

PRESIDENT FORD COMMITTEE RECORDS, (1968, 1971-74) 1975-77

Collection Type

Federal Records

Extent

401.7 linear feet

Record Type

Textual

Access

Open. Researchers wishing to view Treasurer's Office series should consult with an archivist prior to their visit in order to request that specific folders be added to the Library's review-for-access queue. Some items are temporarily restricted under terms of President Ford Committee letter of gift, a copy of which is available on request.

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- Research Office - William McNitt
- Delegate Office - William McNitt
- Vice Presidential Nominee Office - Nancy Mirshah
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- Audiovisual Materials - Kenneth Hafeli

Scope and Content Note

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INTRODUCTION

The President Ford Committee Records partially document the election committee's activities on behalf of the President from the organization's creation in July 1975 until Committee staff filed final reports with the Federal Election Commission in 1978. The following sections briefly outline new regulations affecting the 1976 campaign for president, the history and organization of the President Ford Committee (PFC), PFC activities during the prenomination and postnomination campaigns, and the nature of the files produced by the PFC staff. For more detailed descriptions of the functions and files of various divisions within the PFC organization, see the accompanying sections of this finding aid.

New Regulations Affecting the 1976 Campaign

Major differences between how presidential candidates conducted campaigns in 1976 and how they operated in previous contests were precipitated by passage of the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) Amendments of 1974. This legislation, signed into law by President Ford on October 15, 1974, established the first spending limits ever for candidates in presidential primary and general elections, provided for disclosure and reporting on campaign contributions and expenditures,

introduced public financing for general election campaigns and matching funds to cover part of the costs of primary campaigns, and created the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to develop specific regulations implementing the law and enforcing its provisions.

The new restrictions on fundraising and spending by presidential campaign committees provided the organizations with new challenges during the 1976 campaign. The confusion concerning their implementation and the implications surrounding their application is directly and indirectly reflected in the records of President Ford's election organization.

An immediate impact of the new regulations had on the staffs of election committees is reflected in the structure of the PFC. From its inception, the Committee allocated a significant portion of staff resources to interpret and comply with FECA regulations. This particularly affected staffing of the counsel's office, the finance division, and the treasurer's operation but the concern for compliance is reflected in other PFC divisions as well.

A less direct affect of the new regulations was on the level of the candidates' media spending. Strict limits placed on campaign expenditures (10.2 million for the prenomination campaign and 23 million for the general election) made the allocation of resources even more important than in previous presidential campaigns. The level of spending on media and media experts for the 1976 campaign was proportionally larger than in previous presidential campaigns because media advertising was perceived as the most cost-effective means of reaching the voters. This is reflected in the large proportion of Committee records documenting the activities of Campaign '76 Inc., the in-house advertising agency. Other more traditional forms of campaigning, such as elaborate efforts to attract special interest or ethnic groups, the development of large grassroots volunteer organizations, and high levels of spending on campaign paraphernalia like bumper stickers, buttons, and literature were deemed as less cost-effective in attracting voters. The relatively small amount of Committee records on these topics reflects their relative insignificance.

Another provision of FECA which had direct impact on election committee staffing was the detailed reporting required by the Federal Election Commission to

determine a candidate's eligibility for public funding and to monitor the candidate's election committee spending. Particularly during the primary campaign period of active fundraising, the compliance process was time intensive. In addition to contracting some bookkeeping tasks to outside operations, the PFC had staff members specializing in specific areas of compliance, such as certification of donations and preparation of applications for matching funds. During both the primary and general elections the PFC headquarters staff dedicated large portions of their time monitoring the spending of the organization nationwide to be certain to stay within the FECA expenditure limits.

President Ford Committee History, Organization, and Activities

At the urging of members of his senior White House staff, President Ford authorized the creation of a campaign planning group in May 1975. Some of those advocating an early candidacy announcement were concerned about what impact new regulations might have on the conduct of a campaign, others were hoping an early announcement might head off a divisive struggle for the Republican nomination. On June 20, 1975, Ford announced the creation of a President Ford Committee with Dean Burch, formerly counsellor to the president, as its temporary head. Secretary of the Army Howard "Bo" Callaway assumed the PFC chairmanship when President Ford formally declared his candidacy on July 8, 1975.

The President Ford Committee, headquartered in Washington, D.C., began as a low-budget operation with three paid employees. During the next sixteen months the size of the Committee's staff fluctuated, depending on the availability of funds and level of activity. During the heat of the general election campaign, the paid national headquarters staff numbered more than 200, assisted by nearly one thousand volunteers. In addition to orchestrating the campaign at the national level, the headquarters staff was also responsible for directing and funding the activities of a network of state and local salaried PFC workers and volunteers. Following President Ford's loss to Jimmy Carter in November 1976 most of the Committee organization disbanded. Only a few members of the finance and legal staffs remained on the Committee's payroll until filing final reports with the Federal Election Commission in 1978.

At various points during the campaign, the Committee was perceived as an inefficient, disorderly organization troubled by structural and personnel problems. These problems were dramatically apparent early in the primary campaign when, in the face of fundraising problems and a looming challenge by Ronald Reagan for the party nomination, the PFC's finance chairman and the director of political organization resigned over strategic differences with Chairman Callaway. In April 1976, Callaway also stepped down in the midst of charges that as secretary of the Army he had used his influence for personal gain. Rogers Morton took over as chairman until he too was replaced by James Baker five months later.

The PFC staff was organized primarily along functional lines, its size and activities alternately expanding and contracting to meet needs and control costs. Major activities of the organization during the primary campaign period included, 1) raising enough money to qualify for public matching funds, 2) building a national network of state and local campaign organizations and, 3) developing and implementing an effective strategic plan to win as much delegate support as possible before the Republican National Convention in August 1976.

As the primary season ended and the political and financial workload decreased temporarily, the PFC headquarters staff was dramatically downsized in order to keep costs within mandated expenditure limits. From June 1976 until mid-August those still on the payroll focused on the delegate monitoring program in preparation for an anticipated nomination battle at the Republican National Convention. Following Ford's selection as the nominee, the PFC quickly expanded, overhauling its internal structure and reporting relationships, reopening all state headquarters, revamping the in-house advertising operation, and developing and implementing a strategic plan for the general election campaign.

Several significant changes in the Committee's structure and function occurred between the prenomination and postnomination campaigns. One was the elimination of the fundraising apparatus developed to support the primary campaign. (The new FECA regulations prohibited candidates from accepting donations during the publicly-funded general election campaign.) Another major structural difference was the addition of a large internal operation responsible for developing specific appeals to various special voter groups. Additionally, Chairman James Baker significantly flattened the reporting structure of the organization. This

resulted in all the division directors and office heads reporting directly to him during throughout the fall campaign. (See Attachments 1 and 2)

The Records of the President Ford Committee

The records of the President Ford Committee housed at the Ford Library include nearly 350 linear feet of material divided among eleven office divisions. The files include material on finances, legal matters, public opinion polls, advertising, press relations, politics, a variety of domestic and foreign policy issues, and appeals to specific interest groups or segments of the population. The file for each office division might include material created and accumulated by as few as two staff members, in the case with the Counsel's Office, or as many as fifty individuals for an office as large as People for Ford or Campaign '76 Inc.

The President Ford Committee Records are to a study of the 1976 campaign. Researchers should be alerted however, that although the collection contains significant materials on various aspects of the campaign, the records are by no means complete as several senior staff members apparently removed files upon their departure from the Committee. The result is great variation in the quality and completeness of the documentary record from office to office. The extant files for example, do not reflect the activities of Rogers Morton and James Baker during their respective tenures as PFC chairman. In contrast, the files of PFC Counsel Robert Visser, are extensive and include no obvious gaps. Information on the strengths and weaknesses of a particular series of records is included in the finding aid for that office division.

The records provide researchers with some sense of the close but sometimes stormy relationship between the Committee and the White House staff. They also illustrate some of the problems intrinsic in simultaneously acting as both a president and a candidate. To research any election issue, or the campaign as a whole, it is important to examine the files of the campaign principals in both the White House and the Committee. For example, more high-level strategic and political information is in the files of the White House Chief of Staff Richard Cheney and his support staff than in the files of PFC Chairman Bo Callaway. Other important points of liaison where the documentary record is complementary include the PFC's General Counsel and the White House Office of the Counsel; the

PFC's Communication Director and the White House Press Secretary; and the PFC's Political Director and the White House Scheduling Office, Domestic Council, and advance staff.

For a complete list of collections at the Ford Library which include material on the 1976 campaign researchers should refer to "The 1976 Presidential Election: A Guide to Manuscript Collections Available for Research." Copies of this publication are available at the Library.

Series List

[Chairman's Office](#)

- A1-A4 - Callaway Subject File
- A5-A10 - Callaway State File
- A11-A15 - DeBolt Subject File

[Office of Administration](#)

- B1-B3 - Robert Marik File
- B4-B10 - Royston Hughes File
- B11-B12 - James Cochran Subject File
- B13-B14 - James Cochran Budget File
- B15-B17 - Convention File
- B18-B33 - Correspondence Card File
- B34-B44 - Correspondence Chronological File
- B45-B73 - Correspondence State File
- B74-B83 - Correspondence Topical File

[Political Office](#)

- C1-C5 - Stuart Spencer State File
- C6-C11 - Primary Campaign Coordinators' File
- C12-C20 - General Election State File
- C21 - Norman Watts Chronological File
- C22-C24 - Norman Watts Subject File
- C25-C27 - William Russo Subject File

- C28-C34 - Republican National Committee Campaign File
- C35-C38- PFC State Organizations File

[General Counsel's Office](#)

- D1-D15 - Political File
- D16-D30 - Federal Election Commission Subject File
- D30-D35 - Federal Election Commission Meetings File
- D36-D40 - General Subject File
- D41-D45 - State Legal File
- D46-D48 - Administrative Subject File
- D49-D51 - State Receipt File

[Campaign '76 Media Communications, Inc.](#)

- E1-E2 - Primary Elections - Bruce Wagner Files
- E3-E9 - Primary Elections - Dawn Sibley Files
- E9-E14 - Primary Elections - Carol Karasick Files
- E14-E16 - Primary Elections - Denise Considine Files
- E17 - Primary Elections - Production Accounts File
- E18-E22 - Primary Elections - Dodie Kazanjian Files
- E23-E37 - Primary Elections - SFM Media, Inc.
- E38-E42 - General Election - John Deardourff Files
- E42-E43 - General Election - Dawn Sibley Files
- E44-E54 - General Election - Carol Karasick Files
- E55 - General Election - Dodie Kazanjian Files
- E56-E64 - General Election - New York Office Files
- E65-E87 - General Election - SFM Media, Inc.
- E88-E91 - Primary Elections - Barry Lafer General Subject File
- E91-E97 - Primary Elections - Barry Lafer Paid Invoice File
- E97-E99 - Primary Elections - Barry Lafer Bank Reconciliation File
- E100-E107 - General Election - Barry Lafer General Subject File
- E107-E120 - General Election - Barry Lafer Paid Invoice File
- E120-E126 - General Election - Barry Lafer Bank Reconciliation File

[People for Ford Office](#)

- F1-F7 - Thomas Ruffin Files
- F8-F11 - Pamela Curtis Files
- F12-F13 - Robert Keyes Files
- F14-F17 - Black Desk Files
- F18-F23 - Business and Professional Desk Files
- F24-F26 - Ethnic Desk Files
- F27-F33 - Farm Desk Files
- F34-F39 - Jewish Desk Files
- F40-F52 - National Volunteer Desk Files
- F53-F54 - Older Americans Desk Files
- F55-F62 - Veterans Desk Files
- F63-F73 - Youth Desk Files

[Press Office](#)

- G1-G7 - Peter Kaye Files
- G8-G12 - Peter Teeley Files
- G13-G15 - Mark Rosenker Files
- G15-G20 - Clippings File

[Research Office](#)

- H1-H20 - Market Opinion Research Polls
- H21-H34 - Carter Quotes File
- H35-H38 - President Ford Quotebooks
- H39-H41 - Answer Desk Coordinator's Subject File
- H42-H44 - Publication/Organization Questionnaires
- H45-H50 - General Subject File
- H51-H55 - Campaign News Summaries

I (Letter Not Assigned)

[Delegate Office](#)

- J1-J2 - General Subject File
- J3-J15 - State File

[Vice Presidential Nominee Office](#)

- K1-K5 - Subject File

Treasurer's Office

- L1-L70 - General Subject File
- L71-L74 - Advocate File
- L75-L93 - American Management Systems (AMS) File
- L94-L113 - Banking Records File
- L114-L117 - L.R. Benjamin Banking and Finance File
- L118-L144 - Payroll Records File
- L145-L157 - Travel and Personal Service File
- L158-L170 - White House Vouchers File
- L171-L179 - Youth File
- L180-L228 - Primary Election Contributions File
- L229-L296 - Primary Election States, Regions, and Convention File
- L297-L329 - Primary Election Vendors File
- L330-L342 - General Election Contributions File
- L343-L386 - General Election Expenditures File
- L387-L432 - General Election Vendors File

Speeches - Senator Dole (1)-(6)

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