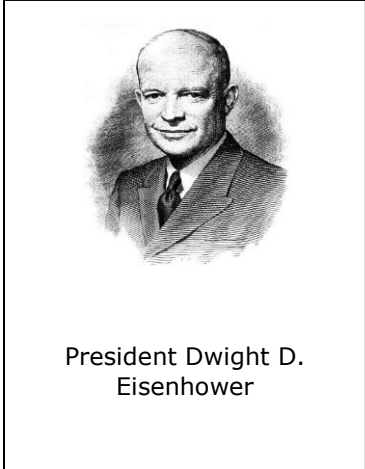


Eighty-Third Congress

Jan. 3, 1953-Dec. 2, 1954

First Administration of Dwight D. ("Ike") Eisenhower

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Historical Background

In his first State of the Union Message on February 2, 1953, President Eisenhower stated that the Administration had begun to define a new foreign policy to address the pressures of Communist aggression, make the free world secure, and foster the advent of economic and political unity in Western Europe. He took special note of the War in Korea, stating that he was issuing instructions that the Seventh Fleet should no longer take action to prevent Formosa from being used as a base of operations against the Chinese Communist mainland.

President Eisenhower also stated that the immigration policy of the United States "does in fact discriminate," and asked Congress to enact a statute that would "guard our legitimate national interests and be faithful to our basic ideas of freedom and fairness to all." Although no immediate action was taken to revise the Nation's immigration policy, in July Congress did approve an act authorizing the admittance of 209,000 refugees.

On July 27, 1953, just six months after taking office, the President fulfilled his campaign pledge to bring the Korean War to an end. Three days later, Congress satisfied its growing distrust of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and a desire to help small businesses by ordering the liquidation of the RFC and providing for the establishment of a new lending agency, the Small Business Administration. In early August, a Farm Credit Board was authorized with the object of increasing farmers' participation in the ownership and control of the Federal Farm Credit System.

During 1953 legislation was also passed giving the States title to the oil-rich coastal lands previously claimed by the Federal Government, authorizing the admission of more than 200,000 refugees not provided for by regular quotas,

House	Senate
Majority Party: Republican (221 seats)	Majority Party: Republican (48 seats)*
Minority Party: Democrat (213 seats)	Minority Party: Democrat (47 seats)
Other Parties: Independent (1 seat)	Other Parties: Independent (1 seat)
Speaker of the House: Joseph W. Martin, Jr.	Majority Leader: Robert A. Taft; William F. Knowland**
<p><i>*Note that party division in the closely divided Senate shifted repeatedly during the 83rd Congress. Nine Senators died and one resigned, shifting the party division each time</i></p> <p><i>** Robert A. Taft died on July 31, 1953; William F. Knowland was elected Republican leader on Aug. 4, 1953</i></p>	

and permitting the President to carry out a governmental reorganization plan creating a new Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

In May 1954, more than half a century after the idea was first seriously proposed, Congress authorized the U.S. Government to cooperate with Canada in constructing the St. Lawrence Seaway, a deep-water navigation channel in the St. Lawrence River, making it possible for relatively large ships to sail directly from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes. Enactment of the Atomic Energy Act of August 1954 terminated the Federal monopoly of atomic science information and technology, opening the way for private ownership and development.

In addition, Congress broadened the urban redevelopment program started in 1949, revised the Internal Revenue Code, approved the sale of surplus agricultural commodities to non-communist countries, voted a liberalization of Social Security benefits, provided for a review of the customs tariff schedule, reorganized and granted greater autonomy to the local government of the Virgin Islands, and enacted a bill designed to outlaw the Communist Party.

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War or Peace?

Korean War - 38th Parallel

At the beginning of the 83rd Congress, negotiations to end the Korean War had been dragging on since mid-1951, with the issue of prisoner of war repatriation proving to be the toughest obstacle to achieving a cease-fire. A number of prisoners held by UN forces expressed their wish to refuse repatriation to Communist China or North Korea.

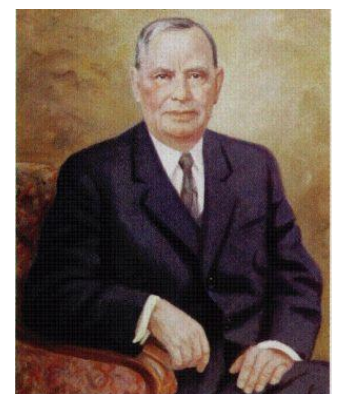
During a trip to Korea in December 1970 as President-elect, Eisenhower became convinced that the U.S. should attempt to pressure the Communists into reaching an agreement by raising the possibility of a renewal of full-scale U.S. military operations. Upon taking office, he informed Communist China through diplomatic channels that the U.S. reserved the right to expand its military effort unless a truce was concluded at an early date. The U.S. then moved atomic weapons into Okinawa, authorized increased military aid to South Korea, and announced that the U.S. 7th Fleet would no longer screen



Senate Majority Leader
Robert A. Taft



Senate Majority Leader
William F. Knowland



Speaker of the House
Joseph W. Martin, Jr.

the Chinese mainland from Chinese Nationalist attacks launched from Formosa (modern day Taiwan).

On March 30, Zhou Enlai, then Foreign Minister of Communist China, announced acceptance of the principal of voluntary repatriation supervised by a neutral nation, but the status of those who refused to return home remained unclear. On May 23, the UN submitted a plan to the negotiators providing for the transfer of non-repatriates to a National Nations Supervisory Commission made up of Indian forces for a 90-120 period in which their governments could attempt to persuade them to repatriate. Following this, the remaining non-repatriates would either be released or their disposition would be referred to the UN General Assembly. On June 4, the Chinese and North Koreans accepted the UN plan with minor changes. Heavy fighting continued in July through the negotiation stalemate. Finally, on July 27, 1953, the UN and Communist negotiating teams initiated the truce agreement in Panmunjom, a village on the border between North Korea and South Korea. With the agreement of the armistice, the Korean Demilitarized Zone was established along the 38th parallel – ending the war where it started.

Considering the armistice agreement as the end of the Korean War, although no official peace treaty was signed, the U.S. commenced Operation Glory from July to November of 1954 to oversee the exchange of each countries dead. Over 4,000 members of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps were exchanged for roughly 13,500 KPA and PVA dead. At the time of the Armistice, the total death toll of the Korean War was over 54,000 Americans and more than 2 million Koreans.

Meanwhile, in the former French Indochina, the long running First Indochina War came to an end at the conclusion of the Geneva Conference on July 21, 1954. The Convention resulted in the official partition of French Indochina into four independent states: Laos, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), the State of Vietnam (South Vietnam), and Cambodia. The division of Vietnam into two states divided at the 17th parallel with the northern territory governed by the Viet Minh rebels and the southern governed by former Emperor Bảo Đại, was intended to be temporary until elections could be held on the issue of governance of a unified Vietnam, no later than July 1956.

And at home, the postwar Red Scare reached its apogee in the Army-McCarthy hearings in the United States Senate March 16-June 17, 1954. The hearings, which were televised live in their entirety from April 22-June 17, were arranged to investigate allegations raised during Senator Joseph McCarthy's investigation of communist infiltration in the Army Signal Corps that Senator McCarthy and his counsel Roy Cohn had sought preferential treatment for Private G. David Schine, a consultant to the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations and a friend of Cohn. The hearing included the now-famous confrontation between Joseph Welch, an attorney for the Army, and Senator McCarthy over the membership of Fred Fisher, a lawyer in Welch's law firm, in National Lawyers Guild, which McCarthy contended was the "legal bulwark of the Communist Party." As McCarthy testified,

Welch broke in, "Senator, may we not drop this? We know he belonged to the Lawyers Guild. Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator, you've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?" Though McCarthy himself was cleared of any wrongdoing in the Schine affair, his counsel Roy Cohn was found to have behaved improperly. More importantly, public approval of Senator McCarthy and his tactics took a mortal hit and, on December 2, 1954, the Senate voted 67-22 to censure McCarthy.

Source:

Niksich, Larry A. [Korean Armistice Negotiations](#). Foreign Affairs Division (CRS), Feb. 20, 1967. 90th Congress, 1st Session, Publication No. F-217. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1967-FAX-0004

Economic Trends and Conditions

At the beginning of 1953, the economy was strong. The annual average unemployment rate for 1952 stood at 2.7 of the total civilian labor force, the lowest annual average since World War II and the outlook for employment was good. Trends indicated that a decreasing portion of total national output was going to defense spending and an increasing portion was supported by civilian demand despite high taxation, indicating that prosperity did not depend upon war. Prices were remarkably stable, as wage and price controls served to curb increases in selected areas where inflationary pressures were greatest. In 1953 government wage and price controls were removed.

At the close of 1953, the economy was prosperous with record output, widely distributed income, very little unemployment and overall price stability. The second half of 1953 did see a slight contraction in business leading to unemployment in some localities. This was due mainly to a decline in spending by businesses for additions to inventory and was aggravated by a large reduction in military expenditures. Retail sales and other categories of spending remained strong.

The year 1954 saw a transition from contraction to recovery. The contraction was relatively mild and brief. The Government cut taxes, the Federal Reserve System eased credit conditions, and the Department of Treasury arranged its financing so as not to compete with mortgages and other long-term issues. Consumers maintained a high rate of spending, business kept capital expenditures at a high rate, builders increased activity, private lenders made credit available on liberal terms, States and localities carried out large construction programs, and export demand remained high. And in a symbolic indication of the health of the U.S. economy, on November 23, 1954, the Dow Jones Industrial Average hit a high of \$382.74, beating the high achieved just before the crash of 1929, effectively winning back all the ground lost on that day and during the economic turmoil that followed.

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Terry v. Adams, holding that white-only pre-elections were discriminatory and unconstitutional, 345 U.S. 461 (1953)

Berman v. Parker, holding that private property could be taken for public purpose with just compensation, upholding the right to take private property to carry out the Federal slum clearance and urban renewal program which sought to address problem of urban blight, 348 U.S. 26 (1954)

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, holding unconstitutional State laws establishing separate schools for white and black students and ruling that the establishment of separate but equal schools violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

Bolling v. Sharpe, holding that school segregation is unconstitutional and in violation of the due process clause, 347 U.S. 497 (1954)

Sources:

Costello, George A. and Johnny H. Killian. [*Constitution of the United States of America, Analysis and Interpretation*](#). Senate, Jan. 1, 1996. 103rd Congress, 1st Session, S. Doc. 103-6. ProQuest Congressional, 14152 S.doc.6

1953 Events

- **Jan. 7:** [President Truman announces American development of the Hydrogen Bomb](#)
- **Jan. 22:** Arthur Miller's 'Crucible' premieres in New York City
- **Feb. 11:** [President Eisenhower refuses clemency appeal for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg](#)
- **Mar. 5:** [Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin dies after collapsing from a stroke four days earlier](#)
- **Mar. 14:** Nikita Khrushchev named First Secretary of Soviet Communist Party
- **Apr. 24:** Winston Churchill is knighted by Queen Elizabeth II

- **Apr. 25:** Francis Crick and James D. Watson publish their findings on the chemical structure of DNA-molecule (double-helix polymer)
- **May 29:** [Edmund Hillary \(NZ\) and Tenzing Norgay \(Nepal\) are the first to reach the summit of Mount Everest](#)
- **June 2:** [Queen Elizabeth II is coronated at Westminster Abbey](#)
- **June 18:** Egypt declared a republic with General Muhammad Naguib as President
- **June 19:** [U.S. communists Ethel and Julius Rosenberg are executed following conviction for conspiracy to commit espionage during time of war](#)
- **July 7:** Che Guevara sets out on a trip through Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador
- **July 26:** Fidel Castro leads a failed attack on the Moncada Barracks, intended to spark a revolution in Cuba; he is arrested on Aug. 1st and sentenced to 15 years in jail
- **July 27:** *Korean War* - [Armistice agreement signed in Panmunjon, ending Korean War where it started at the 38th parallel](#)
- **Aug. 12:** [RDS-6, the first Soviet test of a hydrogen bomb takes place](#)
- **Aug. 15-19:** *Iranian coup d'état* - [Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh is overthrown in favor of monarchical \(Shah\) rule Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, orchestrated by the United Kingdom \(Operation Boot\) and the United States \(TPAJAX Project or Operation Ajax\) to gain control of Iran's oil exports](#)
- **Sept. 28:** [First in series of hearings held by Senator Joseph McCarthy investigating alleged communist infiltration in the U.S. Army](#)
- **Oct. 1:** [Mutual Defense Treaty between the U.S. and South Korea signed](#)
- **Dec. 8:** President Eisenhower addresses the UN on peaceful uses of atomic power

1954 Events

- **Jan. 21:** [USS Nautilus nuclear-powered submarine launched](#)
- **Feb. 2** President Eisenhower reports on detonation of 1st H-Bomb
- **Feb. 10:** President Eisenhower warns against U.S. intervention in Vietnam
- **Feb. 23:** [1st mass inoculation against polio with Salk vaccine occurs at an elementary school in Pittsburgh](#)
- **Mar. 1:** US nuclear test at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands produces the most powerful explosion then known to mankind
- **Mar. 4:** [President Eisenhower Criticizes McCarthy for his approach to rooting out communists in the federal Government](#)
- **Mar. 13 - May 7:** *First Indochina War* - [Viet Minh General Giap opens assault on Dien Bien Phu](#)
- **Apr. - June:** *Red Scare* - [Army-McCarthy hearings begin in the Senate on accusations of communism and espionage in the Army; the hearings are broadcast on national T.V.](#)
- **Apr. 1:** [US Air Force Academy established](#)

- **Apr. 7:** President Dwight D. Eisenhower in news conference is first to voice fear of a "domino-effect" of communism in Indochina
- **May 7:** *First Indochina War* - [French surrender to the Viet Minh following heavy French defeat nearly two-month battle of Dien Bien Phu](#)
- **May 17:** [Brown v. Board of Education](#) decided by the U.S. Supreme Court. In this landmark school desegregation case, the court ruled, in a unanimous decision, that "in the field of public education, the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."
- **June 9:** *Red Scare* - [Joseph Welch asks US Senator Joseph McCarthy "Have you no sense of decency, sir?" during Senate-Army hearings](#)
- **June 14:** [President Eisenhower signs order adding words "under God" to the Pledge](#)
- **June 22:** [Congress passes the Revised Organic Act for the Virgin Islands](#)
- **July 5:** BBC broadcasts its first television new bulletin
- **July 12:** [President Eisenhower put forward a plan for an interstate highway system](#)
- **July 21:** *First Indochina War* - [peace accords are agreed to at the Geneva Conference of 1954, ending the conflict and dividing Vietnam into communist controlled North and the State of Vietnam in the South, divided at the 17th Parallel](#)
- **July 29:** J.R.R. Tolkien's "Fellowship of the Ring" is published in London
- **Aug. 24:** *Red Scare* - [Communist Party is outlawed in the U.S. following the passage of the Communist Control Act of 1954](#)
- **Sept. 17:** "Lord of the Flies" by William Golding is published
- **Oct 10:** *First Indochina War* - Ho Chi Minh enters Hanoi after withdrawal of French troops
- **Oct. 23:** [Britain, France and USSR agree to end the occupation of Germany](#)
- **Oct. 24:** [President Eisenhower pledged the United States support to South Vietnam, sending \\$100 million in aid to the anti-communist government lead by Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem](#)
- **Oct. 26:** Muslim Brotherhood attempts to assassinate Gamal Abdel Nasser leading to the imprisonment and crack down on its members
- **Nov. 12:** Ellis Island closes
- **Nov. 23:** The Dow Jones Industrial Average closes above the peak it reached just before the 1929 crash for the first time
- **Nov. 27:** *Red Scare* - *Alger Hiss Case* - Alger Hiss is released from prison after having served 44 months for perjury
- **Dec. 2:** *Red Scare* - Senate votes 67-22 to condemn Senator Joseph McCarthy for conduct contrary to the traditions of the Senate
- **Dec. 24:** [Laos gains independence from France](#)
- **Dec. 24:** [Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty signed between Taiwan \(ROC\) and the US securing the island of Taiwan from Mainland China](#)

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Committee on Foreign Affairs. House. [Arab Refugees and other Problems in the Near East. Report of Special Study Mission to the Near East \[...\].](#) GPO, Feb. 8, 1954. 83rd Congress, 2nd Session, H0034 (Y4.F76/1:Ar1). ProQuest Congressional, CMP-1954-FOA-0002

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["United States Airpower."](#) Congressional Record, 83rd Congress, 2nd Session (Aug. 17, 1954) Vol. 100, pp. 14894-14895. ProQuest Congressional, CR-1954-0817

Major Acts

Submerged Lands ("Tidelands") Act. Confirmed and established that the States owned the submerged lands in the sea off their borders and the mineral resources of such lands. Also confirmed the jurisdiction and control of the Federal Government over the natural resources of the seabed beyond the submerged lands as far as the edge of the continental shelf (in some areas extending as much as 150 miles) which were called the Outer

Continental Shelf Lands. Approved May 22, 1953. ([67 Stat. 29, Chap. 65; PL83-31](#))

Small Business Act of 1953. Dissolved the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and established a successor organization, the Small Business Administration. Authorized an appropriation of \$275 million for a revolving fund, of which \$150 million was for loans to firms unable to get credit on reasonable terms elsewhere, another \$100 million to finance procurement contracts, and \$25 million for disaster loans. Each borrower was limited to \$150,000, with a 10-year maturity date. Approved July 30, 1953. ([67 Stat. 230, Chap. 282; PL83-163](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Farm Credit Act of 1953. Removed the Farm Credit Administration from the Agriculture Department and made it an independent agency, to be governed by a 13-member Farm Credit Board supervising the Farm Credit System. Twelve members were to be appointed by the President and one by the Secretary of Agriculture. Approved Aug. 6, 1953. ([67 Stat. 390, Chap. 335; PL83-202](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Refugee Relief Act of 1953. Authorized the admission to the United States of 209,000 refugees not provided for by the regular quotas. Like the Displaced Persons Act of 1948, this law required the assistance from U.S. citizens in finding jobs and housing for those admitted. Applicants were also required to obtain certificates guaranteeing that they would be readmitted to the countries where their visas were issued, in case they were denied entry into the United States or deported. Approved Aug. 7, 1953. ([67 Stat. 400, Chap. 336; PL83-203](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act. Provided for United States jurisdiction over the submerged lands of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands, and authorized the leasing of such lands by the Secretary of the Interior. Approved Aug. 7, 1953. ([67 Stat. 462; PL83-212](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954. Provided the sale of surplus U.S. agricultural commodities to friendly foreign nations. Approved July 10, 1954. ([68 Stat. 454, Chap. 469; PL83-480](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Revised Organic Act of the Virgin Islands. Reorganized the local government of the Virgin Islands providing for a governor appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate, a single island legislature, a central administration, and a judicial system headed by a judge appointed by the President. Also authorized the territorial government to issue up to \$10 million in revenue bonds. Under the act, laws could be passed by two-thirds of the legislature over the governor a veto, but were subject to final approval by the President. Also provided that excise taxes on all products from the Virgin Islands were to be returned to the territorial government. Approved July 22, 1954. ([68 Stat. 497, Chap. 558; PL83-517](#))

Housing Act of 1954. Authorized the construction of 35,000 new public housing units in 1955 to serve families displaced by urban redevelopment,

slum clearance, and urban redevelopment. Increased the amount of the maximum mortgage on both sale and rental housing. Lowered the down payments, and lengthened amortization periods. Also included provisions to curb future abuses under FHA operations as a result of disclosures of irregularities in the administration of the FHA home-loan program. Approved Aug. 2, 1954. ([68 Stat. 590, Chap. 649; PL83-560](#))

Internal Revenue Code of 1954. Granted \$3.363 billion in tax relief for individuals and business firms. Reduced taxes on dividend income received by individual stockholders, and specified deductions allowable on items such as retirement income, child-care costs, medical expenses, dependents, charitable contributions, depreciation, non-operating losses, and research costs. Approved Aug. 16, 1954. ([68 Stat. 730; PL83-591](#)) ([Regulatory History](#)) Certain provisions of this Act were subsequently held unconstitutional in *Marchetti v. United States*, 390 U.S. 39 (1968), *Grosso v. United States*, 390 U.S. 62 (1968), *Leary v. United States*, 395 U.S. 6 (1969), and *Haynes v. United States*, 390 U.S.85 (1968).

Communist Control Act of 1954. Outlawed the Communist party in the United States and prohibited Communists and Communist-front organizations and forbade members of Communist organizations from serving in certain representative capacities. Approved Aug. 24, 1954. ([68 Stat. 775, Chap. 886; PL83-637](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Atomic Energy Act of 1954. Amended the Atomic Energy of 1949 to promote private ownership and development of atomic power and to terminate a Federal monopoly on atomic science and technology. Authorized American cooperation with friendly nations in development of peaceful uses of atomic power. Approved Aug. 30, 1954. ([68 Stat. 919, Chap. 1073; PL83-703](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Social Security Amendments of 1954. Revised sections of the Social Security Act to the advantage of certain Federal employees, domestic servants, Americans employed by foreign governments, ministers, policemen, firemen, and National Guard members, and increased benefits payable to recipients in general. Approved Sept. 1, 1954. ([68 Stat. 1052, Chap. 1206; PL83-761](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Customs Simplification Act of 1954. Authorized an extensive, long term study of tariff classification and schedules in order to improve and simplify the process of customs administration. It also amended the Anti-Dumping Act of 1921, transferring authority over cases of injury caused by dumping from the Department of Treasury to the Tariff Commission. Approved Sept.1, 1954. ([68 Stat. 1136, Chap. 1213; PL83-768](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Reorganization Plan which established the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Included as part of the new Department were the Social Security Administration, the Office of Education, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. Approved Apr. 11, 1953. ([67 Stat. 631](#))

St. Lawrence Seaway Act of 1954. Established, in conjunction with the government of Canada, the St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation, for the purpose of constructing the St. Lawrence Seaway at the mutual expense and for the mutual use of and control by Canada and the United States. Approved May 13, 1954. ([68 Stat. 92, Chap. 201; PL83-358](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Source:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980](#). Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

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