News



U.S. President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, former U.S. President Barack Obama, former President Bill Clinton, former Vice President Mike Pence and President-elect Donald Trump attend the state funeral service of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter at the Washington National Cathedral Jan. 9, 2025. At 100, Carter was the longest-living former U.S. president at the time of his death in Plains, Ga., Dec. 29, 2024. His body laid in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda Jan. 7-9. (OSV News/Brendan McDermid, Reuters)

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Mourners including all five living U.S. presidents attended the late President Jimmy Carter's funeral Jan. 9 at the Washington National Cathedral, the first time they have all been in public together since 2018, and an increasingly rare occurrence in an era of bitter partisanship.

President Joe Biden, President-elect Donald Trump, and former presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton, as well as living former vice presidents, members of Congress, U.S. Supreme Court justices and some foreign heads of state, joined the Carter family to remember the 39th president.

Carter, who died Dec. 29 at the age of 100, served a single term in the White House from 1977-1981. He was a devout Baptist, and speakers at the state funeral highlighted how faith played a key role in his life, including teaching Sunday school and working with Habitat for Humanity in his retirement. Carter was also the first U.S. president to host a pope at the White House.

Biden, who delivered a eulogy for Carter, called his life story that of a man "who was at once driven and devoted to making real the words of his Savior, the ideals of this nation," and "who never let the tides of politics divert him from his mission to serve and shape the world."

Carter, Biden said, also "established a model post-presidency by making a powerful difference as a private citizen in America."

As he often does in public remarks, Biden quoted from the Catholic hymn "On Eagle's Wings," composed by Father Jan Michael Joncas, a liturgical theologian and priest of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Steve Ford, son of former President Gerald Ford, said Carter and his father had agreed to eulogize each other, despite knowing one would die before the other. The

younger Ford upheld his father's promise by reading a eulogy for Carter that Ford prepared before his 2006 death.

"It was because of our shared values that Jimmy and I respected each other as adversaries even before we cherished one another as dear friends," Gerald Ford wrote. "For Jimmy Carter, honesty was not an aspirational goal. It was part of his very soul."

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In another notable moment, Trump shook hands with his former Vice President Mike Pence, their first public interaction since they left office as their relationship collapsed in the wake of the Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol. Trump had sought for Pence to unilaterally reject the certification of the 2020 election, and the then-vice president refused, citing his lack of constitutional authority to do so.

Carter's accomplishments as president included the Panama Canal treaties, and a treaty between Egypt and Israel known as the Camp David Accords, per his official White House Historical Association biography. But he lost his bid for a second term amid rising consumer costs and foreign policy setbacks, including the Iranian hostage crisis in 1979. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002.

During his administration, Carter hosted St. John Paul II at the White House on Oct. 6, 1979, while the latter was on his first papal trip to the United States, making him the first pope to ever visit the White House.

Carter was predeceased by his wife, former first lady Rosalynn Carter, who died Nov. 19, 2023, at 96. A private interment ceremony for the former president was scheduled for later in the day Jan. 9 at his home in Plains, Georgia.