

Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan (February 6, 1911 – June 5, 2004) was the 40th President of the United States (1981–1989) and the 33rd Governor of California (1967–1975). Born in Illinois, Reagan moved to Los Angeles, California in the 1930s, where he was an actor, president of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), and a spokesman for General Electric (GE). His start in politics occurred during his work for GE. Originally a member of the Democratic Party, he switched to the Republican Party in 1962, at the age of 51. After delivering a rousing speech in support of Barry Goldwater's presidential candidacy in 1964, he was persuaded to seek the California governorship, winning two years later and again in 1970. He was defeated in his run for the Republican presidential nomination in 1968 as well as 1976, but won both the nomination and election in 1980.

As president, Reagan implemented bold new political and economic initiatives. His supply-side economic policies, dubbed "Reaganomics," (later called "Voodoo economics" by George H. Bush) included deregulation and substantial tax cuts implemented in 1981. In his first term he survived an assassination attempt, took a hard line against organized labor, and ordered military actions in Grenada. He was reelected in 1984. His second term was marked by the bombing of Libya and the Iran-Contra affair. The president had previously ordered a massive military buildup in an arms race with the Soviet Union, forgoing the strategy of détente. He publicly described the USSR as an "evil empire" and supported anti-Communist movements worldwide.

Reagan left office in 1989. In 1994, the former president disclosed that he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease earlier in the year; he died ten years later at the age of ninety-three.

Reagan is held up as a hero in the conservative Republican movement. However, his actual record is far from exemplary. Reagan is largely credited with first implementing the concept of "supply side economics" which suggested that if we cut taxes on the rich, there will be a "trickle down" effect benefiting all aspects of society. Regan also ran up one the largest budget deficits in the history of the country at that time, and increased the national debt more than any other president before him.

