

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was born on January 30, 1882, in Hyde Park, New York. His family was wealthy and politically active, including President Theodore Roosevelt, a distant relation of Franklin. Franklin Roosevelt attended Groton, a private preparatory academy in Massachusetts from 1896 to 1900, when he then enrolled in Harvard University. Roosevelt graduated from Harvard in just three years with a history degree and proceeded to enroll in Columbia University. Upon passing the bar exam, Roosevelt left Columbia and spent the next three years practicing law in New York.

In 1910, Roosevelt embarked on a political career. A member of the Democratic Party, he still won a seat in the New York Senate, although he ran in a predominantly Republican district. Roosevelt won reelection in 1912, but he resigned his office in 1913 to become Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Roosevelt remained in this position until 1920, when he resigned to run for the vice-presidency of the United States for the Democratic Party. His running mate was James M. Cox, an Ohioan. Warren G. Harding, the Republican presidential candidate and another Ohioan, easily won the election due to a growing dislike among U.S. voters for President Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, and his policies during World War I.

Following his defeat in 1920, Roosevelt left politics. The next year, while vacationing at Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Canada, Roosevelt contracted poliomyelitis. This illness left him with limited use of his legs and confined him to a wheelchair for most of the rest of his life. He was able to stand with the assistance of leg braces, crutches, and attendants. Undaunted by this illness, Roosevelt returned to politics, actively campaigning for Alfred E. Smith, the Democratic Party's candidate for president in 1928. That same year, Roosevelt ran for governor of New York, winning the election. He won reelection in 1930, and then Roosevelt embarked upon a campaign for the presidency.



James M. Cox and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Columbus, Ohio, ca. 1920. James Middleton Cox (March 31, 1870 - July 15, 1957) was a Governor of Ohio, U.S. Representative from Ohio and the Democratic candidate for President of the United States in the election of 1920. His running mate was Franklin D. Roosevelt. Cox was defeated in the 1920 Presidential Election by fellow Ohioan Warren G. Harding.

In the presidential election of 1932, Roosevelt, the Democratic Party's candidate, ran against Herbert Hoover, the Republican Party's candidate and the current president. Hoover's failure to assist the U.S. public in coping with the Great Depression led many voters to turn against the incumbent. During the campaign, Roosevelt declared that he had a plan to assist the U.S. public. Roosevelt's proposal became known as the New Deal. Under it, Roosevelt intended to utilize federal government resources in an unprecedented manner to aid the U.S. public. Roosevelt hoped that his New Deal would allow people to cope with the Great Depression, would help end the current economic downturn, and would help prevent another depression from occurring in the future. As a result of the New Deal, Roosevelt handily won the election.

As president, Roosevelt immediately set about implementing his plan. Upon assuming office in March 1933, Roosevelt provided guidance and leadership that many in the U.S. desired. Because of the severe economic crisis, most bills that the President proposed received Congress' immediate approval. Roosevelt first hoped to alleviate the suffering of the U.S. public and to implement programs that would help meet his citizens' basic needs. One of his first moves was to declare a bank holiday so that the federal government could help struggling banks to become solvent. Roosevelt proceeded to create additional government programs and offices that provided aid and jobs for the U.S. public. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the Civil Works Administration, the Public Works Administration, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the National Industrial Recovery Act, and the Civilian Conservation Corps all provided relief, including government jobs. Roosevelt and the Congress implemented these various programs and agencies between 1933 and 1935, and they became known as Roosevelt's First New Deal.

Unfortunately for the United States and its citizens, these various government programs failed to provide relief to all the needy people in the United States. Programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Public Works Administration employed millions of people, but millions of other workers remained unemployed or underemployed. Roosevelt faced increasing pressure to do more to assist the U.S. public. As a result of this pressure, beginning in 1935, Roosevelt implemented his Second New Deal.

The Second New Deal focused more on ending the current depression and implementing safeguards to prevent another depression from occurring again. There were still programs that tried to provide assistance to the U.S. public, including programs like the Works Progress Administration and the National Youth Administration, by hiring people, especially men, for government positions. Other Second New Deal programs included the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, the Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act, the Rural Electrification Act, the Social Security Act, the Wagner-Connery Act, the Resettlement Administration, and the Federal Housing Act, among others.

Both Roosevelt's First New Deal and his Second New Deal provided assistance to the U.S. public, including Ohioans. Hundreds of thousands of Ohioans received government aid through one or more of these programs or agencies. Unfortunately for the U.S. public, all of Roosevelt's efforts came to naught. They did not end the Great Depression. At the same time, it is important to remember that Roosevelt's efforts did alleviate some of the public's suffering. The event that finally ended the Great Depression in the United States was, however, World War II. This conflict provided millions of people in the U.S. of both genders new jobs and opportunities as the nation mobilized for war.

Despite criticisms that his New Deal did not go far enough to help the U.S. public, Roosevelt won overwhelming reelection in 1936. He went on to win reelection again in 1940 and 1944. He was the only person to win election as president to more than two terms.

In 1939, World War II erupted in Europe. This conflict deflected Roosevelt's attention away from attempts to end the Great

Depression and focused him upon assisting countries facing German attack in Europe. Unfortunately for Roosevelt, most in the U.S. objected to U.S. involvement in the war, as they preferred their leaders helping them with the Great Depression. With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the United States found itself embroiled in the conflict.

During World War II, Roosevelt proved himself to be an adept military and political leader. He rallied the public behind the war effort and sustained their morale through just over three years of warfare and hundreds of thousands of dead serving in U.S. forces. Although it was Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor that thrust the United States into the conflict, Roosevelt focused the United States' military efforts on Germany and Italy in Europe and North Africa at first. With Great Britain and the Soviet Union struggling against the Germans, Roosevelt wanted to bolster these two allies before engaging the Japanese. Thanks to Roosevelt's leadership, the United States emerged victorious in World War II. Unfortunately for the president, he died from a stroke on April 12, 1945, less than one month before Germany surrendered and four months before Japan did.

See Also

- ▶ James M. Cox
- ▶ Herbert C. Hoover
- ▶ Warren G. Harding
- ▶ Theodore Roosevelt
- ▶ Thomas W. Wilson
- ▶ Great Depression
- ▶ New Deal
- ▶ World War I
- ▶ Pearl Harbor
- ▶ Civil Works Administration
- ▶ Civilian Conservation Corps
- ▶ Democratic Party
- ▶ Federal Emergency Relief Administration
- ▶ National Youth Administration
- ▶ Public Works Administration
- ▶ Resettlement Administration
- ▶ Works Progress Administration
- ▶ Republican Party
- ▶ National Industrial Recovery Act
- ▶ Emergency Relief Appropriation Act
- ▶ Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act
- ▶ Rural Electrification Act
- ▶ Social Security Act
- ▶ Wagner-Connery Act

- ▶ Federal Housing Act
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