

## APUSH Highlight

### Presidential Accomplishments at the End of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

#### What were President Richard Nixon's accomplishments?

##### Domestic Policy of President Nixon:

- Launched initiatives to fight cancer and illegal drugs, imposed wage and price controls, enforced desegregation of Southern schools, and introduced legislation to reform healthcare and welfare
- Established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and signed into law the Clean Air Act and National Environmental Policy Act
- Presided over lunar landings beginning with Apollo 11, although he eventually replaced manned space exploration with shuttle missions
- Became embroiled in the Watergate Scandal shortly after election to his second term. The scandal's escalation cost him much political support and led him to resign in the face of almost certain impeachment

##### Foreign Policy of President Nixon:

- Initially escalated America's involvement in the Vietnam War, but subsequently ended US involvement by 1973 through the Paris Peace Accords
- Opened diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1972 and ushered in a new era of Sino-American relations
- Initiated détente with the Soviet Union in the wake of his diplomacy with China, leading to SALT I and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty
- Supported Israel during the Yom Kippur War, which led to an Israeli victory and a retaliation by Arab OPEC nations who refused to sell crude oil to the US during the 1973 oil crisis
- Covertly supported a military coup against Chilean Marxist president Salvador Allende

#### What were President Gerald Ford's accomplishments?

##### Domestic Policy of President Ford:

- Presided over the worst economy in the four decades since the Great Depression, with growing inflation and a recession during his tenure. His Whip Inflation Now (WIN) crusade urging the public to rein in spending and consumption failed badly
- Controversially granted a presidential pardon to President Richard Nixon for his role in the Watergate scandal
- Signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which established special education throughout the United States

##### Foreign Policy of President Ford:

- Signed the Helsinki Accords, marking a move toward détente in the Cold War
- Officially ended US involvement in the Vietnam War after North Vietnam conquered South Vietnam

#### What were President Jimmy Carter's accomplishments?

##### Domestic Policy of President Carter:

- Created two new cabinet-level departments: the Department of Energy and the Department of Education
- Established a national energy policy that included conservation, price control, and new technology
- Took measures to improve the environment through the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act and the Superfund Act, which is designed to clean up sites contaminated with hazardous substances
- Espoused a process of bureaucratic streamlining and was responsible for deregulating the airline, trucking, rail, communications, and finance industries
- Presided over a weakening economy and runaway inflation.

##### Foreign policy accomplishments of President Carter:

- Strongly promoted human rights during his tenure and initiated the Camp David Accords, the Panama Canal Treaties, and the second round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II)
- Presided over the 1979 -1981 Iran Hostage Crisis and the failure of its major rescue operation, resulting in the deaths of eight American servicemen, one Iranian civilian, and the destruction of two aircraft
- Boycotted the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979

#### What were President Ronald Reagan's accomplishments?

##### Domestic Policy of President Reagan:

- Developed "Reagonomics" (supply-side economic policies) as a means of controlling inflation and spurring economic growth through tax cuts, reduced business regulation, and reduced growth in government spending
- Lowered the federal income tax rate significantly with the signing of the bipartisan Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981
- Escalated the War on Drugs campaign and specified a mandatory minimum penalty for drug offenses
- Increased spending on national defense and diplomacy and ushered in a close to the Cold War
- Reauthorized the Voting Rights Act of 1965 for another 25 years
- Signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which compensated victims of the Japanese-American internment during World War II
- Fired 11,345 striking air traffic controllers who illegally went on strike in 1981
- Appointed Sandra Day O'Connor as the first female Supreme Court justice

### Foreign Policy of President Reagan:

- Reversed the US policy of detente with the USSR and developed the Reagan Doctrine in support for anti-communist rebel movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Nicaragua and elsewhere
- Provided arms and other support to anti-communist groups such as the Contras and the Mujahideen, and sold arms to foreign allies such as Taiwan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq
- Invaded Grenada after a 1979 coup detente established an independent non-aligned Marxist-Leninist government
- Launched a series of air strikes in Libya in 1986 in retaliation for a bomb explosion in a Berlin discotheque that resulted in American casualties
- Negotiated with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev to initiate a substantial reduction in armaments levels worldwide
- Negotiated the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) to substantially reduce nuclear arms and initiated negotiations with the Soviet Union for the treaty that would later be known as START I
- Presided over the Iran-Contra Affair of selling weapons to Iran and using the proceeds to fund right-wing Contra forces in Nicaragua

### **What were President George H. W. Bush's accomplishments?**

#### Domestic Policy of President Bush:

- Signed an increase in taxes and reneged on a central promise of his presidential campaign in doing so
- Signed the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibiting discrimination based on disabilities
- Signed the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act, which compensated people who contracted cancer and other diseases as a result of exposure to atmospheric nuclear testing undertaken during the Cold War
- Reauthorized the Clean Air Act, which requires cleaner burning fuels

#### Foreign Policy of President Bush:

- Launched a full-scale air assault and ground invasion against Iraq as part of the Gulf War in retaliation for Iraq's invasion of neighboring Kuwait
- Invaded Panama in 1989 to oust leader and drug trafficker Manuel Noriega
- Signed START I with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and declared a US-Russian strategic partnership with the Soviet leader following the dissolution of the USSR in 1991
- Spearheaded the negotiations of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which would later be signed by his successor Bill Clinton

### **What were President Bill Clinton's accomplishments?**

#### Domestic Policy of President Clinton:

- Presided over the longest period of peacetime economic expansion in American history
- Signed the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993, cutting taxes for fifteen million low-income families, making tax cuts available to 90 percent of small businesses, and raising taxes on the wealthiest 1.2 percent of taxpayers
- Signed the 1993 Brady Bill imposing a five-day waiting period on handgun purchases and the 1994 Omnibus Crime Bill expanding the death penalty for drug kingpins, murderers of federal law enforcement officers, and nearly 60 additional categories of violent felons
- Championed comprehensive health reform and the creation of universal health care, but the legislation never mustered enough support to pass Congress
- Was impeached for perjury before a grand jury and obstruction of justice during a lawsuit against him, both related to a scandal involving White House intern Monica Lewinski, but was eventually acquitted by the Senate

#### Foreign Policy of President Clinton:

- Signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) creating a trilateral trade bloc between Mexico, Canada, and the US in 1994
- Deployed American troops in Somalia and Yugoslavia as part of peacekeeping missions
- Ordered cruise missile strikes on terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Sudan in retaliation for al-Qaeda bombings of US embassies in East Africa in 1998