

5-1-2010

# Increasing the Power: The Role of the Vice Presidency Before and After Dick Cheney

Evan Sorce

Western Oregon University, Evansorce41@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.wou.edu/honors\\_theses](http://digitalcommons.wou.edu/honors_theses)



Part of the [American Politics Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Sorce, Evan, "Increasing the Power: The Role of the Vice Presidency Before and After Dick Cheney" (2010). *Honors Senior Theses/Projects*. Paper 75.

This is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at Digital Commons@WOU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Senior Theses/Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@WOU. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@wou.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@wou.edu).

**Increasing the Power: The Role of the Vice Presidency  
Before and After Dick Cheney**

**By Evan Sorce**

An Honors Thesis Presented to the Honors Committee  
of Western Oregon University  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Graduation from the Honors Program

---

Dr. Mark Henkels, Thesis Advisor

---

Dr. Gavin Keulks, Honors Program Director

Western Oregon University

May, 2010

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped me along my journey through Western Oregon University. Thank you to my Mom and Dad for providing the support and advice I needed when times got tough. Thank you to the political science department for teaching me all I know in my major focus area. Thank you to Dr. Gavin Keulks for taking a chance on me by accepting me into the honors program, and pushing me to get my work done. Finally I want to thank Dr. Dover and Dr. Henkels for their willingness help advise me through this project. A special thanks to Dr. Henkels, who was willing to work with me even under duress.

**Table of Contents:**

**Abstract**.....p.4

**The Founders Intention of the Vice Presidency**.....p.5

John Adams.....p.6

Thomas Jefferson.....p.7

**The 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Vice President**.....p.9

Martin Van Buren.....p.11

Millard Fillmore.....p.12

**Institutionalization and the Modern Vice Presidency**.....p.14

John Nance Gardner.....p.19

Richard Nixon.....p.19

Walter Mondale.....p.21

Albert Gore.....p.22

Dick Cheney.....p.23

**Pros and Cons of the Additional powers of the Modern Vice President**.....p.27

**Conclusion**.....p.30

**Works Cited**.....p.31

**Abstract:**

The Office of the Vice Presidency has always been a strange position. It is the only position in the U.S. government that is part of two different branches, the executive and the legislative. Traditionally, the Vice President's role has been to do nothing except wait for the President to die. John Adams, who was the nation's first Vice President, once said of the office of the Vice Presidency, "My country has contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived". In fact, the office has been so unimportant historically that it has been vacant 15 times (Bauman p.1).

Over time, the office of the Vice Presidency has evolved and developed into the position it is today. The Modern Vice President not only serves as an advisor to the President on domestic and foreign policy, but also acts as the presidential liaison to Congress. The Vice President also serves on, and in some instances chairs, many key committees in the U.S. Government.

The office has gone through three distinct eras that fundamentally changed the position from the role that the founding fathers envisioned to the modern Vice Presidency. The entity that is the modern Vice Presidency has created a problem that would have been unheard of 100 years ago. Since the Office of the Vice President has gained so much power in the last few decades with Vice Presidents such as Richard Nixon, Walter Mondale, and Dick Cheney, there is now the possibility of actually having executive officers that are so powerful they become a co-president; something that the founders of our country never intended.

**The Founders Intention of the Vice Presidency:**

The Office of the Vice Presidency was something of an afterthought that came to the attention of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention in its closing day of deliberations in the summer of 1787. The founders purpose for establishing the office was to create a line of succession should the President be unable to fulfill his duties. This succession problem was unprecedented in Western history. Monarchies did not have the problem of a line of succession and Parliamentary democracies can form new governments at will. The United States is a republic, which is like a parliamentary system with three distinct branches; however, unlike the parliamentary system, the American republic does not have flexible electoral periods. In order to ensure a smooth succession, the founders decided to name this position the Vice President (Felzenberg p.2-3).

The delegates at the convention assigned two responsibilities to the position of the Vice President: presiding over the deliberations of the Senate, and standing by to succeed to the presidency in the event that the President could not fulfill his duties. The founders chose a strange way to select the occupier of the office. Believing that the second most qualified man to be the nation's leader should fill the second highest office, the founders decided that the job would be filled by whoever received the second highest number of votes in the Electoral College (Hatfield p.5).

It appears that the founders wanted to use the Vice Presidency as a training ground for future Presidents. By having the candidate considered by the voters to be the second most qualified person for the Presidency in the position of Vice President, this person would receive training and mentoring from the most qualified person. Hopefully, by the time the President had served his terms, the Vice President could step in and serve

as President (Williams p.1).

Article II, section 1 of the Constitution authorized each presidential elector to cast votes "for two Persons, of whom one at least shall not be an Inhabitant of the same State with themselves." The candidate with the greatest number of electoral votes would become President and the candidate with the next-highest number would become Vice President. Another reason the founders designed the elections this way was to prevent presidential electors from voting only for state or regional favorites, thus preventing deadlocks in which no candidate receives a majority vote. By giving each presidential elector two ballots, the framers made it possible to vote for a favorite-son candidate as well as for a more nationally acceptable individual. In the event that no candidate received a majority, the House of Representatives would decide the election from among the five largest vote getters, with each state casting one vote (Hatfield p.7).

### **John Adams:**

John Adams was well qualified to be the first Vice President of the United States. Adams was a patriot, a Massachusetts lawyer, a member of the Continental Congress, and was fundamental in persuading them to declare independence from the British. Adams was inaugurated as the first Vice President of the United States under George Washington on April 20, 1789, and was reelected in 1792. Adams came into the office excited to serve his country, but he soon found that the office was not suited for someone who was as opinionated and involved as he was. Adams was extremely limited in what he could do because of constitutional limits as well as his reluctance to encroach the President's powers.

President Washington and Vice-President Adams had a cordial relationship. Adams attended several cabinet meetings, and President Washington asked Adams for his opinions on occasion. Washington, however, mostly relied on his cabinet. Adams hated spending his days in the shadow of the President, so much so that he stated that the Vice Presidency was "the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived (Hatfield p.7-9)."

Adams used what little power the office of the Vice President did have to his advantage. Adams wielded power in the Senate, where he presided as President of the Senate. The average number of Senators present during his tenure was only 22. Adams at first refused to be the impartial chairman that the Senate was expecting. In his view, his job as the Senate President was to push the functions of majority leader and thus for almost all practical purposes, he considered himself a member of the Senate. He presented the agenda, intervened in debate, and voiced his opinion on many matters (Williams p.23). Furthermore, Adams still has the most tie-breaking votes in Vice Presidential history which he used twenty nine times; each time voting to support the policies of President Washington and supporting the expansion of the role of the new federal government. Adams voted to support American neutrality in a new war between Britain and France, as well as to seek reprisals against Britain for interfering with U.S. shipping commerce. On at least one occasion, he persuaded Senators to vote against legislation that he opposed, and he frequently lectured the Senate on procedural and policy matters. The Senate became frustrated with Adams' political beliefs and his active role in the Senate. They thought it was inappropriate for the Senate President to have such an active role in their body, so they sought to end it. Senators began to attack Adams



and the Washington administration. Adams, who had Presidential aspirations of his own, decided that his role as an active Senate President was not worth losing his chance to be President. Near the end of Adams' first term of office, he decided to exercise more restraint in the Senate to help advance his political future (Hatfield p.7-9). Adams was well qualified to be the first Vice President of the United States, and was well qualified to take over as President when George Washington decided to retire. The 1796 election not only gave Adams the presidency, it also made his rival Thomas Jefferson vice president

### **Thomas Jefferson:**

In 1796, George Washington decided against a third run for the Presidency. This was the first real test of the election system, as there was not a clear favorite to succeed him.

Thomas Jefferson was a very well known and skilled political figure. At age 33, Jefferson drafted the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson was the Governor of Virginia from 1779 to 1781, and succeeded Benjamin Franklin as the French Minister in 1785. In 1796, in response to pressure from his political party officials, Thomas Jefferson reluctantly ran for President. Although Jefferson lost to John Adams by three electoral votes, he became Vice President because the constitution stated that the candidate that finished second in the Presidential race should become the Vice President. Jefferson was Vice President under a man who belonged to the opposing party (Williams p.24-25). Jefferson strongly believed that the office of the Vice Presidency was confined to legislative functions. He felt that he could not take part in any executive functions at all, because that would be a violation of the separation of power principle (Goldstein p. 137).

Not only did Jefferson refuse President Adams' request to undertake diplomatic missions, but he felt that it was inappropriate for the legislative branch to help the executive branch in this capacity. He also felt that it was wrong to help the leadership of the opposing party. In fact, after a single meeting on the street, the two never communicated directly during the entire term of the administration (Williams p.25).

### **The 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Vice President:**

When the founders developed the process for Presidential elections, they were not fond of political parties. In the Federalist Papers No.1, Alexander Hamilton argued that “nothing could be more ill-judged than that intolerant spirit which has, at all times characterized political parties (Hamilton p.2).” The founders did not want to allow political parties to have a role in the political system; in fact, there was not one mention of political parties in the Constitution. The founders did not consider the implications of having a President from one party and a Vice President from the opposite party. However, this is exactly what happened in 1796 when Jefferson beat Pickney, Adams' pick for Vice President.

Political parties began to form during the Washington Administration, and by the election of 1800, most of the political figures in Washington were members of a party. This was a major weakness of the system that the founders had not considered. During the election of 1800, the country became aware of the problem with how we elect our Vice President. The Democratic-Republicans ran two candidates for the presidency since each elector could vote twice. With two candidates running, the Democratic-Republicans hoped to capture both the Presidency and the Vice Presidency. The party officials decided

among themselves that they wanted their candidate Thomas Jefferson to be President, and Aaron Burr to be Vice President. However, when the electors cast their votes, Jefferson and Burr were tied at 73 electoral votes each. This sent the election to the House of Representatives to decide who would be President and who would be Vice President. After 36 ballots, Jefferson won and Burr became Vice President (Young p.11-14).

After that debacle, Congress felt that they had to do something to assure that an event such as the 1800 election never happened again. Some advocated for the abolishment of the position of the Vice President altogether (Goldstein p.6). Eventually the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was proposed and passed. The 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment provided for separate elections for the President and the Vice President.

The passage of the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment, however, had some large unintended consequences to it. After the passage of the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment, there was a sharp decline in the caliber of Vice Presidents. Since the Vice Presidency would no longer go to the person who finished second in the race for the Presidency, the office lost some of its luster and its ability to attract politicians of the stature of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Although the office was relatively unattractive, there were still some prominent politicians who did accept the office, such as John C. Calhoun and Martin Van Buren. However, more often than not, the vice presidential nomination was given by the party convention to defeated fractions of the party as a kind of consolation prize, or to “balance out the ticket” to make the ticket more attractive to the greatest number of voters. Ticket-balancing generally involves two important factors: geography and ideology (Goldstein p.70). Especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to the sensitive issue of slavery, parties would focus on geography to balance out their tickets. If the presidential

nominee was from the North, the party would make sure that the vice presidential nominee was from the South.

Out of the twenty-three vice presidents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, six of them were not nominated to seek another term with the President running for re-election. Six others died in office. Four of them succeeded to the Presidency following the death of their President; none of their administrations were distinguished and none of them were nominated to seek their own term as President (ibid p.7).

### **Martin Van Buren:**

Martin Van Buren was a Senator and Secretary of State before he became Andrew Jackson's second Vice President in 1828. Van Buren was one of the most powerful Vice Presidents in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although he was unable to sway President Jackson from trying to take immediate action to transfer government deposits from the Bank of the United States to state depositories, Van Buren did enjoy a greater measure of influence in Jackson's administration than any previous Vice President (Hatfield p. 110).

Van Buren helped Treasury Secretary Roger B. Taney convince the President to adopt a less hostile posture when Jackson, who was angry that the French failed to comply with the 1832 treaty for the payment of U.S claims against France, threatened to seek congressional authorization to issue letters of marquee. Taney was worried that this move would lead to war with France. When Secretary of State Louis McLane resigned to protest that Jackson failed to take a hard-line stance with France, Van Buren helped Jackson pick Senator John Forsyth of Georgia as McLane's replacement (ibid p.110). Van Buren spent a considerable amount of time "advising members of the cabinet,

writing significant parts of Jackson's messages, and acting as the President's chief advisor on patronage and foreign affairs... (ibid p.111)"

Presiding over the Senate was the most difficult and challenging task that Van Buren faced as Vice President. During Jackson's second term, he faced an opposition coalition of National Republicans, nullifiers, states' rights advocates, and eventually disaffected Democrats, who felt that Jackson was an overreaching despot. Van Buren had to deal with many tense moments and votes as the presiding officer of the Senate. None of them were as intense as Senator Clay's resolution of censure of the President for his refusal to show his withdraw directive for the Bank of the United States of America. Clay and other Jackson opponents continuously attacked not only Jackson, but Van Buren, for the high rate of business and bank foreclosures all over the country (ibid p.113).

Although Van Buren was not able to convince President Jackson to steer clear of rhetoric about the National Bank, Van Buren did a lot more than previous Vice Presidents. He was able to advise the president on policy, and helped choose personnel for important cabinet positions.

### **Millard Fillmore:**

Millard Fillmore had a strange path to the Vice Presidency and ultimately the Presidency. Fillmore had very little education, because he had to leave school at an early age to work for his survival. Even though he received little formal education, Fillmore was admitted to the New York bar in 1823. Fillmore was a member of the House of Representatives for eight years. During which he rose through the ranks and became

Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. In 1848, while he was the Comptroller of New York, Zachery Taylor nominated him as his Vice President (Williams p. 53).

Fillmore's nomination angered the party bosses who were worried that all of the patronage jobs in New York were now going to be selected by Fillmore, especially because Taylor and Fillmore got along well. The leadership decided to go after candidates that Fillmore supported. Fillmore tried everything he could do to defeat the leadership coalition, but he could not do so. This cost Fillmore in multiple ways, because he also lost the friendship and the respect of the President. Their relationship became so cold that Taylor did not even talk to Fillmore about his itinerary before he traveled through New York (*ibid* p.54).

After his failure to influence the patronage system, Fillmore decided to concentrate on his lone constitutional duty as Vice President, presiding over the U.S Senate. Unfortunately, Fillmore presided over the Senate at the time when the Senate was deadlocked during the great debate of 1850 over the compromise bill (*ibid* p.54). After a month of inaction and bitter arguments, Fillmore tried to censure the Senate, lecturing them about the rules, procedures, and expected behavior of Senators. Unfortunately the Senate was not swayed at all, and by mid-year no business had actually been done (*ibid* 54).

A few months later President Taylor died, and Fillmore became President. Most of Taylor's administration refused to work for Fillmore and resigned. Fillmore struggled from the beginning of his Presidency and never fully recovered. Fillmore failed to receive his party's nomination, and, after refusing to switch to the Republican Party after the Whig Party collapsed in the 1850's, Fillmore's political career was over (Williams p.55)

**Institutionalization and the Modern Vice Presidency:**

The institutional responsibilities that have come to the office of the Vice President since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century have given increased respectability to the Office. The trend of recent Presidents delegating more duties and executive power to their Vice Presidents is not a coincidence. The increased role of the Presidential candidate in choosing his own Vice President and the heightened visibility of the candidates gives the President more reason to involve the Vice President in the administration. More importantly, the heightened focus of the President's involvement in foreign as well as domestic affairs since the New Deal has provided endless opportunities for the Vice President to get involved (Goldstein p.151).

One of the institutional responsibilities of the Vice President that has developed in the last few decades is chairing Presidential Commissions. This is something that is easy for a President to do that could potentially mean a lot to the Vice President. The President has the power to create a committee to address any domestic or foreign problem. Since Presidents are usually too busy to chair these committees, they appoint their Vice Presidents to chair the committees. Such supervisory roles have brought the Vice President into the executive branch in a formal way (Goldstein p.151).

The precedence of establishing these roles a regular Vice Presidential activity began with the Eisenhower Administration. In August of 1953, Eisenhower created the Government Contracts Committee with Nixon as its Chair. The committee was charged with the mission of ending racial discrimination in companies holding government contracts. Eisenhower then asked Nixon to head up the Cabinet Committee on Price Stability for Economic Growth, a group that was created to recommend policies on

inflation (ibid p.152).

Kennedy followed in Eisenhower's footsteps and assigned his Vice President, Lyndon Johnson, as the chair of rather important committees. Kennedy delegated to Johnson responsibility for the federal government's effort to stop racial discrimination. Kennedy combined the President's Committee on Government Contracts and the President's Committee on Government Employment Policy into the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity with Johnson at its head. This new committee had more enforcement power and was more active than the old committee. It could terminate government contracts with companies that discriminated on racial grounds (ibid p.152). A second assignment that was given to Johnson and subsequent Vice Presidents was the Chair of the National Aeronautics and Space Council (ibid p.154).

Special Envoy Foreign Travel has provided a second institutional activity for the modern Vice Presidency. Special Envoys have covered most of the globe in frequent travels abroad. In foreign policy as in everything else, the Vice President depends on the President for his assignments (Goldstein p.159). The use of the Vice President as an envoy offers several advantages for the administration. Presidents and Secretaries of State cannot satisfy all of the diplomatic requests made, so Vice Presidents have eased part of this burden. As Hubert Humphrey, Vice President to Lyndon Johnson once stated, "the Vice President can perform assignments that the President feels would be unwise for them to take on themselves, but for which an official lower than Vice President would be unsuitable (Goldstein p.160)." Special Envoy also offers the advantage that the Vice President will very rarely say no, because it will give him something to do with public



exposure. The media does not care what the Vice President does on any given day, but it is newsworthy if he is traveling abroad to meet with foreign diplomats. It also makes the Vice President look busy, which has a very positive impact to the administration.

Special envoys can be implemented for multiple reasons. They can be designed to convey a message that is likely to produce a result that the administration is looking for. For example, Johnson sent Humphrey to Western Europe to discuss a range of topics with the heads of state from the Western European powers, including nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and the future of NATO. They can be visits with important symbolic value in communicating support for a political regime or policy, such as when Johnson along with JFK went to Berlin after the Berlin Wall was built to show American support for West Germany. Special Envoys can also be fact-finding missions, such as Johnson's trip to South Vietnam (ibid p.163-164).

The third institutional responsibility that has developed out of the modern Vice Presidency is the role of Presidential Advisor. This is the most important role that the Vice President has. The cost to the President of giving the Vice President some committee chairmanships and diplomatic missions is low, but presidential time is precious. The President can only spend his time talking to his most trusted advisors. The ability of the Vice President to influence important policy decisions is almost solely based on the relationship between the President and the Vice President (ibid p.167).

There have been frequent attempts to institutionalize the Vice President's role as policy adviser to the President. Presidents have invited the Vice President to cabinet meetings. Congress has made the Vice President a member of the National Security Council (ibid 167). These decisions have helped move the office of the Vice Presidency

into the executive branch and have improved the office's image.

Some presidents including Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, Clinton, and H.W Bush have used their Vice Presidents as policy advisors. Johnson, for example, became an important advisor for President Kennedy on civil rights issues. Johnson strongly advocated for a massive job-training and vocational education program, and the establishment of a community relations service for under-represented communities (ibid p.169).

This role as presidential advisor has continued to grow over time. As the presiding officer of the Senate, the Vice President has traditionally had offices on Capitol Hill. However, in 1961, the institutionalization of the Vice President's office began, furthering the idea that the Vice Presidency has moved into the executive branch. At that time, the Vice President and his staff moved into what was then known as the Executive Office Building next to the White House (Relyea p.24).

In 1970, Congress established a budget line item for the Vice President's executive office in what was called "Special Assistance to the President". When this line item was created, it provided appropriations for expenses necessary to allow the Vice President to provide assistance to the President in connection with presidential-assigned functions. These funds amounted to \$3-4 million and allowed the Vice President to hire qualified staff and to hire and maintain administrative support. This meant that the Vice President not only did not have to borrow staff from other departments and agencies to get staff assistance, but was also under less pressure to look for leadership on temporary committees in order to get personnel. The Vice President began to hire staff specialists and the office of the Vice President soon began to look more and more like the office of

the President. Ford, for example, was the first Vice President to have his own national security adviser and his own counsel. In 1978, a White House staff authorization was proposed and passed through Congress which meant that a Vice Presidential staff employment structure was established, along with arrangements for making expenditures for certain authorized expenses in accordance with helping the Vice President (Relyea p.24).

At the beginning of Vice President Ford's first term, he declined Presidential offers of White House staff assistance and began to recruit his own staff, including a counsel, a national security adviser, speechwriters, and multiple administrative aides. He began with a staff of 17 and with more and more appropriations increases, his staff grew to 70 by the time he became President. This has led to the Vice President's office becoming an independent source of information, expertise, and policy. Ford's personnel practices also established precedence that the Vice President has the freedom to hire and fire staff (ibid p.25).

During the Vice Presidencies of Ford, Rockefeller, and Mondale, a formal organizational system was developed with hierarchical chains of command, which allowed for improved communication between the Vice President's office and the rest of the Executive office of the President. Furthermore, starting with the Mondale Vice Presidency and continuing to this day, the Vice President has an office in the West Wing of the White House, placing the Vice President in close proximity to the Oval Office and the President (ibid p.25).

These institutional steps towards moving the Vice President into the executive branch have not only given the office more legitimacy, but have also greatly enhanced its

ability to be active in the executive branch and have enhanced the office's powers.

**John N. Garner:**

Franklin D. Roosevelt selected John Garner, who was a veteran of the legislature, as his choice for Vice President in 1932. Roosevelt picked John Garner for multiple reasons. He was a counter-weight to the more progressive Roosevelt. As a former Speaker of the house, Garner was considered a veteran of the legislature who knew how Congress worked and how to get legislation passed.

Although Garner maintained Vice Presidential offices on Capitol Hill like his predecessors, he did not consider himself as having primarily a legislative role. Garner regularly attended and participated in Cabinet meetings, advised the President on domestic and foreign policy, and especially during the first few years of the New Deal, often served as a liaison between the President and Congress. Although the Vice President was not one of the formally designated officials to attend the deliberations of the emergency coordinating councils created by President Roosevelt, there is evidence that Garner was invited and did attend some meetings of the National Emergency Council (Relyea p.3).

Garner also was the first Vice President to go on a diplomatic trip abroad. He attended the installation of Manuel Quezon as the President of the Philippines, and traveled to Japan to meet with Emperor Hirohito.

**Richard Nixon:**

General Eisenhower selected Senator Richard M. Nixon as his Vice Presidential

nominee in the election of 1952. Before becoming the Vice President in 1953, Nixon served one term as a Representative and half a term as a Senator. Eisenhower felt that the ignorance of past Vice Presidents was not only shameful, but was dangerous for the country. He promised that Nixon would be the best-informed and most involved Vice President in history (Ambrose p.610). Nixon exercised greater power and responsibility in his Vice Presidency than any of his predecessors.

Nixon was a very active Presidential liaison with Congress, as well as a presidential representative in Republican Party events and campaigns. Although Eisenhower was still the party leader, he did not like to attend Republican Party events, so this was delegated to Nixon. He made some important friends speaking at party fundraisers all over the country, and was far better known than any of his predecessors as Vice President (ibid, p.613). However during the time when Nixon was the party spokesman, Republican percentages started slipping badly. Even in 1956 when Eisenhower swept the country, the Republicans could not take control of Congress.

As Vice President, Nixon stayed away from domestic anti-communism movements, but he made international Communism his top priority. As a member of Eisenhower's Special Envoy, Nixon used his expertise and experience in the area of communism to his advantage. In this role he undertook seven international missions, during which he visited 54 different countries. From his first trip to Asia in 1953 to his last trip to Russia in 1959, Nixon toured the outposts of freedom around the world. He traveled to every continent except Antarctica as part of the Special Envoy (ibid p.615-616).

Nixon filled some important institutional roles for the Office of the Vice

Presidency. He attended 163 Cabinet meetings, 19 of which he chaired. Nixon also attended 217 National Security Council sessions, 26 of which he chaired. He also chaired the Government Contract Committee. The committee indicated that it had secured compliance in 37 of the 79 cases it reviewed (Relyea p.6). He also chaired the Cabinet Committee on Price Stability for Economic Growth. Thus Nixon took a giant leap forward for the office, chairing committees and headlining Republican fundraisers.

### **Walter Mondale:**

James “Jimmy” Carter was a very talented politician. However he had very little experience when it came to the Presidency. Carter spent one term as a state senator in Georgia and then one term as the state’s Governor. Carter saw that the Vice President was a way to address some of his deficiencies, and looked for an experienced member of Congress for his Vice President (Lechelt p.27). Jimmy Carter’s Vice Presidential nominee for the 1976 election was Walter Mondale. Before Mondale was the nominee, he was a Senator from the state of Minnesota, and before that was the Attorney General of Minnesota (Relyea p13).

Carter worked to “executivize” the Vice Presidency by moving it into the executive branch. This allowed Mondale to put his experience to work for Carter (ibid p.28). At Carter’s insistence, Mondale was given an office in the West Wing of the White House near the Oval Office. Shortly after the election, Carter and Mondale sat down and wrote out an understanding that Mondale would not be burdened with secondary roles, but in the words of President Carter “would truly be second in command involved in every aspect of governing” (Relyea p.14). No previous Vice President had ever been as

important a presidential adviser as Mondale was to President Carter. Mondale would see Carter four to five hours a day as the President's "general advisor", and according to Carter, was "the only person that I have, with both the substantive knowledge and political stature to whom I can turn over a major assignment" (Relyea p.24). Mondale helped Carter pick cabinet members and influenced the President to appoint certain people to high level positions including the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of Education (Goldstein p.173) Mondale was the driving force behind the decisions to cancel production of the B-1 bomber and to slow the schedule for submitting the tax revision message (Goldstein p.173). Mondale was a great help to the President in developing and maintaining relationships between the White House and Congress. He also made 14 trips as Special Envoy to the President to a total of 35 countries.

Mondale was the kind of Vice President that President Carter needed; one that was well qualified and had plenty of experience. Mondale oversaw the Vice Presidency move far away from the legislative branch and almost fully into the executive branch.

### **Albert Gore:**

Albert Gore continued the growth and expansion of the Vice Presidency that had begun with the past few Vice Presidents. Gore was Bill Clinton's Vice Presidential nominee in the 1992 election. Prior to the election, Al Gore served as a member of the House of Representatives for four terms and as a Senator from Tennessee for one term. Gore participated in Cabinet and National Security Council meetings, but did a lot more than just that. Gore became one of the President's "most influential advisers." Gore was assigned many different duties during his eight years as Vice President. One of the first

special duties assigned to Gore by Clinton began shortly after their inauguration. In early March of 1993, President Clinton created a National Performance Review Task Force that was to be headed by Gore. The goal of this task force was to make the entire Federal Government cost less and be more efficient (Relyea p.19).

Gore also was assigned by the President to work with relevant departments and agencies to identify problems and recommend solutions about border management and immigration policy in hopes of solving some of the country's immigration issues. Gore was also assigned by President Clinton to lead a U.S and Russian Joint Commission on Energy and Space, and to chair the President's Community Enterprise Board, which was created to provide advice and coordination regarding various federal programs available to distressed communities. Gore also was charged with overseeing and coordinating the various crime prevention programs mandated by the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. In addition, Gore assumed a major role regarding telecommunications and electronic information infrastructure policy and development, aviation safety, security matters, and electronic commerce strategy (Relyea p.19). By the time Gore left office, the Vice Presidency was the most powerful the position had ever been.

### **Richard "Dick" Cheney:**

Dick Cheney was the most influential and powerful Vice President in the history of the United States. Cheney was instrumental in influencing most of the Administration's policies, especially foreign policy, where he was very experienced (Lechelt p.228). Cheney had been a political insider in Washington for decades. He



began working in Richard Nixon's Office of Economic Opportunity. His hard work and conservatism caught the eye of some powerful people, most notably Donald Rumsfeld. When Rumsfeld became White House Chief of staff under Ford, he installed Cheney as his Deputy. Cheney was troubled by what happened to Nixon, and felt that post-Watergate, there was an erosion of power and respect for the Presidency as an institution. Cheney soon became Ford's White House Chief of Staff and came to believe that the founders were smart to invest such strong powers in the executive branch, which could more easily lead the nation with one voice and act decisively in a crisis than the legislative branch could (Walsh et al, p.3).

In 1979, Cheney was elected to the House of Representatives from Wyoming. He was reelected five times and became the house minority whip in December of 1988. Cheney served as the whip for two and a half months until he was appointed Secretary of Defense by George H.W Bush in March of 1989. As a member of the House, Cheney took a very conservative stance on a range of issues from abortion to regulation. Cheney served as the Secretary of Defense until the end of the Bush administration in 1993. As Secretary of Defense, he presided over reductions of the military after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Cheney also oversaw the U.S invasion of Panama and the Gulf War. (Lechelt p.230-241).

Cheney then took a break from the Federal government for about 7 years to become a Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, and become the CEO of Halliburton (ibid p.241).

After George W. Bush was assured that he was going to be the Republican nominee for President in 2000, Bush picked Cheney to head up his Vice Presidential

search committee. Cheney sent lengthy questionnaires and interviewed a dozen or so of the top members of the Republican Party who were interested in serving as the Vice President. After learning the deepest and darkest secrets about military service records, criminal histories, and other intimate details, and interviewing these candidates, Cheney and the search committee decided that he was the most outstanding candidate for the job. On July 25, 2000, George W. Bush announced that his pick for Vice President was Cheney (Gellman p.22).

Cheney's advanced and unprecedented role in the Bush Administration could be due to the fact that Cheney made it clear from day one that he was not interested in the traditional role of the Vice President. He was not interested in mundane tasks such as attending fund-raisers and ceremonial trips (Gillman p.35). According to Dan Bartlett who served as the counselor to Bush, "He said from the outset. If I'm going to do this I'm going to do this differently... I'm not going to be the guy going to funerals. I want to be a real partner in helping make decisions with regard to domestic and foreign policy (ibid p.35)." Cheney stated that he "has probably tasted from the cup of presidential power more than any other vice president in modern history. But if the President and the Vice President disagree, the President gets to have the final decision (Gillman p.53)."

After election night came and passed and there was no clear winner, Cheney suggested to Bush that someone should start assembling the team to take control of the government on inauguration day in case they win. Cheney volunteered to do so, and Bush appointed him as the Chairman of the Transition Team for the President (ibid p.32). Since there was no clear winner of the election, there was no government office space for Cheney to conduct the search. Cheney set up operations at an office in Virginia. There he

conducted his search committee with three cell phones and his daughter and a staff man making calls. It was unprecedented for a Vice President to run a transition team. It was unprecedented for the Vice President to also hire cabinet chiefs, assistant directors, and deputy assistants. Cheney created yet another important precedent for the Office of the Vice Presidency by selecting candidates for important high ranking cabinet positions such as the Secretary of State, Treasury Secretary, Attorney General, and Defense Secretary. Cheney recruited these candidates, pre-interviewed them, and escorted them for Bush's approval. It is not a surprise that Cheney got the people he wanted in those positions (Lechelt p.249-250). Cheney then decided to go farther and decided to pick someone as Energy secretary, and selected Christine Todd Whitman to run the Environmental Protection Agency. Although Cheney made sure to defer to Bush on the final "yea" or "nay" on each nominee, Cheney was really the person who selected the cabinet (Gillman p.38).

Cheney had an office in the West Wing of the White House not far from the Oval Office (Relyea p.19). Cheney quickly hired his staff beginning with David Addington. Addington was Cheney's longtime lawyer and a strong advocate of presidential authority, who was picked to be the Counsel to the Vice President (Gillman p.40). Lewis "Scooter" Libby, who served under Cheney at the Defense Department, became the Vice President's Chief of Staff and national security advisor. This gave him command of every employee in the office of the Vice President (Gillman p.44).

Many Vice Presidents have tried to sit on the National Security Committee Principals Committee, but all of them had failed before Cheney. The NSC's Principals Committee is the senior interagency forum to consider policy issues that affect national

security (George W. Bush). In fact as a rule, no Vice President could attend the meetings going back to the committee's creation in 1947. Cheney sat in on almost every one of these committees meetings, sitting in the first chair on the right in the Situation Room. (ibid p.54)

President Bush decided to create a new task force on the nation's energy situation and assigned Cheney as the Chair. The four-month energy committee would have an impact on the environment for years to come. Cheney took this assignment as a mandate to redefine two boundaries; the one between the executive branch and its competitors, and the one between regulation and the market place. Cheney's ultimate goal was to push the boundaries of presidential authority (Gillman p.81-82).

Cheney made headlines when he refused to release the minutes and agendas of these task force meetings, citing executive privilege. Environmentalist groups sued in U.S. District Court arguing that Cheney and his task force focused on dirty energy that would only benefit those companies, and that the American people have the right to see what the Task Force did. Cheney's lawyers argued that the case was about the separation of powers, and that forcing the White House to release that information would hurt the White House's ability to get candid advice (Mears p.1). The Supreme Court ruled in Cheney's favor and his plan to expand the powers of the White House worked (Cheney v. U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia).

Cheney also brought a ready to sign reply to the Senators who asked what the President's position on global warming was. The reply that Cheney and his staff wrote stated that the current state of scientific knowledge about causes of and solutions to global warming was inconclusive.... Therefore, it would be *premature* at this time for the

President to propose any specific policy or approach aimed at addressing global warming. The letter continued to state that more research was required to completely prove that there was a connection between the increasing amounts of greenhouse gases humans put into the atmosphere and the warming of the planet (ibid p.84). Cheney then got the letter to the President and convinced him to sign it before representatives from the EPA could meet with the President to urge that he take action on global warming.

During September 11, 2001, Cheney found himself in charge of Washington's response to the crisis. Cheney was rushed out of his office and was moved to the Presidential Emergency Operating Center in the White House basement. During the situation, Cheney was one of the only individuals in the bunker who stayed calm. He recommended to Bush that he not return to Washington because his safety couldn't be guaranteed. It was also Cheney who convinced Bush to authorize Air Force pilots to intercept and if necessary, destroy any commercial jetliners that appeared to be hijacked (Lechelt p.254-255).

After 9/11, Cheney argued that America's foreign policy from then on must be to "go out and defeat, smash, and kill the terrorists (Walsh et al., p.4)." Whether the decisions were spying on terrorism suspects inside the United States without a warrant, invading Afghanistan, occupying Iraq, or allowing American operatives to detain suspected terrorists and use "enhanced interrogations" to question them, Cheney was willing to do whatever it took to prevent another 9/11-like attack (Walsh et al, p.4). Thus Richard "Dick" Cheney was by far the most powerful Vice President in the history of the United States. In eight years, Cheney expanded the position more than anyone else in history.

**Pros and Cons of the Additional Powers of the Modern Vice President:**

The increase in powers and institutionalization of the Office of Vice President into the executive branch has its positives and negatives. The Vice Presidency has outgrown its traditional role of presiding over the Senate and waiting for the President to die. As the modern Vice Presidency has developed, Vice Presidents have found that there is a lot that they can do, including be going on diplomatic missions, serving on committees, or advising the President. This tremendous increase of power, along with the ability to help influence and set policy, has made the opportunity to serve as the Vice President of the United States a much more attractive position.

These powers also bring up some concerns that would have been unheard of 100 years ago. The increase in power and responsibility that the Vice President holds requires someone who is highly qualified and experienced. The thinking behind how candidates select their Vice Presidential nominees has not really evolved with the position and it is entirely possible that a Vice Presidential nominee who is unqualified and inexperienced gets elected to be Vice President. This could negatively impact our country. Another concern is that the Office of the Vice President has full time staff dedicated to serve the Vice President; it gives the office the resources it needs to find evidence and intelligence to back up the Vice President's policy ideas. The Vice President's staff has the ability to look at speeches and statements that are to be made by the President before they happen. This potentially could divide the executive branch and embarrass the administration if disagreements occur and these disagreements are leaked to the media. Also now that the Vice President is a much more public position, what are the implications of the Vice

President making claims and statements in the media that are not true, and how does that impact the administration?

Another concern is the great debate about which branch of government the Vice President occupies. The only Constitutional power assigned to the Vice Presidency is presiding officer of the Senate. That technically places the Vice President in the legislative branch. The President cannot give assignments to a member of the legislative branch, because that is a violation of the separation of powers. There is a great precedence in the President delegating tasks to the Vice President. The Vice President now has an office in the White House, and also has a budget under a line item titled “special assistance to the president.” This proves that the Vice President has moved toward the executive branch. However Dick Cheney himself, in order to prevent the office from releasing classified material, argued that Presidential Executive Orders do not affect the Office of the Vice President because the office exercises executive and legislative branch duties (Duffy). Cheney has found a loophole that could potentially allow the Vice President to grab power as well as ignore what the President is ordering the Vice President to do. This has created the potential of confusion as to who is really in charge of the country. This confusion could create a co-presidency, something the founders never intended to happen.

**Conclusion:**

The modern office of the Vice Presidency is completely different than the office that was originally created by the founders of the Constitution. The Vice Presidency is no longer limited to presiding over the Senate and doing work that the president does not

want to do. The Vice President now has a full staff, including a chief of staff, a national security advisor, and policy experts with a variety of expertise. This allows the Office of the Vice President to work on policy research as well as receive the same intelligence and information that the President gets. It also allows the Vice President to influence policy in a way that traditionally only the President could do. In fact, this vast expansion of power (especially under Cheney) has created the possibility of a co-presidency happening; something that the founders of the Constitution never intended to happen.

There has been much debate about whether Dick Cheney's power as Vice President has created a lasting and dangerous precedent. During the 2008 election, the Vice Presidential nominees debated the appropriate role of the Vice Presidency. The eventual winner of the Vice Presidency, Joe Biden, argued that Cheney's overly expansive view of the Vice Presidency almost created a "shadow government" inside the White House. Biden argued that the Vice President should be an advisor to the President and a member of the President's team, and that was how he was going to do the job. Biden and Obama agree about returning the role of the Vice Presidency to a more "traditional" role (Lee p.1-2).

Although Joe Biden is not planning to run the office of the Vice President the same way that Cheney did, there still is that possibility that a future Vice President will. Throughout Cheney's time as the Vice President, he constantly pushed the role of the Vice President to unprecedented areas. Cheney has set the dangerous precedent that a future Vice President can expand on which can further increase the possibility of a co-presidency occurring.



## Bibliography

Mark O. Hatfield, with the Senate Historical Office. *Vice Presidents of the United States, 1789-1993* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997). Introduction by Mark O. Hatfield.

Ambrose, Stephen E. *Nixon Volume 1-The Education of a Politician 1913-1962*. Vol. 1. New York : Simon & Schuster, 1987. 0

Bauman, Richard. "The 'Worst' Best Job in the United States." *American History* 39, no. 3 (August 2004): p50-80.

Bush, W. George. "National Security Presidential Directive 1." February 13<sup>th</sup> 2001. <http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-1.htm> (accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2010).

Harold C Relya. *The Vice Presidency: Evolution of the Modern Office 1933-2001*. Congressional Research Service. 2001.

Duffy, Michael. "The Cheney Branch of Government." *Time*, June 22, 2007.  
Felzenberg, Alvin S. "The Vice Presidency Grows up." *Policy Review* (February-March 2001): 11. (accessed May 10, 2010).

Gellman, Barton. *Angler The Cheney Vice Presidency*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.

Goldstein, Joel K. *The Modern American Vice Presidency The Transformation of a Political Institution*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison, and John Jay. *The Federalist Papers*. Edited by Clinton Rossiter. 1787. Reprint, New York: Mentor, 1999.

Lechelt, Jack. *The Vice Presidency in Foreign Policy: From Mondale to Cheney*. Edited by Melvin I Urofsky. El Paso, New Mexico: LFB Scholarly, 2009.

Lee, Carol E. "Biden to shrink VP Role-- Big Time." *Politico*, December 14, 2008. <http://www.polirix.com/news/stories/120816558.html> (accessed May 29th, 2010)

Mears, Bill. "High court hears arguments on Cheney task force." *CNN*, June 24, 2004. <http://www.cnn.com/2004/LAW/04/27/scotus.cheney/index.html> (accessed May 29, 2010).

Nixon, Richard M. Letter, 1964. In *World Book's Year Book*. N.p.: n.p., n.d.

Cheney v. U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, 542 U.S. 367 (2004) available at: ([http://oyez.org/cases/2000-2009/2003/2003\\_03\\_475](http://oyez.org/cases/2000-2009/2003/2003_03_475)).

Walsh, Kenneth T, Kevin Whitelaw, Angie C Marek, and Jim Stanford. "The Man Behind The Curtain." *U.S. News and World Report*; , October 13, 2003, 26-32.

Williams, Irving G. *The Rise of the Vice Presidency*. Washington D.C: Public Affairs Press, 1956.

Young, Donald. *American Roulette: The History and Dilemma of the Vice Presidency*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965.