his official acts. This immunity extends to all acts within the "outer perimeter" of his duties of office.
- 1985** The disability provision of the 25th Amendment is first used when Vice President Bush becomes Acting President while President Reagan is in surgery.
- 2000** The Supreme Court finds the vote recount in Florida unconstitutional in *Bush v. Gore*, effectively deciding the 2000 presidential election.