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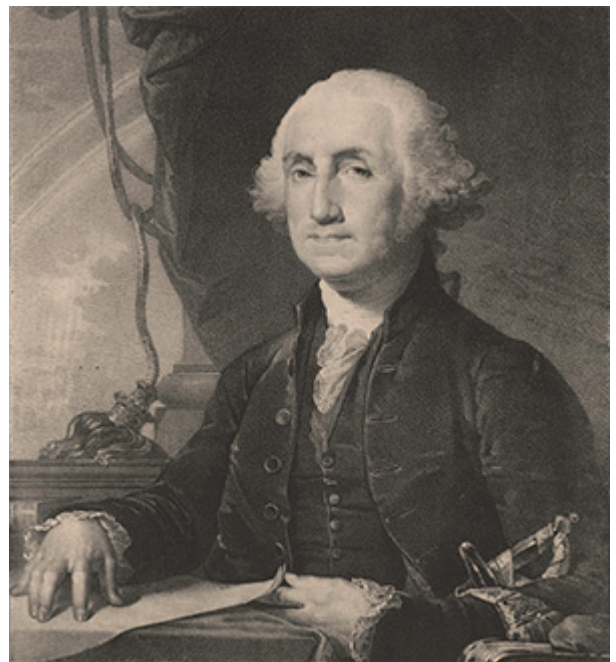
Requirements for the President of the United States

Legal requirements for presidential candidates have remained the same since the year Washington accepted the presidency. As directed by the [Constitution](#), a presidential candidate must be a natural born citizen of the United States, a resident for 14 years, and 35 years of age or older.

A Question of Duty

Most candidates, past and present, have fought hard for their party's nomination. Today, many politicians make this their life's work as they move from city, to state, to national office. Some candidates, however, have expressed misgivings.

Many people don't know that our country's first presidential candidate, George Washington, was reluctant to accept the office. "I cannot describe, the painful emotions which I felt in being called upon to determine whether I would accept or refuse the Presidency of the United States," Washington revealed in a 1789 [speech](#). Washington had fully intended to retire to Mount Vernon when the Constitutional Convention was over. But Washington's sense of duty to his new country outweighed his desire to withdraw from public life.



[George Washington, first president of the United States](#)

Washington was not the only candidate to feel reluctant about the presidency. [James K. Polk](#) accepted the Democratic party's nomination as a duty "neither...sought nor declined." How often do you hear

candidates today speak of duty as a motivation for candidacy? What other motives do you notice in recent candidates?

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