



Disability History and Awareness Month 2023

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, more commonly known by his initials, FDR, was prolific in early 20th-century politics. He won a record four presidential elections and became a central figure in world events during the first half of the 20th century. Roosevelt directed the federal government during most of the Great Depression, implementing his New Deal domestic agenda in response to the worst economic crisis in U.S. history. He built the New Deal Coalition, which defined modern liberalism in the United States throughout the middle third of the 20th century. World War II dominated his third and fourth terms, which ended in victory shortly after he died in office.



Born with the Roosevelt namesake, FDR graduated from Groton School and Harvard College and attended Columbia Law School. In 1905, he married his fifth cousin, once removed, Eleanor Roosevelt. They had six children; five survived into adulthood. He won a seat in the New York State Senate in 1910, then served as Assistant Secretary of the Navy during World War I.

In 1921, Roosevelt contracted Polio, and his legs became permanently paralyzed. While attempting to recover from his condition, Roosevelt founded a polio rehabilitation center in Warm Springs, Georgia. Roosevelt was elected governor of New York in 1928; while in office, he focused on initiatives to combat economic hardship before turning his eyes to the presidency.

After beating President Hoover, FDR began his presidency during the Great Depression. During his first 100 days, FDR churned out an unprecedented agenda -- a combination of executive actions, policy directives, and laws colloquially called the New Deal. The economy improved rapidly during Roosevelt's first term, and he easily won re-election in 1936.

Despite the popularity of the New Deal among supporters of Roosevelt, from 1936 onwards, New Deal legislation was frequently struck down by the US Supreme Court; this led to FDR's

unsuccessful push to expand the court during his presidency – a rare failure among a string of successful partnerships with congress. Other major 1930s legislation and agencies implemented under Roosevelt include the Securities and Exchange Commission, the National Labor Relations Act, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Social Security, and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Roosevelt won a fourth term on his post-war recovery plan. However, his physical health began declining, and less than three months into his fourth term, Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945. While he is generally remembered and celebrated for the successes and innovations of his presidency, the relocation of Japanese Americans to internment camps during the war left a stain on his legacy.

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