

## Notable quotes from American presidents

Americans will celebrate the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the United States throughout 2026. Many a notable leader has influenced the country in its 250-year history, and the following are some notable quotes from American presidents over the course of the nation's history.



*"If we can but prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people, under the pretense of taking care of them, they must become happy."*  
 — **Thomas Jefferson, 1802**

*"Peace is the best time for improvement and preparation of every kind; it is in peace that our commerce flourishes most, that taxes are most easily paid, and that the revenue is most productive."*  
 — **James Monroe, 1817**

*"Office holders are the agents of the people, not their masters."*  
 — **Grover Cleveland, 1886**

*"In the history of mankind, many republics have risen, have flourished for a less or greater time, and then have fallen because their citizens lost the power of governing themselves and thereby governing their state; and in no way has this loss of power been so often and so clearly shown as in the tendency to turn the government into a government primarily for the benefit of one class instead of a government for the benefit of the people as a whole."*  
 — **Theodore Roosevelt, 1903**

*"Governments do not make ideals, but ideals make governments."*  
 — **Calvin Coolidge, 1926**

*"No government is perfect. One of the chief virtues of democracy, however, is that its defects are always visible and under democratic processes can be pointed out and corrected."*  
 — **Harry S. Truman, 1947**

*"Mankind must put an end to war — or war will put an end to mankind."*  
 — **John F. Kennedy, 1961**

*"A president's hardest task is not to do what is right, but to know what is right."*  
 — **Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965**

*"American has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens."*  
 — **George W. Bush, 2001**

*"Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek."*  
 — **Barack Obama, 2008** (delivered while campaigning for president in an election Obama ultimately won)

## Notable facts about the American Civil War

The American Civil War is the deadliest conflict in United States history. Though the precise number of casualties remains unknown, a 2011 analysis from demographic historian Dr. J. David Hacker estimated that three quarters of a million people lost their lives during the American Civil War. Dr. Hacker's research was met with praise by Civil War historians, and his estimate is just one of many notable facts about this pivotal conflict in American history.

► The National Park Service notes incomplete and destroyed enlistment records from the Confederate Army complicate efforts to determine how many soldiers fought in the American Civil War. However, historians estimate the total number of soldiers is somewhere between three and four million. The NPS notes nearly 2.7 million combatants enlisted for the Union Army, while estimates for the Confederate Army range between 750,000 and a little more than 1.2 million.

► The American Battlefield Trust reports that the Battle of Shiloh, also known as the Battle of Pittsburg

Landing, featured unprecedented carnage over two days in April 1862. The battle enabled Union troops to penetrate the Confederate interior, but the cost was steep, producing more casualties than any conflict on the American continent to date. By the time the battle ended, more than 13,000 Union troops had died while Confederate losses neared 11,000.

► American Civil War nurse and eventual founder of the American Red Cross Clara Barton was tending to a wounded soldier during the Battle of Antietam in September 1862 when a bullet ripped through her sleeve. Though Barton was



unharmd, the bullet killed the man she was trying to help.

► Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. is best remembered for his lengthy tenure on the U.S. Supreme Court, which began in 1902 and ended in 1932, when Justice Holmes was 90 years old. But long before Justice Holmes took a seat on the bench of the Supreme Court, he was a combatant in the American Civil War, during which he was injured on three separate occasions.

► Kentucky Senator John J. Crittenden had two sons who became major generals during the American Civil War. Though that's notable on its own, it's even more so given that

Senator Crittenden's sons fought on opposite sides. A third son served in the Union Army as well, attaining the rank of colonel, while two of the Senator's grandsons also fought in the conflict, with one fighting for the Confederate Army and the other serving in the U.S. Navy under Union Rear Admiral David Farragut.

► President Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg Address in 1863 is well-known for its brevity. But Edward Everett, who spoke before President Lincoln at the dedication ceremony of the Gettysburg National Cemetery, spoke for more than two hours.

### UNITED STATES TRIVIA

Test your knowledge of the history of the U.S.

1. How many original colonies were there?
2. Where was the Declaration of Independence signed?
3. Which explorer is America named after?
4. In what year were women finally granted the right to vote in the U.S.?
5. Who are the only two non-presidents to appear on widely used U.S. currency?
6. What are the three branches of the U.S. government?
7. If someone requests your John Hancock, what are they referring to?
8. Who was the first woman to serve on the United States Supreme Court?
9. Which Civil Rights figure led the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955?
10. True or False? Apple Pie was invented in the U.S.
11. Who was the first U.S. astronaut in space?
12. What is the United States motto?
13. When was Washington established as the capital of the United States?
14. Which state was the first admitted to the Union?

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Answers: 1. Thirteen 2. Philadelphia 3. Amerigo Vesputci 4. 1920 5. Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin 6. Legislative, Executive and Judicial 7. Signature 8. Sandra Day O'Connor 9. Martin Luther King, Jr. 10. False; it originated in England 11. Alan Shepard 12. "E pluribus unum." 13. 1790 14. Delaware

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