

## **US History**

### **The Nixon, Ford, & Carter Years**

#### **Learning Target:**

*I can analyze & summarize the issues surrounding the Watergate scandal and the eventual resignation of President Nixon.*

### **2. The Watergate Scandal**

#### ***Background –***

##### The President & Power –

- Nixon increasingly acted like the president's power should have no limits
- Shifted much of the authority of the cabinet to his White House staff
- Cabinet required Senate approval his staff did not

##### The Plumbers –

- 1971 – Nixon ordered his staff to compile an enemies list of critics of his policies
- The plumbers consisted of former CIA and FBI agents
- Group was ordered to stop leaks after the Pentagon Papers had come out
- Much of their actions were illegal and done so for “national security”

#### ***The Break-In –***

- 1972 the plumbers secret activities had grown into an effort to assure reelection of Nixon
- June 1972 five men were caught breaking into the offices of the Democratic National Committee at the Watergate Office and Apartment Complex
- The men were carrying wiretap equipment and other spying devices

#### ***A Possible Link To The President –***

- It soon was discovered the break in was paid for by funds from Nixon's campaign organization, The Committee to Re-elect the President (CRP)
- The break in was organized and directed by G. Gordon Liddy and Howard Hunt, both had ties to the CRP
- The plumbers were led by James McCord who was the security coordinator for the CRP
- White House denied any connection to the break-in

##### The Washington Post Investigation –

- Washington Post reporters, Bob Woodward & Carl Bernstein refused to let the story die
- Through a high-level source known as Deep Throat they discovered the CRP had hired 50 agents to sabotage the Democrats' chances in the 1972 election

### ***The Senate Investigation –***

- Spring of 1973 the Senate led an investigation into the Watergate scandal
- Nixon had been reelected in 1972
- James McCord admitted that top White House officials had helped plan the break-in
- Witnesses were questioned on national TV and some were convicted and jailed
- June 1973, Nixon's former White House attorney John Dean, testified the president had been directly involved in the cover-up

### ***The White House Tapes –***

- Nixon denied the charges of John Dean and many saw no way to prove the accusations
- The hearings seemed to be at an impasse with the truth almost impossible to determine
- Presidential aide Alexander Butterfield then stunned the committee when he revealed that Nixon taped almost all of his conversations in the White House

### **The Fight for the Tapes –**

- Justice Department prosecutor, Archibald Cox, demanded the tapes
- Nixon refused citing executive privilege for national security
- A federal judge ordered Nixon to release the tapes but he still refused
- Nixon continued to refuse until the Supreme Court ordered him to in July 1974

### **Spiro Agnew Resigns –**

- During the fight for the tapes V.P. Agnew was charged with income tax evasion
- Pleaded no contest and resigned for a lesser sentence
- Gerald Ford, the Rep. Leader of the House, was appointed Vice President

### **Saturday Night Massacre –**

- Nixon ordered the Attorney General to fire prosecutor Cox
- He refused as did the Deputy Attorney General
- The Solicitor General finally complied and fired Cox
- This outraged the nation and led to calls of impeachment

### ***Impeachment?***

- The House Judiciary Committee held televised debates on whether or not to impeach Nixon
- When the Supreme Court finally released the tapes the nation heard that Nixon had directed the cover-up and authorized illegal activities
- Impeachment and removal from office seemed certain

### ***The President Resigns –***

#### **August 8, 1974 –**

- Nixon realized he would be impeached

-Resigned the presidency on noon of the next day

August 9, 1974 –

- Gerald Ford was sworn in as president
- Nominated Governor Rockefeller of New York as his vice president
- First time the president and vice president were appointed and not elected

***Pardon & Clemency –***

The Pardon –

- September 1974 Ford granted Nixon a full pardon for Watergate
- Did so to maintain the credibility of the government
- Many were not pleased with the decision
- The pardon greatly hurt Ford's popularity numbers

Clemency –

- One week after the pardon Ford offered clemency to Vietnam draft evaders
- Had to reaffirm their allegiance to the US and perform 2 years of public service
- Only 19 percent of evaders responded feeling they had done nothing wrong