

# Ford Sworn In As Vice President Ceremonies Held Hour After House Approval, 389-35

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Gerald R. Ford took the oath as Vice President yesterday in the House chamber, his home for 25 years, and promised to do "the very best I can for America."

One hour after the House voted 389 to 35 to confirm Ford, he and President Nixon entered the chamber where House and Senate, as well as the diplomatic corps, all nine Supreme Court Justices, and the President's Cabinet had assembled. The two walked to the platform below the speaker's rostrum, where Presidents traditionally deliver their annual State of the Union messages.

For Mr. Nixon, who did not deliver his address in person last January, this was his first appearance inside the Capitol since June 1, 1972, when he reported on his trip to the Soviet Union. That was just before the Watergate break-in, which has been the source of much of his trouble since.

During his 15 minutes in the chamber, President Nixon spoke not a word, except to exchange private greetings with Speaker Carl Albert and others on the platform. Chief Justice Warren E. Burger administered the oath at 6:10 p.m., with Mrs. Ford standing beside her husband holding a Bible and Mr. Nixon standing behind him.

After Ford delivered a 10-minute speech saying farewell to the House and expressing his faith in America, the President departed alone. Ford remained briefly for another round of long applause, and then led the senators back across the Capitol to the Senate chamber and took up his duties as its presiding officer.

In the visitors' galleries were Ford's four children. Sitting beside them was Mrs. Nixon. Also attending were the President's top staff aide, Alexander M. Haig Jr., and Mr. Nixon's long-time secretary, Rose Mary Woods.

Sitting almost directly in front of Ford in a first-row seat was Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, whom Ford tried to impeach for a variety of reasons including income as president of a private foundation. Several House members who voted against confirming Ford spoke of his "insensitivity to the rule of law" in this matter.

This was a unique ceremony, the first time in American history that a Vice President—Ford is the 40th—had taken office at any time except when a President was sworn in.

It was provided for by the 25th Amendment, ratified in 1967, after the assassination of President Kennedy had left the office of Vice President vacant for 14 months. The amendment provides that when a vacancy occurs, the President shall nominate a Vice President, who will take office after being approved by a majority vote of each house.

The 17th vacancy in the vice-presidential office occurred on Oct. 10, when Spiro T. Agnew resigned and was fined for income tax evasion. Two days later Mr. Nixon nominated Ford, who has been Republican leader of the House for nine years. The Senate approved the nomination by a vote of 92 to 3.

Even the few House members who voted against Ford as too conservative, or not up to the job of President if it becomes vacant, praised the Michigan congressman as an "honest and decent man." The long, loud applause that greeted Ford after his confirmation and when he left the chamber as Vice President was genuine, and during his speech, when he mentioned his family, Ford appeared close to tears.

Ford's goal had been to become Speaker of the House. Instead, at 6:33 p.m., he took up the gavel as presiding officer of the Senate. In this role he will never be able to speak or vote except to say yea or nay to break a tie. But he was given five minutes to address the Senate, and he said:

"A funny thing happened to me on the way to becoming Speaker."

Earlier, when Albert first announced the vote in the House, Ford entered the chamber to a standing, cheering ovation. He made his way to the Speaker's desk to shake hands with Albert. They faced the crowded chamber, an arm around each other, and waved, standing together for the last time as House colleagues of 25 years, the last nine as party leaders.

Two surprises marked the debate—the announcement by Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter Rodino (D-N.J.) that he would vote against Ford, and the announcement by Rep. Andrew Young (D-Ga.), one of 15 black members, that he would vote for him.

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