

U.S. Presidents

“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.” – F.D.R.

The **Young Elected Leaders Project (YELP)** studies and works with young people who run for public office. YELP research reveals that over one-half of American presidents serving since the turn of the 20th Century began their public careers as young elected leaders. Beginning with William McKinley, the data below charts the presidents who were 35 years old or younger when elected to their first public office.

Six of the thirteen Presidents serving since the start of the 20th Century were elected into their first public office at the age of 30 or younger. At 25 years of age, Theodore Roosevelt was the youngest future President, America’s current president, Barack H. Obama, began his public life as a state senator at 35.

U.S. President	First Elected Office	State	Age
William McKinley	U.S. House of Reps.	OH	34
Theodore Roosevelt	State Assembly	NY	24
William H. Taft	Superior Court Judge	OH	31
Warren G. Harding	State Senate	OH	35
Calvin Coolidge	Councilman	Northampton, MA	26
Franklin D. Roosevelt	State Senate	NY	28
John Kennedy	U.S. House of Reps.	MA	30
Lyndon B. Johnson	U.S. House of Reps.	TX	29
Richard M. Nixon	U.S. House of Reps.	CA	34
Gerald Ford	U.S. House of Reps.	MI	35
Jimmy Carter	Board of Ed.	Sumter County, GA	32
William J. Clinton	Attorney General	AR	30
Barack H. Obama	State Senate	IL	35

About the Young Elected Leaders Project (YELP)

Originating in 2002 with funding from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Young Elected Leaders Project studies and works with young people who run for public office. For this project, Eagleton established a database of young elected officials; conducted a survey of young elected leaders regarding their background and leadership experience; convened a conference of young leaders in May 2003; and issued a report entitled *Political Generation Next: America’s Young Elected Leaders*. Currently, YELP is led by Dr. Elizabeth Matto, assistant research professor and director of Eagleton’s Youth Political Participation Program, working with a team of undergraduate researchers.