American politics in 2004

American politics in **2004** was defined by the high-stakes re-election of Republican President **George W. Bush** over Democratic challenger Senator **John Kerry** of Massachusetts, against the backdrop of the ongoing Iraq War and post-9/11 security concerns. Bush secured a second term with **50.7%** of the popular vote to Kerry's **48.3%**, and **286** electoral votes to Kerry's **251**, with the decisive battleground state being **Ohio**.

The Presidential Campaign & Key Issues

- **Foreign Policy & Iraq:** The dominant theme of the election was national security, the War on Terror, and the 2003 invasion of Iraq.
- **The Primaries:** Senator John Kerry effectively clinched the Democratic nomination after strong performances on Super Tuesday in March, later selecting Senator **John Edwards** of North Carolina as his running mate in July.
- **The Conventions:** The **Democratic National Convention** took place in Boston in July (notable for an acclaimed keynote address by rising Illinois Senate candidate **Barack Obama**), while the **Republican National Convention** was held in New York City in late August.
- **Outside Groups:** The election saw a major rise in influence from **527 political organizations**, most notably the anti-Kerry group *Swift Boat Veterans for Truth*, which heavily challenged Kerry's military record from the Vietnam War.

Congressional and State Outcomes

- **Congressional Gains:** Riding on Bush's coattails, the Republican Party strengthened its majorities in Congress, picking up net gains in both the **U.S. Senate** and the **U.S. House of Representatives**.
- **State Ballot Measures:** Alongside the presidential vote, **11 states** passed constitutional amendments or ballot initiatives defining marriage strictly as between a man and a woman to ban same-sex marriage.

Operation Iraqi Freedom—the U.S.-led Iraq War—began on **March 20, 2003**, and was marked by the swift toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime, followed by a multi-year insurgency and military occupation that officially concluded in December 2011.

The 2003 Invasion Phase

- **March 20, 2003:** Operation Iraqi Freedom officially begins with preemptive airstrikes and a "shock and awe" bombing campaign targeting leadership sites in Baghdad.
- **April 9, 2003:** U.S. coalition forces seize control of **Baghdad**, effectively ending the central control of Saddam Hussein's government.
- **May 1, 2003:** U.S. President George W. Bush stands aboard the *USS Abraham Lincoln* under a "Mission Accomplished" banner and declares an end to major combat operations.
- **December 13, 2003:** Former Iraqi President **Saddam Hussein** is captured by U.S. troops during Operation Red Dawn in a small underground hideout near Tikrit.

Insurgency and Escalation Phase (2004–2007)

- **April – May 2004:** Public outrage erupts globally after photographic evidence emerges of detainee abuse by U.S. personnel at Abu Ghraib prison.
- **November 2004:** U.S. and coalition forces launch a massive, highly destructive offensive against insurgents in Fallujah.

Ronald Regan timeline

- **November 4, 1980:** Elected the 40th President of the United States, defeating Jimmy Carter. [1, 4, 5]

The Presidency (1981–1989)

- **January 20, 1981:** Inaugurated as president; the 52 American hostages held in Iran were released the same day.
- **March 30, 1981:** Survived an assassination attempt by John Hinckley Jr. in Washington, D.C.
- **August 1981:** Fired striking air traffic controllers (PATCO) after they ignored a back-to-work order.

- **March 1983:** Delivered his famous "Evil Empire" speech and announced the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).
- **October 1983:** Ordered the U.S. military invasion of Grenada.
- **November 1984:** Reelected in a landslide victory over Democratic challenger Walter Mondale.
- **1985–1988:** Participated in a series of historic Cold War summit meetings with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, leading to the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.
- **November 1986:** The Iran-Contra affair became public, revealing secret, unauthorized arms sales and fund diversions.
- **June 1987:** Delivered his famous "Tear down this wall" speech in West Berlin. [1, 3, 4, 5]

Post-Presidency and Later Life (1989–2004)

- **January 1989:** Left office and retired to California.
- **November 1994:** Released a handwritten public letter announcing he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

June 5, 2004: Passed away at his home in Bel Air, California, at the age of 93