



Barack Hussein Obama II

“Obama” redirects here. For his father, see Barack Obama, Sr. For other uses, see Obama (disambiguation).

Barack Hussein Obama II (US ⓘ[ⓘ]/bəˈrɑːkuːˈseɪnəˈbɑːmə/, born August 4, 1961) is the 44th and current President of the United States, and the first African American to hold the office. Born in Honolulu, Hawaii, Obama is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School, where he served as president of the *Harvard Law Review*. He was a community organizer in Chicago before earning his law degree. He worked as a civil rights attorney and taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School from 1992 to 2004. He served three terms representing the 13th District in the Illinois Senate from 1997 to 2004, running unsuccessfully for the United States House of Representatives in 2000.

In 2004, Obama received national attention during his campaign to represent Illinois in the United States Senate with his victory in the March Democratic Party primary, his keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in July, and his election to the Senate in November. He began his presidential campaign in 2007 and, after a close primary campaign against Hillary Rodham Clinton in 2008, he won sufficient delegates in the Democratic Party primaries to receive the presidential nomination. He then defeated Republican nominee John McCain in the general election, and was inaugurated as president on January 20, 2009. Nine months after his election, Obama was named the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

During his first two years in office, Obama signed into law economic stimulus legislation in response to the Great Recession in the form of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and the Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010. Other major domestic initiatives in his first term included the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, often referred to as “Obamacare”; the Dodd–Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act; and the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010. In foreign policy, Obama ended U.S. military involvement in the Iraq War, increased U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan, signed the New START arms control treaty with Russia, ordered U.S. military involvement in Libya, and ordered the military operation that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden. In January 2011, the Republicans regained control of the House of Representatives as the Democratic Party lost a total of 63 seats; and, after a lengthy debate over federal spending and whether or not to raise

the nation's debt limit, Obama signed the Budget Control Act of 2011 and the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012.

Obama was reelected president in November 2012, defeating Republican nominee Mitt Romney, and was sworn in for a second term on January 20, 2013. During his second term, Obama has promoted domestic policies related to gun control in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, and has called for full equality for LGBT Americans, while his administration has filed briefs which urged the Supreme Court to strike down the Defense of Marriage Act of 1996 and California's Proposition 8 as unconstitutional. In foreign policy, Obama ordered U.S. military involvement in Iraq in response to gains made by the Islamic State in Iraq after the 2011 withdrawal from Iraq, continued the process of ending U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan, and has sought to normalize U.S. relations with Cuba.

1 Early life and career

Main articles: Family of Barack Obama and Early life and career of Barack Obama

Obama was born on August 4, 1961,^[1] at Kapi'olani Maternity & Gynecological Hospital (now Kapi'olani Medical Center for Women and Children) in Honolulu, Hawaii,^{[2][3][4]} and would become the first President to have been born in Hawaii.^[5] His mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, was born in Wichita, Kansas, and was of mostly English ancestry.^[6] His father, Barack Obama, Sr., was a Luo from Nyang'oma Kogelo, Kenya. Obama's parents met in 1960 in a Russian class at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, where his father was a foreign student on scholarship.^{[7][8]} The couple married in Wailuku on Maui on February 2, 1961,^{[9][10]} and separated when, in late August 1961, Obama's mother moved with their newborn son to attend the University of Washington in Seattle for one year. In the meantime, Obama, Sr. completed his undergraduate economics degree in Hawaii in June 1962, then left to attend graduate school at Harvard University on a scholarship. Obama's parents divorced in March 1964.^[11] Obama Sr. returned to Kenya in 1964 where he remarried; he visited Barack in Hawaii only once, in 1971.^[12] He died in an automobile accident in 1982 when his son was 21 years old.^[13]

In 1963, Dunham met Lolo Soetoro, an Indonesian East-

West Center graduate student in geography at the University of Hawaii, and the couple were married on Molokai on March 15, 1965.^[14] After two one-year extensions of his J-1 visa, Lolo returned to Indonesia in 1966, followed sixteen months later by his wife and stepson in 1967, with the family initially living in a Menteng Dalam neighborhood in the Tebet subdistrict of south Jakarta, then from 1970 in a wealthier neighborhood in the Menteng subdistrict of central Jakarta.^[15] From ages six to ten, Obama attended local Indonesian-language schools: St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School for two years and Besuki Public School for one and a half years, supplemented by English-language Calvert School homeschooling by his mother.^[16]



Obama with his half-sister Maya Soetoro-Ng, mother Ann Dunham and grandfather Stanley Dunham, in Honolulu, Hawaii

Obama returned to Honolulu in 1971 to live with his maternal grandparents, Madelyn and Stanley Dunham, and with the aid of a scholarship attended Punahou School, a private college preparatory school, from fifth grade until his graduation from high school in 1979.^[17] Obama lived with his mother and sister in Hawaii for three years from 1972 to 1975 while his mother was a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Hawaii.^[18] Obama chose to stay in Hawaii with his grandparents for high school at Punahou when his mother and sister returned to Indonesia in 1975 so his mother could begin anthropology field work.^[19] His mother spent most of the next two decades in Indonesia, divorcing Lolo in 1980 and earning a PhD in 1992, before dying in 1995 in Hawaii following treatment for ovarian cancer and uterine cancer.^[20]

Of his early childhood, Obama recalled, “That my father looked nothing like the people around me—that he was black as pitch, my mother white as milk—barely registered in my mind.”^[8] He described his struggles as a young adult to reconcile social perceptions of his multiracial heritage.^[21] Reflecting later on his years in Honolulu, Obama wrote: “The opportunity that Hawaii offered—to experience a variety of cultures in a climate of mutual respect—became an integral part of my world view, and a basis for the values that I hold most dear.”^[22] Obama has also written and talked about using alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine during his teenage years to “push questions of who I was out of my mind”.^[23] Obama was also a

member of the “choom gang”, a self-named group of friends that spent time together and occasionally smoked marijuana.^{[24][25]}

After high school, Obama moved to Los Angeles in 1979 to attend Occidental College. In February 1981, Obama made his first public speech, calling for Occidental to participate in the disinvestment from South Africa in response to that nation’s policy of apartheid.^[26] In mid-1981, Obama traveled to Indonesia to visit his mother and half-sister Maya, and visited the families of college friends in Pakistan and India for three weeks.^[26] Later in 1981, he transferred as a junior to Columbia College, Columbia University in New York City, where he majored in political science with a specialty in international relations^[27] and lived off-campus on West 109th Street.^[28] He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in 1983 and worked for a year at the Business International Corporation,^[29] then at the New York Public Interest Research Group.^{[30][31]} In 1985, Obama was among the leaders of May Day efforts to bring attention to the New York City Subway system, which was in a bad condition at the time. Obama traveled to several subway stations to get people to sign letters addressed to local officials and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and was photographed at the City College subway station holding a sign protesting the system’s condition.^[32]

1.1 Community organizer and Harvard Law School

Two years after graduating, Obama was hired in Chicago as director of the Developing Communities Project, a church-based community organization originally comprising eight Catholic parishes in Roseland, West Pullman, and Riverdale on Chicago’s South Side. He worked there as a community organizer from June 1985 to May 1988.^{[31][33]} He helped set up a job training program, a college preparatory tutoring program, and a tenants’ rights organization in Altgeld Gardens.^[34] Obama also worked as a consultant and instructor for the Gamaliel Foundation, a community organizing institute.^[35] In mid-1988, he traveled for the first time in Europe for three weeks and then for five weeks in Kenya, where he met many of his paternal relatives for the first time.^{[36][37]} He returned to Kenya in 1992 with his fiancée Michelle and his half-sister Auma.^{[36][38]} He returned to Kenya in August 2006 for a visit to his father’s birthplace, a village near Kisumu in rural western Kenya.^[39]

Obama entered Harvard Law School in the fall of 1988. He was selected as an editor of the *Harvard Law Review* at the end of his first year,^[40] president of the journal in his second year,^{[34][41]} and research assistant to the constitutional scholar Laurence Tribe while at Harvard for two years.^[42] During his summers, he returned to Chicago, where he worked as an associate at the law firms of Sidley Austin in 1989 and Hopkins & Sutter in 1990.^[43] After

graduating with a J.D. *magna cum laude*^[44] from Harvard in 1991, he returned to Chicago.^[40] Obama's election as the first black president of the *Harvard Law Review* gained national media attention^{[34][41]} and led to a publishing contract and advance for a book about race relations,^[45] which evolved into a personal memoir. The manuscript was published in mid-1995 as *Dreams from My Father*.^[45]

1.2 University of Chicago Law School and civil rights attorney

In 1991, Obama accepted a two-year position as Visiting Law and Government Fellow at the University of Chicago Law School to work on his first book.^{[45][46]} He then taught constitutional law at the University of Chicago Law School for twelve years, first as a Lecturer from 1992 to 1996, and then as a Senior Lecturer from 1996 to 2004.^[47]

From April to October 1992, Obama directed Illinois's Project Vote, a voter registration campaign with ten staffers and seven hundred volunteer registrars; it achieved its goal of registering 150,000 of 400,000 unregistered African Americans in the state, leading *Crain's Chicago Business* to name Obama to its 1993 list of "40 under Forty" powers to be.^[48]

He joined Davis, Miner, Barnhill & Galland, a 13-attorney law firm specializing in civil rights litigation and neighborhood economic development, where he was an associate for three years from 1993 to 1996, then of counsel from 1996 to 2004. His law license became inactive in 2007.^{[49][50]}

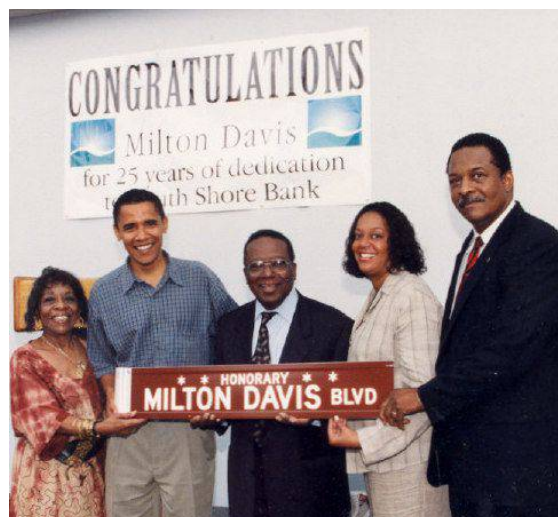
From 1994 to 2002, Obama served on the boards of directors of the Woods Fund of Chicago, which in 1985 had been the first foundation to fund the Developing Communities Project, and of the Joyce Foundation.^[31] He served on the board of directors of the Chicago Annenberg Challenge from 1995 to 2002, as founding president and chairman of the board of directors from 1995 to 1999.^[31]

2 Legislative career (1997–2008)

2.1 As Illinois State Senator (1997–2004)

Main article: Illinois Senate career of Barack Obama

Obama was elected to the Illinois Senate in 1996, succeeding State Senator Alice Palmer as Senator from Illinois's 13th District, which at that time spanned Chicago South Side neighborhoods from Hyde Park – Kenwood south to South Shore and west to Chicago Lawn.^[51] Once elected, Obama gained bipartisan support for legislation that reformed ethics and health care laws.^[52] He sponsored a law that increased tax credits for low-income workers, negotiated welfare reform, and pro-



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

motated increased subsidies for childcare.^[53] In 2001, as co-chairman of the bipartisan Joint Committee on Administrative Rules, Obama supported Republican Governor Ryan's payday loan regulations and predatory mortgage lending regulations aimed at averting home foreclosures.^[54]

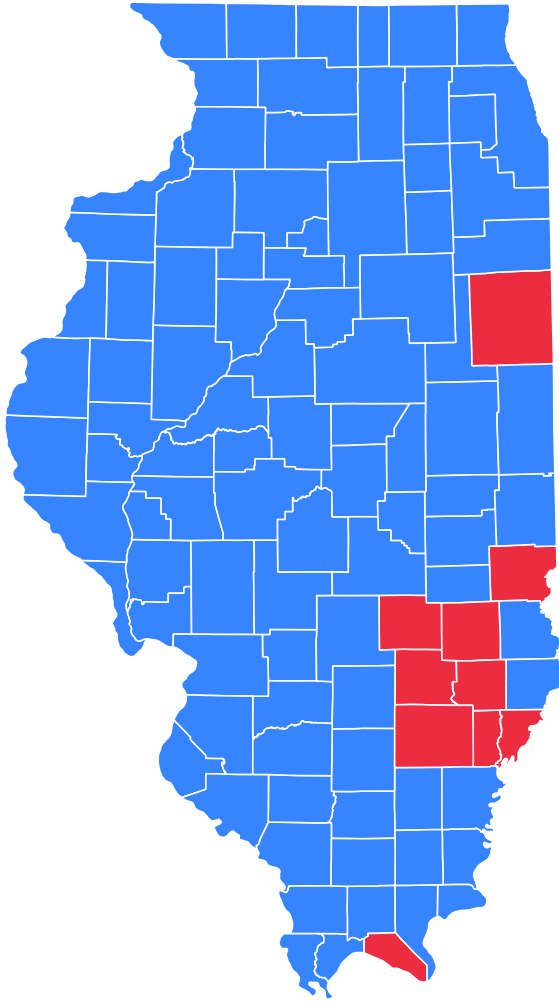
He was reelected to the Illinois Senate in 1998, defeating Republican Yesse Yehudah in the general election, and was reelected again in 2002.^[55] In 2000, he lost a Democratic primary race for Illinois's 1st congressional district in the United States House of Representatives to four-term incumbent Bobby Rush by a margin of two to one.^[56]

In January 2003, Obama became chairman of the Illinois Senate's Health and Human Services Committee when Democrats, after a decade in the minority, regained a majority.^[57] He sponsored and led unanimous, bipartisan passage of legislation to monitor racial profiling by requiring police to record the race of drivers they detained, and legislation making Illinois the first state to mandate videotaping of homicide interrogations.^{[53][58]} During his 2004 general election campaign for U.S. Senate, police representatives credited Obama for his active engagement with police organizations in enacting death penalty reforms.^[59] Obama resigned from the Illinois Senate in November 2004 following his election to the U.S. Senate.^[60]

2.2 U.S. Senate campaign

Main article: United States Senate election in Illinois, 2004

In May 2002, Obama commissioned a poll to assess his prospects in a 2004 U.S. Senate race; he created a campaign committee, began raising funds, and lined up political media consultant David Axelrod by August



County results of the 2004 U.S. Senate race in Illinois. Obama won the counties in blue.

2002. Obama formally announced his candidacy in January 2003.^[61]

Obama was an early opponent of the George W. Bush administration's 2003 invasion of Iraq.^[62] On October 2, 2002, the day President Bush and Congress agreed on the joint resolution authorizing the Iraq War,^[63] Obama addressed the first high-profile Chicago anti-Iraq War rally,^[64] and spoke out against the war.^[65] He addressed another anti-war rally in March 2003 and told the crowd that "it's not too late" to stop the war.^[66]

Decisions by Republican incumbent Peter Fitzgerald and his Democratic predecessor Carol Moseley Braun to not participate in the election resulted in wide-open Democratic and Republican primary contests involving fifteen candidates.^[67] In the March 2004 primary election, Obama won in an unexpected landslide—which overnight made him a rising star within the national Democratic Party, started speculation about a presidential future, and led to the reissue of his memoir, *Dreams from My Father*.^[68] In July 2004, Obama delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention,^[69] seen by 9.1 million viewers. His speech was well received

and elevated his status within the Democratic Party.^[70]

Obama's expected opponent in the general election, Republican primary winner Jack Ryan, withdrew from the race in June 2004.^[71] Six weeks later, Alan Keyes accepted the Republican nomination to replace Ryan.^[72] In the November 2004 general election, Obama won with 70 percent of the vote.^[73]

2.3 As U.S. Senator from Illinois (2005–08)

Main article: [United States Senate career of Barack Obama](#)

Obama was sworn in as a senator on January 3, 2005,^[74]



Obama in his official portrait as a member of the United States Senate

becoming the only Senate member of the Congressional Black Caucus.^[75] *CQ Weekly* characterized him as a "loyal Democrat" based on analysis of all Senate votes in 2005–2007. Obama announced on November 13, 2008, that he would resign his Senate seat on November 16, 2008, before the start of the lame-duck session, to focus on his transition period for the presidency.^[76]

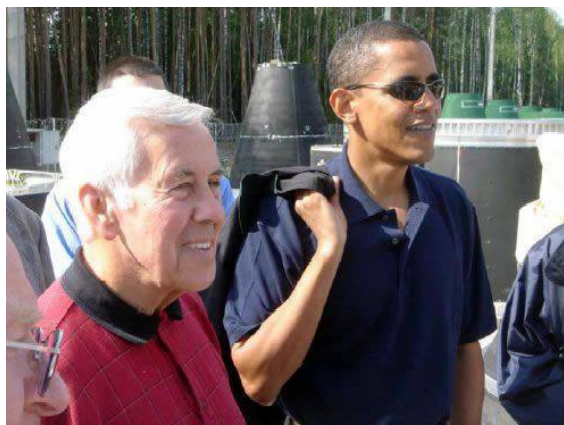
2.3.1 Legislation

See also: [List of bills sponsored by Barack Obama in the United States Senate](#)

Obama cosponsored the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act.^[77] He introduced two initiatives that bore

his name: Lugar–Obama, which expanded the Nunn–Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction concept to conventional weapons;^[78] and the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, which authorized the establishment of USA Spending.gov, a web search engine on federal spending.^[79] On June 3, 2008, Senator Obama—along with Senators Tom Carper, Tom Coburn, and John McCain—introduced follow-up legislation: Strengthening Transparency and Accountability in Federal Spending Act of 2008.^[80]

Obama sponsored legislation that would have required nuclear plant owners to notify state and local authorities of radioactive leaks, but the bill failed to pass in the full Senate after being heavily modified in committee.^[81] Regarding tort reform, Obama voted for the Class Action Fairness Act of 2005 and the FISA Amendments Act of 2008, which grants immunity from civil liability to telecommunications companies complicit with NSA warrantless wiretapping operations.^[82]



Obama and U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN) visit a Russian facility for dismantling mobile missiles (August 2005)^[83]

In December 2006, President Bush signed into law the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act, marking the first federal legislation to be enacted with Obama as its primary sponsor.^[84] In January 2007, Obama and Senator Feingold introduced a corporate jet provision to the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act, which was signed into law in September 2007.^[85] Obama also introduced two unsuccessful bills: the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act to criminalize deceptive practices in federal elections,^[86] and the Iraq War De-Escalation Act of 2007.^[87]

Later in 2007, Obama sponsored an amendment to the Defense Authorization Act to add safeguards for personality-disorder military discharges.^[88] This amendment passed the full Senate in the spring of 2008.^[89] He sponsored the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act supporting divestment of state pension funds from Iran’s oil and gas industry, which has not passed committee; and co-sponsored legislation to reduce risks of nuclear terrorism.^[90] Obama also sponsored a Senate amendment

to the State Children’s Health Insurance Program, providing one year of job protection for family members caring for soldiers with combat-related injuries.^[91]

2.3.2 Committees

Obama held assignments on the Senate Committees for Foreign Relations, Environment and Public Works and Veterans’ Affairs through December 2006.^[92] In January 2007, he left the Environment and Public Works committee and took additional assignments with Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions and Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs.^[93] He also became Chairman of the Senate’s subcommittee on European Affairs.^[94] As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Obama made official trips to Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa. He met with Mahmoud Abbas before Abbas became President of the Palestinian National Authority, and gave a speech at the University of Nairobi in which he condemned corruption within the Kenyan government.^[95]

3 Presidential campaigns

3.1 2008 presidential campaign

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

On February 10, 2007, Obama announced his candidacy



Obama stands on stage with his wife and daughters just before announcing his presidential candidacy in Springfield, Illinois, February 10, 2007

for President of the United States in front of the Old State Capitol building in Springfield, Illinois.^{[96][97]} The choice of the announcement site was viewed as symbolic because it was also where Abraham Lincoln delivered his historic “House Divided” speech in 1858.^{[96][98]} Obama emphasized issues of rapidly ending the Iraq War, increasing energy independence, and reforming the health care system,^[99] in a campaign that projected themes of hope and change.^[100]

A large number of candidates entered the Democratic Party presidential primaries. The field narrowed to a

duel between Obama and Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton after early contests, with the race remaining close throughout the primary process but with Obama gaining a steady lead in pledged delegates due to better long-range planning, superior fundraising, dominant organizing in caucus states, and better exploitation of delegate allocation rules.^[101] On June 7, 2008, Clinton ended her campaign and endorsed Obama.^[102]



President George W. Bush meets with President-elect Obama in the Oval Office on November 10, 2008

On August 23, Obama announced his selection of Delaware Senator Joe Biden as his vice presidential running mate.^[103] Obama selected Biden from a field speculated to include former Indiana Governor and Senator Evan Bayh and Virginia Governor Tim Kaine.^[104] At the Democratic National Convention in Denver, Colorado, Hillary Clinton called for her supporters to endorse Obama, and she and Bill Clinton gave convention speeches in his support.^[105] Obama delivered his acceptance speech, not at the center where the Democratic National Convention was held, but at Invesco Field at Mile High to a crowd of over 75,000; the speech was viewed by over 38 million people worldwide.^{[106][107]}

During both the primary process and the general election, Obama's campaign set numerous fundraising records, particularly in the quantity of small donations.^[108] On June 19, 2008, Obama became the first major-party presidential candidate to turn down public financing in the general election since the system was created in 1976.^[109]

John McCain was nominated as the Republican candidate, and the two engaged in three presidential debates in September and October 2008.^[110] On November 4, Obama won the presidency with 365 electoral votes to 173 received by McCain.^[111] Obama won 52.9% of the popular vote to McCain's 45.7%.^[112] He became the first African American to be elected president.^[113] Obama delivered his victory speech before hundreds of thousands of supporters in Chicago's Grant Park.^[114]

3.2 2012 presidential campaign

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

On April 4, 2011, Obama announced his reelection



Mitt Romney and President Obama shake hands in the Oval Office on November 29, 2012, following their first meeting since President Obama's reelection

campaign for 2012 in a video titled "It Begins with Us" that he posted on his website and filed election papers with the Federal Election Commission.^{[115][116][117]} As the incumbent president he ran virtually unopposed in the Democratic Party presidential primaries,^[118] and on April 3, 2012, Obama had secured the 2778 convention delegates needed to win the Democratic nomination.^[119]

At the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, former President Bill Clinton formally nominated Obama and Joe Biden as the Democratic Party candidates for president and vice president in the general election, in which their main opponents were Republicans Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts, and Representative Paul Ryan of Wisconsin.^[120]

On November 6, 2012, Obama won 332 electoral votes, exceeding the 270 required for him to be reelected as president.^{[121][122][123]} With 51.1% of the popular vote,^[124] Obama became the first Democratic president since Franklin D. Roosevelt to twice win the majority of the popular vote.^{[125][126]} President Obama addressed supporters and volunteers at Chicago's McCormick Place after his reelection and said: "Tonight you voted for action, not politics as usual. You elected us to focus on your jobs, not ours. And in the coming weeks and months, I am looking forward to reaching out and working with leaders of both parties."^{[127][128]}

4 Presidency

Main article: Presidency of Barack Obama

See also: Confirmations of Barack Obama's Cabinet and

List of presidential trips made by Barack Obama

4.1 First days



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

The inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President took place on January 20, 2009. In his first few days in office, Obama issued executive orders and presidential memoranda directing the U.S. military to develop plans to withdraw troops from Iraq.^[129] He ordered the closing of the Guantanamo Bay detention camp,^[130] but Congress prevented the closure by refusing to appropriate the required funds^{[131][132][133]} and preventing moving any Guantanamo detainee into the U.S. or to other countries.^[134] Obama reduced the secrecy given to presidential records.^[135] He also revoked President George W. Bush's restoration of President Ronald Reagan's Mexico City Policy prohibiting federal aid to international family planning organizations that perform or provide counseling about abortion.^[136]

4.2 Domestic policy

Main article: [Barack Obama social policy](#)

The first bill signed into law by Obama was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, relaxing the statute of limitations for equal-pay lawsuits.^[137] Five days later, he signed the reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to cover an additional 4 million uninsured children.^[138] In March 2009, Obama reversed a Bush-era policy which had limited funding of embryonic stem cell research and pledged to develop "strict guidelines" on the research.^[139]

Obama appointed two women to serve on the Supreme Court in the first two years of his Presidency. Sonia Sotomayor, nominated by Obama on May 26, 2009, to replace retiring Associate Justice David Souter, was confirmed on August 6, 2009,^[140] becoming the first



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

Hispanic Supreme Court Justice.^[141] Elena Kagan, nominated by Obama on May 10, 2010, to replace retiring Associate Justice John Paul Stevens, was confirmed on August 5, 2010, bringing the number of women sitting simultaneously on the Court to three, for the first time in American history.^[142]

On September 30, 2009, the Obama administration proposed new regulations on power plants, factories and oil refineries in an attempt to limit greenhouse gas emissions and to curb global warming.^{[143][144]}

On October 8, 2009, Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, a measure that expands the 1969 United States federal hate-crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.^{[145][146]}

On March 30, 2010, Obama signed the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act, a reconciliation bill which ends the process of the federal government giving subsidies to private banks to give out federally insured loans, increases the Pell Grant scholarship award, and makes changes to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.^{[147][148]}

In a major space policy speech in April 2010, Obama announced a planned change in direction at NASA, the U.S. space agency. He ended plans for a return of human spaceflight to the moon and development of the Ares I rocket, Ares V rocket and Constellation program, in favor of funding Earth science projects, a new rocket type, and research and development for an eventual manned mission to Mars, and ongoing missions to the International Space Station.^[149]

On December 22, 2010, Obama signed the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010, fulfilling a key promise made in the 2008 presidential campaign^{[150][151]} to end the Don't ask, don't tell policy of 1993 that had prevented gay and lesbian people from serving openly in the United States Armed Forces.^[152]

President Obama's 2011 State of the Union Address focused on themes of education and innovation, stress-



Obama meets with the Cabinet, November 23, 2009

ing the importance of innovation economics to make the United States more competitive globally. He spoke of a five-year freeze in domestic spending, eliminating tax breaks for oil companies and reversing tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, banning congressional earmarks, and reducing healthcare costs. He promised that the United States would have one million electric vehicles on the road by 2015 and would be 80% reliant on "clean" electricity.^{[153][154]}

As a candidate for the Illinois state senate Obama had said in 1996 that he favored legalizing same-sex marriage,^[155] but by the time of his run for the U.S. senate in 2004, he said that while he supported civil unions and domestic partnerships for same-sex partners, for strategic reasons he opposed same-sex marriages.^[156] On May 9, 2012, shortly after the official launch of his campaign for reelection as president, Obama said his views had evolved, and he publicly affirmed his personal support for the legalization of same-sex marriage, becoming the first sitting U.S. president to do so.^{[157][158]}

During his second inaugural address on January 21, 2013,^[128] Obama called for full equality for gay Americans: "Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law — for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well." This was a historic moment, being the first time that a president mentioned gay rights or the word "gay" in an inaugural address.^{[159][160]} In 2013 the Obama administration filed briefs which urged the Supreme Court to rule in favor of same-sex couples in the cases of *Hollingsworth v. Perry* (regarding same-sex marriage)^[161] and *United States v. Windsor* (regarding the Defense of Marriage Act).^[162]

On November 10, 2014, President Obama recommended the Federal Communications Commission reclassify broadband Internet service as a telecommunications service in order to preserve net neutrality.^{[163][164]}

4.2.1 White House advisory and oversight groups

On March 11, 2009, Obama created the White House Council on Women and Girls, which forms part of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, having been established by Executive Order 13506 with a broad mandate to advise him on issues relating to the welfare of American women and girls.^[165] The Council is currently chaired by Senior Advisor to the President Valerie Jarrett.^[166] Obama also established the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault through an official United States government memorandum on January 22, 2014 with a broad mandate to advise him on issues relating to sexual assault on college and university campuses throughout the United States.^{[166][167][168]} The current co-chairs of the Task Force are Vice President Joe Biden and Jarrett.^[167] The Task Force has been a development out of the White House Council on Women and Girls and Office of the Vice President of the United States, and prior to that, the 1994 Violence Against Women Act that was first-drafted by Biden.^[169]

4.2.2 Economic policy

Main article: Economic policy of Barack Obama

On February 17, 2009, Obama signed the American

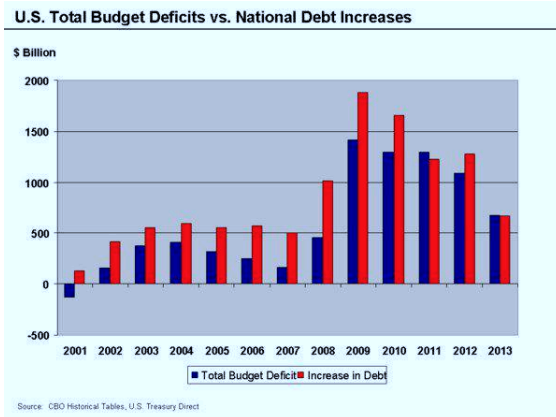


Obama presents his first weekly address as President of the United States on January 24, 2009, discussing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, a \$787 billion economic stimulus package aimed at helping the economy recover from the deepening worldwide recession.^[170] The act includes increased federal spending for health care, infrastructure, education, various tax breaks and incentives, and direct assistance to individuals.^[171]

In March, Obama's Treasury Secretary, Timothy Geithner, took further steps to manage the financial crisis, including introducing the Public-Private Investment Program for Legacy Assets, which contains provisions for buying up to two trillion dollars in depreciated real estate assets.^[172] Obama intervened in the troubled automotive industry^[173] in March 2009, renewing loans for General Motors and Chrysler to continue operations while reorganizing. Over the following months the White House set terms for both firms' bankruptcies, including

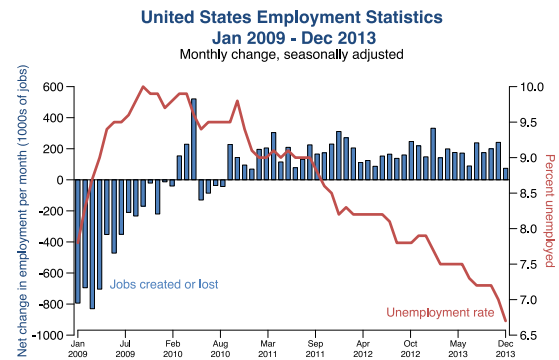
the sale of Chrysler to Italian automaker Fiat^[174] and a reorganization of GM giving the U.S. government a temporary 60% equity stake in the company, with the Canadian government taking a 12% stake.^[175] In June 2009, dissatisfied with the pace of economic stimulus, Obama called on his cabinet to accelerate the investment.^[176] He signed into law the Car Allowance Rebate System, known colloquially as “Cash for Clunkers”, that temporarily boosted the economy.^{[177][178][179]}



Deficit and Debt increases 2001-2013

Spending and loan guarantees from the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department authorized by the Bush and Obama administrations totaled about \$11.5 trillion, but only \$3 trillion was spent by the end of November 2009.^[180] Obama and the Congressional Budget Office predicted the 2010 budget deficit would be \$1.5 trillion or 10.6% of the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP) compared to the 2009 deficit of \$1.4 trillion or 9.9% of GDP.^{[181][182]} For 2011, the administration predicted the deficit will slightly shrink to \$1.34 trillion, while the 10-year deficit will increase to \$8.53 trillion or 90% of GDP.^[183] The most recent increase in the U.S. debt ceiling to \$17.2 trillion took effect in February 2014.^[184] On August 2, 2011, after a lengthy congressional debate over whether to raise the nation’s debt limit, Obama signed the bipartisan Budget Control Act of 2011. The legislation enforces limits on discretionary spending until 2021, establishes a procedure to increase the debt limit, creates a Congressional Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to propose further deficit reduction with a stated goal of achieving at least \$1.5 trillion in budgetary savings over 10 years, and establishes automatic procedures for reducing spending by as much as \$1.2 trillion if legislation originating with the new joint select committee does not achieve such savings.^[185] By passing the legislation, Congress was able to prevent a U.S. government default on its obligations.^[186]

As it did throughout 2008, the unemployment rate rose in 2009, reaching a peak in October at 10.0% and averaging 10.0% in the fourth quarter. Following a decrease to 9.7% in the first quarter of 2010, the unemployment rate fell to 9.6% in the second quarter, where



Employment statistics (changes in unemployment rate and net jobs per month) during Obama’s tenure as U.S. President^{[187][188]}

it remained for the rest of the year.^[189] Between February and December 2010, employment rose by 0.8%, which was less than the average of 1.9% experienced during comparable periods in the past four employment recoveries.^[190] By November 2012, the unemployment rate fell to 7.7%,^[191] decreasing to 6.7% in the last month of 2013.^[192] During 2014, the unemployment rate continued to decline, falling to 6.3% in the first quarter.^[193] GDP growth returned in the third quarter of 2009, expanding at a rate of 1.6%, followed by a 5.0% increase in the fourth quarter.^[194] Growth continued in 2010, posting an increase of 3.7% in the first quarter, with lesser gains throughout the rest of the year.^[194] In July 2010, the Federal Reserve noted that economic activity continued to increase, but its pace had slowed, and chairman Ben Bernanke said the economic outlook was “unusually uncertain”.^[195] Overall, the economy expanded at a rate of 2.9% in 2010.^[196]

The Congressional Budget Office and a broad range of economists credit Obama’s stimulus plan for economic growth.^{[197][198]} The CBO released a report stating that the stimulus bill increased employment by 1–2.1 million,^{[198][199][200][201]} while conceding that “It is impossible to determine how many of the reported jobs would have existed in the absence of the stimulus package.”^[197] Although an April 2010 survey of members of the National Association for Business Economics showed an increase in job creation (over a similar January survey) for the first time in two years, 73% of 68 respondents believed that the stimulus bill has had no impact on employment.^[202]

Within a month of the 2010 midterm elections, Obama announced a compromise deal with the Congressional Republican leadership that included a temporary, two-year extension of the 2001 and 2003 income tax rates, a one-year payroll tax reduction, continuation of unemployment benefits, and a new rate and exemption amount for estate taxes.^[203] The compromise overcame opposition from some in both parties, and the resulting \$858 billion Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 passed with biparti-

san majorities in both houses of Congress before Obama signed it on December 17, 2010.^[204]

In December 2013, Obama declared that growing income inequality is a “defining challenge of our time” and called on Congress to bolster the safety net and raise wages. This came on the heels of the nationwide strikes of fast-food workers and Pope Francis' criticism of inequality and trickle-down economics.^[205]

4.2.3 Environmental policy

See also: [Climate change policy of the United States](#)

On April 20, 2010, an explosion destroyed an offshore



Obama at a 2010 briefing on the BP Oil Spill at the Coast Guard Station Venice in Venice, Louisiana

drilling rig at the Macondo Prospect in the Gulf of Mexico, causing a major sustained oil leak. The well's operator, BP, initiated a containment and cleanup plan, and began drilling two relief wells intended to stop the flow. Obama visited the Gulf on May 2 among visits by members of his cabinet, and again on May 28 and June 4. On May 22, he announced a federal investigation and formed a bipartisan commission to recommend new safety standards, after a review by Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and concurrent Congressional hearings. On May 27, he announced a six-month moratorium on new deepwater drilling permits and leases, pending regulatory review.^[206] As multiple efforts by BP failed, some in the media and public expressed confusion and criticism over various aspects of the incident, and stated a desire for more involvement by Obama and the federal government.^[207]

In July 2013, Obama expressed reservations and stated he “would reject the Keystone XL pipeline if it increased carbon pollution” or “greenhouse emissions”.^{[208][209]} Obama's advisers called for a halt to petroleum exploration in the Arctic in January 2013.^[210] On February 24, 2015, Obama vetoed a bill that would authorize the pipeline.^[211] It was the third veto of Obama's presidency and his first major veto.^[212]

4.2.4 Health care reform

Main article: [Health care reform in the United States](#)

Obama called for Congress to pass legislation reforming



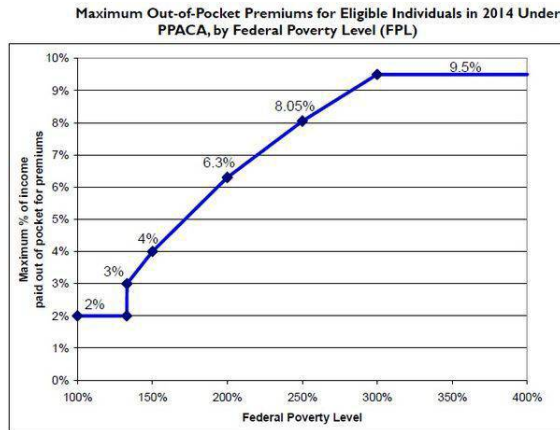
Obama signs the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act at the White House, March 23, 2010

health care in the United States, a key campaign promise and a top legislative goal.^[213] He proposed an expansion of health insurance coverage to cover the uninsured, to cap premium increases, and to allow people to retain their coverage when they leave or change jobs. His proposal was to spend \$900 billion over 10 years and include a government insurance plan, also known as the public option, to compete with the corporate insurance sector as a main component to lowering costs and improving quality of health care. It would also make it illegal for insurers to drop sick people or deny them coverage for pre-existing conditions, and require every American to carry health coverage. The plan also includes medical spending cuts and taxes on insurance companies that offer expensive plans.^{[214][215]}

On July 14, 2009, House Democratic leaders introduced a 1,017-page plan for overhauling the U.S. health care system, which Obama wanted Congress to approve by the end of 2009.^[213] After much public debate during the Congressional summer recess of 2009, Obama delivered a speech to a joint session of Congress on September 9 where he addressed concerns over the proposals.^[216] In March 2009, Obama lifted a ban on using federal funds for stem cell research.^[217]

On November 7, 2009, a health care bill featuring the public option was passed in the House.^{[218][219]} On December 24, 2009, the Senate passed its own bill—without a public option—on a party-line vote of 60–39.^[220] On March 21, 2010, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) passed by the Senate in December was passed in the House by a vote of 219 to 212.^[221] Obama signed the bill into law on March 23, 2010.^[222]

The ACA includes health-related provisions to take effect over four years, including expanding Medicaid eligibility for people making up to 133% of the federal poverty level (FPL) starting in 2014,^[223] subsidizing insurance premiums for people making up to 400% of the FPL (\$88,000



Maximum Out-of-Pocket Premium as Percentage of Family Income and federal poverty level, under Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, starting in 2014 (Source: CRS)

for family of four in 2010) so their maximum “out-of-pocket” payment for annual premiums will be from 2 to 9.5% of income,^{[224][225]} providing incentives for businesses to provide health care benefits, prohibiting denial of coverage and denial of claims based on pre-existing conditions, establishing health insurance exchanges, prohibiting annual coverage caps, and support for medical research. According to White House and Congressional Budget Office figures, the maximum share of income that enrollees would have to pay would vary depending on their income relative to the federal poverty level.^{[224][226]}

The costs of these provisions are offset by taxes, fees, and cost-saving measures, such as new Medicare taxes for those in high-income brackets, taxes on indoor tanning, cuts to the Medicare Advantage program in favor of traditional Medicare, and fees on medical devices and pharmaceutical companies;^[227] there is also a tax penalty for those who do not obtain health insurance, unless they are exempt due to low income or other reasons.^[228] In March 2010, the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the net effect of both laws will be a reduction in the federal deficit by \$143 billion over the first decade.^[229]

The law faced several legal challenges, primarily based on the argument that an individual mandate requiring Americans to buy health insurance was unconstitutional. On June 28, 2012, the Supreme Court ruled by a 5–4 vote in *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius* that the Commerce Clause does not allow the government to require people to buy health insurance, but the mandate was constitutional under the US Congress’s taxing authority.^[230] In *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* the Court ruled that “closely-held” for-profit corporations could be exempt on religious grounds under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act from regulations adopted under the ACA that would have required them to pay for insurance that covered certain contraceptives.

4.2.5 Energy policy

Main article: Energy policy of the Obama administration

Prior to June 2014, Obama offered substantial support for a broadly based “All of the above” approach to domestic energy policy which Obama has maintained since his first term and which he last confirmed at his State of the Union speech in January 2014 to a mixed reception by both parties. In June 2014, Obama made indications that his administration would consider a shift towards an energy policy more closely tuned to the manufacturing industry and its impact on the domestic economy.^[231] Obama’s approach of selectively combining regulation and incentive to various issues in the domestic energy policy such as coal mining and oil fracking has received mixed commentary for not being as responsive to the needs of the domestic manufacturing sector as needed, following claims that the domestic manufacturing sector utilizes as much as a third of nation’s available energy resources.^{[232][233]}

4.2.6 Gun control



President Obama visiting victims of a shooting at University of Colorado Hospital on July 22, 2012

On January 16, 2013, one month after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, President Obama signed 23 executive orders and outlined a series of sweeping proposals regarding gun control.^[234] He urged Congress to reintroduce an expired ban on military-style assault weapons, such as those used in several recent mass shootings, impose limits on ammunition magazines to 10 rounds, introduce background checks on all gun sales, pass a ban on possession and sale of armor-piercing bullets, introduce harsher penalties for gun-traffickers, especially unlicensed dealers who buy arms for criminals and approving the appointment of the head of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for the first time since 2006.^[235]

4.2.7 2010 midterm elections

Main articles: United States House of Representatives elections, 2010 and United States Senate elections, 2010

Obama called the November 2, 2010 election, where the Democratic Party lost 63 seats in, and control of, the House of Representatives,^[236] “humbling” and a “shellacking”.^[237] He said that the results came because not enough Americans had felt the effects of the economic recovery.^[238]

4.3 Foreign policy

Main article: Foreign policy of the Barack Obama administration

In February and March 2009, Vice President Joe Biden



Obama speaking on "A New Beginning" at Cairo University on June 4, 2009

and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton made separate overseas trips to announce a “new era” in U.S. foreign relations with Russia and Europe, using the terms “break” and “reset” to signal major changes from the policies of the preceding administration.^[239] Obama attempted to reach out to Arab leaders by granting his first

interview to an Arab cable TV network, *Al Arabiya*.^[240]

On March 19, Obama continued his outreach to the Muslim world, releasing a New Year’s video message to the people and government of Iran.^{[241][242]} In April, Obama gave a speech in Ankara, Turkey, which was well received by many Arab governments.^[243] On June 4, 2009, Obama delivered a speech at Cairo University in Egypt calling for “A New Beginning” in relations between the Islamic world and the United States and promoting Middle East peace.^[244]

On June 26, 2009, in response to the Iranian government’s actions towards protesters following Iran’s 2009 presidential election, Obama said: “The violence perpetrated against them is outrageous. We see it and we condemn it.”^[245] On July 7, while in Moscow, he responded to a Vice President Biden comment on a possible Israeli military strike on Iran by saying: “We have said directly to the Israelis that it is important to try and resolve this in an international setting in a way that does not create major conflict in the Middle East.”^[246]

On September 24, 2009, Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to preside over a meeting of the United Nations Security Council.^[247]

In March 2010, Obama took a public stance against plans by the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to continue building Jewish housing projects in predominantly Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem.^{[248][249]} During the same month, an agreement was reached with the administration of Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to replace the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with a new pact reducing the number of long-range nuclear weapons in the arsenals of both countries by about one-third.^[250] Obama and Medvedev signed the New START treaty in April 2010, and the U.S. Senate ratified it in December 2010.^[251]

In December 2011, Obama instructed agencies to consider LGBT rights when issuing financial aid to foreign countries.^[252] He criticized Russia’s law discriminating against gays in August 2013,^[253] stopping short of advocating a boycott of the 2014 Winter Olympics held in Sochi, Russia.^[254]

In December 2014, Obama announced that he intended to normalize relationships between Cuba and the United States.^[255]

4.3.1 Iraq

Main article: Iraq War

On February 27, 2009, Obama announced that combat operations in Iraq would end within 18 months. His remarks were made to a group of Marines preparing for deployment to Afghanistan. Obama said, “Let me say this as plainly as I can: by August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end.”^[256] The Obama administration

scheduled the withdrawal of combat troops to be completed by August 2010, decreasing troop's levels from 142,000 while leaving a transitional force of about 50,000 in Iraq until the end of 2011. On August 19, 2010, the last U.S. combat brigade exited Iraq. Remaining troops transitioned from combat operations to counter-terrorism and the training, equipping, and advising of Iraqi security forces.^{[257][258]} On August 31, 2010, Obama announced that the United States combat mission in Iraq was over.^[259] On October 21, 2011 President Obama announced that all U.S. troops would leave Iraq in time to be “home for the holidays”.^[260]

In June 2014, amid territorial gains made by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant following the U.S. withdrawal in 2011, Obama sent 275 troops to provide support and security for U.S. personnel and the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.^[261]



Meeting with British Prime Minister David Cameron during the 2010 G-20 Toronto summit

4.3.2 War in Afghanistan

Main article: [War in Afghanistan \(2001–present\)](#)

Early in his presidency, Obama moved to bolster U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan.^[262] He announced an increase to U.S. troop levels of 17,000 in February 2009 to “stabilize a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan”, an area he said had not received the “strategic attention, direction and resources it urgently requires”.^[263] He replaced the military commander in Afghanistan, General David D. McKiernan, with former Special Forces commander Lt. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal in May 2009, indicating that McChrystal’s Special Forces experience would facilitate the use of counterinsurgency tactics in the war.^[264] On December 1, 2009, Obama announced the deployment of an additional 30,000 military personnel to Afghanistan and proposed to begin troop withdrawals 18 months from that date;^[265] this took place in July 2011. David Petraeus replaced McChrystal in June 2010, after McChrystal’s staff criticized White House personnel in a magazine article.^[266] In February 2013 Obama said the U.S. military would reduce the troop level in Afghanistan

from 68,000 to 34,000 US troops by February 2014.^[267]

4.3.3 Israel



Obama meeting with Israeli President Shimon Peres, 2009

In June 2012, Obama said that the bond between the United States and Israel is “unbreakable.”^[268] During the initial years of the Obama administration, the U.S. increased military cooperation with Israel, including increased military aid, re-establishment of the U.S.-Israeli Joint Political Military Group and the Defense Policy Advisory Group, and an increase in visits among high-level military officials of both countries.^[269] The Obama administration asked Congress to allocate money toward funding the Iron Dome program in response to the waves of Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel.^[270]

In 2011, the United States vetoed a Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements, with the United States being the only nation to do so.^[271] Obama supports the two-state solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict based on the 1967 borders with land swaps.^[272]

In 2013, one journalist reported that, in Obama’s view, “with each new settlement announcement, Netanyahu is moving his country down a path toward near-total isolation.”^[273]

4.3.4 War in Libya

Main article: [2011 military intervention in Libya](#)

In March 2011, as forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi advanced on rebels across Libya, calls for a no-fly zone came from around the world, including Europe, the Arab League, and a resolution^[274] passed unanimously by the U.S. Senate.^[275] In response to the unanimous passage of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973 on March 17, Gaddafi—who had previously vowed to “show no mercy” to the rebels of Benghazi^[276]—announced an immediate cessation of military activities,^[277] yet reports came in that his forces continued shelling Misrata. The next day, on Obama’s

orders, the U.S. military took part in air strikes to destroy the Libyan government's air defense capabilities to protect civilians and enforce a no-fly-zone,^[278] including the use of Tomahawk missiles, B-2 Spirits, and fighter jets.^{[279][280][281]} Six days later, on March 25, by unanimous vote of all of its 28 members, NATO took over leadership of the effort, dubbed **Operation Unified Protector**.^[282] Some Representatives^[283] questioned whether Obama had the constitutional authority to order military action in addition to questioning its cost, structure and aftermath.^{[284][285]}

4.3.5 Osama bin Laden

Main article: **Death of Osama bin Laden**

Starting with information received in July 2010, in-



President Barack Obama along with members of the national security team, receive an update on Operation Neptune's Spear, in the White House Situation Room, May 1, 2011. See also: The Situation Room (photograph)

telligence developed by the CIA over the next several months determined what they believed to be the location of Osama bin Laden in a large compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, a suburban area 35 miles from Islamabad.^[286] CIA head Leon Panetta reported this intelligence to President Obama in March 2011.^[286] Meeting with his national security advisers over the course of the next six weeks, Obama rejected a plan to bomb the compound, and authorized a "surgical raid" to be conducted by United States Navy SEALs.^[286] The operation took place on May 1, 2011, resulting in the death of bin Laden and the seizure of papers, computer drives and disks from the compound.^{[287][288]} DNA testing identified bin Laden's body,^[289] which was buried at sea several hours later.^[290] Within minutes of the President's announcement from Washington, DC, late in the evening on May 1, there were spontaneous celebrations around the country as crowds gathered outside the White House, and at New York City's Ground Zero and Times Square.^{[287][291]} Reaction to the announcement was positive across party lines, including from former presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush,^[292] and from many countries around the world.^[293]

5 Cultural and political image

Main article: **Public image of Barack Obama**

See also: **International media reaction to the United States presidential election, 2008** and **International reactions to the United States presidential election, 2012**

Obama's family history, upbringing, and Ivy League ed-



Obama's first term presidential portrait (2009)

ucation differ markedly from those of African-American politicians who launched their careers in the 1960s through participation in the civil rights movement.^[294] Expressing puzzlement over questions about whether he is "black enough," Obama told an August 2007 meeting of the **National Association of Black Journalists** that "we're still locked in this notion that if you appeal to white folks then there must be something wrong."^[295] Obama acknowledged his youthful image in an October 2007 campaign speech, saying: "I wouldn't be here if, time and again, the torch had not been passed to a new generation."^[296]

Obama is frequently referred to as an exceptional orator.^[297] During his pre-inauguration transition period and continuing into his presidency, Obama has delivered a series of weekly Internet video addresses.^[298]

According to the **Gallup Organization**, Obama began his presidency with a 68% approval rating^[300] before gradually declining for the rest of the year, and eventually bottoming out at 41% in August 2010,^[301] a trend similar to Ronald Reagan's and Bill Clinton's first years in office.^[302] He experienced a small poll



Obama conducting the first completely virtual interview from the White House in 2012^[299]

bounce shortly after Osama bin Laden's death on May 2, 2011. This bounce lasted until around June 2011, when his approval numbers dropped back to where they were previously.^{[303][304]} His approval ratings rebounded around the same time as his reelection in 2012, with polls showing an average job approval of 52% shortly after his second inauguration.^[305] Despite him dropping to 39% in his approval ratings in late-2013 due to the ACA roll-out, he has climbed to 50% in late January 2015 according to the Gallup Organization.^[306] Polls show strong support for Obama in other countries,^[307] and before being elected President he met with prominent foreign figures including former British Prime Minister Tony Blair,^[308] Italy's Democratic Party leader and Mayor of Rome Walter Veltroni,^[309] and French President Nicolas Sarkozy.^[310]

In a February 2009 poll conducted in Western Europe and the U.S. by Harris Interactive for France 24 and the *International Herald Tribune*, Obama was rated as the most respected world leader, as well as the most powerful.^[311] In a similar poll conducted by Harris in May 2009, Obama was rated as the most popular world leader, as well as the one figure most people would pin their hopes on for pulling the world out of the economic downturn.^{[312][313]}



G8 leaders watching the 2012 UEFA Champions League Final

Obama won Best Spoken Word Album Grammy Awards for abridged audiobook versions of *Dreams from My Father* in February 2006 and for *The Audacity of Hope*

in February 2008.^[314] His concession speech after the New Hampshire primary was set to music by independent artists as the music video "Yes We Can", which was viewed 10 million times on YouTube in its first month^[315] and received a Daytime Emmy Award.^[316] In December 2008 and in 2012, *Time* magazine named Obama as its Person of the Year.^[317] The 2008 awarding was for his historic candidacy and election, which Time described as "the steady march of seemingly impossible accomplishments".^[318] On May 25, 2011, Obama became the first President of the United States to address both houses of the UK Parliament in Westminster Hall, London. This was only the 5th occurrence since the start of the 20th century, of a head of state being extended this invitation, following Charles de Gaulle in 1960, Nelson Mandela in 1996, Queen Elizabeth II in 2002 and Pope Benedict XVI in 2010.^{[319][320]}

On October 9, 2009, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced that Obama had won the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize "for his extraordinary efforts to strengthen international diplomacy and cooperation between peoples".^[321] Obama accepted this award in Oslo, Norway on December 10, 2009, with "deep gratitude and great humility."^[322] The award drew a mixture of praise and criticism from world leaders and media figures.^{[323][324][325][326][327][328][329]} Obama's peace prize was called a "stunning surprise" by *The New York Times*.^[330] Obama is the fourth U.S. president to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and the third to become a Nobel laureate while in office.^[331]

6 Family and personal life

Main article: Family of Barack Obama

In a 2006 interview, Obama highlighted the diversity



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

of his extended family: "It's like a little mini-United Nations", he said. "I've got relatives who look like Bernie Mac, and I've got relatives who look like Margaret Thatcher."^[332] Obama has a half-sister with whom he was raised (Maya Soetoro-Ng, the daughter of his mother

and her Indonesian second husband) and seven half-siblings from his Kenyan father's family – six of them living.^[333] Obama's mother was survived by her Kansas-born mother, Madelyn Dunham,^[334] until her death on November 2, 2008,^[335] two days before his election to the Presidency. Obama also has roots in Ireland; he met with his Irish cousins in Moneygall in May 2011.^[336] In *Dreams from My Father*, Obama ties his mother's family history to possible Native American ancestors and distant relatives of Jefferson Davis, President of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War.^[337]

Besides his native English, Obama speaks some basic Indonesian, having learned the language during his four childhood years in Jakarta.^{[338][339]} He plays basketball, a sport he participated in as a member of his high school's varsity team;^[340] he is left-handed.^[341]



Obama taking a shot during a game on the White House basketball court, 2009

Obama is a supporter of the Chicago White Sox, and he threw out the first pitch at the 2005 ALCS when he was still a senator.^[342] In 2009, he threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the all star game while wearing a White Sox jacket.^[343] He is also primarily a Chicago Bears football fan in the NFL, but in his childhood and adolescence was a fan of the Pittsburgh Steelers, and rooted for them ahead of their victory in Super Bowl XLIII 12 days after he took office as President.^[344] In 2011, Obama invited the 1985 Chicago Bears to the White House; the team had not visited the White House after their Super Bowl win in 1986

due to the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster.^[345]

In June 1989, Obama met Michelle Robinson when he was employed as a summer associate at the Chicago law firm of Sidley Austin.^[346] Assigned for three months as Obama's adviser at the firm, Robinson joined him at several group social functions, but declined his initial requests to date.^[347] They began dating later that summer, became engaged in 1991, and were married on October 3, 1992.^[348] The couple's first daughter, Malia Ann, was born on July 4, 1998,^[349] followed by a second daughter, Natasha ("Sasha"), on June 10, 2001.^[350] The Obama daughters attended the private University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. When they moved to Washington, D.C., in January 2009, the girls started at the private Sidwell Friends School.^[351] The Obamas have two Portuguese Water Dogs, the first, a male named Bo, a gift from Senator Ted Kennedy.^[352] In August 2013, Bo was joined by Sunny, a female.^[353]

Applying the proceeds of a book deal, the family moved in 2005 from a Hyde Park, Chicago condominium to a \$1.6 million house in neighboring Kenwood, Chicago.^[354] The purchase of an adjacent lot—and sale of part of it to Obama by the wife of developer, campaign donor and friend Tony Rezko—attracted media attention because of Rezko's subsequent indictment and conviction on political corruption charges that were unrelated to Obama.^[355]

In December 2007, *Money* estimated the Obama family's net worth at \$1.3 million.^[356] Their 2009 tax return showed a household income of \$5.5 million—up from about \$4.2 million in 2007 and \$1.6 million in 2005—mostly from sales of his books.^{[357][358]} On his 2010 income of \$1.7 million, he gave 14% to non-profit organizations, including \$131,000 to Fisher House Foundation, a charity assisting wounded veterans' families, allowing them to reside near where the veteran is receiving medical treatments.^{[359][360]} As per his 2012 financial disclosure, Obama may be worth as much as \$10 million.^[361]

Obama tried to quit smoking several times, sometimes using nicotine replacement therapy, and, in early 2010, Michelle Obama said that he had successfully quit smoking.^{[362][363]}

6.1 Religious views

Obama is a Christian whose religious views developed in his adult life.^[364] He wrote in *The Audacity of Hope* that he "was not raised in a religious household". He described his mother, raised by non-religious parents (whom Obama has specified elsewhere as "non-practicing Methodists and Baptists"), as being detached from religion, yet "in many ways the most spiritually awakened person that I have ever known." He described his father as a "confirmed atheist" by the time his parents met, and his stepfather as "a man who saw religion as not particularly useful." Obama explained how, through work-



Obama and First Lady worship at African Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., January 2013

ing with black churches as a community organizer while in his twenties, he came to understand “the power of the African-American religious tradition to spur social change.”^[365]

In January 2008, Obama told *Christianity Today*: “I am a Christian, and I am a devout Christian. I believe in the redemptive death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I believe that faith gives me a path to be cleansed of sin and have eternal life.”^[366] On September 27, 2010, Obama released a statement commenting on his religious views saying “I’m a Christian by choice. My family didn’t—frankly, they weren’t folks who went to church every week. And my mother was one of the most spiritual people I knew, but she didn’t raise me in the church. So I came to my Christian faith later in life, and it was because the precepts of Jesus Christ spoke to me in terms of the kind of life that I would want to lead—being my brothers’ and sisters’ keeper, treating others as they would treat me.”^{[367][368]}

Obama met Trinity United Church of Christ pastor Rev. Jeremiah Wright in October 1987, and became a member of Trinity in 1992.^[369] He resigned from Trinity in May 2008 during his first presidential campaign after some of Wright’s statements were criticized.^[370] After a prolonged effort to find a church to attend regularly in Washington, Obama announced in June 2009 that his primary place of worship would be the Evergreen Chapel at Camp David.^[371]

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8 External links

Official

- Official website (Campaign)
- Official website of President Barack Obama (White House)
- Official website of The Barack Obama Foundation

Other

- Barack Obama at DMOZ
- Biography at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*
- Profile at Project Vote Smart
- Financial information (federal office) at the Federal Election Commission
- Collected news and commentary at the *Chicago Tribune*
- Collected news and commentary at the *Tampa Bay Times’s* PolitiFact.com
- Collected news and commentary at *The Washington Post’s* Fact Checker blog

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