

Governors (and Generals) Rule

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With early and sustained leads in the polls, in contributions, in the enthusiasm of crowds, and in the proficiency of his media appearances and campaign organization, former Vermont governor Howard Dean is the man to beat in the 2004 race for the Democratic Party's Presidential nomination. This has surprised political analysts in Washington and the national media. The Democratic candidates include prominent figures with long experience in national politics and policymaking, such as Senators Joe Lieberman and John Kerry and former House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt. How could they be bested by a former governor of a small, rural state with no experience in national affairs or exposure to the national electorate?

The conventional explanation is that Governor Dean has positioned himself well to the left of the other candidates on the war in Iraq, taxes, health care, and other issues. By leveling harsh attacks at President Bush, he has energized the left-liberal Democratic Party "base" in a way that the other, more seasoned and moderate candidates have not.

Democratic Party activists and primary voters are indeed more liberal than the rank-and-file, just as their Republican counterparts are more conservative than Republicans as a whole. But many primary voters also appear to want to win general elections, even at the expense of doctrinal purity. In recent primaries, more moderate candidates have routinely beaten more liberal or conservative candidates—George W. Bush over Steve Forbes, Bill Clinton over Tom Harkin, Bob Dole over Phil Gramm and Pat Buchanan, George H. W. Bush over Jack Kemp and Pete du Pont, Michael Dukakis over Joseph Biden and Paul Simon, Walter Mondale over Gary Hart and Alan Cranston.

Pundits who appreciate the centrist tendency of U.S. politics are expecting that one of the national Democrats will rebound against upstart Dean when the primary voting begins in February. But Governor Dean, who obviously appreciates the tendency as well as anyone, has already recast himself as a moderate, emphasizing his record as a tight-fisted, budget-balancing, Second Amendment-respecting governor. As the long pre-primary season has worn on, the resilience and durability of the surprise frontrunner has become a political story of its own.

A better explanation of Howard Dean's lead, one that suggests it will continue, is that his political experience and identity are as a governor, while all of the other candidates, with the exception of Wesley Clark, are legislators. (Bob Graham of Florida, the first drop-out from the Democratic pack, is a former governor but has been a senator for the past seventeen years.) The Dean Surprise is indeed merely the latest episode of the Governor Surprise, a quadrennial political drama. The year before a Presidential election, a clutch candidates from the out-of-office party toss their hats in the ring, and Washington politicians and the national media focus intently on the established national figures—senators or congressmen such as Al Gore, Bob Kerrey, Howard Baker, Birch Bayh, John Glenn, Richard Lugar, and most of the liberal and conservative also-rans mentioned above. Then, when the primaries arrive, the national legislators are swept away by a governor—Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Michael Dukakis, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush. One has to go back to Senator Barry Goldwater's defeat of Governors Nelson Rockefeller and William Scranton for the 1964 Republican nomination to find a clear exception to this pattern.¹

1. Former Governor Edmund Muskie was among those defeated by Senator George McGovern for the 1972 Democratic nomination, and former Governor Lamar Alexander was among those defeated by Senator Robert Dole for the 1996 Republican nomination, but both had moved from the State House to Washington (Muskie a Senator, Alexander a Cabinet secretary) long before their candidacies. All three recent senator-nominees lost the general election badly.

The dominance of governors in our Presidential politics is an old and durable phenomenon. Since the election of 1828, when Andrew Jackson's landslide victory over John Quincy Adams ended our initial era of Founding Father Presidents, governors have won more major party nominations, more general elections, and more Electoral College votes than any other category of Presidential candidate—and vastly more than candidates whose main political experience was in the U.S. Congress. Table 1 below presents details on these and other components of Presidential timber from Old Hickory through George W. Bush.

U.S. Presidents, Candidates, and Electoral College Votes by Political Background, 1828–2000

Political Background	(Table 1)						Electoral College—All Candidates in 44 Elections	
	31 Elected Presidents		2 Top Candidates in 44 Elections			Votes	%	
	Total	Reelected	Winners	Losers	Combined			
Governor	10	6	18	14	32	8,049	41.1%	
Military Leader	7	3	10	4	14	2,952	15.1%	
Legislator	3	0	3	8	11	1,943	9.9%	
Statesman	4	1	5	10	15	2,406	12.3%	
Vice President	7	1	8	8	16	4,249	21.7%	
Total	31	11	44	44	88	19,599	100.0%	

Terms

1. "31 Elected Presidents" omits 5 unelected Presidents (John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Andrew Johnson, Chester A. Arthur, and Gerald R. Ford).
2. "2 Top Candidates in 44 Elections" includes the winner and the candidate receiving the second highest Electoral College votes in each election.
3. "Electoral College—All Candidates in 44 Elections" includes all 106 candidates receiving Electoral College votes in all elections.
4. "Political Background" determined by the candidates' most recent or prominent public positions at the time of their first presidential candidacies. All candidates who were incumbent or former vice presidents are categorized as "Vice President."

Sources

"The Presidents of the United States," www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents; "The Political Graveyard," www.politicalgraveyard.com; "Electoral College Box Scores," www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/votes_index.html; various encyclopedias and biographies.

The table breaks down, for the period 1828–2000, the political backgrounds of our 31 elected Presidents, the 88 winning and losing candidates in our 44 Presidential elections, and all 106 candidates receiving Electoral College votes in the 44 elections (including third-party, regional,

and independent candidates, so long as they received at least one vote). I divided Presidents and candidates into five categories: Governor, Military Leader (generals who had commanded important military victories, from Jackson through Dwight D. Eisenhower), Legislator (members of the U.S. Senate or House of Representatives, such as John F. Kennedy), Statesman (those who had been Cabinet officials, such as Herbert Hoover, and those whose careers had been mainly or exclusively non-elective, such as Abraham Lincoln), and Vice President. Each President and Presidential candidate was assigned to one of these categories according to his (all were men) most recent or prominent position at the time of his first Presidential candidacy. Candidates who were incumbent or former Vice Presidents (several, such as Lyndon B. Johnson, Harry Truman, Calvin Coolidge, and Theodore Roosevelt, ran as the incumbent President after rising to that position on the death of the elected President) were classified as Vice President regardless of their previous political positions. An appendix provides details on how the categories were constructed and lists the backgrounds of all Presidential candidates since 1828 who received Electoral College votes in the general election.

Aside from the longstanding dominance of governors in our Presidential politics, the most striking result of the canvass is the overwhelming dominance of governors and military leaders combined. Governors and generals account for 55 percent of our elected Presidents (17 of 31), 52 percent of our major Presidential candidates (46 of 88), and 56 percent of all Electoral College votes for all candidates. Moreover, governors and generals are our most successful Presidents, with much higher re-election rates than those from other political backgrounds; as a result, *they account for nearly two-thirds of the winners of Presidential elections* (28 winners in 44 elections—18 governors and 10 military leaders).

In contrast, only three of our 31 elected Presidents have come from a primarily legislative background, and none was re-elected to a second

term. Legislators have won nominations at a higher rate than elections—of our 44 runner-up candidates, eight (18 percent) were legislators, in contrast to 18 (41 percent) governors and military leaders. But these, after all, were the losers come November, and the relatively poor performance of legislator-nominees is itself instructive. In the Electoral College, legislators have won only 10 percent of votes cast, the same as their paltry 10 percent of elected Presidents.

The much higher frequency of governor-nominees is even more striking when one considers that the pool of potential legislator-nominees is much larger. Even if we limit the pool to senators (all 11 of our major legislator-nominees were senators), there are always exactly twice as many senators as governors. That does not mean that a given political party will always have twice as many senators as governors, but partisan fortunes in the Senate and the State Houses are positively correlated. So if senators were the equals of governors as Presidential candidates, we would have, over a long span of years, approximately twice as many senator-nominees as governor-nominees. In reality, the ratio is not 2:1 but rather 1:3 (11 senator-nominees to 32 governor-nominees).

Several candidates classified as Statesman (my catch-all category for those whose primary career positions had been unelected) had served in the Senate or House, but only incidentally to their pre-candidacy careers—such as William Jennings Bryan, who served two terms in the House, and Horace Greeley, who served a few months. Of the four statesmen who were elected President, two had been legislators. Abraham Lincoln's single term in the House was incidental to his pre-candidacy career as lawyer, orator, and Illinois Republican leader. James Buchanan is a close case: he served a decade in the House and a decade in the Senate, but prior to his nomination he had been secretary of state for four years and ambassador to Great Britain for four years, and these positions were decisive to his nomination.

The other two elected statesmen, William Howard Taft and Herbert

Hoover, had held no elective office prior to their nominations. Taft, appointed governor of the Philippines and secretary of war during the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations, was the hand-picked successor to a wildly popular President—a case similar to Vice Presidential successions such as that of George H. W. Bush following Ronald Reagan. Hoover was secretary of commerce under Presidents Harding and Coolidge, but his popular prestige exceeded that of both Presidents (to Coolidge's great chagrin). Hoover's illustrious non-military wartime service, first during the Boxer Rebellion in China and then throughout World War I, followed by his leadership of post-World War I relief efforts, would justify a category of his own: a “civilian general” of national renown.

The dominance of governors and military leaders in our Presidential politics has persisted through many epochal changes in the composition of the U.S. electorate, in the nature of the issues confronting Presidents and candidates, in the methods and style of political campaigning, in the sources and techniques of campaign financing, and in the procedures for selecting candidates. The pattern therefore reveals something essential and enduring about our political system and Presidential preferences. But what is that something, and is it likely to continue as our political system continues to evolve?

Many experts I have spoken with suggest that the governor/general preference reveals the advantages of a fresh political face, and the disadvantages of being a Washington insider with a legislative paper trail. A legislator of any tenure, unlike a governor or general, will have cast yeo-or-nay votes on a multitude of bills, providing rich opportunities for campaign opponents to select particular votes that are unpopular with important election constituencies. Legislator-candidates are therefore more vulnerable to attack in campaign debate, and less able to maneuver and position themselves according to campaign contingencies. In contrast, governor-candidates and general-candidates, whose records are in state and

in military affairs rather than the national issues that predominate in Presidential campaigns, are fresh faces on the national scene with greater leeway in fashioning an appealing political identity.

There is undoubtedly some truth in this assessment. Certainly, the desire to “clean house in Washington” is a strong and recurring one in U.S. politics, and has often worked to the advantage of governors and generals. But it is far from a complete explanation. For one thing, legislators challenging incumbent Presidents or Vice Presidents can rightly claim to be outsiders vis-a-vis the incumbent administration, and will have a paper trail to prove it with more particularity than governors or generals do. In the 2000 Republican primaries, for instance, Senator John McCain was a far more vociferous critic of the Clinton administration, and of Washington politics in general, than Governor George W. Bush.

Moreover, governor-candidates are often deeply involved in national affairs. Grover Cleveland championed government “reform” and pro-business causes. Woodrow Wilson promoted “progressive” national economic legislation. Ronald Reagan was known for welfare reform and confronting student demonstrators. Jimmy Carter gained national renown for renouncing racial discrimination in his first inaugural address in Georgia (landing on the cover of *Time* magazine as the first southern governor to do so). Although governors have no direct experience in national defense and foreign policy, members of Congress have little more—they are largely bystanders and second-guessers of Presidential actions. Finally, the paper-trail explanation does not account for governors’ and generals’ much higher rates of re-election, when they are themselves Washington insiders with notorious paper trails on national issues.

More important, the focus on congressional voting fails to capture a more fundamental weakness of legislators in the context of a Presidential campaign—which is that they are accustomed to a *lower* degree of political accountability than governors and generals. Legislators act as participants in a murky, collective enterprise, not as individual decision-makers. They

become adept at taking credit for popular legislation (“I supported the Clean Air Act!”) while eluding accountability on controversial matters through omnibus bills, obscure riders, fuzzy legislative language, delegation of hard choices to executive agencies, and an array of procedural maneuvers. Almost any single vote can be explained away by special circumstances or by contrasting it with other votes, and voters quickly weary of finger-pointing and excuse-making over obscure legislative histories. The records of governors and generals, being executive rather than legislative, are much harder to explain away.

And that, in my view, takes us to the heart of the matter. I suggest that the major reason for the dominance of governors and generals in Presidential politics, and the weakness of legislators, is that governors and generals are CEOs—with the experience, aptitude, and demeanor that comes from being a public executive—while legislators are not. By process of selection, all serious Presidential candidates are individuals of some substance and accomplishment in prior offices; but the nature of those offices varies significantly. Governors have submitted budgets, hired and fired subordinates, presided over public emergencies, called out the National Guard, negotiated public strikes, exercised discretion in the enforcement of criminal and other public laws, and endured a succession of victories and defeats large and small for which, fairly or unfairly, they received the credit or blame. Military leaders have done all those things and more: they have made decisions involving staggeringly large risks and, usually, have exhibited personal courage of the most impressive kind.

Legislators, in contrast, have made speeches, sat on committees, and cast votes—virtually none of them decisive in the manner of an executive decision. Worse, if they have been successful legislators—skilled at the legislative craft and popular with their peers—they have advanced to the House or Senate leadership. As legislative leaders, they have been called upon to negotiate compromises among the conflicting interests, ideologies, regions, and idiosyncrasies of their fellow representatives; these, by

definition, are *unprincipled* compromises, an essential requirement of democratic government but hardly the profile in leadership that the Presidential candidate seeks to project.² Governors and generals also make compromises among conflicting interests, but the nature of the executive function forces them to make real choices and limits their ability to obfuscate and “muddle through.”

It is not surprising, then, that of our three legislator-nominees who were elected to the presidency, none had been a legislative leader and only one, Benjamin Harrison, had any sort of legislative record at all (and that during just a single term in the Senate). The other two, Warren G. Harding and John F. Kennedy, were both blithe shirkers of their Senate duties with little involvement in legislative dealmaking. (James Buchanan, our close case classified as Statesman, had been chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations—not importantly a legislative position, and one that led to his appointment as President James Polk’s secretary of state.) Nor is it surprising that, to take one of many recent examples, Senator John Kerry’s campaign for the 2004 Democratic nomination consists almost entirely of references to his military record in the Vietnam War, his endorsements from military officers, and his early experience as a county prosecutor, with nary a word about his two decades in the Senate. Of our 46 governor-nominees and general-nominees, not one of the victors and only a few of the losers could be said to have been lackadaisical, or indeed anything but highly energetic and absorbed, in their pre-candidacy offices.

None of this is to denigrate the importance of legislative practice, which is as crucial as executive practice to the success of representative government, especially in a vast nation such as ours with innumerable regional, economic, ethnic, and social divisions that must be reconciled in

2. One of the greatest of modern legislative leaders, Senator Everett Dirksen (Republican minority leader from 1959 through 1969), was once asked to respond to criticism by party back-benchers that he was too prone to compromise Republican principles in negotiations with the Democrats. He replied, “I am a man of fixed and unbending principles, the first of which is to be flexible at all times.”

some manner. But legislative work attracts individuals, and produces résumés, of a different character than executive work, and the latter are likely to be much more impressive to voters selecting our most important public executive. Indeed, we may say that one of the hidden virtues of our form of government—where the states possess a degree of independent sovereignty (rather than being administrative subdivisions of the national government, as in France), and where the head of government is elected independently of the legislature (rather than being the leader of the largest faction of the legislature, as in parliamentary systems)—is that it tends to cultivate and elevate national leaders whose skills and temperaments are distinctively executive rather than legislative.

It is worth emphasizing that the tendency emphasized here is just that—a tendency, not a complete explanation. If executive experience and ability were the thing voters most looked for in a President, we would see many business executives running for and winning the presidency; in fact we see virtually none (Ross Perot being the recent exception that proves the rule). In well-framed public opinion polls asking which types of experience best prepare someone to be President, governors come in first but only slightly ahead of members of Congress (35 percent to 27 percent in a recent Pew poll). At the same time, however, polls on “confidence in leaders of institutions” almost always find “Congress” far behind “The Military” and “The White House” and often down in the basement with “The Press” and “Law Firms” (there is no “Governors” category in these polls).

A fair interpretation of the polling data and election returns adduced here is that Americans are very skeptical about politicians in their purest embodiment—the career legislator—and seek in their President someone who appears to transcend politics-as-usual (which requires a very high order of political skill to convey). Successful experience as a public executive or military leader is an excellent means of cultivating and signaling the requisite political transcendence, because executives make decisions as individuals. Another means is oratorical facility—the ability to

crystallize in words, from the confusion of political conflict, that which is essential, ennobling, and expressive of vital national aspirations. The two attributes are highly complementary: four of the five two-term Presidents in the twentieth century were governors who were also eloquent speakers (Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton). Occasionally, great rhetorical skill alone will suffice (Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy). But more routinely, executive experience and temperament alone, even when accompanied by a plain or even inarticulate speaking style, conveys the no-nonsense determination to remain above conventional politics (Dwight D. Eisenhower and many of the governor-Presidents and general-Presidents of the nineteenth century).

Will governors and generals continue to dominate our Presidential politics, and will legislators continue to be also-rans? The analysis presented here suggests that they will, but we need to consider whether recent developments might change that analysis. The past prominence of governors was in part the result of the central role of large states in the party conventions that chose Presidential candidates up to the 1970s. Today, the party conventions have become largely ceremonial, and candidates are selected by an accumulation of primary elections heavily dominated by the media and mass campaigning. These changes may be thought to work to the relative advantage of legislators—who are better known to the national media and, as noted earlier, receive most of the media attention in the early phases of campaigns.

The growing importance of the media and the “nationalization” of the selection process may indeed have drawn more legislators into the fray (although it is easy to overlook the prominence of legislators in our pre-modern Presidential politics—Daniel Webster, Stephen A. Douglas, James G. Blaine, Robert A. Taft, and, at the cusp of the modern era, Hubert H. Humphrey). But to date there is no evidence that changes in the selection process have altered the results to the advantage of legislators. To the contrary, the relative success of governors has increased over time: It was

greater in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth century, greater in the latter half of the twentieth century than in the first half, and greatest of all in the latest quarter century of media-and-primary-driven nominating contests.

If anything, modern selection procedures may have advantaged governors, by expanding the field of plausible governor-candidates to include those from small states with few electoral or nominating-convention votes. The governors of Georgia, Arkansas, and Vermont would have gotten short shrift at the state-boss-controlled party conventions of times past, but governors Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, and Howard Dean have been highly proficient in mobilizing modern campaigns. Today's more democratic, media-driven politics may be amplifying the natural advantages of governors over legislators, casting in more vivid relief the differences between executive and legislative abilities, records, and temperaments.

The future of generals involves an additional issue. The past prominence of military leaders was in part the result of the central role of the military in the settling of the continent and in the Civil War. Since the 1880 election contest between Civil War generals James Garfield and Winfield Hancock, only a single military leader has been a Presidential candidate in a general election: World War II Supreme Commander Eisenhower. World War I, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and the protracted political-military contest of the Cold War were not the sorts of conflicts to produce popular military heroes (although World War I did, as we have noted, produce a civilian executive-hero in Herbert Hoover). The twentieth-century generals who might have been Presidential timber, such as John J. Pershing, Douglas MacArthur, George C. Marshall, and Colin Powell, did not make the run.

But that may be changing now. The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the attacks of September 11th and arrival of a new war on terror, have led to a succession of military actions that have displayed the proficiency of U.S. armed forces and revived appreciation for the martial virtues. Public

approval of the military is now higher than at any time since World War II, and higher than for any other profession or public institution.³ The near candidacy of Colin Powell in 1996 and the 2004 candidacy of Wesley Clark may presage the return of the military leader to our Presidential politics and, eventually, to the White House.

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3. See *The Generation of Trust: How the U.S. Military Has Regained the Public's Confidence since Vietnam*, David C. King and Zachary Karabell (AEI Press, 2003).

APPENDIX

U.S. Presidents, Candidates, and Electoral Votes by Political Background, 1828–2000

Notes on the Categories

The table in the text summarizes, for the period 1828 through 2000, the political background of the 31 elected Presidents, the 88 winning and runner-up candidates in the 44 Presidential elections, and the 106 candidates receiving Electoral College votes in the 44 elections. Political background was specified in five categories: Governor, Military Leader, Legislator, Statesman, and Vice President. Each President and Presidential candidate was classified according to his (all were men) most recent or prominent position at the time of his first Presidential candidacy. All of those who had served as Vice President were placed in this category regardless of their earlier political positions.

Most of the classifications were unambiguous. Several of those classified as Governor had served previously in the U.S. Congress but were governors at the time of their Presidential candidacies. None of the Legislators had been a governor, although they might have been under the “most recent or prominent” assignment rule (Senator Bob Graham, erstwhile candidate for the 2004 Democratic nomination, would be categorized a Legislator rather than Governor, although he was a two-term governor of Florida before his long senatorial career). Among military leaders who were elected President, there were two close calls: James Garfield and Benjamin Harrison, both of whom had served with distinction in the Civil War and were subsequently elected to the U.S. Congress. Garfield was categorized a Military Leader because his critical Civil War victory was the source of his public renown and political career—he was a famous Union general at the time of his election to the House of Representatives, and he resigned his commission to accept the election at President Lincoln’s urging. Harrison was categorized a Legislator—he had commanded no famous victories and was elected to the Senate many years after the Civil War.

The Statesman category includes men whose most recent or prominent public office was as a Cabinet secretary, ambassador, or appointed state official or judge, as well as those who achieved political prominence in non-governmental capacities—as lawyers, journalists, or champions of political causes. Several people in this variegated group, such as Abraham Lincoln, William Jennings Bryan, Horace Greeley, and John W. Davis, served in the House of Representatives but only briefly (one or two terms) and incidentally to their larger pre-candidacy careers. One of the four who were elected President, James Buchanan, was

a close call: he had served a decade in the House and a decade in the Senate, but prior to his nomination had been secretary of state for four years and ambassador to Great Britain for four years, and these positions were critical to his nomination. The other two elected Statesmen (other than Buchanan and Lincoln) were Herbert Hoover and William Howard Taft, neither of whom had held any elective office at the time of his nomination.

Among the losing major candidates, two who had been secretaries of state, Henry Clay and James G. Blaine, were classified as Legislators rather than Statesmen because of their longer and more important tenures in the House and Senate. The only major party candidate with no background in public office, elected or unelected, was corporate executive and lawyer Wendell Willkie in the Republican's third try against FDR in 1940.

The seven Vice Presidents who were subsequently elected President include men whose pre-Vice-Presidential background was as legislator (Harry Truman, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard Nixon), governor (Theodore Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge), and statesman (Martin Van Buren and George H. W. Bush). The rationale for a separate Vice President category regardless of previous background is that Vice Presidents are selected by Presidential candidates (or, in earlier times, often by party king-makers) according to criteria—typically, regional and ideological balance with the Presidential candidate—distinct from those governing success in winning a Presidential nomination, and that, subsequently, their tenure as Vice President is the dominant factor affecting their political fortunes. Of the seven Vice Presidents later elected President, four assumed the Presidency on the death of the President and were subsequently elected as the incumbent President (Roosevelt, Coolidge, Truman, and Johnson), and two were elected President as the incumbent Vice President (Van Buren and Bush). The seventh, Richard Nixon, was defeated in 1960 as the incumbent Vice President and later elected as a former Vice President; he was the only one of the seven to be elected President twice.

Five Vice Presidents assumed the presidency on the death or resignation of the President but were never elected President in their own right—John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Andrew Johnson, Chester A. Arthur, and Gerald R. Ford (only one of them, Ford, was even nominated). As unelected Presidents, they are excluded from the analysis altogether.

A chronological list of the candidates, showing their background classifications and Electoral College votes and percentages, is presented on Table 2 on the following three pages.

Political Background of Presidential Candidates, 1828–2000 (Table 2)

G = Governor ML = Military Leader L = Legislator S = Statesman VP = Vice President IP = Incumbent President EC = Electoral College D = Died in office R = Resigned from office						
Election	Candidate	Background	EC Votes	EC %	Elected Term	
1828	Andrew Jackson John Quincy Adams	ML S (IP)	178 83	68.2 31.8	1	
1832	Andrew Jackson Henry Clay John Floyd William Wirt	ML L G S	219 49 11 7	76.6 17.1 3.8 2.4	2	
1836	Martin Van Buren Wm. Henry Harrison Hugh L. White Daniel Webster William P. Mangum	VP (S) ML L L L	170 73 26 14 11	57.8 24.8 8.8 4.8 3.7	1	
1840	Wm. Henry Harrison Martin Van Buren	ML VP (S) (IP)	234 60	79.6 20.4	1 (D; John Tyler)	
1844	James K. Polk Henry Clay	G L	170 105	61.8 38.2	1	
1848	Zachary Taylor Lewis Cass	ML G	163 127	56.2 43.8	1 (D; Millard Fillmore)	
1852	Franklin Pierce Winfield Scott	ML ML	254 42	85.8 14.2	1	
1856	James Buchanan John C. Frémont Millard Fillmore	S L VP (S)	174 114 8	58.8 38.5 2.7	1	
1860	Abraham Lincoln J.C. Breckinridge John Bell Stephen A. Douglas	S VP (L) L L	180 72 39 12	59.4 23.8 12.9 3.9	1	
1864	Abraham Lincoln George B. McClellan	S (IP) ML	212 21	91 9	2 (D; Andrew Johnson)	
1868	Ulysses S. Grant Horatio Seymour	ML G	214 80	72.8 27.2	1	
1872	Ulysses S. Grant Horace Greeley*	ML (IP) S	286 66	81.3 18.8	2	
1876	Rutherford B. Hayes Samuel J. Tilden	G G	185 184	50.1 49.9	1	

* Electoral College votes attributed to Horace Greeley as if he had lived to Electoral College session.

Political Background of Presidential Candidates, 1828–2000; page 2

<u>Election</u>	<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Background</u>	<u>EC Votes</u>	<u>EC %</u>	<u>Elected Term</u>
1880	James A. Garfield Winfield S. Hancock	ML ML	214 155	58 42	1 (D; Chester A. Arthur)
1884	Grover Cleveland James G. Blaine	G L	219 182	54.6 45.4	1
1888	Benjamin Harrison Grover Cleveland	L G (IP)	233 168	58.1 41.9	1
1892	Grover Cleveland Benjamin Harrison James B. Weaver	G L (IP) L	277 145 22	62.4 32.7 4.9	2
1896	William McKinley William J. Bryan	G S	271 176	60.6 39.4	1
1900	William McKinley William J. Bryan	G S	292 155	65.3 34.7	2 (D; Theodore Roosevelt)
1904	Theodore Roosevelt Alton B. Parker	VP (G) (IP) S	336 140	70.6 29.4	1
1908	William H. Taft William J. Bryan	S S	321 162	66.5 33.5	1
1912	Woodrow Wilson William H. Taft Theodore Roosevelt	G S (IP) VP (G)	435 8 88	81.9 1.5 16.6	1
1916	Woodrow Wilson Charles E. Hughes	G (IP) G	277 254	52.2 47.8	2
1920	Warren G. Harding James M. Cox	L G	404 127	76.1 23.9	1 (D; Calvin Coolidge)
1924	Calvin Coolidge John W. Davis Robert M. LaFollette	VP (G) (IP) S G	382 136 13	71.9 25.6 2.5	1
1928	Herbert C. Hoover Alfred E. Smith	S G	444 87	83.6 16.4	1
1932	Franklin D. Roosevelt Herbert C. Hoover	G S (IP)	472 59	88.9 11.1	1
1936	Franklin D. Roosevelt Alfred M. Landon	G (IP) G	523 8	98.5 1.5	2
1940	Franklin D. Roosevelt Wendell L. Willkie	G (IP) S	449 82	84.6 15.4	3
1944	Franklin D. Roosevelt Thomas E. Dewey	G (IP) G	432 99	81.4 18.6	4 (D; Harry Truman)

Political Background of Presidential Candidates, 1828–2000; page 3

<u>Election</u>	<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Background</u>	<u>EC Votes</u>	<u>EC %</u>	<u>Elected Term</u>
1948	Harry S. Truman Thomas E. Dewey Strom Thurmond	VP (L) (IP) G L	303 189 39	57.1 35.6 7.3	1
1952	Dwight D. Eisenhower Adlai E. Stevenson	ML G	442 89	83.2 16.8	1
1956	Dwight D. Eisenhower Adlai E. Stevenson Walter B. Jones	ML (IP) G L	457 73 1	86.1 13.7 0.2	2
1960	John F. Kennedy Richard M. Nixon Harry F. Byrd	L VP (L) L	303 219 15	56.4 40.8 2.8	1 (D; Lyndon B. Johnson)
1964	Lyndon B. Johnson Barry M. Goldwater	VP (L) L	486 52	90.3 9.7	1
1968	Richard M. Nixon Humbert H. Humphrey George C. Wallace	VP (L) VP (L) G	301 191 46	55.9 35.5 8.6	1
1972	Richard M. Nixon George McGovern John Hospers	VP (L) L S	520 17 1	96.7 3.1 0.2	2 (R; Gerald Ford)
1976	James E. Carter, Jr. Gerald R. Ford Ronald Reagan	G VP (L) (IP) G	297 240 1	55.2 44.6 0.2	1
1980	Ronald Reagan James E. Carter, Jr.	G G (IP)	489 49	90.9 9.1	1
1984	Ronald Reagan Walter F. Mondale	G (IP) VP (L)	525 13	97.6 2.4	2
1988	George H. W. Bush Michael S. Dukakis Lloyd Bentsen	VP (S) G L	426 111 1	79.2 20.6 0.2	1
1992	William J. Clinton George H. W. Bush	G VP (S) (IP)	370 168	68.8 31.2	1
1996	William J. Clinton Robert Dole	G (IP) L	379 159	70.4 29.6	2
2000	George W. Bush Al Gore	G VP (L)	271 266	50.5 49.5	1

Sources

"The Presidents of the United States," www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents; "The Political Graveyard," www.politicalgraveyard.com; "Electoral College Box Scores," www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/votes_index.html; various encyclopedias and biographies.