

## SITTING PRESIDENTS AND VICE PRESIDENTS WHO HAVE TESTIFIED BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES

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**President Abraham Lincoln<sup>1</sup>**  
**House Judiciary Committee**  
**February 13, 1862**

"President Lincoln today voluntarily appeared before the House Judiciary Committee," reported the *New York Tribune*, "and gave testimony in the matter of the premature publication in the *Herald* of a portion of his last annual message." Lincoln's message to Congress in December 1861 had been published in the *New York Herald* on the same morning that it was sent to Capitol Hill. The House Judiciary Committee, chaired by John Hickman, investigated the leak and called *Herald* correspondent Henry Wikoff to testify. Wikoff refused to divulge his source, citing "an obligation of strictest secrecy." Given Wikoff's close friendship with Mary Todd Lincoln, many assumed that the correspondent was protecting the First Lady. The committee ordered the sergeant at arms to hold Wikoff. Then the President went to the Capitol for a private meeting with Judiciary Committee members, to assure them that no member of his family was involved. The next day the committee released Wikoff.

**Vice President Schuyler Colfax**  
**House Select Committee to Investigate the Credit Mobilier**  
**January 7, 1873**

Vice President Colfax appeared voluntarily before the House Select Committee concerning his ownership of stock in Credit Mobilier, a company involved in the construction of the federally-subsidized transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad. During the previous presidential campaign, in response to newspaper criticism, Colfax had denied that the railroad's agent, Congressman Oakes Ames, had given or offered him stock in the Credit Mobilier. Before the committee, Colfax testified that he had first agreed to buy five hundred dollars worth of the stock from Ames but later decided against making the purchase; but that Ames never repaid him the five hundred dollars. Oakes Ames, however, produced evidence of Colfax's check to him for five hundred and thirty-four dollars and his check to Colfax for twelve hundred dollars, the difference being a sixty percent cash dividend.

**President Woodrow Wilson**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**August 19, 1919**

Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee took testimony from President Wilson at the White House, concerning the treaty of peace with Germany, and establishment of a League of Nations. The President opened by reading a statement and then answered questions for three and a half hours, after which the President invited them to stay for lunch. Chairman Henry Cabot Lodge explained that the committee was "very desirous of getting information on certain points which seem not clear and on which they thought information would be of value to them." Despite Wilson's efforts, the Senate twice rejected the Treaty of Versailles, and the United States never joined the League.

**President Gerald R. Ford**  
**Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, House Judiciary Committee**  
**October 17, 1974**

President Ford voluntarily appeared before the Subcommittee at the Capitol to explain the reasons behind his pardon of former President Richard M. Nixon. Ford insisted that the pardon had not been prearranged, but was the result of his concern over reports of Nixon's deteriorating mental and physical health.

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<sup>1</sup>President George Washington testified before the entire Senate on the subject of Indian treaties on August 22, 1789.

**FORMER PRESIDENTS WHO HAVE TESTIFIED  
BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES**

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Theodore Roosevelt  
House Committee on Investigation of the United States Steel Corporation  
August 5, 1911 (Steel industry)

Theodore Roosevelt  
Senate Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections  
October 4, 1912 (campaign expenditures)

Harry S. Truman  
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
April 18, 1955 (United Nations Charter)

Gerald R. Ford  
Subcommittee on the Constitution, Senate Judiciary Committee  
March 1, 1983 (bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution)

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