

A QUARTER CENTURY
(1991-2016)

THE WORDS & THE DEEDS

25 MEMORABLE YEARS OF SERVICE

This Red Book was originally issued in 2011 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the founding of The Dilenschneider Group in October of 1991 to serve corporate, institutional, organizational, and individual clients around the world. For each one of those 20 years, we selected a memorable event, accompanied by a quote that captured its importance from people who had played key roles. This year, to mark our 25th anniversary, we are reissuing the original booklet with a new year-by-year section for 2012-16, again accompanied by appropriate quotes.

What the months and years ahead will bring we cannot know, but we can be sure they will be full of many more history-making events, and stimulate many more quotable statements. Meanwhile, The Dilenschneider Group's Trend and Special Reports will continue to keep our clients, friends, and readers up-to-date and well-informed about the critical issues and events that shape our lives in the unfolding 21st Century.

1991

THE END OF THE SOVIET ERA

“My life’s work has been accomplished. I did all that I could.”

– USSR President
Mikhail Gorbachev
December 15, 1991

After more than four decades of hostility, mistrust, the threat of nuclear Armageddon, huge military build-ups, and pervasive mutual fear between the West and the Soviet Union, the Cold War came to an end in 1989. But it took two more years for the Soviet Union to be tossed into the dustbin of history and its many far-flung republics establish their

independence. On June 12, 1991, Boris Yeltsin was elected President of the Russian Federation, the largest of the former Soviet republics. In July, the Warsaw Pact collapsed. On Christmas Day, General Secretary of the Communist Party and President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev, who played a key role in ending the Cold War, resigned. The next day, the Soviet legislature formally dissolved the old Soviet Union.

1992

DEMOCRAT BILL CLINTON WINS WHITE HOUSE

“Today, a generation raised in the shadows of the Cold War assumes new responsibilities in a world warmed by the sunshine of freedom, but threatened still by ancient hatreds and new plagues.”

– President Bill Clinton
Inaugural Address
January 20, 1993

Although Bill Clinton made those prophetic remarks a few weeks into the New Year at the traditional inaugural ceremonies, his battle to gain the White House dominated headlines throughout 1992.

Bill Clinton enjoyed an Electoral College margin of more than 200 votes over then-President George H.W. Bush in the 1992 presidential race. But some political scientists still argue that the third-party candidacy of Ross Perot that year assured the former Arkansas governor’s victory—and the White House. Perot attracted nearly 20 million popular votes or

18.9 percent of the total. In fact, following Bill Clinton’s selection as the Democratic Party’s standard-bearer in the Spring of 1992, polls showed Perot in the lead ahead of Bush and Clinton.

After the defeat of Iraq in the first Gulf War (“Desert Storm”), Bush’s greatest perceived strength was in foreign affairs. But the end of the Cold War in 1989 and subsequent fall of the Soviet Union turned most voters’ attention to domestic problems. Bush had alienated much of his conservative base when he broke his 1988 pledge by raising taxes (“Read My Lips, No New Taxes”). Meanwhile, the economy was also in the midst of another recession, which became a central issue in his losing campaign. Bill Clinton, who won his second term four years later, took office promising a “new covenant” with America.

1993

FIRST WORLD TRADE CENTER BOMBING BY ISLAMIC TERRORISTS

“A terrorist bomb, or whatever it was, was planted in exactly the right place to knock everything out.”

– Elmer Chapman
retired New York City
Deputy Fire Chief
February 27, 1993

Although Americans became dimly aware of Islamic jihadism following the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon that killed 241 U.S. service members, it was the truck bomb detonated below the North Tower of the World Trade Center a decade afterwards that drove the terrorist threat into the national consciousness—a precursor of the much greater catastrophe at the same site on 9/11. Six people

died that fateful day in February, 1993, and over 1,000 were injured, most during the evacuation that followed the blast.

All of the co-conspirators including Ramzi Yousef, the Pakistani who planned the attack, were eventually convicted. Yousef was the nephew of Kahlid Sheikh Mohammad, considered the principal architect of 9/11. Stemming from the WTC investigation, Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, a controversial, blind Muslim cleric, was also later convicted for seditious conspiracy activities.

1994

NEWT GINGRICH'S REPUBLICAN "CONTRACT WITH AMERICA"

"There is no comparable Congressional document [“Contract With America”] in our 200-year history.”

– House Speaker
Newt Gingrich
December 26, 1994

The “Contract With America,” first proposed by Republican House Minority Whip Newt Gingrich six weeks before the 1994 mid-term election season, was the rallying platform that enabled the GOP to regain the House that year. Many of its specific policy ideas originated at the conservative Heritage Foundation, but many also seemed to come directly from President Reagan’s 1985 State of the Union Address.

They included shrinking the size of government, cutting taxes, greater entrepreneurial activity, tort and welfare reform. The “Contract” was significant because it re-energized the party and laid the groundwork for George W. Bush’s victory at the polls in 2000 and the current resurgence of conservative ideology. The document contained eight reforms and ten specific bills the Republicans promised to bring up for floor debate and votes.

In November of 1994, the GOP, under the “Contract” banner, won a majority of seats in both the House and Senate for the first time in four decades. When the 104th Congress met in January, Newt Gingrich was elected by his loyal colleagues to the powerful post of Speaker of the House, becoming the first Republican Speaker of the House of Representatives in 40 years.

1995

OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

“You can’t handle the truth because the truth is I blew up the Murrah Building, and isn’t it kind of scary that one man could wreak this kind of hell?”

– Timothy McVeigh
May 16, 1995

There have been many lethal acts of domestic terrorism in the 235-year history of the United States—the dynamiting of the Los Angeles Times building in 1910, the J.P. Morgan Wall Street bombing in 1920, the anti-Vietnam violence of the Weather Underground in the 1970s. No such destructive episode, however, triggered greater anger and shock than the 1995 bombing on April 19 of the Alfred P. Murrah

Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City.

That single, horrific event, conceived and implemented by Timothy McVeigh and his ally, Terry Nichols, who assembled the bomb material, took the lives of 168 people including 19 children and injured nearly 700. The blast, which registered a 3.0 on the Richter scale, was the product of a 4,800 lb. bomb delivered by Ryder truck to the front of the Murrah Building. It destroyed or damaged 324 other buildings within a 16-block radius and destroyed or burned 86 automobiles. The bomb was estimated to have caused at least \$622 million worth of damages.

The official FBI investigation of the event became the largest criminal investigation case in American history. McVeigh, apprehended less than two hours after the bombing, was executed for his crime on June 11, 2001. He said he was motivated by resentment over the Waco/David Koresh siege in 1993 and the Ruby Ridge incident the year earlier. Nichols was sentenced to life in prison.

1996

THE STOCK MARKET ROLLER COASTER

“But how do we know when irrational exuberance has unduly escalated asset values, which then become subject to unexpected and prolonged contractions as they have in Japan over the past decade?”

– Chairman
Alan Greenspan
December 5, 1996

When Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan made his celebrated observation about sky-rocketing stock market prices in a speech before the American Enterprise Institute, he was talking about the dot-com bubble. Greenspan was somewhat prescient since his remarks set off immediate declines in markets worldwide, but the Dow Jones Industrial Average soon recovered, reaching a high of 8,259 on August 6 of the next year. Then—some 11 weeks later—came the mini-crash of October 27, unleashed by an economic crisis in

Asia. By the end of that day, the Dow had lost 554.26 points. The year signaled a fundamental change from an investor to a trader-dominated equity marketplace.

However, few heeded the warning in Greenspan’s well-remembered phrase. In the new Millennium, the equity markets began their historic rise driven by a boom in commodities plus credit and housing bubbles. That exuberance reached its apogee on October 9, 2007 when the Dow hit a record high of 14,164.53. It came crashing down again to a low of 6440.08 on March 9, 2009, as the Great Recession battered the nation’s economy, before starting another impressive rebound, reaching over 12,200 in mid-February 2011.

1997

TONY BLAIR AND THE LABOR PARTY TAKE POWER IN THE U.K.

***“She was the People’s
Princess and that is how
she will stay; how she will
remain in our hearts and
our memories forever.”***

– U.K. Prime Minister
Tony Blair,
Tribute to
Princess Diana
August 31, 1997

In May 1997, following decades of Tory dominance under Margaret Thatcher and later John Major, the “New Labor” Party, headed by 43-year old Tony Blair, returned to power in the U.K., racking up a landslide victory. It wasn’t long after Blair took office that the death of Princess Diana in an automobile accident shocked the world and led to his memorable eulogy about the much-admired Princess of Wales.

Blair moved his party strongly to the center from its traditional left-wing position much as his friend, Bill Clinton, had done in the U.S.—a policy he called “the third way.” A highlight of Blair’s tenure was the “Good Friday Agreement” that ended hostilities in Northern Ireland.

It was, however, his support of George W. Bush and the Iraq War that, ultimately, eroded the Prime Minister’s popularity at home. In June of 2007, he resigned and was succeeded by longtime colleague, Gordon Brown. In 2010, after 13 years out of office, the Conservative Party, led by David Cameron, took over at 10 Downing Street in a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats.

THE IMPEACHMENT OF PRESIDENT CLINTON

“The managers on the part of the House of Representatives are here and present, and ready to present the Articles of Impeachment, which have been preferred by the House of Representatives against William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States.”

– U.S. Representative
Henry Hyde
December 19, 1998

In the wake of a much-publicized dalliance with White House intern Monica Lewinsky and the Paula Jones lawsuit, Bill Clinton, the 42nd President of the U.S., was impeached—i.e., indicted—by the House of Representatives in late December of the year. He was accused of malfeasance in office, perjury before a Grand Jury, and obstruction of justice. Some two months later, the Senate acquitted him. It was the second impeachment (for “high crimes and misdemeanors”) of a U.S. president in the nation’s history. Lincoln’s martyred successor, Andrew Johnson, was impeached in 1868 and also acquitted.

The entire seamy episode dominated the nation’s headlines for months. The actual trial proceedings, with Chief Justice William Rehnquist presiding, were largely partisan. The perjury charge failed with 45 senators (all Republicans) voting “guilty” and 55 senators (45 Democrats and 10 Republicans) voting “not guilty.” The obstruction of justice failed with 50 senators (all Republicans) voting “guilty” and 50 senators (45 Democrats and 5 Republicans) voting “not guilty.” In both cases, a two-thirds majority of 67 senators would have been required for conviction.

Months later, Clinton did acknowledge that the relationship with Lewinsky was “wrong” and “not appropriate.”

1999

Y2K SCARE FIZZLES

“We realize how important this Y2K transition is to our customers and to I.B.M.”

– David Cassano, General
Manager of I.B.M.’s
“Year 2000” program
December 31, 1999

Even as early as April 29, 1998, the thoughtful, highly-respected U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York warned: “It is becoming apparent to all of us that a once seemingly innocuous computer glitch, relating to how computers recognize dates, could wreak worldwide havoc.” January 1, 2000 between 12:00 and 12:01 a.m. arrived—and

NOTHING happened! That minute was arguably the most anti-climactic the world has ever seen. For months, even years, there was widespread fear that computers would crash, causing massive blackouts in an “end of life as we know it” scenario, all because of a software decision made in the 40’s and 50’s.

To save precious storage space, computer engineers designed computers to record the year in two digits (99), not four (1999). Since computers are critical for nearly all major industries, including utilities, banking, manufacturing, telecommunications, and airlines, worldwide glitches could potentially cause catastrophic failures around the globe. Forewarned, companies spent billions on Y2K preparations.

But it was never determined whether the absence of mass computer breakdowns resulted from preparations and expenditures by millions everywhere, or because the problem had been vastly over-hyped. Either way, the world moved along uninterrupted on January 1, 2000.

2000

SUPREME COURT VOTE DECIDES PRESIDENTIAL RACE

“Now, the U.S. Supreme Court has spoken. Let there be no doubt, while I strongly disagree with the Court’s decision, I accept it.... And tonight, for the sake of our unity of the people and the strength of our democracy, I offer my concession.”

– Vice President
Al Gore
December 13, 2000

The fiercely-contested, drawn-out 2000 presidential race remained undecided until December 13 of that year when the U.S. Supreme Court (Bush v. Gore) found the Florida Supreme Court’s method of counting ballots a violation of the 14th Amendment’s equal protection clause. Many on the left also blamed third-party candidate Ralph Nader, who attracted considerable votes (as did Pat Buchanan) in the Sunshine State, for Gore’s Florida loss.

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that no alternative vote-counting method could be established within the time limits set by Florida, precluding a

statewide recount. That gave the state’s 25 Electoral College votes to George W. Bush—and the presidency. The new President eked out a narrow 291-288 victory. (One elector abstained from voting.)

Vice President Al Gore and his running mate, Joe Lieberman, had nearly 550,000 more popular votes than Bush/Cheney. It was the closest Electoral College result since 1876 when Rutherford B. Hayes defeated Samuel J. Tilden by a single electoral vote to become the nation’s 18th president. Hayes, too, lost the popular vote. The 2000 election was, in fact, the fourth U.S. presidential race in which the electoral vote did not reflect the popular vote.

2001

TERRORISTS ATTACK AMERICA, SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

“We Are All Americans”

– Banner Headline
Le Monde, Paris, France
Sept. 12, 2001

“Everything has changed” was the universal mantra heard across this nation in the wake of 9/11, which took the lives of nearly 3,000 Americans at the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, and Shanksville,

PA. It was the first time in U.S. history that the mainland was attacked so devastatingly. A traumatized nation was united as never before rallying behind the President. Support came from everywhere around the globe—even Iran. To his credit, President Bush made a strong plea for tolerance towards Muslims and cited Islam as “a religion of peace.”

The 19 al-Qaeda perpetrators, who hijacked four passenger aircraft that sunny, late summer morning in 2001, were almost all Saudis and well-educated. Many had been residing in the U.S. for some time. The attack, master-minded by Osama bin Laden from his base in Afghanistan, came as a thunderbolt to most Americans, who were scarcely aware, if at all, of the existence of a terrorist organization like al-Qaeda.

Less than a month later, on October 7, the U.S. military, along with the British, launched “Operation Enduring Freedom” in Afghanistan in response to the September 11 attack—a conflict now in its 11th year, making it the longest war in American history. President Obama has now proposed that all American troops be withdrawn from Afghanistan by 2014 as pressures mount domestically for an earlier drawdown.

2002

THE YEAR OF CORPORATE SCANDALS

“I want to assure our customers and employees that the company remains viable and committed to a long-term future.”

– WorldCom CEO
John Sidgmore
June 26, 2002

What happened in 2002 unleashed a crisis of confidence about many sectors of the business community. Operating in a minimally regulatory environment, two of the key malefactors back then were the trading giant, Enron, and the telecommunications powerhouse, WorldCom, both of which collapsed. Their leaders were subsequently indicted and imprisoned under the weight of massive accounting and market frauds. Other large firms

beset by scandals at the time included Tyco, Adelphia Communications, and Peregrine Systems.

When WorldCom was toppled, it had over \$35 billion in debt—creditors received pennies on the dollar—not to mention countless millions of shares worth practically nothing. Most tragically, an estimated 30,000 WorldCom employees lost their jobs. Earlier, beleaguered Enron declared bankruptcy in December 2001—the largest business failure in U.S. history until WorldCom imploded in July of 2002. Enron’s collapse also led to the demise in 2002 of the huge accounting firm, Arthur Andersen, which played a central role in its many transgressions.

Congress then passed the far-reaching Sarbanes-Oxley Act on July 30, 2002. The bill—later to become controversial—was designed to protect investors by improving the accuracy and reliability of corporate disclosures.

2003

THE INVASION OF IRAQ

“We know that Saddam Hussein is determined to keep his weapons of mass destruction—is determined to make more.”

– Secretary of State
Colin Powell at the U.N.
February 5, 2003

Secretary of State Colin Powell’s strong statement to the United Nations Security Council (which he has since repudiated) played a key role in gaining support for the approaching U.S. invasion of Iraq although the U.N. did not formally approve the move. Nor did Congress actually declare war.

Instead, Congress passed a joint resolution several months earlier (October 16, 2002) authorizing the use of military force against Iraq. The vote in the House was 296-133 and in the Senate 77-23. Nearly all the opposition was on the Democratic side of the aisle. The war (“Shock and Awe”) began on March 20, 2003. Formal hostilities, by agreement with the Iraqi government, officially ended more than seven years later when U.S. combat forces left the country in August of 2010 although some training and security troops remained. The human and financial toll had been great. All U.S. military personnel are scheduled to leave by the end of 2011.

2004

BUSH RE-ELECTED FOR SECOND TERM

“I earned capital in the campaign, political capital, and now I intend to spend it.”

– President
George W. Bush
November 4, 2004

George W. Bush emerged notably confident and self-assured after his victory in the 2004 presidential race. He regarded his re-election as a powerful vote of confidence and spoke frequently of the considerable political capital he had gained as a result. The second-term President was eager to move ahead quickly to privatize Social Security, pass Medicare drug legislation, and prosecute the war in Iraq.

Before November 2, however, Bush was anything but certain about winning another term. The broad economy was still relatively weak and opposition to the Iraq War, then more than a year old, was growing rapidly in many quarters.

Controversial, damaging “Swift Boat” ads, plus perceptions of Democratic nominee Senator John Kerry as remote and elitist, did much to undermine his campaign, which had a very strong anti-war component. As it turned out, the 2004 election, like 2000, was actually decided by a single state. Ohio’s 20 electoral votes gave Bush/Cheney their margin of victory over Kerry/Edwards, 286 to 251. Bush/Cheney also won the popular tally by over two million votes.

2005

THE HURRICANE THAT CHANGED THE FACE OF THE GULF STATES

“If you ever have 20,000 people come to supper, you know what I’m talking about. If it’s easy, it would have been done already.”

– U.S. General
Russel Honoré
September 3, 2005

U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Russel L. Honoré, who directed the federal clean-up after Hurricane Katrina, was understating, if anything, the reality of Katrina. The apocalyptic natural disaster in late August of 2005 cost nearly 1,500 lives in Louisiana alone and decimated a large section of one of America’s most colorful cities as well as many other Gulf Coast communities.

More than five years after the devastating event and the major outlays of reconstruction dollars that followed, its destructive after-effects are still being felt—especially in New Orleans. Indeed, the disaster had major implications for a large segment of the population, the economy, and the politics of the entire United States.

In addition to FEMA’s inept Michael (“Brownie”) Brown and his agency’s slow response to the unfolding tragedy, there was plenty of blame to go around including the Mayor of New Orleans and the Governor of Louisiana, who many believe placed bureaucratic roadblocks in the way of federal efforts to cope with the crisis. Also targeted, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which had failed to build an adequate levee system to hold back the rampaging Mississippi River.

2006

DEMOCRATS REGAIN CONTROL OF CONGRESS

“If you look at it race by race, it was close. The cumulative effect, however, was not close. It was a thumping.”

– President George W. Bush
November 9, 2006

That was the folksy, but accurate colloquialism George W. Bush used to describe the results of the 2006 mid-term elections as the Democrats swept to power, capturing both Houses of Congress by substantial margins and naming California’s Nancy Pelosi the first woman Speaker in U.S. history. The party also won a major-

ity of the gubernatorial and state legislative races that year. 2006 prefigured the Democrats’ even stronger follow-up performance in 2008 and, ironically, the 180-degree reversal two years later when the GOP posted even more seismic Congressional and statewide victories.

Prevailing opinion attributed the Democratic triumph to the negative electorate reaction to Bush’s handling of both Katrina and the war in Iraq, his unsuccessful effort to privatize Social Security, and the culture of corruption and scandals surrounding the Republican Party at the time.

Nonetheless, because of the President’s veto power, the Democrats were unable to pass any major new legislation they initiated. Their committee chairmen did, however, succeed in holding numerous hearings focusing on critical issues they wished to make the public and the media aware of.

2007

THE REVOLUTION IN MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

“This is a day I’ve been looking forward to for 2½ years.... Today, Apple is going to reinvent the phone.”

– Apple CEO Steve Jobs
Macworld Conference &
Expo, January 9, 2007

The iPhone was Apple’s worst-kept secret. In the weeks preceding the January announcement, rumors buzzed like frenzied bees, building to such a climax that Apple CEO Steve Jobs was forced to address the issue. In his keynote speech at Macworld, the first thing Jobs referenced was the iPhone, which he said was five years ahead of the competition.

The iPhone, still in development, was launched a half-a-year later on June 29, 2007.

The iPhone was such a significant development for the company that it changed its name, shortening Apple Computers, Inc. to Apple, Inc., indicating a fundamental shift about how Apple perceived itself. Just as in 1984, when Apple created the revolutionary Macintosh and, in 2001, the iPod, its latest invention began a revolution in mobile telecommunications. Smartphones existed before the iPhone, but Apple made them desirable and user-friendly, enabling smartphones to proliferate in the market at an astounding rate over the next three years.

Hard on the heels of Apple’s smartphone, a rush of other mobile phone-makers entered the field. Carriers continued to build and strengthen their 3G networks, preparing for explosive data demand by planning and starting to build 4G networks. Overseas, many developing countries in Africa and Asia skipped landlines for cellular networks. The CIA World Factbook noted that Uganda was 128th in the world for landlines, but 68th for mobile phones—with 168,500 landlines to 8,555,000 mobile phones, according to 2008 data. Today, the total amount of cell phones in use around the world is estimated in the many billions. Then, in January of 2011, Apple made history again with the introduction of its long-awaited tablet, the iPad, which became the runaway global bestseller despite the flood of competing devices that soon also hit the market.

2008

BARACK OBAMA WINS PRESIDENCY

“If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.”

– Barack Obama
November 4, 2008

Whatever one’s party affiliation, few will argue that the election of the U.S.’s first African-American president 143 years after the end of the Civil War was a truly historic event. Given little chance of victory when he first announced his candidacy in February of 2007, the young U.S. Senator from Illinois staged an unprecedented winning campaign. But, an unexpected victory in the Iowa Democratic Party primary early in 2008 instantly boosted his chances.

Aided by an army of newly energized young people and minority voters, and making particularly effective use of the Internet, Obama locked up the nomination in June after an epic primary battle against Hillary Clinton. A last-minute rush of so-called super delegates, plus wins in Montana and South Dakota in August, pushed him over the threshold of 2,119 votes needed to be nominated by his party.

Five months later, Barack Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States, handily defeating Republican opponent John McCain. The official Electoral College tally gave Obama a landslide margin of 192 votes over McCain—365 for Obama and only 173 for McCain. Analysts attributed McCain’s defeat to many factors—notably, the financial crisis that escalated rapidly in September of that year and the presence of Sarah Palin on the GOP ticket.

2009

TEA PARTY BORN; RECESSION BOTTOMS AS GDP STARTS TO GROW

“The government is promoting bad behavior! This is America! How many of you people want to pay for your neighbor’s mortgage that has an extra bathroom and can’t pay their bills?”

– Rick Santelli
CNBC reporter
February 19, 2009

Although some may assert otherwise, it’s generally believed that the explosive, condemnatory remarks by a cable news journalist made from the floor of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange launched the Tea Party groundswell.

Populism has long been a factor in American political life for well over a century. In 2009, it reappeared spontaneously with the birth of the Tea Party. Its wellspring, underscored in

Town Hall rallies across the nation, was strong opposition that year to the Wall Street and auto bailouts and, most particularly, President Obama’s healthcare plan. The movement picked up steam in the 2010 mid-term elections, posting an impressive series of triumphs under the GOP banner.

The Great Recession that, economists say, began in December 2007 and gained huge momentum in 2008, technically ended in June of 2009, according to an announcement by the National Bureau of Economic Research. That announcement was met with considerable skepticism since high unemployment rates remained static.

By mid-year, unemployment approached 10 percent, home foreclosures were still proliferating, banks were not lending, consumer demand was flat, and assets lost by individuals, companies, institutions, investment funds, etc. had rocketed to uncounted trillions. On a positive side, combined profits of all firms listed on the NYSE hit a new record in 2009 (\$61.4 billion), and the Dow, after plunging to a low in March, took off on another dramatic rise.

2010

GOP WINS U.S. HOUSE, STATE ELECTIONS IN MAJOR SWING

“The American people’s voice was heard at the ballot box. We have real work to do and this is not the time for celebration.”

– John A. Boehner
presumptive new Speaker
of the U.S. House of
Representatives
November 2, 2010

Although the BP oil spill—the largest national disaster in U.S. history—dominated headlines since April of the year, for longer-term significance there is little question that the Republican triumph in the 2010 mid-term elections, plus the emergence of the Tea Party as a force in American electoral politics, stand as defining events of 2010. Several of the latter movement's more extreme candidates

were defeated, but, in exit polling, four out of ten voters expressed support for the Tea Party.

In addition to gaining 63 seats in the House and six in the Senate, where the Democrats narrowly maintained control, the GOP also picked up a series of state legislatures and governorships—particularly in key presidential swing states. A major move by independent voters to the Republican line—reversing 2008—played the defining role in the GOP resurgence. This was also the most expensive mid-term election in the nation's history.

The outcome, most analysts agreed, was an apparent rejection of many of the policies of the Obama Administration, reflecting broad-based voter discontent and concern about the state of the national economy and continued high unemployment rates. Among the defeated were some of the most powerful, well-known, and once-unassailable Democratic members of both houses of Congress as scores of incumbents lost their seats.

2011

THE DEATH OF OSAMA BIN LADEN

“Tonight, I can report to the American people and the world that the United States has conducted an operation that killed Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda, and a terrorist who was responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent men, women and children.”

– President Barack Obama
May 1, 2011

The sweeping, global implications of the death of Osama bin Laden still remain difficult to assess fully, although nearly six months have passed since that fateful day. The small team of U.S. Navy SEALs that accomplished the deed in Pakistan, where bin Laden had his secret compound, was hailed across the nation. The unfolding ramifications were profound. Certainly, without its charismatic leader, al-Qaeda suffered a powerful blow as the historic Arab Spring movement has found new impetus. Here at home, the push to accelerate withdrawal of U.S.

troops from Afghanistan has also gained momentum—both in Congress (on both sides of the aisle) and in public polling.

2012

TRAGEDY AT SANDY HOOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

“As a country, we have been through this too many times. Whether it is an elementary school in Newtown, or a shopping mall in Oregon, or a temple in Wisconsin, or a movie theater in Aurora, or a street corner in Chicago, these neighborhoods are our neighborhoods and these children are our children. And we’re going to have to come together and take meaningful action to prevent more tragedies like this, regardless of the politics.”

– President Barack Obama
December 14, 2012

In a horrifying mass shooting that was among the deadliest in U.S. history, 20-year-old Adam Lanza entered Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., and shot to death 20 children between 6 and 7 years old, along with six staff members. Lanza, who killed his mother before driving to the school, committed suicide as police were arriving. There were countless questions about his mental state and why he chose the school, but the mass killings revived the debate about gun control in our country and a culture saturated in violence.

2013

POPE FRANCIS IS ELECTED

“Please, I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of good will: let us be ‘protectors’ of creation, protectors of God’s plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.”

– Pope Francis
March 19, 2013

Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina was elected the 266th pope, and took the name Francis in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, a decision that would define the theme of his pontificate and point to the importance of mercy, compassion, simplicity, humility and concern for the poor. Francis became the first Jesuit ever to be elected pope. In addition, he was the first pope from the Americas, and the first from the Southern Hemisphere.

2014

THE U.S. RE-ESTABLISHES DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH CUBA

“In the most significant change in our policy in more than fifty years, we will end an outdated approach that, for decades, has failed to advance our interests, and instead we will begin to normalize relations between our two countries. Through these changes, we intend to create more opportunities for the American and Cuban people, and begin a new chapter among the nations of the Americas.”

– President Barack Obama
December 17, 2014

Ending more than a half-century of hostilities, President Obama announced that the United States would re-establish diplomatic relations with Cuba, resolving friction between the two countries that had endured since the Cold War. The decision was made after 18 months of secret negotiations and the release by Cuba of Alan Gross, a U.S. contractor who had been held in a Cuban prison for five years. The U.S. policy on Cuba had long been a cause for contention in much of Latin America. Cuban President Raul Castro said his country was willing to enter a dialogue on the “profound differences” between Cuba and the U.S.

2015

THE LEGALIZATION OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

“We’re the first country in the world to enshrine marriage equality in our constitution and do so by popular mandate. That makes us a beacon, a light to the rest of the world of liberty and equality. It’s a very proud day to be Irish.”

– Leo Varadkar
Ireland’s health minister,
who came out as gay
during the campaign.
May 23, 2015

Despite fervent opposition from the clergy, the Republic of Ireland became the first country to vote to legalize same-sex marriage after voters overwhelmingly approved the measure to change the nation’s constitution. More than 60 percent of Irish voters cast ballots, and 62 percent of them voted their approval. Ireland had not decriminalized homosexuality until the 1990s. Civil partnerships were introduced in 2010; however, champions for gay marriage argued they did not provide the protections and recognition that marriage does.

2016

THE UNITED KINGDOM VOTES TO LEAVE THE EUROPEAN UNION

“I was absolutely clear about my belief that Britain is stronger, safer and better off inside the European Union. But the British people have made a very clear decision to take a different path, and as such I think the country requires fresh leadership to take it in this direction.”

– Prime Minister
David Cameron
June 24, 2016

In a stunning referendum after a bitter political debate, the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. The record high turnout and decisive margin—52 percent to 48 percent—left no doubt as to what voters wanted—dissolving the U.K.’s 43-year membership in the European community. The decision had enormous repercussions, including the resignation of Prime Minister David Cameron and a sense of ill ease across Europe, along with uncertainty about the future of the U.K. itself, since Scotland and Northern Ireland had voted to remain in the union.

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