

1956

The soldier-statesman Eisenhower did little to agitate public opinion during his first term. The President established a White House staff based on his military experience and delegated responsibility to the Cabinet members.³⁹ Relationships with Congress were cordial and even better with the media. A Korean cease fire was finally negotiated on July 27, 1953. However, the mid-term congressional elections saw the Republicans lose their majority status as the Democrats gained an edge in the Senate, 49 to 47, and a working margin of 232 to 203 in the House of Representatives.

As the 1956 presidential election year approached, Eisenhower recovered from the mid-term slump. McCarthyism had been silenced by the censure of the Wisconsin Senator by his colleagues. A Geneva Summit Conference in July 1955 and bipartisan legislative actions pushed the President's ratings upward. Only health problems threatened his renomination and re-election. There was no serious challenge to the President in the primaries and there was no sentiment among convention delegates to find another candidate. Eisenhower and Nixon were renominated on unanimous ballots.

The Democrats experienced a rerun of the 1952 party struggle among Senator Kefauver and Governors Stevenson and Harriman. In a reversal of 1952, it was Stevenson who performed better in the primaries defeating Kefauver in every meeting but the first in Minnesota on March 20, 1956. In the Maryland primary on May 7, 1956 Kefauver received 112,768 votes against 58,366 for an unpledged delegation. The Tennessee Senator withdrew from consideration leaving only New York Governor Harriman between Stevenson and his rematch with Eisenhower. In an interesting historical footnote, former President Truman nominated Governor Harriman and future President Kennedy placed the name of Governor Stevenson in nomination. Stevenson won a comfortable first ballot victory and, in an unusual action, threw the nomination for vice president wide open by not indicating his choice for the second spot. In a wild scramble, present and future leaders of the Democratic party engaged in vote trading before Kefauver edged Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts.⁴⁰

1956 ELECTION SUMMARY

Candidate (Party)	Popular Vote		Electoral Vote	
	Md.	U.S.	Md.	U.S.
Dwight D. Eisenhower (R)	559,738	35,585,245	9	457
Adlai E. Stevenson (D)	372,613	26,030,172		73
Others	476	409,955		1

The Democratic ticket was better organized and more unified than in the first run against Eisenhower but the general mood of the electorate was not for change. The President was re-elected by a greater margin in electoral and popular votes than in 1952.