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# Cost of Inaugurations

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## Cost of Inaugurations

Can we get a comparison of presidential inauguration costs for the last 6 to 10 presidents?

Many visitors to <http://www.allpresidents.org/> have been asking this question or some variation of it. There are two primary costs of inaugurations. One is the cost of the swearing-in ceremony, which is paid for by taxpayers; the funds are appropriated by Congress; in 2001, George W. Bush's swearing-in ceremony cost \$1 million. Second is the cost of the balls, the candlelight dinners, the parties, the concerts -- all the festivities that surround the swearing-in ceremony, which are paid for by private donations.

If there is criticism of how much a modern inaugural costs, it is usually directed at this latter cost, the parties and festivities, even though the burden is not borne by taxpayers. Going backward in time, from the most recent to the most distant inaugurations, here are the private-sector costs of the festivities surrounding some inaugurations:



George W. Bush's 2nd inaugural will cost in the neighborhood of \$40 million. That's what the Presidential Inaugural Committee is trying to raise through private donations and ticket sales to the nine balls and three candlelight dinners.

George W. Bush's 1st inaugural in 2001 also cost nearly \$40 million.

Bill Clinton's 2nd inaugural in 1997 was comparatively lean by the inaugural standards of the times, \$23.6 million.

Bill Clinton's 1st inaugural in 1993 cost approximately \$33 million.

George H. W. Bush's inaugural in 1989 cost approximately \$30 million.

Ronald Reagan's 2nd inaugural in 1985 cost in the neighborhood of the 1981 inaugural, around \$20 million.

Ronald Reagan's 1st inaugural in 1981 cost \$19.4 million, significantly more than his predecessors. One reason is that inflation had been sky-high between Carter's and Reagan's inaugurations. A second reason is that several balls were added to the festivities. A third is that the swearing-in ceremony was moved to the west front of the Capitol. Because of topography, that aspect of the building is much more dramatic than the east front; it was also symbolic of Ronald Reagan's western roots.

Jimmy Carter's inaugural in 1977 cost \$3.5 million. Elected in the wake of the Watergate scandal, he deliberately downplayed anything that appeared to aggrandize the presidency.

Richard Nixon's 2nd inaugural in 1973 cost \$4 million. Bob Hope, a Nixon supporter, joked that the three-day extravaganza commemorated "the time when Richard I becomes Richard II."

Lyndon Johnson's inaugural in 1965 cost \$1.5 million.

Woodrow Wilson's inaugural was relatively lean since on his orders there would be no ball. He disliked dances. Congress appropriated \$30,000 for the event.

James Madison's inaugural ceremony in 1809 cost more than previous inaugurations in part because it was the first to include a ball. Dolley Madison, the federalist era's social maven, had also served as hostess for President Jefferson.

*(Question from Bob S. of Albuquerque, NM)*