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John McCain



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For other people named John McCain, see [John McCain \(disambiguation\)](#).

John Sidney McCain III (born August 29, 1936) is an American politician serving as the [senior United States Senator](#) from [Arizona](#), a seat he was first elected to in [1986](#). He was the [Republican](#) nominee for [President of the United States](#) in the [2008 election](#), which he lost to [Barack Obama](#).

McCain graduated from the [United States Naval Academy](#) in 1958 and followed [his father](#) and [grandfather](#)—both [four-star admirals](#)—into the [U.S. Navy](#). He became a [naval aviator](#) and flew [ground-attack aircraft](#) from [aircraft carriers](#). During the [Vietnam War](#), he was almost killed in the [1967 USS *Forrestal* fire](#). While McCain was on a bombing mission over [Hanoi](#) in October 1967, he was shot down, seriously injured, and captured by the [North Vietnamese](#). He was a [prisoner of war](#) until 1973. McCain experienced episodes of [torture](#) and refused an out-of-sequence early [repatriation](#) offer. The wounds that he sustained during war have left him with lifelong physical disabilities. He retired from the Navy as a [captain](#) in 1981 and moved to Arizona, where he entered politics. In 1982, McCain was elected to the [United States House of Representatives](#), where he served two terms. He entered the [U.S. Senate](#) in 1987 and easily won reelection five times, most recently in [2016](#).

While generally adhering to [conservative](#) principles, McCain at times has had a media reputation as a "[maverick](#)" for his willingness to disagree with his party on certain issues. After being investigated and largely exonerated in a political influence scandal of the 1980s as a member of the [Keating Five](#), he made [campaign finance reform](#) one of his signature concerns, which eventually resulted in passage of the [McCain–Feingold Act](#) in 2002. He is also known for his work in the 1990s to restore diplomatic relations with [Vietnam](#), and for his belief that the [Iraq War](#) should have been fought to a successful

John McCain



United States Senator
from [Arizona](#)

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 3, 1987

Serving with [Jeff Flake](#)

Preceded by [Barry Goldwater](#)

Chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 3, 2015

Preceded by [Carl Levin](#)

Chair of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee

In office

January 3, 2005 – January 3, 2007

Preceded by [Ben Nighthorse Campbell](#)

Succeeded by [Byron Dorgan](#)

In office

January 3, 1995 – January 3, 1997

Preceded by [Daniel Inouye](#)

Succeeded by [Ben Nighthorse Campbell](#)

Chair of the Senate Commerce Committee

conclusion. McCain has chaired the [Senate Commerce Committee](#), and he opposed [pork barrel spending](#). He was a member of the bipartisan group known as the [Gang of 14](#) who played a key role in alleviating a crisis over judicial nominations.

McCain entered the race for the Republican nomination for President in [2000](#), but he lost a [heated primary season contest](#) to Governor [George W. Bush](#) of Texas. He secured the [nomination in 2008](#) after coming back from early reversals, but was defeated by [Democratic](#) nominee [Barack Obama](#) in [the general election](#), losing by a [365–173 electoral college margin](#). He subsequently adopted more orthodox conservative stances and attitudes and largely opposed actions of the [Obama administration](#), especially in regard to foreign policy matters. By 2013, however, he had become a key figure in the Senate for negotiating deals on certain issues in an otherwise partisan environment. In 2015, McCain became Chairman of the [Senate Armed Services Committee](#). In July 2017, he was diagnosed with brain cancer; since the diagnosis he has taken a reduced role in the Senate.^[1]

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	In office
	January 3, 2003 – January 3, 2005
Preceded by	Fritz Hollings
Succeeded by	Ted Stevens
	In office
	January 20, 2001 – June 3, 2001
Preceded by	Fritz Hollings
Succeeded by	Fritz Hollings
	In office
	January 3, 1997 – January 3, 2001
Preceded by	Larry Pressler
Succeeded by	Fritz Hollings
Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Arizona's 1st district	
	In office
	January 3, 1983 – January 3, 1987
Preceded by	John Jacob Rhodes
Succeeded by	John Jacob Rhodes III
Personal details	
Born	John Sidney McCain III August 29, 1936 (age 81) Coco Solo , Panama Canal Zone
Political party	Republican
Spouse(s)	Carol Shepp (m. 1965; div. 1980) Cindy Hensley (m. 1980)
Relations	John McCain (Father) Roberta Wright (Mother)
Children	7, notably Meghan and John McCain IV
Education	United States Naval Academy (BS)
Website	Senate website [?]
Military service	
Allegiance	 United States
Service/branch	 United States Navy
Years of service	1958–1981
Rank	 Captain
Battles/wars	Vietnam War (POW)
Awards	Silver Star Medal Bronze Star Medal (3) with Combat "V" Purple Heart Medal Legion of Merit (2) with Combat "V" Distinguished Flying Cross Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (2)

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V · T · E

Early life and military career, 1936–1981

Main article: [Early life and military career of John McCain](#)

Formative years and education

John McCain was born on August 29, 1936, at [Coco Solo Naval Air Station](#) in the [Panama Canal Zone](#), to naval officer [John S. McCain Jr.](#) (1911–1981) and [Roberta \(Wright\) McCain](#) (b. 1912). He has a younger brother named [Joe](#) and an elder sister named [Sandy](#).^[2] At that time, the [Panama Canal](#) was under U.S. control.^[3]

McCain's family tree includes Scots-Irish and English ancestors.^[4] His father and his paternal grandfather, [John S. McCain Sr.](#), both became four-star [United States Navy admirals](#).^[5] The McCain family^[2] followed his father to various naval postings in the United States and the Pacific.^[6]

Altogether, he attended about 20 schools.^[7] In 1951, the family settled in [Northern Virginia](#), and McCain attended [Episcopal High School](#), a private preparatory boarding school in [Alexandria](#).^{[8][9]} He excelled at [wrestling](#) and graduated in 1954.^{[10][11]}

Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, McCain entered the [United States Naval Academy](#) at [Annapolis](#). He was a friend and informal leader there for many of his classmates,^[12] and sometimes stood up for targets of [bullying](#).^[5] He also became a lightweight [boxer](#).^[13] McCain did well in academic subjects that interested him, such as literature and history, but studied only enough to pass subjects that gave him difficulty, such as mathematics.^{[5][14]} He came into conflict with higher-ranking personnel and did not always obey the rules, which contributed to a low [class rank](#) (894 of 899), despite a high [IQ](#).^{[12][15]} McCain graduated in 1958.^[12]

Naval training, first marriage, and Vietnam War assignment

McCain began his [early military career](#) when he was commissioned as an [ensign](#) and started two and a half years of training at [Pensacola](#) to become a naval aviator.^[16] While there, he earned a reputation as a man who partied.^[7] He completed flight school in 1960 and became a naval pilot of [ground-attack aircraft](#); he was assigned to [A-1 Skyraider](#) squadrons^[17] aboard the aircraft carriers [USS *Intrepid*](#) and [USS *Enterprise*](#)^[18] in the [Caribbean](#) and [Mediterranean Seas](#).^[19]

McCain began as a sub-par flier^[19] who was at times careless and reckless;^[20] during the early to mid-1960s, two of his flight missions crashed and a third mission collided with power lines, but he received no major injuries.^[20] His aviation skills improved over time,^[19] and he was seen as a good pilot, albeit one who tended to "push the envelope" in his flying.^[20]

At age 28 on July 3, 1965, McCain married [Carol Shepp](#), who was a model from [Philadelphia](#).^[21] McCain adopted her two young children Douglas and Andrew.^{[18][22]} He and Carol then had a daughter named Sidney.^{[23][24]}

McCain requested a combat assignment,^[25] and was assigned to the aircraft carrier [USS *Forrestal*](#) flying [A-4 Skyhawks](#).^[26] His combat duty began when he was 30 years old in mid-1967, when *Forrestal* was assigned to a bombing campaign, [Operation Rolling Thunder](#), during the [Vietnam War](#).^{[21][27]} Stationed in the [Gulf of Tonkin](#), McCain and his fellow pilots became frustrated by micromanagement from Washington, and he would later write that "In all candor, we thought our civilian commanders were complete idiots who didn't have the least notion of what it took to win the war."^{[27][28]}

On July 29, 1967, McCain was a [lieutenant commander](#) when he was near the epicenter of the [USS *Forrestal* fire](#). He escaped from his burning jet and was trying to help another pilot escape when a bomb exploded;^[29] McCain was struck in the legs and chest by fragments.^[30] The ensuing fire killed 134 sailors and took 24 hours to control.^{[31][32]} With the *Forrestal* out of commission, McCain volunteered for assignment with the [USS *Oriskany*](#), another [aircraft carrier](#) employed in [Operation Rolling Thunder](#).^[33] Once there, he would be awarded the [Navy Commendation Medal](#) and the [Bronze Star Medal](#) for missions flown over North Vietnam.^[34]

Prisoner of war

[McCain's capture and subsequent imprisonment](#) occurred on October 26, 1967. He was flying his 23rd bombing mission over [North Vietnam](#) when his [A-4E Skyhawk](#) was shot down by a missile over [Hanoi](#).^{[35][36]} McCain fractured both arms and a leg when he ejected from the aircraft,^[37] and nearly drowned after he parachuted into [Trúc Bạch Lake](#). Some North Vietnamese pulled him ashore, then others crushed his shoulder with a rifle butt and bayoneted him.^[35] McCain was then transported to Hanoi's main [Hỏa Lò Prison](#), nicknamed the "Hanoi Hilton".^[36]

Although McCain was seriously wounded and injured, his captors refused to treat him. They beat and interrogated him to get information, and he was given medical care only when the North Vietnamese discovered that his father was a high-ranking admiral.^[38] His status as a [prisoner of war](#) (POW) made the front pages of major newspapers.^{[39][40]}

McCain spent six weeks in the hospital, where he received marginal care. He had lost 50 pounds (23 kg), was in a chest cast, and his gray hair had turned as white as snow.^[35] McCain was sent to a different camp on the outskirts of Hanoi.^[41] In



McCain at the [Naval Academy](#), 1954 ↗



December 1967, McCain was placed in a cell with two other Americans who did not expect him to live more than a week.^[42] In March 1968, McCain was placed into [solitary confinement](#), where he would remain for two years.^[43]

McCain (front right) with his squadron and T-2 Buckeye trainer, 1965



In mid-1968, his father [John S. McCain Jr.](#) was named commander of all U.S. forces in the Vietnam theater, and the North Vietnamese offered McCain early release^[44] because they wanted to appear merciful for propaganda purposes,^[45] and also to show other POWs that elite prisoners were willing to be treated preferentially.^[44] McCain refused repatriation unless every man taken in before him was also released. Such early release was prohibited by the POWs' interpretation of the military [Code of Conduct](#) which states in Article III: "I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy".^[46] To prevent the enemy from using prisoners for propaganda, officers were to agree to be released in the order in which they were captured.^[35]

Beginning in August 1968, McCain was subjected to a program of severe torture.^[47] He was bound and beaten every two hours; this punishment occurred at the same time that he was suffering from [dysentery](#).^{[35][47]} Further injuries brought McCain to "the point of suicide," but his preparations were interrupted by guards. Eventually, McCain made an anti-U.S. propaganda "confession".^[35] He has always felt that his statement was dishonorable, but as he later wrote, "I had learned what we all learned over there: every man has his breaking point. I had reached mine."^{[48][49]} Many U.S. POWs were tortured and maltreated in order to extract "confessions" and propaganda statements;^[50] virtually all of them eventually yielded something to their captors.^[51] McCain received two to three beatings weekly because of his continued refusal to sign additional statements.^[52]

McCain refused to meet various anti-war groups seeking peace in Hanoi, wanting to give neither them nor the North Vietnamese a propaganda victory.^[53] From late 1969, treatment of McCain and many of the other POWs became more tolerable,^[54] while McCain continued actively to resist the camp authorities.^[55] McCain and other prisoners cheered the [U.S. "Christmas Bombing" campaign](#) of December 1972, viewing it as a forceful measure to push North Vietnam to terms.^{[49][56]}

McCain was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam for five and a half years until his release on March 14, 1973.^[57] His wartime injuries left him permanently incapable of raising his arms above his head.^[58]

Commanding officer, liaison to Senate, and second marriage

McCain was reunited with his family when he [returned](#) to the United States. His wife [Carol](#) had suffered her own crippling ordeal due to an automobile accident in December 1969. As a returned POW, McCain became a celebrity of sorts.^[59]

McCain underwent treatment for his injuries that included months of grueling [physical therapy](#).^[60] He attended the [National War College](#) at [Fort McNair](#) in Washington, D.C. during 1973–1974.^[61] McCain was rehabilitated by late 1974 and his flight status was reinstated. In 1976, he became [commanding officer](#) of a training squadron that was stationed in Florida.^{[59][62]} He improved the unit's flight readiness and safety records,^[63] and won the squadron its first-ever



McCain being interviewed after his return from Vietnam, April 1973



Meritorious Unit Commendation.^[62] During this period in Florida, McCain had extramarital affairs and his marriage began to falter, about which he later stated, "The blame was entirely mine".^{[64][65]}

McCain served as the Navy's liaison to the U.S. Senate beginning in 1977.^[66] In retrospect, he has said that this represented his "real entry into the world of politics and the beginning of my second career as a public servant."^[59] His key behind-the-scenes role gained congressional financing for a new **supercarrier** against the wishes of the **Carter administration.**^{[60][67]}

In April 1979,^[60] McCain met **Cindy Lou Hensley**, a teacher from **Phoenix, Arizona**, whose father had founded **a large beer distributorship.**^[65] They began dating, and he urged his wife Carol to grant him a divorce, which she did in February 1980; the uncontested divorce took effect in April 1980.^{[22][60]} The settlement included two houses, and financial support for her ongoing medical treatments due to her 1969 car accident; they would remain on good terms.^[65] McCain and Hensley were married on May 17, 1980, with Senators **William Cohen** and **Gary Hart** attending as **groomsmen.**^{[21][65]} McCain's children did not attend, and several years would pass before they reconciled.^{[24][60]} John and Cindy McCain entered into a **prenuptial agreement** that kept most of her family's assets under her name; they would always keep their finances apart and file separate **income tax returns.**^[68]

McCain decided to leave the Navy. It was doubtful whether he would ever be promoted to the rank of **full admiral**, as he had poor annual physicals and had been given no major sea command.^[69] His chances of being promoted to **rear admiral** were better, but McCain declined that prospect, as he had already made plans to run for Congress and said he could "do more good there."^{[70][71]}

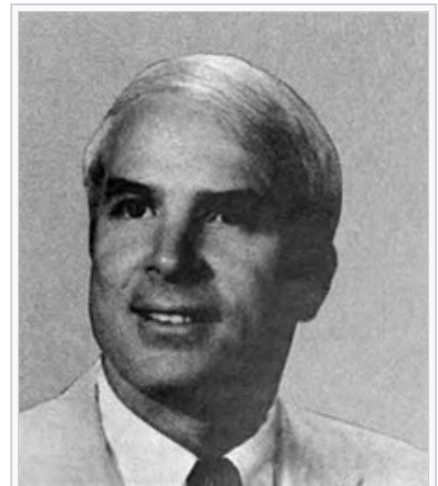
McCain retired from the Navy on April 1, 1981,^[72] as a **captain.**^[34] He was designated as disabled and awarded a **disability pension.**^[73] Upon leaving the military, he moved to Arizona. His numerous military decorations and awards include the **Silver Star Medal**, two **Legions of Merit**, **Distinguished Flying Cross**, three **Bronze Star Medals**, two **Purple Heart Medals**, two **Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals**, and **Prisoner of War Medal.**^[34]

House and Senate elections and career, 1982–2000

Main article: [House and Senate career of John McCain, until 2000](#)

U.S. Congressman

McCain set his sights on becoming a congressman because he was interested in current events, was ready for a new challenge, and had developed political ambitions during his time as Senate liaison.^{[65][74][75]} Living in Phoenix, he went to work for **Hensley & Co.**, his new father-in-law **Jim Hensley's** large **Anheuser-Busch** beer distributorship.^[65] As vice president of public relations at the distributorship, he gained political support among the local business community, meeting powerful figures such as banker **Charles Keating Jr.**, real estate developer **Fife Symington III** and newspaper publisher Darrow "Duke" Tully.^{[66][76]} In 1982, McCain ran as a Republican for an open seat in **Arizona's 1st congressional district**, which was being vacated by 30-year incumbent Republican **John Jacob Rhodes.**^[77] A



McCain in 1983, during his first term ✪ in the House of Representatives

newcomer to the state, McCain was hit with charges of being a [carpetbagger](#).^[65] McCain responded to a voter making that charge with what a *Phoenix Gazette* columnist would later describe as "the most devastating response to a potentially troublesome political issue I've ever heard".^[65]

Listen, pal. I spent 22 years in the Navy. My father was in the Navy. My grandfather was in the Navy. We in the military service tend to move a lot. We have to live in all parts of the country, all parts of the world. I wish I could have had the luxury, like you, of growing up and living and spending my entire life in a nice place like the First District of Arizona, but I was doing other things. As a matter of fact, when I think about it now, the place I lived longest in my life was Hanoi.^{[65][78]}

McCain won a highly contested primary election with the assistance of local political endorsements, his Washington connections, and money that his wife lent to his campaign.^{[66][65]} He then easily won the general election in the heavily Republican district.^[65]

In 1983, McCain was elected to lead the incoming group of Republican representatives,^[65] and was assigned to the [House Committee on Interior Affairs](#). Also that year, he opposed creation of a federal [Martin Luther King Jr. Day](#), but admitted in 2008: "I was wrong and eventually realized that, in time to give full support [in 1990] for a state holiday in Arizona."^{[79][80]}

At this point, McCain's politics were mainly in line with President [Ronald Reagan](#); this included support for [Reaganomics](#), and he was active on Indian Affairs bills.^[81] He supported most aspects of the [foreign policy of the Reagan administration](#), including its [hardline stance against the Soviet Union](#) and [policy towards Central American conflicts](#), such as backing the [Contras](#) in Nicaragua.^[81] McCain opposed keeping U.S. Marines [deployed in Lebanon](#) citing unattainable objectives, and subsequently criticized President Reagan for pulling out the troops too late; in the interim, the [1983 Beirut barracks bombing](#) killed hundreds.^{[65][82]} McCain won re-election to the House easily in 1984,^[65] and gained a spot on the [House Foreign Affairs Committee](#).^[83] In 1985, he made his first return trip to Vietnam,^[84] and also traveled to [Chile](#) where he met with its military [junta](#) ruler, General [Augusto Pinochet](#).^{[85][86][87]}

Growing family

In 1984, McCain and Cindy had their first child together, daughter [Meghan](#), followed two years later by son John Sidney (Jack) IV, and in 1988 by son James (Jimmy).^[88]

In 1991, Cindy McCain brought an abandoned three-month-old girl needing medical treatment to the U.S. from a [Bangladeshi](#) orphanage run by [Mother Teresa](#).^[89] The McCains decided to adopt her and named her Bridget.^[90]

First two terms in U.S. Senate

[McCain's Senate career began](#) in January 1987, after he defeated his Democratic opponent, former state legislator [Richard Kimball](#), by 20 percentage points in the 1986 election.^{[66][91]} McCain succeeded longtime [American conservative](#) icon and Arizona fixture [Barry Goldwater](#) upon the latter's retirement as [U.S. senator from Arizona](#).^[91]

Senator McCain became a member of the [Armed Services Committee](#), with which he had formerly done his Navy liaison work; he also joined the [Commerce Committee](#) and the [Indian Affairs Committee](#).^[91] He continued to support the Native American agenda.^[92] As first a House member and then a senator—and as a lifelong gambler with close ties to the gambling industry^[93]—

McCain was one of the main authors of the 1988 [Indian Gaming Regulatory Act](#),^{[94][95]} which codified rules regarding [Native American gambling enterprises](#).^[96] McCain was also a strong supporter of the [Gramm-Rudman](#) legislation that enforced automatic spending cuts in the case of budget deficits.^[97]

McCain soon gained national visibility. He delivered a well-received speech at the [1988 Republican National Convention](#), was mentioned by the press as a [short list](#) vice-presidential running mate for Republican nominee [George H. W. Bush](#), and was named chairman of Veterans for Bush.^{[91][98]}

McCain became embroiled in a scandal during the 1980s, as one of five United States senators comprising the so-called [Keating Five](#).^[99] Between 1982 and 1987, McCain had received \$112,000 in lawful^[100] political contributions from [Charles Keating Jr.](#) and his associates at [Lincoln Savings and Loan Association](#), along with trips on Keating's jets^[99] that McCain belatedly repaid, in 1989.^[101] In 1987, McCain was one of the five senators whom Keating contacted in order to prevent the government's seizure of Lincoln, and McCain met twice with federal regulators to discuss the government's investigation of Lincoln.^[99] In 1999, McCain said: "The appearance of it was wrong. It's a wrong appearance when a group of senators appear in a meeting with a group of regulators, because it conveys the impression of undue and improper influence. And it was the wrong thing to do."^[102] In the end, McCain was cleared by the [Senate Ethics Committee](#) of acting improperly or violating any law or Senate rule, but was mildly rebuked for exercising "poor judgment".^{[100][102]} In his 1992 re-election bid, the Keating Five affair was not a major issue,^[103] and he won handily, gaining 56 percent of the vote to defeat Democratic community and [civil rights](#) activist Claire Sargent and independent former governor, [Evan Mecham](#).^[104]

McCain developed a reputation for independence during the 1990s.^[105] He took pride in challenging party leadership and establishment forces, becoming difficult to categorize politically.^[105]

As a member of the 1991–1993 [Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs](#), chaired by fellow Vietnam War veteran and Democrat, [John Kerry](#), McCain investigated the [Vietnam War POW/MIA issue](#), to determine the fate of U.S. service personnel listed as [missing in action](#) during the Vietnam War.^[106] The committee's unanimous report stated there was "no compelling evidence that proves that any American remains alive in captivity in Southeast Asia."^[107] Helped by McCain's efforts, in 1995 the U.S. normalized diplomatic relations with Vietnam.^[108] McCain was vilified by some POW/MIA activists who, unlike the Arizona senator, believed large numbers of Americans were still held against their will in Southeast Asia.^{[108][109][110]} Since January 1993, McCain has been Chairman of the [International Republican Institute](#), an organization partly funded by the U.S. government that supports the emergence of political democracy worldwide.^[111]



President [Ronald Reagan](#) greets [John McCain](#) as First Lady [Nancy Reagan](#) looks on, March 1987



The 1992 christening of [USS John S. McCain](#) at [Bath Iron Works](#), with his mother [Roberta](#), son [Jack](#), daughter [Meghan](#), and wife [Cindy](#)

In 1993 and 1994, McCain voted to confirm President Clinton's nominees [Stephen Breyer](#) and [Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#) whom he considered to be qualified for the [U.S. Supreme Court](#). He would later explain that "under our Constitution, it is the president's call to make."^[112] McCain had also voted to confirm nominees of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, including [Robert Bork](#) and [Clarence Thomas](#).^[113]

McCain attacked what he saw as the corrupting influence of large political contributions—from corporations, labor unions, other organizations, and wealthy individuals—and he made this his signature issue.^[114] Starting in 1994, he worked with Democratic Wisconsin Senator [Russ Feingold](#) on [campaign finance reform](#); their McCain–Feingold bill attempted to put limits on "[soft money](#)".^[114] The efforts of McCain and Feingold were opposed by some of the moneyed interests targeted, by incumbents in both parties, by those who felt spending limits impinged on free political speech and might be unconstitutional as well, and by those who wanted to counterbalance the power of what they saw as [media bias](#).^{[114][115]} Despite sympathetic coverage in the media, initial versions of the [McCain–Feingold Act](#) were [filibustered](#) and never came to a vote.^[116]


The term "[maverick Republican](#)" became a label frequently applied to McCain, and he has also used it himself.^{[114][117][118]} In 1993, McCain opposed [military operations in Somalia](#).^[119] Another target of his was [pork barrel](#) spending by Congress, and he actively supported the [Line Item Veto Act of 1996](#), which gave the president power to veto individual spending items^[114] but was ruled unconstitutional by the [Supreme Court](#) in 1998.^[120]

In the [1996 presidential election](#), McCain was again on the [short list](#) of possible vice-presidential picks, this time for Republican nominee [Bob Dole](#).^{[103][121]} The following year, [Time](#) magazine named McCain as one of the "25 Most Influential People in America".^[122]

In 1997, McCain became chairman of the powerful Senate Commerce Committee; he was criticized for accepting funds from corporations and businesses under the committee's purview, but in response said the small contributions he received were not part of the big-money nature of the campaign finance problem.^[114] McCain took on the [tobacco industry](#) in 1998, proposing legislation that would increase cigarette taxes in order to fund anti-smoking campaigns, discourage teenage smokers, increase money for health research studies, and help states pay for smoking-related health care costs.^{[114][123]}

Supported by the [Clinton administration](#) but opposed by the industry and most Republicans, the bill failed to gain [cloture](#).^[123]



Photo of McCain's father and grandfather that appeared on the cover of his 1999 family memoir 

Start of third term in the U.S. Senate

In November 1998, McCain won re-election to a third Senate term; he prevailed in a landslide over his Democratic opponent, environmental lawyer Ed Ranger.^[114] In the [February 1999 Senate trial following the impeachment of Bill Clinton](#), McCain voted to convict the president on both the [perjury](#) and [obstruction of justice](#) counts, saying Clinton had violated his sworn oath of office.^[124] In March 1999, McCain voted to approve the [NATO bombing campaign against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia](#), saying that the ongoing genocide of the [Kosovo War](#) must be stopped and criticizing past Clinton administration inaction.^[125] Later in 1999, McCain shared the [Profile in](#)

[Courage Award](#) with Feingold for their work in trying to enact their campaign finance reform,^[126] although the bill was still failing repeated attempts to gain cloture.^[116]

In August 1999, McCain's memoir *Faith of My Fathers*, co-authored with [Mark Salter](#), was published;^[127] a reviewer observed that its appearance "seems to have been timed to the unfolding Presidential campaign."^[128] The most successful of his writings, it received positive reviews,^[129] became a bestseller,^[130] and was later [made into a TV film](#). The book traces McCain's family background and childhood, covers his time at Annapolis and his service before and during the Vietnam War, concluding with his release from captivity in 1973. According to one reviewer, it describes "the kind of challenges that most of us can barely imagine. It's a fascinating history of a remarkable military family."^[131]

2000 presidential campaign

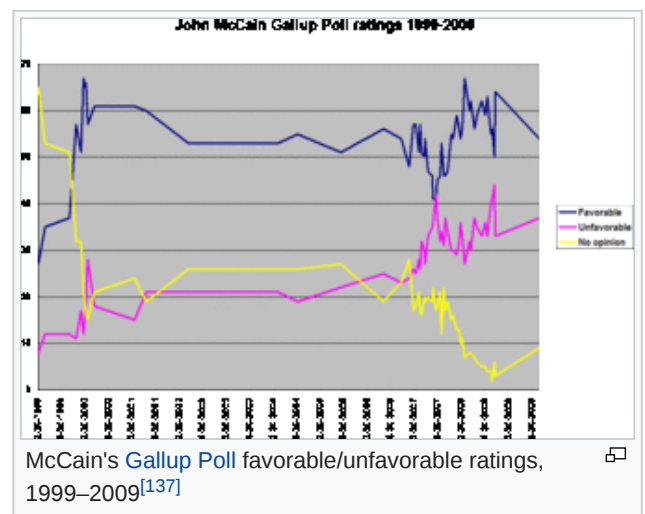
Main article: [John McCain presidential campaign, 2000](#)

McCain announced his candidacy for president on September 27, 1999, in [Nashua, New Hampshire](#), saying he was staging "a fight to take our government back from the power brokers and special interests, and return it to the people and the noble cause of freedom it was created to serve".^{[127][132]} The frontrunner for the Republican nomination was [Texas Governor George W. Bush](#), who had the political and financial support of most of the party establishment.^[133]

McCain focused on the [New Hampshire primary](#), where his message appealed to independents.^[134] He traveled on a [campaign bus](#) called the Straight Talk Express.^[127] He held many [town hall meetings](#), answering every question voters asked, in a successful example of "retail politics", and he used free media to compensate for his lack of funds.^[127] One reporter later recounted that, "McCain talked all day long with reporters on his Straight Talk Express bus; he talked so much that sometimes he said things that he shouldn't have, and that's why the media loved him."^[135] On February 1, 2000, he won New Hampshire's primary with 49 percent of the vote to Bush's 30 percent. The Bush campaign and the Republican establishment feared that a McCain victory in the crucial [South Carolina primary](#) might give his campaign unstoppable momentum.^{[127][136]}

The Arizona Republic would write that the McCain–Bush primary contest in South Carolina "has entered national political lore as a low-water mark in presidential campaigns", while *The New York Times* called it "a painful symbol of the brutality of American politics".^{[127][138][139]} A variety of interest groups that McCain had challenged in the past ran negative ads.^{[127][140]} Bush borrowed McCain's earlier language of reform,^[141] and declined to dissociate himself from a veterans activist who accused McCain (in Bush's presence) of having "abandoned the veterans" on POW/MIA and [Agent Orange](#) issues.^{[127][142]}

Incensed,^[142] McCain ran ads accusing Bush of lying and comparing the governor to [Bill Clinton](#), which Bush said was "about as low a blow as you can give in a Republican primary".^[127] An



McCain's Gallup Poll favorable/unfavorable ratings, 1999–2009^[137]

anonymous smear campaign began against McCain, delivered by [push polls](#), faxes, e-mails, flyers, and audience [plants](#).^{[127][143]} The smears claimed that McCain had fathered a black child out of wedlock (the McCains' dark-skinned daughter was adopted from Bangladesh), that his wife Cindy was a drug addict, that he was a homosexual, and that he was a "[Manchurian Candidate](#)" who was either a traitor or mentally unstable from his North Vietnam POW days.^{[127][138]} The Bush campaign strongly denied any involvement with the attacks.^{[138][144]}

McCain lost South Carolina on February 19, with 42 percent of the vote to Bush's 53 percent,^[145] in part because Bush mobilized the state's evangelical voters^{[127][146]} and outspent McCain.^[147] The win allowed Bush to regain lost momentum.^[145] McCain would say of the rumor spreaders, "I believe that there is a special place in hell for people like those."^[90] According to one report, the South Carolina experience left McCain in a "very dark place".^[138]

McCain's campaign never completely recovered from his South Carolina defeat, although he did rebound partially by winning in [Arizona](#) and [Michigan](#) a few days later.^[148] He made a speech in [Virginia Beach](#) that criticized Christian leaders, including [Pat Robertson](#) and [Jerry Falwell](#), as divisive conservatives,^[138] declaring "... we embrace the fine members of the religious conservative community. But that does not mean that we will pander to their self-appointed leaders."^[149] McCain lost the [Virginia](#) primary on February 29,^[150] and on March 7 lost nine of the thirteen primaries on [Super Tuesday](#) to Bush.^[151] With little hope of overcoming Bush's delegate lead, McCain withdrew from the race on March 9, 2000.^[152] He endorsed Bush two months later,^[153] and made occasional appearances with the Texas governor during the general election campaign.^[127]

Senate career, 2000–2008

Main article: [Senate career of John McCain, 2001–2014](#)

Remainder of third Senate term

McCain began 2001 by breaking with the new [George W. Bush administration](#) on a number of matters, including [HMO](#) reform, climate change, and gun legislation; McCain–Feingold was opposed by Bush as well.^{[116][154]} In May 2001, McCain was one of only two Senate Republicans to vote against the [Bush tax cuts](#).^{[154][155]} Besides the differences with Bush on ideological grounds, there was considerable antagonism between the two remaining from the previous year's campaign.^{[156][157]} Later, when a Republican senator, [Jim Jeffords](#), became an Independent, thereby throwing control of the Senate to the Democrats, McCain defended Jeffords against "self-appointed enforcers of party loyalty".^[154] Indeed, there was speculation at the time, and in years since, about McCain himself leaving the Republican Party, but McCain has always adamantly denied that he ever considered doing so.^{[154][158][159]} Beginning in 2001, McCain used [political capital](#) gained from his presidential run, as well as improved legislative skills and relationships with other members, to become one of the Senate's most influential members.^[160]

After the [September 11, 2001 attacks](#), McCain supported Bush and the [U.S.-led war in Afghanistan](#).^{[154][161]} He and Democratic senator [Joe Lieberman](#) wrote the legislation that created the [9/11 Commission](#),^[162] while he and Democratic senator [Fritz Hollings](#) co-sponsored the [Aviation and Transportation Security Act](#) that federalized [airport security](#).^[163]

In March 2002, McCain–Feingold, officially known as the [Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002](#), passed in both Houses of Congress and was signed into law by President Bush.^{[116][154]} Seven years in the making, it was McCain's greatest legislative achievement.^{[154][164]}



McCain's Senate website from 2003 to 2006 illustrated his concern about [pork barrel](#) spending.^[114]

Meanwhile, in discussions over proposed U.S. action against [Iraq](#), McCain was a strong supporter of the Bush administration's position.^[154] He stated that Iraq was "a clear and present danger to the United States of America", and voted accordingly for the [Iraq War Resolution](#) in October 2002.^[154] He predicted that U.S. forces would be treated as liberators by a large



U.S. President [George W. Bush](#) with Senator McCain, December 4, 2004

number of the Iraqi people.^[165] In May 2003, McCain voted against the second round of Bush tax cuts, saying it was unwise at a time of war.^[155] By November 2003, after a trip to Iraq, he was publicly questioning Secretary of Defense [Donald Rumsfeld](#), saying that more U.S. troops were needed; the following year, McCain announced that he had lost confidence in Rumsfeld.^{[166][167]}

In October 2003, McCain and Lieberman co-sponsored the [Climate Stewardship Act](#) that would have introduced a [cap and trade](#) system aimed at returning [greenhouse gas](#) emissions to 2000 levels; the bill was defeated with 55 votes to 43 in the Senate.^[168] They reintroduced modified versions of the Act two additional times, most recently in January 2007 with the co-sponsorship of [Barack Obama](#), among others.^[169]

In the [2004 U.S. presidential election campaign](#), McCain was once again frequently mentioned for the vice-presidential slot, only this time as part of the Democratic ticket under nominee [John Kerry](#).^{[170][171][172]} McCain said that Kerry had never formally offered him the position and that he would not have accepted it if he had.^{[171][172][173]} At the [2004 Republican National Convention](#), McCain supported Bush for re-election, praising Bush's management of the [War on Terror](#) since the September 11 attacks.^[174] At the same time, he defended Kerry's Vietnam War record.^[175] By August 2004, McCain had the best favorable-to-unfavorable rating (55 percent to 19 percent) of any national politician;^[174] he campaigned for Bush much more than he had four years previously, though the two remained situational allies rather than friends.^[156]


McCain was also up for re-election as senator, in 2004. He defeated little-known Democratic schoolteacher [Stuart Starky](#) with his biggest margin of victory, garnering 77 percent of the vote.^[176]

Start of fourth Senate term

In May 2005, McCain led the so-called [Gang of 14](#) in the Senate, which established a compromise that preserved the ability of senators to filibuster judicial nominees, but only in "extraordinary circumstances".^[177] The compromise took the steam out of the filibuster movement, but some Republicans remained disappointed that the compromise did not eliminate filibusters of judicial nominees in all circumstances.^[178] McCain subsequently



cast [Supreme Court](#) confirmation votes in favor of [John Roberts](#) and [Samuel Alito](#), calling them "two of the finest justices ever appointed to the United States Supreme Court."^[113]

Speaking on the Senate floor against [earmarking](#), February 2007 

Breaking from his 2001 and 2003 votes, McCain supported the [Bush tax cut extension](#) in May 2006, saying not to do so would amount to a tax increase.^[155] Working with Democratic Senator [Ted Kennedy](#), McCain was a strong proponent of comprehensive immigration reform, which would involve legalization, guest worker programs, and border enforcement components. The [Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act](#) was never voted on in 2005, while the [Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006](#) passed the Senate in May 2006 but failed in the House.^[167] In June 2007, President Bush, McCain, and others made the strongest push yet for such a bill, the [Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007](#), but it aroused intense grassroots opposition among talk radio listeners and others, some of whom furiously characterized the proposal as an "amnesty" program,^[179] and the bill twice failed to gain cloture in the Senate.^[180]

By the middle of the 2000s (decade), the increased [Indian gaming](#) that McCain had helped bring about was a \$23 billion industry.^[95] He was twice chairman of the [Senate Indian Affairs Committee](#), in 1995–1997 and 2005–2007, and his Committee helped expose the [Jack Abramoff Indian lobbying scandal](#).^{[181][182]} By 2005 and 2006, McCain was pushing for amendments to the [Indian Gaming Regulatory Act](#) that would limit creation of off-reservation casinos,^[95] as well as limiting the movement of tribes across state lines to build casinos.^[183]



Owing to his time as a POW, McCain has been recognized for his sensitivity to the detention and interrogation of detainees in the [War on Terror](#). In October 2005, McCain introduced the [McCain Detainee Amendment](#) to the Defense Appropriations bill for 2005, and the Senate voted 90–9 to support the amendment.^[184] It prohibits inhumane treatment of prisoners, including prisoners at [Guantanamo Bay](#), by confining military interrogations to the techniques in the [U.S. Army Field Manual on Interrogation](#). Although Bush had threatened to veto the bill if McCain's amendment was included,^[185] the President announced in December

2005 that he accepted McCain's terms and would "make it clear to the world that this government does not torture and that we adhere to the international convention of torture, whether it be here at home or abroad".^[186] This stance, among others, led to McCain being named by *Time* magazine in 2006 as one of America's 10 Best Senators.^[187] McCain voted in February 2008 against a bill containing a ban on [waterboarding](#),^[188] which provision was later narrowly passed and vetoed by Bush. However, the bill in question contained other provisions to which McCain objected, and his spokesman stated: "This wasn't a vote on waterboarding. This was a vote on applying the standards of the [Army] field manual to CIA personnel."^[188]

Meanwhile, McCain continued questioning the progress of the war in Iraq. In September 2005, he remarked upon [Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard Myers'](#) optimistic outlook on the war's progress: "Things have not gone as well as we had planned or expected, nor as we were told by you, General Myers."^[189] In August 2006, he criticized the administration for continually understating the effectiveness of the insurgency: "We [have] not told the American people how tough and difficult this could be."^[167] From the beginning, McCain strongly supported the [Iraq](#)

troop surge of 2007.^[190] The strategy's opponents labeled it "McCain's plan"^[191] and University of Virginia political science professor [Larry Sabato](#) said, "McCain owns Iraq just as much as Bush does now."^[167] The surge and the war were unpopular during most of the year, even within the Republican Party,^[192] as McCain's presidential campaign was underway; faced with the consequences, McCain frequently responded, "I would much rather lose a campaign than a war."^[193] In March 2008, McCain credited the surge strategy with reducing violence in Iraq, as he made his eighth trip to that country since the war began.^[194]

2008 presidential campaign

Main article: [John McCain presidential campaign, 2008](#)

McCain formally announced his intention to run for President of the United States on April 25, 2007 in [Portsmouth, New Hampshire](#).^[195] He stated that: "I'm not running for president to be somebody, but to do something; to do the hard but necessary things, not the easy and needless things."^[196]

McCain's oft-cited strengths as a presidential candidate for 2008 included national name recognition, sponsorship of major lobbying and campaign finance reform initiatives, his ability to reach across the aisle, his well-known military service and experience as a POW, his experience from the 2000 presidential campaign, and an expectation that he would capture Bush's top fundraisers.^[197] During the 2006 election cycle, McCain had attended 346 events^[58] and helped raise more than \$10.5 million on behalf of Republican candidates. McCain also became more willing to ask business and industry for campaign contributions, while maintaining that such contributions would not affect any official decisions he would make.^[198] Despite being considered the front-runner for the nomination by pundits as 2007 began,^[199] McCain was in second place behind former [Mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani](#) in [national Republican polls](#) as the year progressed.

McCain had fundraising problems in the first half of 2007, due in part to his support for the [Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007](#), which was unpopular among the Republican base electorate.^{[200][201]} Large-scale campaign staff downsizing took place in early July, but McCain said that he was not considering dropping out of the race.^[201] Later that month, the candidate's campaign manager and campaign chief strategist both departed.^[202] McCain slumped badly in national polls, [often running third or fourth with 15 percent or less support](#).



[President Bush](#) meets with the McCains as he endorses him for President, March 5, 2008



McCain formally announces his candidacy for president in [Portsmouth, New Hampshire](#), 2007

The Arizona senator subsequently resumed his familiar position as a political [underdog](#),^[203] riding the Straight Talk Express and taking advantage of free media such as debates and sponsored events.^[204] By December 2007, the Republican race was unsettled, with none of the top-tier candidates dominating the race and all of them possessing major vulnerabilities with different elements of the Republican base electorate.^[205] McCain was showing a resurgence, in particular with renewed strength in New Hampshire—the scene of his 2000 triumph—and was bolstered further by the endorsements of [The Boston](#)

Globe, the *New Hampshire Union Leader*, and almost two dozen other state newspapers,^[206] as well as from Senator Lieberman (now an [Independent Democrat](#)).^{[207][208]} McCain decided not to campaign significantly in the January 3, 2008, [Iowa caucuses](#), which saw a win by former [Governor of Arkansas Mike Huckabee](#).

McCain's comeback plan paid off when he won the [New Hampshire primary](#) on January 8, defeating former [Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney](#) in a close contest, to once again become one of the front-runners in the race.^[209] In mid-January, McCain placed first in the [South Carolina primary](#), narrowly defeating Mike Huckabee.^[210] Pundits credited the third-place finisher, [Tennessee's](#) former U.S. Senator [Fred Thompson](#), with drawing votes from Huckabee in South Carolina, thereby giving a narrow win to McCain.^[211] A week later, McCain won the [Florida primary](#),^[212] beating Romney again in a close contest; Giuliani then dropped out and endorsed McCain.^[213]

On February 5, McCain won both the majority of states and [delegates](#) in the [Super Tuesday Republican primaries](#), giving him a commanding lead toward the Republican nomination. Romney departed from the race on February 7.^[214] McCain's wins in the March 4 primaries clinched a majority of the delegates, and he became the presumptive Republican nominee.^[215]

McCain was born in the Panama Canal Zone. Had he been elected, he would have become the first president who was born outside the contiguous forty-eight states. This raised a potential legal issue, since the [United States Constitution](#) requires the president to be a [natural-born citizen](#) of the United States. A bipartisan legal review,^[216] and a unanimous but non-binding Senate resolution,^[217] both concluded that he is a natural-born citizen. Also, if inaugurated in 2009 at age 72 years and 144 days, he would have been the oldest U.S. president upon [accession to the presidency](#),^[218] and the second-oldest president to be inaugurated.^[219]

McCain addressed concerns about his age and past health issues, stating in 2005 that his health was "excellent".^[220] He had been treated for a type of [skin cancer](#) called [melanoma](#), and an operation in 2000 for that condition left a noticeable mark on the left side of his face.^[221] McCain's prognosis appeared favorable, according to independent experts, especially because he had already survived without a recurrence for more than seven years.^[221] In May 2008, McCain's campaign briefly let the press review his medical records, and he was described as appearing cancer-free, having a strong heart, and in general being in good health.^[222]

McCain clinched enough delegates for the nomination and his focus shifted toward the general election, while [Barack Obama](#) and [Hillary Clinton](#) fought a prolonged [battle for the Democratic nomination](#).^[223] McCain introduced various policy proposals, and sought to improve his fundraising.^{[224][225]} Cindy McCain, who accounts for most of the couple's wealth with an estimated net worth of \$100 million,^[68] made part of her tax returns public in May.^[226] After facing criticism about [lobbyists](#) on staff, the McCain campaign issued new rules in May 2008 to avoid [conflicts of interest](#), causing five top aides to leave.^{[227][228]}

When Obama became the Democrats' [presumptive nominee](#) in early June, McCain proposed joint [town hall meetings](#), but Obama instead requested [more traditional debates](#) for the fall.^[229] In July, a staff shake-up put [Steve Schmidt](#) in full operational control of the McCain campaign.^[230] [Rick Davis](#) remained as campaign manager but with a reduced role. Davis had also managed McCain's 2000 presidential campaign; in 2005 and 2006, [U.S. intelligence](#) warned McCain's Senate staff



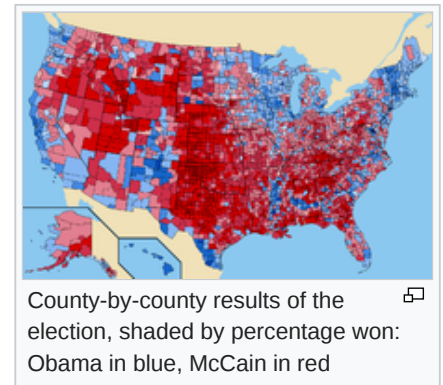
The Palins and McCains campaign in [Fairfax, Virginia](#), following the 2008

about Davis's Russian links but gave no further warnings.^{[231][232][233][234]}

Throughout the summer of 2008, Obama typically led McCain in national polls by single-digit margins,^[235] and also led in several key swing states.^[236] McCain reprised his familiar underdog role, which was due at least in part to the overall challenges Republicans faced in the election year.^{[203][236]} McCain accepted [public financing](#) for the general election campaign, and the restrictions that go with it, while criticizing his Democratic opponent for becoming the first major party candidate to opt out of such financing for the general election since the system was implemented in 1976.^{[237][238]} The Republican's broad campaign theme focused on his experience and ability to lead, compared to Obama's.^[239]

On August 29, 2008, McCain revealed [Alaska Governor Sarah Palin](#) as his surprise choice for running mate.^[240] McCain was only the second U.S. major-party presidential nominee (after [Walter Mondale](#)) to select a woman for his running mate and the first Republican to do so; Palin would have become the first female Vice President of the United States if McCain had been elected. On September 3, 2008, McCain and Palin became the Republican Party's presidential and vice presidential nominees, respectively, at the [2008 Republican National Convention](#) in [Saint Paul, Minnesota](#). McCain surged ahead of Obama in national polls following the convention, as the Palin pick energized core Republican voters who had previously been wary of him.^[241] However, by the campaign's own later admission, the rollout of Palin to the national media went poorly,^[242] and voter reactions to Palin grew increasingly negative, especially among independents and other voters concerned about her qualifications.^[243]

On September 24, McCain said he was temporarily suspending his campaign activities, called on Obama to join him, and proposed delaying the first of the [general election debates with Obama](#), in order to work on the [proposed U.S. financial system bailout](#) before Congress, which was targeted at addressing the [subprime mortgage crisis](#) and [liquidity crisis](#).^{[244][245]} McCain's intervention helped to give dissatisfied House Republicans an opportunity to propose changes to the plan that was otherwise close to agreement.^{[246][247]} After Obama declined McCain's suspension suggestion, McCain went ahead with the debate on September 26.^[248] On October 1, McCain voted in favor of a revised \$700 billion rescue plan.^[249] Another debate was held on October 7; like the first one, polls afterward suggested that Obama had won it.^[250] A final presidential debate occurred on October 15.^[251]



During and after the final debate, McCain compared Obama's proposed policies to socialism and often invoked "[Joe the Plumber](#)" as a symbol of American small business dreams that would be thwarted by an Obama presidency.^{[252][253]} McCain barred using the [Jeremiah Wright controversy](#) in ads against Obama,^[254] but the campaign did frequently criticize Obama regarding [his purported relationship with Bill Ayers](#).^[255] McCain's rallies became increasingly vitriolic,^[256] with attendees denigrating Obama and displaying a growing anti-Muslim and anti-African-American sentiment.^[257] During a campaign rally in Minnesota, Gayle Quinnell, a 75-year old McCain supporter said she did not trust Obama because "he's an Arab",^[258] McCain pointedly replied to the woman, "No ma'am. He's a decent family man, citizen, that I just happen to have disagreements with on fundamental issues."^[257] McCain's response was considered one of the

finer moments of the campaign and was still being viewed several years later as a marker for civility in American politics.^{[256][259]} Down the stretch, McCain was outspent by Obama by a four-to-one margin.^[260] Meghan McCain said that she cannot "go a day without someone bringing up (that) moment," and noted that at the time "there were a lot of people really trying to get my dad to go (against Obama) with ... you're a Muslim, you're not an American aspect of that," but that her father had refused. "I can remember thinking that it was a morally amazing and beautiful moment, but that maybe there would be people in the Republican Party that would be quite angry," she said.^[261]

The election took place on November 4, and Barack Obama was projected the winner at about 11:00 pm Eastern Standard Time; McCain delivered his concession speech in Phoenix, Arizona about twenty minutes later.^[262] In it, he noted the historic and special significance of Obama becoming the nation's first African American president.^[262] In the end, McCain won 173 [electoral college votes](#) to Obama's 365;^[263] McCain failed to win most of the [battleground states](#) and lost some traditionally Republican ones.^[264] McCain gained 46 percent of the nationwide popular vote, compared to Obama's 53 percent.^[264]

Senate career after 2008

Main article: [Senate career of John McCain, 2001–2014](#)

Remainder of fourth Senate term

[Following his defeat, McCain returned to the Senate](#) amid varying views about what role he might play there.^[265] In mid-November 2008 he met with President-elect Obama, and the two discussed issues they had commonality on.^[266] Around the same time, McCain indicated that he intended to run [for re-election to his Senate seat in 2010](#).^[267] As the inauguration neared, Obama consulted with McCain on a variety of matters, to an extent rarely seen between a president-elect and his defeated rival,^[268] and President Obama's inauguration speech contained an allusion to McCain's theme of finding a purpose greater than oneself.^[269]



U.S. President [Barack Obama](#) and [McCain](#) at a press conference in March 2009

Nevertheless, McCain emerged as a leader of the Republican opposition to the [Obama economic stimulus package of 2009](#), saying it had too much spending for too little stimulative effect.^[270] McCain also voted against Obama's Supreme Court nomination of [Sonia Sotomayor](#)—saying that while undeniably qualified, "I do not believe that she shares my belief in judicial restraint"^[271]—and by August 2009 was siding more often with his Republican Party on closely divided votes than ever before in his senatorial career.^[272] McCain reasserted that the [War in Afghanistan](#) was winnable^[273] and criticized Obama for a

slow process in deciding whether to send additional U.S. troops there.^[274]

McCain also harshly criticized Obama for scrapping construction of the [U.S. missile defense complex in Poland](#), declined to enter negotiations over climate change legislation similar to what he had proposed in the past, and strongly opposed the [Obama health care plan](#).^{[274][275]} McCain led a successful [filibuster](#) of a measure that would allow repeal of the military's "[Don't ask, don't tell](#)" policy towards gays.^[276] Factors involved in McCain's new direction included Senate staffers leaving, a renewed concern over national debt levels and the scope of federal government, a possible Republican primary challenge from conservatives in 2010, and McCain's campaign edge

being slow to wear off.^{[274][275]} As one longtime McCain advisor said, "A lot of people, including me, thought he might be the Republican building bridges to the Obama Administration. But he's been more like the guy blowing up the bridges."^[274]

In early 2010, a primary challenge from radio talk show host and former U.S. Congressman [J. D. Hayworth](#) materialized in the [2010 U.S. Senate election in Arizona](#) and drew support from some but not all elements of the [Tea Party movement](#).^{[277][278]} With Hayworth using the campaign slogan "The Consistent Conservative", McCain said—despite his own past use of the term on a number of occasions^{[278][279]}—"I never considered myself a maverick. I consider myself a person who serves the people of Arizona to the best of his abilities."^[280] The primary challenge coincided with McCain reversing or muting his stance on some issues such as the bank bailouts, closing of the [Guantánamo Bay detention camp](#), campaign finance restrictions, and gays in the military.^[277]



When the health care plan, now called the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act](#), passed Congress and became law in March 2010, McCain strongly opposed the landmark legislation not only on its merits but also on the way it had been handled in Congress. As a consequence, he warned that congressional Republicans would not be working with Democrats on anything else: "There will be no cooperation for the rest of the year. They have poisoned the well in what they've done and how they've done it."^[281] McCain became a vocal defender of [Arizona SB 1070](#), the April 2010 tough anti-illegal immigration state law that aroused national controversy, saying that the state had been forced to take action given the federal government's inability to control the border.^{[278][282]} In the August 24 primary, McCain beat Hayworth by a 56 to 32 percent margin.^[283] McCain proceeded to easily defeat Democratic city councilman [Rodney Glassman](#) in the general election.^[284]

In the lame duck session of the [111th Congress](#), McCain voted for the compromise [Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010](#),^[285] but against the [DREAM Act](#) (which he had once sponsored) and the [New START Treaty](#).^[286] Most prominently, he continued to lead the eventually losing fight against "Don't ask, don't tell" repeal.^[287] In his opposition, he sometimes fell into anger or hostility on the Senate floor, and called its passage "a very sad day" that would compromise the battle effectiveness of the military.^{[286][287]}

Fifth Senate term

While control of the House of Representatives went over to the Republicans in the [112th Congress](#), the Senate stayed Democratic and McCain continued to be the ranking member of the [Senate Armed Services Committee](#). As the [Arab Spring](#) took center stage, McCain urged that the embattled Egyptian president, [Hosni Mubarak](#), step down and thought the U.S. should push for democratic reforms in the region despite the associated risks of religious extremists gaining power.^[288] McCain was an especially vocal supporter of the [2011 military intervention in Libya](#). In April of that year he visited the [Anti-Gaddafi forces](#) and [National Transitional Council](#) in [Benghazi](#), the highest-ranking American to do so, and said that the rebel forces were "my heroes".^[289] In June, he joined with Senator Kerry in offering a resolution that would have [authorized the military intervention](#), and said: "The administration's disregard for the elected representatives of the American people on this matter has been troubling and counterproductive."^{[290][291]} In August,

McCain voted for the [Budget Control Act of 2011](#) that resolved the [U.S. debt ceiling crisis](#).^[292] In November, McCain and Senator [Carl Levin](#) were leaders in efforts to codify in the [National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012](#) that terrorism suspects, no matter where captured, could be detained by [the U.S. military and its tribunal system](#); following objections by civil libertarians, some Democrats, and the White House, McCain and Levin agreed to language making it clear that the bill would not pertain to U.S. citizens.^{[293][294]}

In the [2012 Republican Party presidential primaries](#), McCain endorsed former 2008 rival [Mitt Romney](#) and campaigned for him, but compared the contest to a [Greek tragedy](#) due to its drawn-out nature with massive [super PAC](#)-funded attack ads damaging all the contenders.^[295] He labeled the Supreme Court's 2010 [Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission](#) decision as "uninformed, arrogant, naïve", and, decrying its effects and the future scandals he thought it would bring, said it would become considered the court's "worst decision ... in the 21st century".^[296] McCain took the lead in opposing the defense spending sequestrations brought on by the Budget Control Act of 2011 and gained attention for defending State Department aide [Huma Abedin](#) against charges brought by a few House Republicans that she had ties to the [Muslim Brotherhood](#).^[297]

McCain continued to be one of the most frequently appearing guests on the Sunday morning news talk shows.^[297] He became one of the most vocal critics of the Obama administration's handling of the September 11, 2012, [attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission in Benghazi](#), saying it was a "debacle" that featured either "a massive cover-up or incompetence that is not acceptable" and that it was worse than the [Watergate scandal](#).^[299] As part of this, he and a few other senators were successful in blocking the planned nomination of Ambassador to the UN [Susan Rice](#) to succeed Hillary Rodham Clinton as U.S. Secretary of State; McCain's friend and colleague John Kerry was nominated instead.^[300]



The "Three Amigos" walking in [Kunar Province](#) in eastern Afghanistan in July 2011: McCain (second from left), [Lindsey Graham](#) (second from right in front), [Joe Lieberman](#) (right in front)^[298]

Regarding the [Syrian civil war](#) that had begun in 2011, McCain repeatedly argued for the U.S. intervening militarily in the conflict on the side of the anti-government forces.^[301] He staged a visit to rebel forces inside Syria in May 2013, the first senator to do so, and called for arming the [Free Syrian Army](#) with heavy weapons and for the establishment of a [no-fly zone](#) over the country.^[301] Following reports that two of the people he posed for pictures with had been responsible for the kidnapping of eleven Lebanese Shiite pilgrims the year before, McCain disputed one of the identifications and said he had not met directly with the other.^[302] Following the [2013 Ghouta chemical weapons attack](#), McCain argued again for strong American military action against the government of the Syrian president, [Bashar al-Assad](#), and in September 2013 cast a Foreign Relations committee vote in favor of Obama's request to Congress that it authorize a military response.^[303] McCain took the lead in criticizing a growing non-interventionist movement within the Republican Party, exemplified by his March 2013 comment that Senators [Rand Paul](#) and [Ted Cruz](#) and Representative [Justin Amash](#) were "wacko birds".^[304]

During 2013, McCain was a member of a bi-partisan group of senators, the "[Gang of Eight](#)", which announced principles for another try at comprehensive immigration reform.^[305] The resulting [Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act of 2013](#) passed the



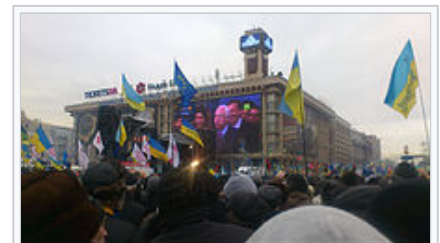
Kerry (far left) and McCain (center-right) with members of the [Saudi Royal Family](#) after greeting the new King [Salman of Saudi Arabia](#), Riyadh, January 2015

Senate by a 68–32 margin, but faced an uncertain future in the House.^[306] In July 2013, McCain was at the forefront of an agreement among senators to drop filibusters against Obama administration executive nominees without Democrats resorting to the "[nuclear option](#)" that would disallow such filibusters altogether.^{[307][308]} However, the option would be imposed later in the year anyway, much to the senator's displeasure.^[309] These developments and some other negotiations showed that McCain now had improved relations with the Obama administration, including the president himself, as well as with Democratic Senate Majority Leader [Harry Reid](#), and that he had become the

leader of a power center in the Senate for cutting deals in an otherwise bitterly partisan environment.^{[310][311][312]} They also led some observers to conclude that the "maverick" McCain had returned.^{[308][312]}

McCain was publicly skeptical about the Republican strategy that precipitated the [U.S. federal government shutdown of 2013](#) and [U.S. debt-ceiling crisis of 2013](#) in order to defund or delay the Affordable Care Act; in October 2013 he voted in favor of the [Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014](#), which resolved them and said, "Republicans have to understand we have lost this battle, as I predicted weeks ago, that we would not be able to win because we were demanding something that was not achievable."^[313] Similarly, he was one of nine Republican senators who voted for the [Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013](#) at the end of the year.^[314] By early 2014, McCain's apostasies were enough that the [Arizona Republican Party](#) formally censured him for having what they saw as a liberal record that had been "disastrous and harmful".^[315] McCain remained stridently opposed to many aspects of Obama's foreign policy, however, and in June 2014, following major gains by the [Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant](#) in the [2014 Northern Iraq offensive](#), decried what he saw as a U.S. failure to protect its past gains in Iraq and called on the president's entire national security team to resign. McCain said, "Could all this have been avoided? ... The answer is absolutely yes. If I sound angry it's because I am angry."^[316]

McCain was a supporter of the [Euromaidan](#) protests against Ukrainian President [Viktor Yanukovich](#) and his government, and appeared in [Independence Square in Kiev](#) in December 2013.^[317] Following the overthrow of Yanukovich and subsequent [2014 Russian military intervention in Ukraine](#), McCain became a vocal supporter of providing arms to Ukrainian military forces, saying the [sanctions imposed against Russia](#) were not enough.^[318] In 2014, McCain led the opposition to the appointments of [Colleen Bell](#), [Noah Mamet](#), and [George Tsunis](#) to the ambassadorships in Hungary, Argentina, and Norway, respectively, arguing they were unqualified appointees being rewarded for their political fundraising.^[319] Unlike many Republicans, McCain supported the release and contents of the [Senate Intelligence Committee report on CIA torture](#) in December 2014, saying "The truth is sometimes a hard pill to swallow. It sometimes causes us difficulties at home and abroad. It is sometimes used by our enemies in attempts to hurt us. But the American people are entitled to it, nonetheless."^[320] He added that the CIA's practices following the September 11 attacks had



McCain addresses anti-government protesters in [Kiev, Ukraine](#), pledging his support for their cause, December 15, 2013.