
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

MEMORIAL COMMISSION

THE NATIONAL MEMORIALIZATION OF DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Dwight D. Eisenhower (October 14, 1890 - March 28, 1969) served as the 34th President of the United States and ranks as one of the preeminent figures in the global history of the twentieth century. Eisenhower was a central leader in the victorious resolution of World War II but his lasting significance in history lies in his deep commitment to freedom, the Constitution, democracy, economic progress and international peace.

An officer in World War I, Eisenhower's unusual abilities led to accelerated promotions at the outset of World War II and his selection in December 1943 as Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. General George C. Marshall endorsed him for this position and President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed him. He commanded the largest and most complex amphibious assault in world history on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He tirelessly worked to achieve cooperation among the allied nations and commanders and became one of the most beloved military leaders in American history and most respected international figures of that time.

Toward the end of World War II, Eisenhower was nominated by President Roosevelt and approved by Congress for the rank of five-star General. Upon retiring from military service, he served as President of Columbia University from October 1948 to January 1951. While in that position, President Truman regularly sought his advice and counsel and then recalled him to active duty, appointing him in December 1950 as the first commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) military forces in Europe.

Eisenhower's many contributions to our nation's security included his oversight of the peacetime demobilization of American military forces, his guidance in creating the armed forces needed to resist Communist aggression, and his many efforts to promote the unification of the armed forces.

As Eisenhower's two-term presidency began, American democratic values and national security were threatened by powerful adversaries in Europe and Asia. Passionately devoted to national security through alliances with other nations, President Eisenhower insisted on acquiring the modern military forces needed to contain the Soviet Union and other Communist nations without weakening America's capitalist economy and trading partners. Through crises and controversies, he kept the nation focused on the long-term strategy that would, he was certain, eventually win the Cold War. He understood the political economy of warfare better than most of his contemporaries and realized that excessive military expenditures could undermine the nation and its allies. Knowing that nuclear war was un-winnable and a threat to civilization, President Eisenhower promoted the peaceful uses of atomic energy, while skillfully and willingly deploying the most advanced electronic and photographic technologies to ensure American security. Simultaneously, he sustained strategic nuclear deterrence. President Eisenhower



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inaugurated the national security policies that guided the nation for the next three decades, leading to the peaceful end of the Cold War in 1989.

While advancing these strategic Cold War measures, President Eisenhower assiduously pursued balanced budgets, fiscal responsibility, and those public works that were essential to the nation and its citizens. He introduced lasting innovations to the institution of the presidency, creating the first White House chief of staff, the first congressional relations office, the first presidential assistant for national security affairs and the first presidential science advisor. He dramatically improved the transportation infrastructure of the country with construction of the interstate highway system and the St. Lawrence Seaway. During his presidency, the United States added two stars to its flag, symbolizing the addition of the important new states of Alaska (January 3, 1959) and Hawaii (August 21, 1959).

To address the increasing complexity of the social needs of the American people, President Eisenhower created the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1953, improved Social Security by increasing benefits and placing an additional ten million Americans in the Social Security system, and dispensed free polio vaccines. In 1957, he led Congress to enact the first civil rights legislation since Reconstruction.

Like Washington, Eisenhower became president and commander in chief after leading his countrymen and their allies to military victory and then served through perilous times. Eisenhower's extraordinary accomplishments as president and military leader can be followed through the public record and a series of memorable addresses and speeches including—the Guildhall Address (London, 1945), Chance for Peace (Washington, 1953), Atoms for Peace (United Nations, 1953), Open Skies (Geneva Summit, 1955) and his Farewell Address (1961). His preeminent historical and national significance is assured. The challenge in our memorialization of Dwight D. Eisenhower will be to honor in a distinct, unique and enduring manner all of the facets of his extraordinary career of service to this nation.