

Order of Presidential Succession

According to the Presidential Succession Act of 1792, the Senate president pro tempore¹ was next in line after the vice president to succeed to the presidency, followed by the Speaker of the House.

In 1886, however, Congress changed the order of presidential succession, replacing the president pro tempore and the Speaker with the cabinet officers. Proponents of this change argued that the congressional leaders lacked executive experience, and none had served as president, while six former secretaries of state had later been elected to that office.

The Presidential Succession Act of 1947, signed by President Harry Truman, changed the order again to what it is today. The cabinet members are ordered in the line of succession according to the date their offices were established.

Prior to the ratification of the [25th Amendment](#) in 1967, there was no provision for filling a vacancy in the vice presidency. When a president died in office, the vice president succeeded him, and the vice presidency then remained vacant. The first vice president to take office under the new procedure was Gerald Ford, who was nominated by Nixon on Oct. 12, 1973, and confirmed by Congress the following Dec. 6.

- The Vice President [Dick Cheney](#)
- Speaker of the House [Nancy Pelosi](#)
- President pro tempore of the Senate¹ [Robert Byrd](#)
- Secretary of State [Condoleezza Rice](#)
- Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson
- Secretary of Defense Robert Gates
- Attorney General [Alberto Gonzales](#)
- Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne
- Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns
- Secretary of Commerce [Carlos Gutierrez](#)²
- Secretary of Labor [Elaine Chao](#)³
- Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt
- Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Alphonso Jackson
- Secretary of Transportation Mary E. Peters
- Secretary of Energy Samuel Bodman
- Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings
- Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson
- Secretary of Homeland Security [Michael Chertoff](#)

NOTE: An official cannot succeed to the Presidency unless that person meets the Constitutional requirements.

1. The president pro tempore presides over the Senate when the vice president is absent. The president pro tempore is elected by the Senate, but by tradition the position is held by the senior member of the majority party.

2. Carlos Gutierrez was born in Cuba and is ineligible.

3. Elaine Chao was born in Taiwan and is ineligible.