



50 Years of Presidential Campaign Buttons  
by Alan Alquist  
Bellingham Photo Club Solo Photo Book in a Month



## 50 Years of Presidential Campaigns

Harry Vant, a life long friend of almost 60 years, gave me his collection of historic campaign buttons. The photographs are the basis for this book. Not all presidential contenders from this period are represented, but most of the major and a few minor characters are here. I have added a brief description of each candidate's historical context and a salient quotation.



The Democratic Party is one of the two major political parties in the United States. The modern-day Democratic Party was founded around 1828 by supporters of Andrew Jackson, making it the world's oldest active political party.

A Democratic Party pin set is shown here. The donkey is the party's mascot and the broom represents the hope of sweeping its candidates into office.



The Republican Party, also referred to as the GOP (Grand Old Party), is the other major political party in the United States, along with its main rival, the Democratic Party. The GOP was founded in 1854. Here is a Republican Party pin urging a vote for the straight Republican ticket in the 1950 election.



Norman Thomas ran for the presidency as a candidate for the Socialist Party in six consecutive elections beginning in 1928.

*After I asked a student what he meant, he replied that freedom consisted of the unimpeded right to get rich, to use his ability, no matter what the cost to others, to win advancement. No decent society can tolerate that definition.*

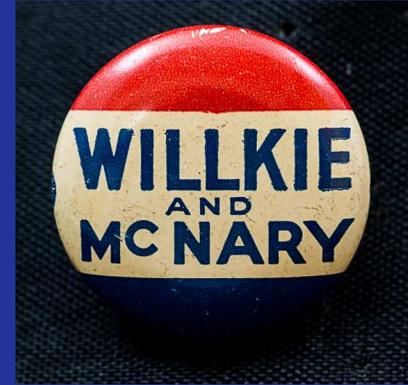


In the 1968 presidential election campaign, George Wallace ran as an American Independent Party candidate. Wallace notoriously opposed desegregation and supported the policies of *Jim Crow* during the Civil Rights Movement. As governor of Alabama he declared in his 1963 inaugural address that he stood for *segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever.*



**Franklin D. Roosevelt** was the 32nd president of the United States (1933–45). The only president elected to the office four times, Roosevelt led the United States through two of the greatest crises of the 20th century: the Great Depression and World War II. In so doing, he greatly expanded the powers of the federal government through a series of programs and reforms known as the New Deal. He served as the principal architect of the successful effort to rid the world of German National Socialism and Japanese militarism.

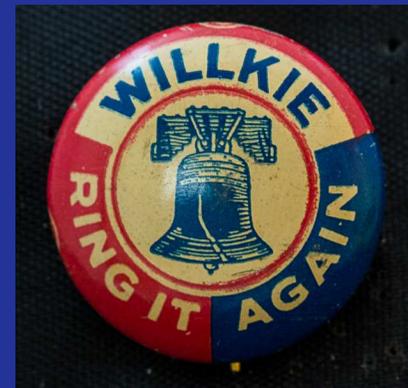
*I'm not the smartest fellow in the world, but I can sure pick smart colleagues.*



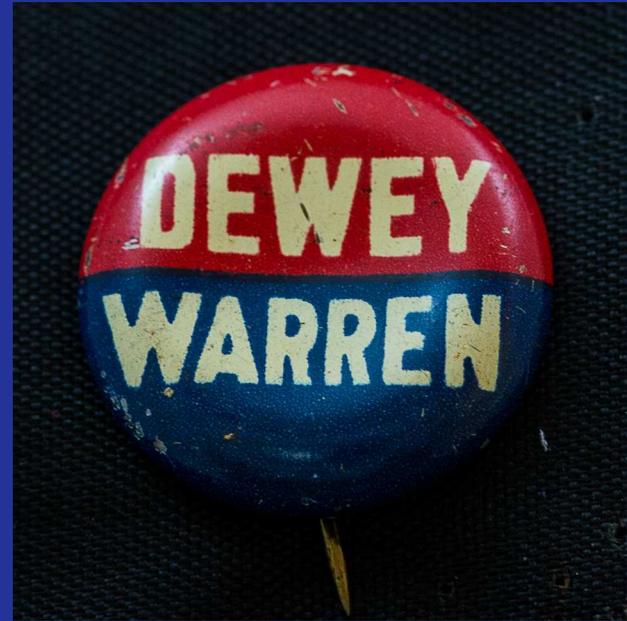
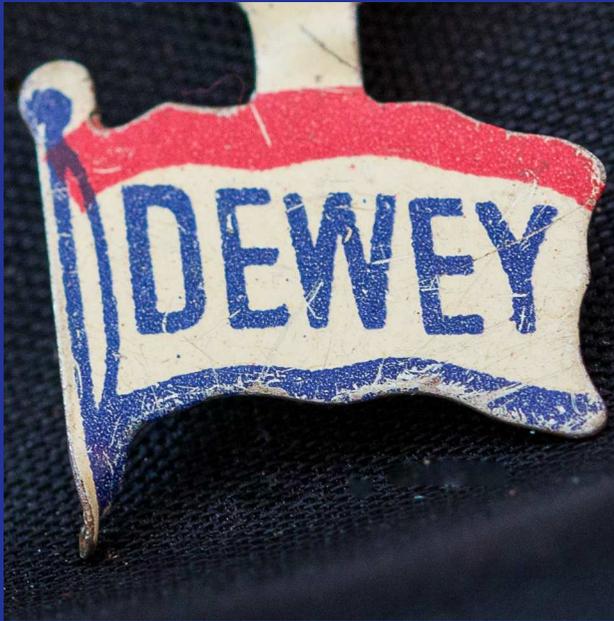
**Wendell Lewis Willkie** was the 1940 Republican nominee for President of the United States. Willkie appealed to many convention delegates as the Republican field's only interventionist favoring greater U.S. involvement to support Britain against the Axis powers. His Democratic opponent, incumbent President Franklin D. Roosevelt, won the 1940 election with about 55% of the popular vote and took the electoral college vote by a wide margin.

Willkie actively sought the Republican nomination in 1944. But the party leadership resented his wartime assistance to the Roosevelt. His quest for his second nomination therefore got little traction. The party instead chose New York Governor Tom Dewey.

*To suppress minority thinking and minority expression would tend to freeze society and prevent progress. Now more than ever, we must keep in the forefront of our minds the fact that whenever we take away the liberties of those we hate, we are opening the way to loss of liberty for those we love.*



**Thomas Edmund Dewey** was an American lawyer, prosecutor, and politician. He served as the 47th governor of New York from 1943 to 1954. In 1944, he was the Republican Party's nominee for president, but lost the election to incumbent Franklin D. Roosevelt in the closest of Roosevelt's four presidential elections. He was again the Republican presidential nominee in 1948, but lost to President Harry S. Truman in one of the greatest upsets in presidential election history.



Dewey played a large role in winning the Republican presidential nomination for Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952, and helped Eisenhower win the presidential election that year. He also played a large part in the choice of Richard M. Nixon as the Republican vice-presidential nominee in 1952 and 1956.

*When you're leading, don't talk.*

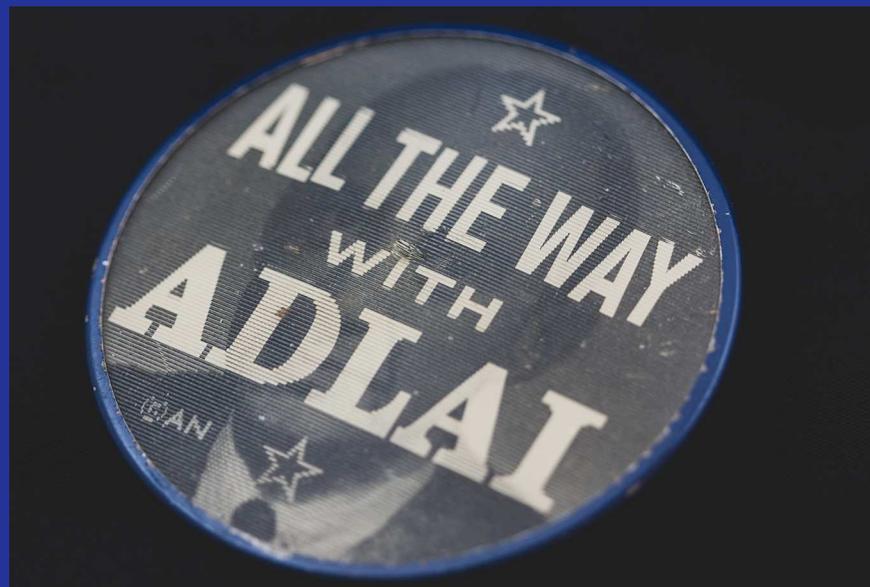
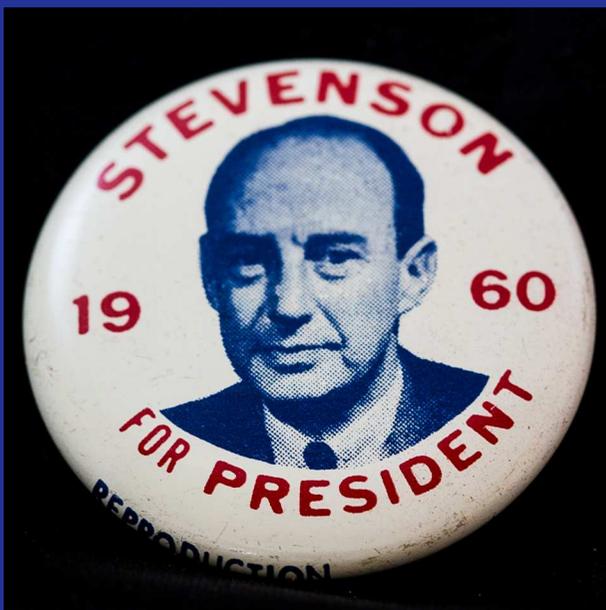


**Carey Estes Kefauver** was an American politician from Tennessee. A member of the Democratic Party, he served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1939 to 1949 and in the Senate from 1949 until his death in 1963. He twice sought his party's nomination for President of the United States. In 1956, he was selected by the Democratic National Convention to be the running mate of presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson. The Stevenson–Kefauver ticket lost to the Eisenhower–Nixon ticket in 1956.



This button with the raccoon hat highlights a memorable moment in his career. In Kefauver's 1948 campaign for the U.S. Senate his progressive stances on the issues put him in direct competition with E. H. Crump, the boss of the state's Democratic Party. During the primary, Crump and his allies accused Kefauver of being a *fellow traveler* and of working for the *pinkos and communists* with the stealth of a raccoon. In a televised speech, Kefauver put on a coonskin cap and proudly proclaimed, *I may be a pet coon, but I'm not Boss Crump's pet coon.*

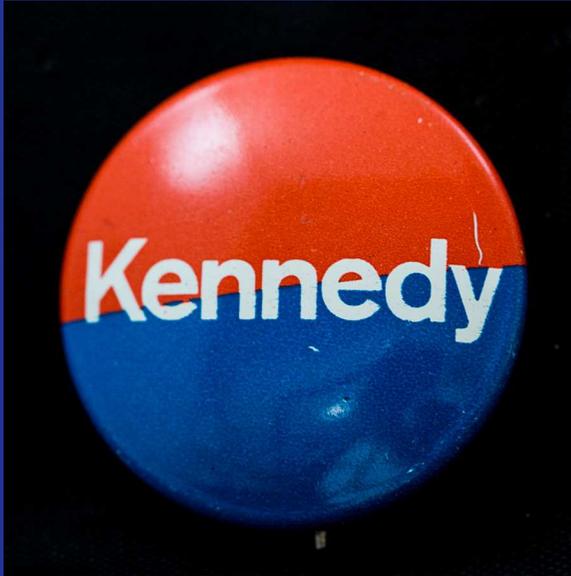
*Presidential ambition is a disease which can only be cured by embalming fluid.*



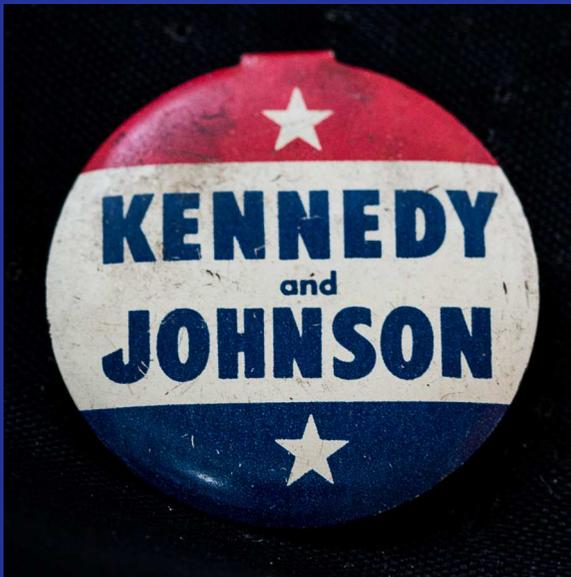
**Adlai Ewing Stevenson II** was an American lawyer, politician, and diplomat. He received the Democratic Party's nomination for president in the 1952 and 1956 elections.

In both the 1952 and 1956 elections, Stevenson was defeated in landslides by Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower. He unsuccessfully sought the Democratic presidential nomination for a third time at the 1960 Democratic National Convention. The nomination went to John F. Kennedy. After his election, President Kennedy appointed Stevenson as the United States Ambassador to the United Nations.

*It's hard to lead a cavalry charge  
if you think you look funny on a horse.*

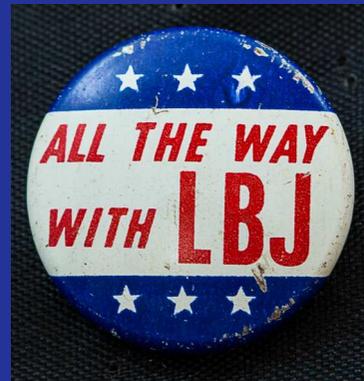


**John Fitzgerald Kennedy**, often referred to by his initials **JFK** or **Jack**, was an American politician who served as the 35th president of the United States from January 1961 until his assassination in November 1963. Kennedy served at the height of the Cold War, and the majority of his work as president concerned relations with the Soviet Union and Cuba. A Democrat, Kennedy represented Massachusetts in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate prior to becoming president.



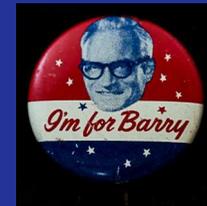
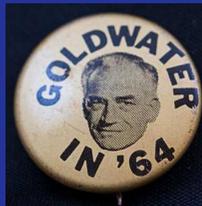
On November 22, 1963, he was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson assumed the presidency upon Kennedy's death. Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested for the crime, but he was shot and killed by Jack Ruby two days later. The FBI and the Warren Commission both concluded Oswald had acted alone in the assassination, but various groups contested the Warren Report and believed that Kennedy was the victim of a conspiracy. After Kennedy's death, Congress enacted many of his proposals, including the Civil Rights Act and the Revenue Act of 1964. Kennedy ranks highly in polls of U.S. presidents with historians and the general public.

*The ignorance of one voter in a democracy  
impairs the security of all.*



**Lyndon Baines Johnson**, often referred to by his initials **LBJ**, was an American politician who served as the 36th president of the United States from 1963 to 1969. As the 37th vice president from 1961 to 1963, he assumed the presidency following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. A Democrat from Texas, Johnson also served as a United States Representative and as the Majority Leader in the United States Senate. Johnson is one of only four people who have served as President, Vice President, and in both houses of Congress .

*To conclude that women are unfitted to the task of our historic society seems to me the equivalent of closing male eyes to female facts.*



**Barry Morris Goldwater** was an American politician, businessman, and author who was a five-term Senator from Arizona and the Republican Party nominee for president of the United States in 1964. Despite his loss of the 1964 presidential election in a landslide, Goldwater is the politician most often credited with having sparked the resurgence of the American conservative political movement in the 1960s. He also had a substantial impact on the libertarian movement.

*Mark my word, if and when these preachers get control of the Republican party, and they're sure trying to do so, it's going to be a terrible damn problem. Frankly, these people frighten me. Politics and governing demand compromise. But these Christians believe they are acting in the name of God, so they can't and won't compromise. I know, I've tried to deal with them.*

**Hubert Horatio Humphrey Jr.** was an American politician who served as the 38th vice president of the United States from 1965 to 1969. He twice served in the United States Senate, representing Minnesota from 1949 to 1964 and 1971 to 1978. He unsuccessfully sought his party's presidential nomination in 1952 and 1960. After Lyndon B. Johnson became president after the Kennedy assassination, he chose Humphrey as his running mate, and the Democratic ticket was elected in the landslide 1964 election.



In March 1968, Johnson made his surprise announcement that he would not seek reelection, and Humphrey launched his campaign for the presidency. Loyal to the Johnson administration's policies on the Vietnam War, he saw opposition from many within his own party and avoided the primaries to focus on winning the delegates of non-primary states at the Democratic Convention. His delegate strategy succeeded in clinching the nomination, and he chose Senator Edmund Muskie as his running mate. In the general election, he nearly matched Nixon's tally in the popular vote but lost the electoral vote by a wide margin.

*Compassion is not weakness, and concern for the unfortunate is not socialism.*

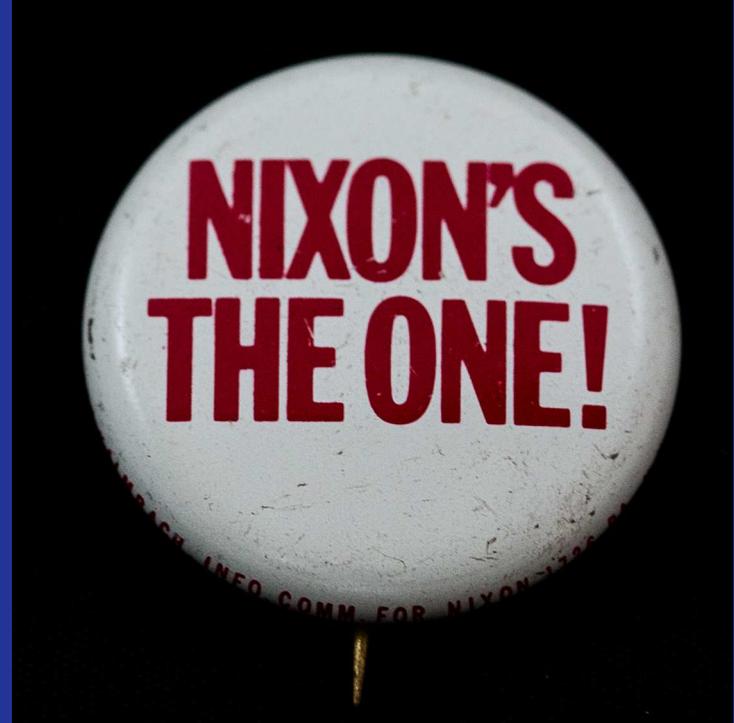
**Eugene Joseph McCarthy** was an American politician and poet from Minnesota. He served in the United States House of Representatives from 1949 to 1959 and the United States Senate from 1959 to 1971. McCarthy sought the Democratic nomination in the 1968 presidential election, challenging incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson on an anti-Vietnam War platform.



McCarthy ran for president five times, but never won. He sought the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972 but fared poorly in the primaries. He campaigned in several more races after that, but never won election to another office. Running as an independent in the 1976 presidential election he won only 0.9% of the popular vote.

*Saying we should keep the two-party system simply because it is working is like saying the Titanic voyage was a success because a few people survived on life rafts.*

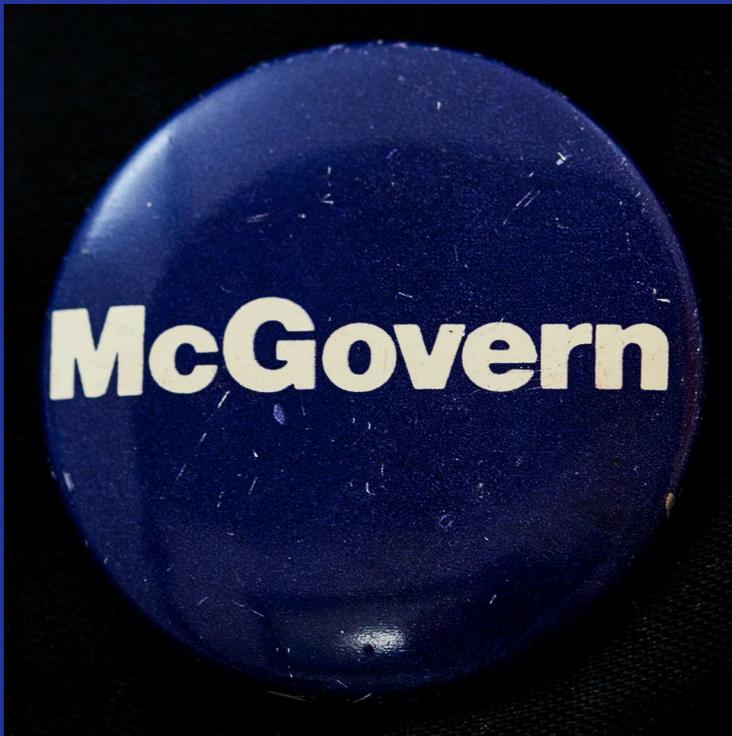
**Richard Milhouse Nixon** was the 37th president of the United States, serving from 1969 until 1974. Nixon previously served as the 36th vice president from 1953 to 1961. He was the running mate of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican Party's presidential nominee in the 1952 election, serving for eight years in that capacity. He waged an unsuccessful presidential campaign in 1960, narrowly losing to John F. Kennedy. Nixon then lost a race for governor of California to Edmund G. Brown in 1962. After losing that election, he blamed the media, saying, *You won't have Nixon to kick around any more.*



In 1968, he ran for the presidency again and was elected, defeating Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace in a close election. Nixon brought an end to the war in Vietnam in 1973, and eliminated the military draft. Nixon's foreign policy accomplishments include a visit to China in 1972 that led to diplomatic relations between the two nations, and détente and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the Soviet Union. Among other things in domestic policy he enforced desegregation in Southern schools and established the Environmental Protection Agency.

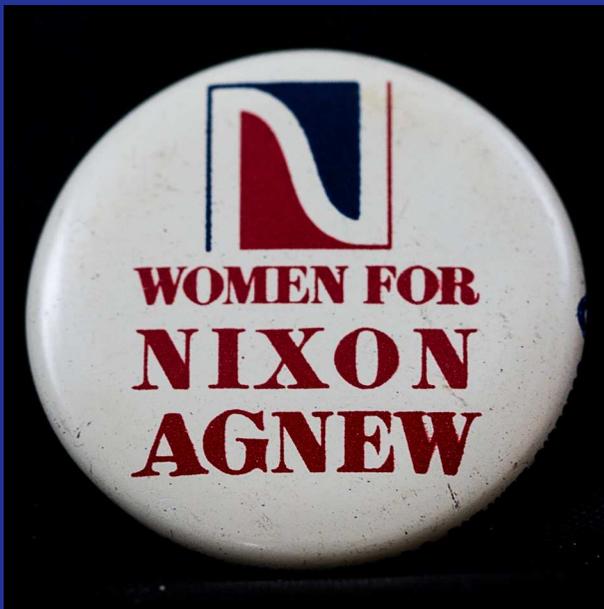
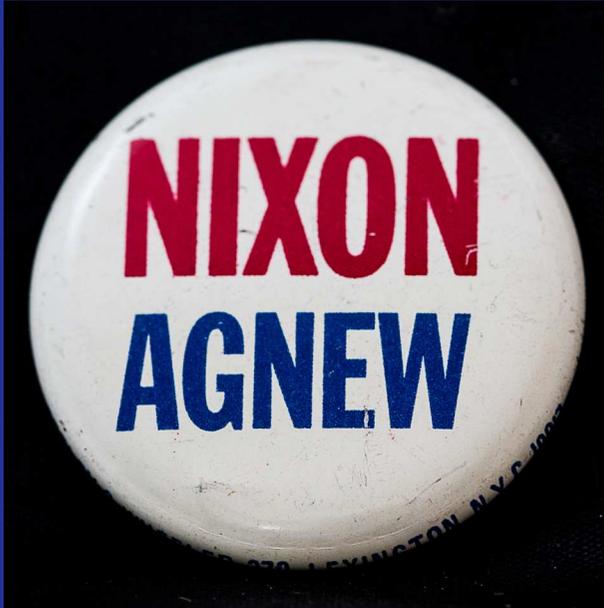
*Politics would be a helluva good business if it weren't for the goddamned people.*

**George Stanley McGovern** was an American historian, author, U.S. representative, U.S. senator, and the Democratic Party presidential nominee in the 1972 presidential election. McGovern vied to become the first South Dakota native to become president.



McGovern's long-shot, grassroots-based 1972 presidential campaign gained the Democratic nomination but left the party badly split ideologically. His credibility was undermined by choosing Thomas Eagleton as his running mate. Eagleton stepped down when it was revealed he had been hospitalized on three occasions for depression and had undergone electroshock therapy. Sargent Shriver replaced Eagleton as the vice presidential candidate. In the general election McGovern lost to incumbent Richard Nixon in one of the biggest landslides in U.S. electoral history.

*I'm fed up to the ears with old men dreaming up wars for young men to die in.*



After winning his second term in 1972 Nixon continued his usual political stance of confrontation rather than conciliation and compromise. He sought to consolidate power within the presidency and asserted that the executive branch was exempt from many of the checks and balances imposed by the Constitution. This stance would later turn on him during the Watergate scandal.

In late July 1974, the House Judiciary Committee passed the first of three articles of impeachment against Nixon, charging obstruction of justice. Upon the threat of a likely post-impeachment conviction, Nixon resigned from the office of the presidency on August 9, 1974.

*I would have made a good Pope.*

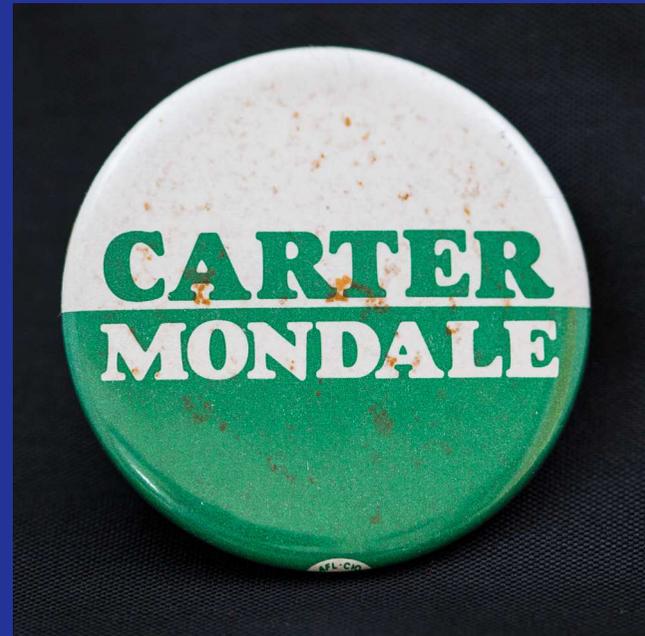
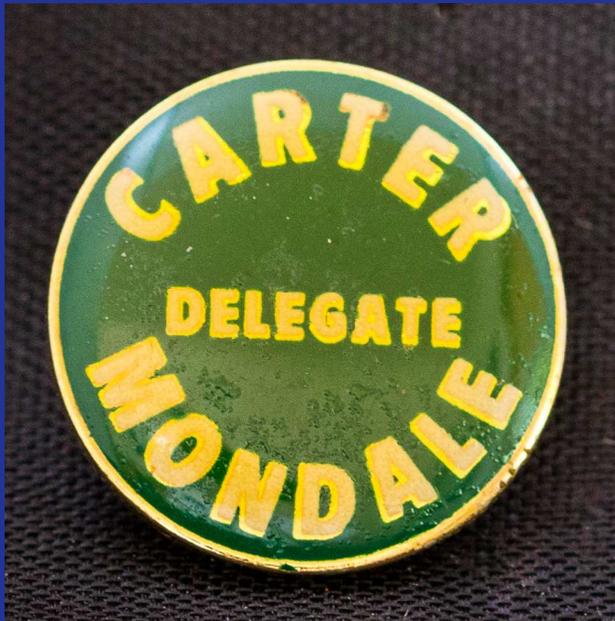


**Shirley Anita Chisholm** was an American politician, educator, and author. In 1968, she became the first black woman elected to the United States Congress. She represented New York's 12th congressional district for seven terms from 1969 to 1983. In the 1972 United States presidential election, she became the first black candidate for a major party's nomination for President of the United States, and the first woman to run for the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, as well as the first woman to appear in a United States presidential debate.

In 2015, Chisholm was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

*I don't measure America by its achievement  
but by its potential.*

**James Earl Carter Jr.** is an American politician, philanthropist, and former farmer who served as the 39th president of the United States from 1977 to 1981. Despite being a dark-horse candidate who was little known outside of Georgia at the start of the campaign, Carter won the 1976 Democratic presidential nomination and chose Walter Mondale as his vice-presidential running mate. In the general election, Carter ran as an outsider and narrowly defeated incumbent Republican President Gerald Ford.



Carter's time in office was marred by a worsening economy and the Iranian hostage crisis. Ronald Reagan defeated him in the 1980 election. Some historians consider the Reagan Presidency to mark a political realignment characterized by the rise of conservatism.

Since leaving the presidency, Carter has remained active in the private sector. In 2002, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

*Thoughtful criticism and close scrutiny of all government officials by the press and the public are an important part of our democratic society.*



**Ronald Wilson Reagan** was an American politician who served as the 40th president of the United States from 1981 to 1989 and became a highly influential voice of modern conservatism.

In 1980, he won the Republican presidential nomination and defeated the incumbent president, Jimmy Carter. At the time of his first inauguration, Reagan was the oldest person to assume the U.S. presidency. Reagan defeated former vice president Walter Mondale when he ran for re-election in 1984, winning the most electoral votes of any U.S. president. It was the second-most lopsided presidential election in modern U.S. history.

*No matter what time it is, wake me,  
even if it's in the middle of a Cabinet meeting.*



**Walter Frederick "Fritz" Mondale** is an American politician, diplomat and lawyer who served as the 42nd vice president of the United States from 1977 to 1981. In 1984, Walter Mondale won the Democratic presidential nomination. He campaigned for a nuclear freeze, the Equal Rights Amendment, an increase in taxes, and a reduction of U.S. public debt. His vice presidential nominee was Geraldine Ferraro, a Congresswoman from New York, the first female vice-presidential nominee of any major party. Mondale and Ferraro lost the election to the incumbents Reagan and Bush.

*Mr. Reagan will raise taxes; and so will I.  
He won't tell you. I just did.*



**Photography by  
Alan Alquist**