

PRESIDENTIAL VACANCY, DISABILITY, AND INABILITY

TWENTY-FIFTH AMENDMENT

SECTION 1. In case of the removal of the President from office or of his death or resignation, the Vice President shall become President.

SECTION 2. Whenever there is a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, the President shall nominate a Vice President who shall take office upon confirmation by a majority vote of both Houses of Congress.

SECTION 3. Whenever the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that he is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, and until he transmits to them a written declaration to the contrary, such powers and duties shall be discharged by the Vice President as Acting President.

SECTION 4. Whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of such other body as Congress may by law provide, transmit to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives their written declaration that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President.

Thereafter, when the President transmits to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives his written declaration that no inability exists, he shall resume the powers and duties of his office unless the

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an assassin's bullet, Wilson an invalid for the last eighteen months of his term, the result of a stroke—with its unanswered questions: who was to determine the existence of an inability, how was the matter to be handled if the President sought to continue, in what manner should the Vice President act, would he be acting President or President, what was to happen if the President recovered. Congress finally proposed this Amendment to the States in the aftermath of President Kennedy's assassination, with the Vice Presidency vacant and a President who had previously had a heart attack.

This Amendment saw multiple use during the 1970s and resulted for the first time in our history in the accession to the Presidency and Vice-Presidency of two men who had not faced the voters in a national election. First, Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned on October 10, 1973, and President Nixon nominated Gerald R. Ford of Michigan to succeed him, following the procedures of § 2 of the Amendment for the first time. Hearings were held upon the nomination by the Senate Rules Committee and the House Judiciary Committee, both Houses thereafter confirmed the nomination, and the new Vice President took the oath of office December 6, 1973. Second, President Richard M. Nixon resigned his office August 9, 1974, and Vice President Ford immediately succeeded to the office and took the presidential oath of office at noon of the same day. Third, again following § 2 of the Amendment, President Ford nominated Nelson A. Rockefeller of New York to be Vice President; on August 20, 1974, hearings were held in both Houses, confirmation voted and Mr. Rockefeller took the oath of office December 19, 1974.¹

¹For the legislative history, *see* S. Rep. No. 66, 89th Cong., 1st Sess. (1965); H.R. Rep. No. 203, 89th Cong., 1st Sess. (1965); H.R. Rep. No. 564, 89th Cong., 1st Sess. (1965). For an account of the history of the succession problem, *see* R. SILVA, *PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION* (1951).