

## A Year Before 9/11

The fifteen Years of BlazeVOX

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### Table of Contents

2000 .....	2
2001 .....	5
2002.....	7
2003.....	9
2004 .....	12
2005.....	15
2006 .....	19
2007.....	21
2008 .....	26
2009 .....	32
2010 .....	40
2011 .....	51
2012.....	57
2013.....	64
2014 .....	73

## 2000

Socialist president, Ricardo Lagos, elected in Chile (Jan. 16).

George W. Bush and Al Gore take Iowa caucuses in U.S. presidential race (Jan. 22).

Austria at center of European dispute after conservative People's Party forms coalition with the far-right Freedom Party, headed by xenophobe Jörg Haider (Feb. 3).

First Lady Hillary Clinton officially enters N.Y. Senate race (Feb. 6).

Hijackers seize Afghan plane; release hostages in Stansted, England (Feb. 6–12).

Britain ends self-rule in Northern Ireland after Irish Republican Army misses disarmament deadline (Feb. 11).

NEAR spacecraft becomes first to orbit an asteroid (Feb. 14). Wary investors cause stock plunge; beginning of the end of the Internet stock boom (Feb. 25).

Reformists win control of Iranian parliament for first time since 1979 Islamic revolution (Feb. 26).

Gun maker Smith & Wesson limits the manufacture and distribution of handguns in light of lawsuits (March 17).

Mass murder or suicide of hundreds in Ugandan doomsday cult (March 18).

Acting Russian president Vladimir V. Putin formally chosen for post (March 25).

Microsoft loses antitrust suit; appeal expected (April 3).

Controversial Osprey plane crash kills 19 marines (April 8).

Cuban boy Elián González reunited with father after federal raid of Miami relatives' home (April 22).

Vermont approves same-sex unions (April 25).

“I love you” virus disrupts computers worldwide (May 4).

South Carolina removes Confederate battle flag from capitol dome (May 18).

Chile ends Augusto Pinochet's immunity, clearing way for trial on murder and torture charges during years as dictator (May 24).

Israeli troops withdraw from Lebanese security zone after 22 years of occupation (May 24).

Former Indonesian president Suharto under house arrest, charged with corruption and abuse of power (May 29).

Britain restores parliamentary powers to Northern Ireland after Sinn Fein agrees to disarm (June 4).

Presidents of North and South Korea sign peace accord, ending half-century of antagonism (June 15).

British find 58 bodies of illegal Asian immigrants suffocated in Dutch truck that transported them (June 20).

Elián González returns to Cuba with father (June 23).

U.S. navy resumes shelling exercises of Puerto Rico's Vieques Island, used as a training site (June 25).

Human genome deciphered; expected to revolutionize the practice of medicine (June 26).

Iraq believed to resume missile program (June 30). Vicente Fox Quesada elected president of Mexico (July 2).

Bashar al-Assad succeeds late father, Hafez al-Assad, as Syrian president (July 10).

Concorde crash kills 113 near Paris (July 25).

Republican convention picks Texas governor George W. Bush as presidential candidate; Dick Cheney for vice presidential spot (Aug. 2).

Democratic convention selects Vice President Al Gore and Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman to head ticket (Aug. 14).

Los Alamos scientist Wen Ho Lee, accused of stealing sensitive nuclear weapons data, freed after serving nine months in prison (Sept. 13).

Olympic Games open in Australia (Sept. 15).

Six-year Whitewater investigation of the Clintons ends without indictments (Sept. 20).

Yugoslav opposition claims victory; incumbent Slobodan Milosevic denies results (Sept. 25).

Danish voters reject euro (Sept. 26).

Abortion pill, RU-486, wins U.S. approval (Sept. 28).

Palestinians and Israelis clash, spurred by visit of right-wing Israeli leader Ariel Sharon to a joint Jewish/Muslim holy site; "Al Aksa intifada" continues unabated (Sept. 30 et seq.).

Nationwide uprising overthrows Yugoslavian president Milosevic (Oct. 5).

Vojislav Kostunica sworn in as Yugoslav president (Oct. 7).

17 U.S. sailors on navy destroyer Cole die in Yemen terrorist explosion (Oct. 12).

U.S. presidential election closest in decades; Bush's slim lead in Florida leads to automatic recount in that state (Nov. 7–8).

Republicans file federal suit to block manual recount of Florida presidential election ballots sought by Democrats (Nov. 11).

Philippine president Joseph Estrada impeached after receiving gambling payoffs (Nov. 13).

Florida Supreme Court rules hand count of presidential ballots may continue (Nov. 21).

Global warming talks collapse at Hague conference (Nov. 25).

Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris certifies Bush as winner by 537 votes (Nov. 26).

Mad Cow disease alarms Europe (Nov. 30 et seq.).

Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak resigns (Dec. 9).

U.S. Supreme Court orders halt to manual recount of presidential votes in Florida (Dec. 9).

Supreme Court seals Bush victory by 5–4; rules there can be no further recounting (Dec. 12).

## 2001

Congo president Laurent Kabila assassinated by bodyguard (Jan. 16). Son Joseph Kabila takes over amid continuing civil war.

Ariel Sharon wins election in Israel (Feb. 6). Right-wing leader chosen overwhelmingly as nation's fifth prime minister in just over five years during worst Israeli-Palestinian violence in years. Background: Middle East.

The long-simmering resentment of Macedonia's ethnic Albanians erupts into violence in March. The rebels seek greater autonomy within Macedonia. After six months of fighting, a peace agreement is signed (Aug. 13). British-led NATO forces enter the country and disarm the guerrillas. Background: Macedonia and the Balkans.

U.S. spy plane and Chinese jet collide (April 2); Sino-American relations deteriorate during a standoff. The 24 crew members of the U.S. plane were detained for 11 days and released after the U.S. issued a formal statement of regret.

Former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic is delivered to UN tribunal in The Hague to await war-crime trial (June 29).

Without U.S., 178 nations reach agreement on climate accord, which rescues, though dilutes, 1997 Kyoto Protocol (July 23).

In response to Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, U.S. and British forces launch bombing campaign on Taliban government and al-Qaeda terrorist camps in Afghanistan (Oct. 7). Bombings continue on a daily basis. Background: Afghanistan.

Irish Republican Army announces that it has begun to dismantle its weapons arsenal, marking a dramatic leap forward in Northern Ireland peace process (Oct. 23). Background: Northern Ireland Primer.

At a UN-sponsored summit in Bonn, Germany, Afghani factions meet to create a post-Taliban government (Nov. 27). Hamid Karzai is selected as head of the transitional government (Dec. 5). Background: Who's Who in Afghanistan.

Taliban regime in Afghanistan collapses after two months of bombing by American warplanes and fighting by Northern Alliance ground troops (Dec. 9).

Israel condemns the Palestinian Authority as a "terror-supporting entity" and severs ties with leader Yasir Arafat following mounting violence against Israelis (Dec. 3). The Israeli Army begins bombing Palestinian areas. Background: Middle East.

In final days of presidency, Bill Clinton issues controversial pardons, including one for Marc Rich, billionaire fugitive financier (Jan. 20).

George W. Bush is sworn in as 43rd president (Jan. 20).

U.S. submarine Greeneville sinks Japanese fishing boat, killing 9 (Feb. 9).

FBI agent Robert Hanssen is charged with spying for Russia for 15 years (Feb. 20).

Race riots in Cincinnati continue for several days following a shooting of an unarmed black man by a white police officer (April 7 et seq.).

Four are declared guilty in 1998 terrorist bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (May 29). Background: U.S. Embassy Bombings.

Balance of the Senate shifts after Jim Jeffords of Vermont changes his party affiliation from Republican to Independent. The move strips Republicans of control of the Senate and gives Democrats the narrowest of majorities (50-49-1) (June 5).

Bush signs new tax-cut law, the largest in 20 years (June 7). Background: Economic Downturn and a Tax Cut.

Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh executed (June 11).

Budget surplus dwindles. The Congressional Budget Office attributes this rapid change in the nation's fortunes to the slowing economy and the Bush tax cut (Aug. 22). Background: Economic Downturn and a Tax Cut.

Terrorists attack United States. Hijackers ram jetliners into twin towers of New York City's World Trade Center and the Pentagon. A fourth hijacked plane crashes 80 mi outside of Pittsburgh (Sept. 11). Toll of dead and injured in thousands. Within days, Islamic militant Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda terrorist network are identified as the parties behind the attacks.

Anthrax scare rivets nation, as anthrax-laced letters are sent to various media and government officials. Several postal workers die after handling the letters (throughout October).

## 2002

Former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic's trial on charges of crimes against humanity opens at The Hague (Feb. 12).

Tamil Tigers and Sri Lankan government sign a cease-fire agreement, ending 19 years of civil war (Feb. 22).  
Background: World in Review

India's worst Hindu-Muslim violence in a decade rocked the state of Gujarat after a Muslim mob fire-bombed a train, killing Hindu activists. Hindus retaliated, and more than 1,000 died in the bloodshed (Feb. 27 et seq.). Background: World in Review

U.S. and Afghan troops launch Operation Anaconda against remaining al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan (March 2). Background: Taliban Timeline and Afghanistan

Israeli tanks and warplanes attack West Bank towns of Nablus, Jenin, Bethlehem, and others in response to string of Palestinian suicide attacks (March 29–April 21). In the first three months of 2002, 14 suicide bombers kill dozens of Israeli civilians, and wounded hundreds. Background: World in Review

International Criminal Court wins UN ratification; U.S. refuses to ratify (April 11).

Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez ousted in coup, then reinstated (April 12, 14).

U.S. and Russia reach landmark arms agreement to cut both countries' nuclear arsenals by up to two-thirds over the next 10 years (May 13).

East Timor becomes a new nation (May 20).

Terrorist bomb in Bali kills hundreds (Oct. 12).

Government suspended in Northern Ireland in protest of suspected IRA spy ring (Oct. 14).

North Korea admits to developing nuclear arms in defiance of treaty (Oct. 16).

Chechen rebels take 763 hostages in Moscow theater (Oct. 23). Russian authorities release a gas into theater, killing 116 hostages and freeing remainder (Oct. 26). Background: Chechnya Timeline

China's Jiang Zemin officially retires as general secretary; Hu Jintao named as his successor (Nov. 14).

UN Security Council passes unanimous resolution calling on Iraq to disarm or else face "serious consequences." (Nov. 8).

UN arms inspectors return to Iraq (Nov. 18).

President Bush's first State of the Union address vows to expand the fight on terrorism and labels Iran, Iraq, and North Korea "an axis of evil" (Jan. 29).

Kenneth L. Lay, chairman of bankrupt energy trader Enron, resigns; company under federal investigation for hiding debt and misrepresenting earnings (Jan. 24). Background: 2002 News of the Nation

U.S. withdraws from International Court treaty (May 6).

FBI lawyer Coleen Rowley criticizes FBI for thwarting terrorist efforts in a letter to the FBI director (May 21).

U.S. abandons 31-year-old Antiballistic Missile treaty (June 13). Background: 2001 News of the Nation

Bush announces change in Middle East policy: U.S. will not recognize an independent Palestinian state until Yasir Arafat is replaced (June 24).

Bush signs corporate reform bill (July 30) in response to a spate of corporate scandals: Enron, Arthur Andersen, Tyco, Qwest, Global Crossing, ImClone, and Adelphia, among others, were convicted or placed under federal investigation for various misadventures in fraud and crooked accounting. Background: 2002 News of the Nation

Pennsylvania miners rescued after spending 77 hours in a dark, flooded mine shaft (July 28).

Bush addresses United Nations, calling for a "regime change" in Iraq (Sept. 12).

Snipers prey upon DC suburbs, killing ten and wounding others (Oct. 2–24). Police arrest two sniper suspects, John Allen Muhammad and John Lee Malvo (Oct. 24).

Republicans retake the Senate in midterm elections; gain additional House seats (Nov. 5). Background: 2002 News of the Nation

Bush signs legislation creating cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security (Nov. 25).

Boston archbishop Cardinal Bernard Law resigns as a result of the Catholic Church's sexual abuse scandals and cover-up of priest-child molestation. (Dec. 13).

## 2003

North Korea withdraws from treaty on the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons (Jan. 10).

In State of the Union address, Bush announces that he is ready to attack Iraq even without a UN mandate (Jan. 28). (For an account of the U.S. build-up to war in Iraq, see News of the Nation, 2003.)

Ariel Sharon elected Israeli prime minister (Jan. 29).

Nine-week general strike in Venezuela calling for President Chavez's resignation ends in defeat (Feb. 2).

U.S. Secretary of State Powell presents Iraq war rationale to UN, citing its WMD as imminent threat to world security (Feb. 5).

U.S. and Britain launch war against Iraq (March 19). See also Iraq war timeline.

Baghdad falls to U.S. troops (April 9).

First Palestinian prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas, sworn in (April 29).

U.S.-backed "road map" for peace proposed for Middle East (April 30). Background

The U.S. declares official end to combat operations in Iraq (May 1).

Terrorists strike in Saudi Arabia, killing 34 at Western compound; Al-Qaeda suspected (May 12).

Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi again placed under house arrest by military regime (May 30).

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) discovers Iran's concealed nuclear activities and calls for intensified inspections (June 18).

Palestinian militant groups announce ceasefire toward Israel (June 29).

Liberia's autocratic president Charles Taylor forced to leave civil-war ravaged country (Aug. 11). Background

NATO assumes control of peacekeeping force in Afghanistan (Aug. 11). Background

Libya accepts blame for 1988 bombing of flight over Lockerbie, Scotland; agrees to pay \$2.7 billion to the families of the 270 victims (Aug. 15).

Suicide bombing destroys UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing 24, including top envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello (Aug. 19).

Palestinian suicide bombing in Jerusalem kills 20 Israelis, including 6 children (Aug. 19).

After Israel retaliates for suicide bombing by killing top member of Hamas, militant Palestinian groups formally withdraw from cease-fire in effect since June 29 (Aug. 24).

Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas resigns; "road map" to peace effectively collapses (Sept. 6).  
Background

The Bush administration reverses policy, agreeing to transfer power to an interim Iraqi government in early 2004 (Nov. 14).

Suicide bombers attack two synagogues in Istanbul, Turkey, killing 25 (Nov. 15).

Another terrorist attack in Istanbul kills 26 (Nov. 20). Al-Qaeda suspected in both. See suspected al-Qaeda terrorist attacks.

Georgian president Eduard Shevardnadze resigns after weeks of protests (Nov. 23).

Paul Martin succeeds Jean Chretien as Canadian prime minister (Dec. 12).

Saddam Hussein is captured by American troops (Dec. 13).

Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi announces he will give up weapons program (Dec. 19).

Space shuttle Columbia explodes, killing all 7 astronauts (Feb. 1).

Bush signs ten-year, \$350-billion tax cut package, the third-largest tax cut in U.S. history (May 28).

In one of the most important rulings on the issue of affirmative action in twenty-five years-the Supreme Court decisively upholds the right of affirmative action in higher education (June 23).

Investigation into the loss of space shuttle Columbia cites egregious organizational problems at NASA (Aug. 25).

Congressional Budget Office predicts federal deficit of \$480 billion in 2004 and \$5.8 trillion by 2013 (Aug. 26).

California governor Gray Davis ousted in recall vote; actor Arnold Schwarzenegger elected in his place (Oct. 7).

President Bush signs \$87.5 billion emergency package for post-war Iraq reconstruction; this supplements \$79 billion approved in April. (Nov. 5).

John A. Muhammad, convicted in the 2002 Washington, DC, area shootings, receives death sentence (Nov. 24).

President Bush eliminates steel tariffs after WTO says U.S. violated trade laws (Dec. 4).

## 2004

About one third of Iran's Parliament steps down to protest hard-line Guardian Council's banning of more than 2,000 reformists from running in parliamentary elections (Feb. 1).

A. Q. Khan, founder of Pakistan's nuclear program, admits he sold nuclear-weapons designs to other countries, including North Korea, Iran, and Libya (Feb. 4).

Armed rebels in Haiti force President Aristide to resign and flee the country (Feb. 29).

Spain is rocked by terrorist attacks, killing more than 200. Al Qaeda takes responsibility (March 11).

Spain's governing Popular Party loses election to opposition Socialists. Outcome seen as a reaction to terrorist attacks days before and Popular Party's support of the U.S.-led war in Iraq (March 14).

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) formally admits 7 new countries: Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia (March 29).

Israeli prime minister Sharon announces plan to unilaterally withdraw from Gaza Strip (April 12).

Greek Cypriots reject UN reunification plan with Turkish Cypriots (April 24).

Sudan rebels (SPLA) and government reach accord to end 21-year civil war. However, separate war in western Darfur region between Arab militias and black Africans continues unabated (May 26).

U.S. troops launch offensive in Falluja in response to killing and mutilation on March 31 of four U.S. civilian contractors. (April 5–May 1).

U.S. hands over power to Iraqi interim government; Iyad Allawi becomes prime minister (June 28).

Security Council demands Sudanese government disarm militias in Darfur that are massacring civilians (July 30).

Summer Olympics take place in Athens, Greece (Aug. 13–29).

Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez survives recall referendum (Aug. 16).

Chechen terrorists take about 1,200 schoolchildren and others hostage in Beslan, Russia; 340 people die when militant detonate explosives (Sept. 1–3).

UN Atomic Energy Agency tells Iran to stop enriching uranium; a nascent nuclear weapons program suspected (Sept. 18).

About 380 tons of explosives reported missing in Iraq (Oct. 25).

Yasir Arafat dies in Paris (Nov. 11).

U.S. troops launch attack on Falluja, stronghold of the Iraqi insurgency (Nov. 8).

Ukraine presidential election declared fraudulent (Nov. 21).

Hamid Karzai inaugurated as Afghanistan's first popularly elected president (Dec. 7).

Massive protests by supporters of opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko's lead to a new Ukrainian election; Yushchenko eventually declared prime minister (Dec. 26).

Enormous tsunami devastates Asia; 200,000 killed (Dec. 26).

Bush proposes ambitious space program that includes flights to the Moon, Mars, and beyond (Jan. 14).

John Kerry secures Democratic nomination after winning nine out of ten primaries and caucuses (March 2).

U.S. media release graphic photos of American soldiers abusing and sexually humiliating Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison. Images spark outrage around the world (April 30).

Gay marriages begin in Massachusetts, the first state in the country to legalize such unions (May 17).

Senate Intelligence Committee reports that intelligence on Iraq's weapons programs was "overstated" and flawed (July 5).

Sept. 11 commission harshly criticizes government's handling of terrorist attacks (July 22).

Democratic National Convention in Boston nominates John Kerry for president (July 26–29).

Pentagon-sponsored Schlesinger report rejects idea that Abu Ghraib prison abuse was work of a few aberrant soldiers, and asserts there were "fundamental failures throughout all levels of command" (Aug. 24).

Republican Convention in New York renominates President Bush (Aug. 30–Sept. 2).

Florida hit by hurricanes Bonnie (Aug. 12) and Charley (Aug. 13).

U.S.'s final report on Iraq's weapons finds no WMDs (Sept. 16).

Congress extends tax cuts due to expire at the end of 2005 (Sept. 23).

Hurricane Ivan ravages U.S. south (Sept. 15). Hurricane Jeanne hits Florida (Sept. 26).

George W. Bush is reelected president, defeats John Kerry (Nov. 2).

## 2005

Worldwide aid pours in to help the eleven Asian countries devastated by the Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami (Jan.).

Mahmoud Abbas wins presidency of the Palestinian Authority in a landslide. This is the first presidential election for Palestinians since 1996 (Jan. 9).

The Sudanese government and Southern rebels sign a peace agreement to end a 20-year civil war that has claimed the lives of two million people (Jan. 9).

Iraqi elections to select a 275-seat National Assembly take place despite threats of violence (Jan. 30). See also Iraq; Iraq Timeline.

Former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri—a nationalist who had called for Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon—is assassinated (Feb. 14). Weeks of protests ensue.

Violent protests follow elections in Kyrgyzstan (March 13), which international monitors deem severely flawed. President Askar Akayev flees the country and then resigns (April 4).

Pope John Paul II Dies (April 2). Benedict XVI becomes the next pope (April 24).

The Syrian military, stationed in Lebanon for 29 years, withdraws (April 26).

Tony Blair becomes first Labour Party prime minister to win three successive terms, but his party loses a large number of seats in the elections (May 5).

The European Union abandons plans to ratify the proposed European constitution by 2006 after both France and the Netherlands vote against it (June 16).

Former Teheran mayor Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a hard-line conservative, wins Iran's presidential election with 62% of the vote. He defiantly pursues Iran's nuclear ambitions over the course of his first year in office (June 24).

London hit by Islamic terrorist bombings, killing 52 and wounding about 700. It is Britain's worst attack since World War II (July 7).

Group of Eight industrial nations pledge to double aid to Africa to \$50 billion a year by 2010, cancel the debt of many poor countries, and open trade (July 8).

Pentagon assessment finds Iraq's police force is, at best, "partially capable" of fighting the country's insurgency. The U.S.'s eventual withdrawal plan hinges upon Iraqi security forces replacing U.S. soldiers: "As Iraqis stand up, Americans will stand down," President Bush had stated (July 20). See also Iraq; Iraq Timeline.

The Irish Republican Army announces it is officially ending its violent campaign for a united Ireland and will instead pursue its goals politically (July 27). See also Northern Ireland Peace Process.

The Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) sign a peace accord to end their nearly 30-year-long civil war (Aug. 15).

Israel begins evacuating about 8,000 Israeli settlers from the Gaza Strip, which has been occupied by Israel for the last 38 years (Aug. 15).

A 7.6 earthquake centered in the Pakistani-controlled part of the Kashmir region kills more than 80,000 and leaves an estimated 4 million homeless (Oct. 2).

Angela Merkel, leader of the Christian Democratic Union, which narrowly prevailed over Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's Social Democratic Party in September elections becomes the country's first female chancellor (Oct. 10).

Millions of Iraqi voters ratify a new constitution (Oct. 15).

Former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein goes on trial for the killing of 143 people in the town of Dujail, Iraq, in 1982 (Oct 19).

Several weeks of violent rioting begins in the impoverished French-Arab and French-African suburbs of Paris after two boys are accidentally killed while hiding from police (Oct 27).

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf becomes Africa's first woman elected head of state (Nov. 11).

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon quits as head of the Likud Party, which he founded, to start a new, more centrist organization, called Kadima (Nov. 21).

About 11 million Iraqis (70% of the country's registered voters) turn out to select their first permanent Parliament since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein (Dec. 15). See also Iraq; Iraq Timeline.

George W. Bush is officially sworn in for his second term as president (Jan. 20).

In his State of the Union address, President Bush announces his plan to reform Social Security (Feb. 2). Despite months of campaigning, his plan receives only a lukewarm reception.

The Terry Schiavo case becomes the focus of an emotionally charged battle in Congress (March 20).

Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor announces her retirement (July 1).

President Bush signs the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which will remove trade barriers between the U.S. and Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (Aug. 2).

Hurricane Katrina wreaks catastrophic damage on the Gulf coast; more than 1,000 die and millions are left homeless. Americans are shaken not simply by the magnitude of the disaster but by how ill-prepared all levels of government are in its aftermath. (Aug. 25-30). See also Hurricane Katrina Timeline.

Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, who served on the U.S. Supreme Court for 33 years, dies (Sept. 3).

John Roberts becomes 17th chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court (Sept 22).

Another major hurricane, Rita, ravages the Gulf coast (Sept. 23).

House majority leader Tom Delay is accused of conspiring to violate Texas's election laws. He steps aside from his House leadership position (Sept. 28).

Number of deaths of U.S. soldiers in Iraq reaches 2,000 (Oct. 25).

President Bush selects Harriet Miers, White House counsel, to replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor (Oct 3). Miers withdraws her nomination after strong criticism from the president's conservative base (Oct. 27).

A federal grand jury indicts I. Lewis Libby, Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, with obstruction of justice and perjury in connection with a White House leak investigation. (Oct. 28).

President Bush nominates conservative judge Samuel Alito to replace retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor on the Supreme Court (Oct. 31).

California Republican congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham resigns after pleading guilty to taking at least \$2.4 million in bribes (Nov. 28).

The Sept. 11 Public Discourse Project reports that the country is still "alarmingly vulnerable to terrorist strikes." (Dec. 5).

The press reveals that in 2002, Bush signed a presidential order to allow the National Security Agency to spy on Americans suspected of being connected to terrorist activity without warrants. (Dec. 15).

## 2006

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon suffers a massive stroke; he is replaced by acting prime minister Ehud Olmert (Jan. 5).

Militant group Hamas wins 74 of 132 seats in Palestinian legislative elections (Jan. 25). Israeli leaders vote to withhold \$50 million per month (Feb. 19).

A Danish newspaper challenges taboos against illustrations of Muhammad by printing several negative cartoons depicting him. Angry demonstrators throughout the Muslim world smash windows, set fires, and burn flags of Denmark and other nations whose newspapers reprint the cartoons (Feb. 4 onward).

In Iraq, a coalition of Shiites and Kurds dominates the new government. Secretarian violence wracks the country, killing tens of thousands, with fatality rates rising throughout the year; some observers describe the situation as a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. Several internal reports characterize the U.S. military efforts as failing. See Iraq Timeline 2006.

After weeks of crippling student-led protests, French president Jacques Chirac repeals a new labor law that would have made it easier for employers to fire workers under the age of 26 (Apr. 10).

In defiance of the U.N. Security Council, Iran president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announces that Iran has successfully enriched uranium (Apr. 11). The International Atomic Energy Agency reports to the Security Council that it has found traces of highly enriched uranium at Iran's Natanz facility (July 31). U.N. Security Council resolution bans the Iranian import and export of materials and technology used to enrich uranium (Dec. 23).

North Korea test fires missiles over the Sea of Japan (July 4) and explodes a nuclear device in the North Korean mountains (Oct. 9). The U.N. Security Council votes in favor of a resolution banning the sale of materials to North Korea that could be used to produce weapons (Oct. 14). North Korea agrees to resume disarmament talks with China, Russia, the U.S., and South Korea (Oct. 31).

India test-launches a missile with a range of 1,800 miles (July 9). More than 200 people die and hundreds more are wounded when a series of bombs explode on commuter trains in Mumbai, India during the evening rush hour (July 11).

Hezbollah, a Lebanese militant group, fires rockets into Israel. In response, Israel launches a major military attack, sending thousands of troops into Lebanon. (July 13–Aug. 15).

Saddam Hussein is convicted of crimes against humanity by an Iraqi court (Nov. 5), and hanged in Baghdad. A witness videotapes the hanging using a cell phone and captures the chaos that unfolds as Shiite guards taunt Hussein (Dec. 30).

President Bush signs a law renewing the Patriot Act, including a signing statement stating that he does not consider himself bound by its requirement to tell Congress how the law is being used (Mar. 9).

House releases a report on the response to Hurricane Katrina, assigning blame on all levels of government (Feb. 15).

Jack Abramoff, a lobbyist with ties to several members of Congress, is sentenced to six years in prison by a Florida judge on fraud charges (Mar. 29).

George Bush and Tony Blair express regret for the abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison, for removing all Baathists from positions of power in Iraq, and for other missteps (May 25).

The Supreme Court rules that military tribunals cannot be set up to try prisoners in the absence of Congressional authorization and that prisoners are entitled to fair trials under the Geneva Conventions (June 29).

President Bush uses his veto power for the first time, striking down legislation that would have expanded the number of stem cell lines available for embryonic research using federal financing. (July 19).

Democrats gain control of both houses of Congress in the midterm elections (Nov. 7).

John Bolton steps down as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations when it becomes clear that he does not have enough votes in the Senate to win confirmation (Dec. 4).

## 2007

Romania and Bulgaria join the European Union, bringing the number of member nations to 27 (Jan. 1).

Leaders of Hamas and Fatah, two rival Palestinian factions, meet in Mecca and reach a deal to end hostilities and form a unity government (Feb. 7). The Palestinian legislature approves a Hamas-dominated unity government (March 17). Hamas takes control of much of the Gaza Strip (June 13). Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas dissolves the government, fires Prime Minister Ismail Haniya, the leader of Hamas, and declares a state of emergency (June 14).

The U.S. begins its "surge" of some 30,000 troops to Iraq to stem increasingly deadly attacks by insurgents and militias (Feb. 7).

The International Court of Justice rules that the slaughter of some 8,000 Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serbs in Srebrenica in 1995 was genocide (Feb. 26).

David Hicks, an Australian, pleads guilty to providing material support to al Qaeda. He's the first Guantánamo Bay detainee to be convicted by a military commission (March 26).

Iranian troops detain 15 Britons (eight sailors and seven marines) claiming they were in Iranian territorial waters (March 26). The detainees are freed (April 4).

Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Féin, and Rev. Ian Paisley, the head of the Democratic Unionist Party, meet face-to-face for the first time and hash out an agreement for a power-sharing government (March 26).

Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko dissolves Parliament and accuses Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich of attempting to consolidate power (April 2).

President Vladimir Putin announces Russia will suspend the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty, which limits conventional weapons in Europe (April 26).

In the second round of French presidential elections, Conservative candidate Nicolas Sarkozy defeats Socialist candidate Ségolène Royal, 53.1% to 46.9% (May 6).

A commission that investigated 2006's war between Israel and Lebanon says Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert was responsible for "a severe failure in exercising judgment, responsibility, and prudence." It also says Olmert rushed to war without an adequate plan (April 30).

Gordon Brown replaces Tony Blair as the prime minister of Great Britain (June 27).

Russian president Vladimir Putin announces that the country will suspend its participation in the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty, a cold-war era agreement that limits the deployment of heavy weaponry (July 14).

India and U.S. reach an accord on civilian nuclear power that allows India, which has not signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, to buy nuclear fuel from the U.S. to expand its civilian nuclear energy program and reprocess its spent fuel (July 27).

President Ramos-Horta names independence activist Xanana Gusmão as prime minister of East Timor (Aug. 6).

Two pairs of truck bombs explode about five miles apart in the remote, northwestern Iraqi towns of Qahtaniya and Jazeera, killing at least 500 members of the minority Yazidi community, making it the single deadliest insurgent attack of the war (Aug. 14).

Abdullah Gul, of the Justice and Development Party, is elected president of Turkey in the third round of voting by the country's parliament. He is the first Islamist president in the country's modern history (Aug. 28).

Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe abruptly announces his resignation. The move follows a string of scandals and his party's recent defeat in parliamentary elections, in which his Liberal Democratic Party lost control of the upper house to the opposition Democratic Party (Sep. 12). Yasuo Fukuda is elected prime minister of Japan (Sep. 23).

Seventeen Iraqi civilians are killed when employees of private security company Blackwater USA reportedly fire on a car that failed to stop at the request of a police officer (Sep. 16). The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform finds that employees of Blackwater USA have been involved in some 200 shootings in Iraq. The report says the company paid some families of victims and tried to cover up other incidents (Oct. 1). The State Department announces that its own monitors will accompany Blackwater employees on all security convoys (Oct. 5). An FBI report says 14 of the 17 shootings were unjustified and the guards were reckless in their use of deadly force (Nov. 13).

Nuon Chea, who was second-in-command to Pol Pot during the four years of Khmer Rouge rule that led to the state-sponsored massacre of between 1 million and 2 million Cambodians, is arrested and charged with war crimes (Sep. 19).

After a month of peaceful pro-democracy demonstrations that include hundreds of monks, Burmese government forces shoot at crowds, raid pagodas, and arrest monks. Dozens of people are killed. The protests are the largest in Myanmar in 20 years (Sep. 26)

In a landmark deal, North Korea agrees to disclose details about its nuclear facilities, including how much plutonium it has produced, and dismantle all of its nuclear facilities by the end of 2007. In exchange, the country will receive some 950,000 metric tons of fuel oil or financial aid. The Bush administration will also start the process of removing North Korea from its list of nations that sponsor terrorism (Oct. 1).

Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf is easily reelected to a third term by the country's national and provincial assemblies. The opposition boycotts the vote, however, and only representatives from the governing party participate in the election (Oct. 6). Former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto arrives in Pakistan after eight years in exile (Oct. 18). Musharraf declares a state of emergency, suspends the country's constitution and fires Chief Justice Iflikhar Muhammad Chaudhry and the other judges on the Supreme Court (Nov. 3). The Supreme Court, filled with judges loyal to Musharraf, dismisses the case challenging the constitutionality of Musharraf being elected president while head of the military (Nov. 22). Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif returns to Pakistan after eight years in exile and demands that Musharraf lift the emergency rule and reinstate the dismissed Supreme Court justices (Nov. 25). Musharraf steps down as military chief. He is replaced by Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani (Nov. 28). Musharraf is sworn in as a civilian president (Nov. 29). Former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto is killed in a bombing at a campaign rally in Rawalpindi (Dec. 27).

Cristina Fernández de Kirchner is elected Argentina's first woman president. She succeeds her husband, Néstor Kirchner (Oct. 28).

Australian prime minister John Howard loses to the Labor Party's Kevin Rudd (Nov. 24).

A National Intelligence Estimate says "with high confidence" that Iran froze its nuclear weapons program in 2003. The report contradicts one written in 2005 that stated Iran was determined to continue developing such weapons (Dec. 3).

The African National Congress chooses Jacob Zuma as its leader, ousting South African president Thabo Mbeki (Dec. 18).

Violence breaks out between rival tribes after preliminary results in Kenya's presidential elections show opposition candidate Raila Odinga, of the Orange Democratic Movement, defeating incumbent Mwai Kibaki, 57% to 39% (Dec. 27).

California Democrat Nancy Pelosi becomes the first woman speaker of the House and will preside over the 109th Congress. Democrats take control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 1994 (Jan. 4).

President Bush announces that a surge of an additional 20,000 troops will be deployed to Baghdad to try to stem the sectarian fighting (Jan. 10).

The Senate confirms Mike McConnell as the director of National Intelligence (Feb. 6).

U.S. Army Maj. Gen. George Weightman is removed from his post as head of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Army Secretary Francis Harvey steps down. Dismissals follow reports that patients have received inadequate care, have been caught in a maze of bureaucratic red tape, and have been treated in dilapidated facilities. (March 2). Bipartisan presidential commission, set up in response to the inadequate treatment of troops at the Walter Reed Medical Center, suggests overhauling the system that makes disability and compensation determinations and improving treatment for brain injuries and post traumatic stress (July 25).

Lewis “Scooter” Libby, former chief of staff to Vice President Dick Cheney, is found guilty of lying to FBI agents and to a grand jury in the investigation of who leaked to the press the name of a covert CIA agent. The agent, Valerie Plame Wilson, is married to Joseph Wilson, who in 2003 questioned the Bush administration’s claim that Saddam Hussein was pursuing a nuclear weapons program by seeking to obtain uranium from Niger (March 6). Libby is sentenced to 30 months in jail (June 5). President Bush commutes his sentence (July 2).

In hearings before the Senate and House, seven U.S. attorneys who were fired in late 2006 say they received inappropriate calls from Republican lawmakers or Justice Department officials regarding corruption cases they were investigating. They also say they felt pressured by the Justice Department to keep quiet about their dismissals (March 6). Attorney General Alberto Gonzales tells Senate Judiciary Committee that although the process in which U.S. attorneys were fired was flawed, the dismissals were justified. Gonzales cites a bad memory more than 50 times when he fails to answer questions about key parts of the dismissal process (April 19). Citing executive privilege, President Bush refuses to hand over any documents relating to the firing of U.S. prosecutors in 2006 and instructs Harriet Miers, Bush's former counsel, and Sara Taylor, the former deputy assistant to the president and White House director of political affairs, to also refuse to testify (July 9). The House Judiciary Committee votes, 22 to 17, to hold Harriet Miers and White House chief of staff Joshua Bolten in contempt for refusing to testify about the dismissals (July 25). The White House announces that Alberto Gonzales has submitted his resignation (Aug. 27). Bush selects retired federal judge Michael Mukasey to replace Alberto Gonzales (Sep. 17). The Senate votes, 53 to 40, to confirm Mukasey as attorney general (Nov. 8).

Supreme Court rules, 5–4, that the Environmental Protection Agency has the authority to regulate automobile emissions of heat-trapping gases and that the agency cannot shirk its responsibility to do so unless it provides a scientific reason (April 2).

President Bush vetoes the \$124 billion spending bill passed by Congress for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The bill called on the Bush administration to establish benchmarks for the Iraqi government that, if met, set a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. It was only the second time in Bush's presidency that he used the veto (May 1).

President Bush vetoes legislation, passed by Congress, that eases restrictions on federal funding of embryonic stem cell research (June 7).

The minimum wage increases to \$5.85, up from \$5.15. It's the first increase in 10 years. The wage will increase 70 cents each year through 2009, when it will be \$7.25 an hour (July 24).

President Bush signs law that legalizes government eavesdropping of telephone conversations and emails of American citizens and people overseas without a warrant as long as there is a "reasonable belief" that one party is not in the United States (Aug. 5).

Karl Rove, highly influential and controversial advisor to President Bush, announces his resignation (Aug. 13).

In highly anticipated testimony, Gen. David Petraeus tells members of the House Foreign Affairs and Armed Services committees that the U.S. military needs more time to meet its goals in Iraq. U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker also testifies, saying that while Iraqi leaders and the people are capable of—and desire to—bridge the sectarian divide, "I frankly do not expect that we will see rapid progress" (Sep. 10).

President Bush signs an energy bill that requires passenger vehicles sold in the U.S. to have fuel economy standards of 35 mpg by 2020, a 40% increase over the current standard. Measure also calls for an increase in the production of ethanol and other biofuels to 36 billion gallons a year by 2022, up from the current 5 billion (Dec. 19).

## 2008

Jan. 1–31: Tribal violence erupts in Kenya after December 2007's presidential election between Raila Odinga, of the Orange Democratic Movement, and incumbent president Mwai Kibaki. More than 800 people die in violence across the country. Preliminary results had Odinga defeating Kibaki, 57% to 39%. In the days after the election, however, Odinga's lead dwindled and Kenya's electoral commission declared Kibaki the winner, 46% to 44%. International observers said the vote was rigged.

Jan. 6: President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, is reelected, taking 52% of the vote. He had called for early elections in November 2007, after massive protests prompted by accusations that he abused power and stifled dissent.

Jan. 31: Final report by an Israeli-government-appointed panel, the Winograd Commission, on Israel's 2006 war against the militant group Hezbollah in Lebanon, calls the operation a "large and serious" failure and criticizes the country's leadership for failing to have an exit strategy in place before the invasion.

Feb. 10: Three men wearing ski masks steal four pieces of artwork from the Zurich Museum in one of the largest art robberies in history. In broad daylight, the robbers took a Cezanne, a Degas, a van Gogh, and a Monet, with a combined worth of \$163 million. Feb. 18: Two of the paintings, the Monet and the van Gogh, are found in perfect condition in the backseat of an unlocked car in Zurich.

Feb. 17: Kosovo's prime minister Hashim Thaci declares independence from Serbia. Serbian prime minister Vojislav Kostunica says he would never recognize the "false state." International reaction is mixed, with the United States, France, Germany, and Britain indicating that they plan to recognize Kosovo as the world's 195th country.

Feb. 19: Cuban president Fidel Castro, who temporarily handed power to his brother Raúl in July 2006 when he fell ill, permanently steps down after 49 years in power.

March 2: Dmitri A. Medvedev, a former aide to Russian president Vladimir Putin, wins the presidential election in a landslide. Putin will remain in a position of power, serving as Medvedev's prime minister.

March 10: Some 400 Buddhist monks participate in a protest march in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, to commemorate 1959's failed uprising against China's invasion and occupation of Tibet. March 14: Violence breaks out, with ethnic Tibetans clashing with Chinese citizens. Chinese police suppress the demonstrations, and Tibetan leaders say that more than 100 Tibetans are killed.

April 2: Zimbabwe's Morgan Tsvangirai, of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, says he won 50.3% of the vote in March 29's presidential election, defeating Robert Mugabe, who has been in power since 1980. April 14: The High Court of Zimbabwe dismisses the opposition's request for the release of election results. The government cracks down on the opposition.

April 11: In Nepal, millions of voters turn out to elect a 601-seat Constituent Assembly that will write a new constitution. Maoist rebels win 120 out of 240 directly elected seats.

May 2: More than a month after the presidential election, Zimbabwe officials announce that opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, defeated incumbent Robert Mugabe, 47.9% to 43.2%. A runoff election is necessary because neither candidate won more than 50%.

May 28: Nepal's newly elected Constituent Assembly votes to dissolve the 239-year-old monarchy and form a republic. King Gyanendra is told he must step down within 15 days.

June 19: Egypt brokers a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas, the militant group that controls the Gaza Strip. The agreement is intended to stem the violence in the region.

June 22: Morgan Tsvangirai, of Zimbabwe's Movement for Democracy and Change, who was to face incumbent president Robert Mugabe in a runoff election, withdraws from the race, saying he could not subject his supporters to violence and intimidation. June 27: Mugabe wins the second round of the election, with about 85% of the vote.

July 2: After being held for nearly six years by Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels in Colombia, 15 hostages, including three U.S. military contractors and French-Colombian politician Ingrid Betancourt, are freed by commandos who infiltrated FARC's leadership.

July 14: Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, formally charges Sudan's president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, with genocide for planning and executing the decimation of Darfur's three main ethnic tribes: the Fur, the Masalit, and the Zaghawa.

July 21: Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb president during the war in Bosnia in the 1990s, is arrested outside Belgrade and charged with genocide, persecution, deportation, and other crimes against non-Serb civilians. Karadzic orchestrated the massacre of almost 8,000 Muslim men and boys in 1995 in Srebrenica. July 30: Karadzic is transferred to The Hague to await trial.

Aug. 7: Fighting breaks out after Georgian soldiers attack South Ossetia, a breakaway enclave in Georgia that won de facto independence in the early 1990s. Separatists in South Ossetia retaliate. Aug. 8: Russia enters the fray, with troops and tanks pouring into South Ossetia to support the region. Aug. 9 and 10: Russia intensifies its involvement, moving troops into Abkhazia, another breakaway region, and launching airstrikes at Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. Aug. 13: France brokers a deal between Russia and Georgia. President George Bush sends U.S. troops on a humanitarian mission to Georgia. He warns Russia that if it doesn't observe the cease-

fire, the country risks its standing in "the diplomatic, political, economic, and security structures of the 21st century." Aug. 29: Russia and Georgia sever diplomatic ties from each other. It is the first time Russia has cut off formal relations with one of its former republics, which gained independence in 1991.

Aug. 7: Pakistan's governing coalition, led by Asif Ali Zardari, of the Pakistan Peoples Party, and Nawaz Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-N, begins impeachment proceedings against President Pervez Musharraf on charges of violating the constitution and misconduct. Aug. 18: Musharraf resigns as president.

Aug. 15: Nepal's Constituent Assembly elects Maoist leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, known as Prachanda, as prime minister.

Aug. 22: As many as 90 Afghan civilians, 60 of them children, die in an airstrike by coalition troops in the western village of Azizabad. It is one of the deadliest airstrikes since the war began in 2001, and the deadliest for civilians. The U.S. military refutes the figures, which were confirmed by the UN.

Sep. 2: Thai prime minister Samak Sundaravej declares a state of emergency when protests between government supporters and the opposition, People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), which is calling for Samak's resignation, turn violent. Sep. 9: Samak is forced from office when Thailand's Constitutional Court rules that he violated the constitution by being paid to appear on a cooking show. Somchai Wongsawat, the first deputy prime minister, becomes acting prime minister. Sep. 17: Parliament elects Somchai prime minister.

Sep. 6: Asif Ali Zardari, leader of the Pakistan Peoples Party and the widower of former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto, wins 481 out of 702 votes in the two houses of Parliament to become president.

Sep. 15: In Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai, who defeated Mugabe 48% to 43% in March 2008 elections but boycotted the June runoff election because of voter intimidation, agree to a power-sharing deal. Tsvangirai will serve as prime minister and the opposition will control 16 ministries. The governing party will control 15; Mugabe will continue as president.

Sep. 20: A truck bomb explodes outside the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan, killing more than 50 people and wounding hundreds. A previously unknown group, Fedayeen Islam, takes responsibility for the attack.

Sep. 21: Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert, who is under investigation for corruption, resigns.

Sep. 24: Japan's Taro Aso, a conservative and former foreign minister, becomes prime minister, succeeding Yasuo Fukuda, who stepped down amid criticism of his handling of domestic issues.

Oct. 1: The Iraqi government takes command of 54,000 mainly Sunni fighters from the U.S., which had been paying the fighters for their support. The fighters, members of awakening councils, turned against al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia in 2007 and began siding with the U.S.

Nov. 16: Iraq's cabinet passes by a large margin a status of forces agreement that will govern the U.S. presence in Iraq through 2011. The pact calls for the withdrawal of all U.S. combat troops by Dec. 31, 2011, and the removal of U.S. troops from Iraqi cities by the summer of 2009. In addition, the agreement gives Iraqi officials increased jurisdiction over serious crimes committed by off-duty Americans who are off base when the crimes occur. Nov. 27: The Iraqi Parliament votes, 149 to 35, to approve the status of forces agreement. Dec. 4: The Presidential Council, made up of Iraq's president and two vice presidents, gives final approval to the status of forces agreement.

Nov. 26: More than 170 people are killed and about 300 are wounded in a series of attacks on several landmarks and commercial hubs in Mumbai, India. Indian officials say ten gunmen carried out the attack. It took Indian forces three days to end the siege. Deccan Mujahedeen, a previously unknown group, claims responsibility for the attacks. Pakistan officials deny any involvement in the attacks, but some Indian officials hint that they suspect Pakistani complicity.

Dec. 2: Thailand's Constitutional Court ruling that the governing People Power engaged in fraud during the 2007 elections forces Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat from power and bans party members from politics for five years. Dec. 15: Parliament elects Abhisit Vejjajiva, the head of the Democrat Party, as prime minister.

Dec. 14: At a news conference in Baghdad, a reporter for Al Baghdadia, a Cairo-based satellite television network, hurls his shoes at President Bush and calls him a "dog." The shoes narrowly miss Bush's head.

Dec. 22: Guinea's despotic president, Lansana Conte, dies after 24 years in power. Dec. 24: Junior army leaders launch a coup. Army captain Moussa Camara takes over as president of the republic.

Dec. 28: Days after a cease-fire between Israel and Hamas expired, Hamas begins launching rocket attacks into Israel, which retaliates with airstrikes that kill about 300 people. Israel targets Hamas bases, training camps, and missile storage facilities.

Jan. 3: The presidential primary season begins with Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Mike Huckabee.

Feb. 5: Arizona senator John McCain emerges as the clear front runner among Republicans in the Super Tuesday primary races. On the Democratic side, New York senator Hillary Clinton wins big states such as California and Massachusetts, but Illinois senator Barack Obama takes more states.

March 4: Sen. John McCain has enough delegates to secure the Republican presidential nomination.

March 8: President George W. Bush, saying intelligence officials must have "all the tools they need to stop the terrorists," vetoes legislation that would have outlawed all methods of interrogation that are banned in

the Army Field Manual, which prohibits waterboarding and other harsh techniques that have been used by the CIA.

March 18: Sen. Barack Obama delivers a pivotal speech on race, denouncing the provocative remarks on race made by his former pastor, Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Jr., but explains that the complexities of race in America have fueled anger and resentment among many African Americans.

March 11: The government begins to intervene in the U.S. financial system to avoid a crisis. The Federal Reserve outlines a \$200 billion loan program that lets the country's biggest banks borrow Treasury securities at discounted rates and post mortgage-backed securities as collateral. March 16: The Federal Reserve approves a \$30 billion loan to JPMorgan Chase so it can take over Bear Stearns, which is on the verge of collapse.

May 15: California's Supreme Court rules, 4 to 3, that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry.

May 20: Senator Edward Kennedy, a Democrat from Massachusetts who's been in office since 1963, is diagnosed with malignant glioma, a brain tumor.

June 3: On the final day of the 2008 primary season, Sen. Barack Obama secures 2,154 delegates and becomes the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee. He's the first black candidate to head a major party ticket in a presidential election. Aug. 28: Obama accepts the Democratic presidential nomination, becoming the first African American to be selected by a major party as its nominee for president.

June 12: The U.S. Supreme Court rules, 5 to 4, that prisoners at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, have a right to challenge their detention in federal court.

June 26: The U.S. Supreme Court rules, 5 to 4, that the Constitution protects an individual's right to possess a gun, but insists that the ruling "is not a right to keep and carry any weapon whatsoever in any manner whatsoever and for whatever purpose."

Sep. 4: Sen. John McCain accepts the the Republican presidential nomination.

Sep. 29: An internal inquiry by the U.S. Justice Department's inspector general and its Office of Professional Responsibility reports "significant evidence that political partisan considerations were an important factor in the removal of several of the U.S. attorneys." (Nine federal prosecutors were fired in 2006.)

Oct. 1: The U.S. Senate ratifies an agreement that allows India to buy nuclear fuel on the world market for its reactors as long as it uses the fuel for civilian purposes only.

Oct. 10: Connecticut's Supreme Court rules that a state law that limits marriage to heterosexual couples and a civil union law that protects gay couples violate equal protection rights guaranteed by the constitution.

Oct. 27: A jury finds Sen. Ted Stevens (R-AK) guilty of seven felony charges for lying on financial disclosure forms and failing to report more than \$250,000 in gifts from the VECO Corporation, one of Alaska's biggest oil-field contractors.

Nov. 4: Democratic senator Barack Obama wins the presidential election against Sen. John McCain, taking 338 electoral votes to McCain's 161. Obama becomes the first African American to be elected president of the United States. Also in the election, Democrats increase their majority in the House and pick up five seats in the Senate.

Nov. 4: Voters in California narrowly pass a ballot measure, Proposition 8, that overturns the May 15, 2008, California Supreme Court decision that said same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry.

Dec. 19: President George W. Bush announces plans to lend General Motors and Chrysler \$17.4 billion to survive the next three months.

## 2009

Jan. 3: After more than a week of intense air strikes, Israeli troops crossed the border into Gaza, launching a ground war against the militant Palestinian group, Hamas. More than 430 Palestinians and 4 Israelis have been killed since the fighting began Dec. 27, 2008. Jan. 17: Israel announces unilateral cease-fire in Gaza. Hamas says it will continue to fight as long as Israeli troops remain in the area. Jan. 18: Hamas announces cease-fire in response to Israel's promise of peace.

Jan. 31: Iraq holds local elections to create provincial councils. More than 14,000 people run for just 440 seats on councils around the country. The elections are notable for their lack of violence and the noticeably diminished role the U.S. played in their implementation.

Feb. 1: Johanna Sigurdardottir takes office as Iceland's first female prime minister.

Feb. 7: The worst wildfires in Australia's history kill at least 181 people in the state of Victoria, injure more than a hundred, and destroy more than 900 homes.

March 3: A group of 12 gunmen in Pakistan attack the national cricket team of Sri Lanka and their police escorts. Six policemen are killed in the attack, as well as two bystanders.

March 4: The International Criminal Court issues an arrest warrant for the president of Sudan, Omar Hassan Ahmad al Bashir, charging him with war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Darfur region.

March 17: Madagascar's president Marc Ravalomanana resigns after a bitter, three-month-long power struggle with opposition leader Andry Rajoelina. Ravalomanana hands power over to the military, which in turn transfers control to Andry Rajoelina.

April 1: Sweden becomes the fifth European country to legalize same-sex marriage. The other countries with the same rights are The Netherlands, Norway, Belgium and Spain.

April 26: H1N1 (swine flu) has killed as many as 103 people in Mexico, most likely the epicenter of the worldwide outbreak. April 29: At least 150 in Mexico are dead from H1N1.

May 1: For the first time in 341 years, a woman is appointed as poet laureate of the United Kingdom. Carol Ann Duffy, 53, will take over the post from current poet laureate Andrew Motion.

June 1: In the worst aviation disaster since 2001, Air France Flight 447 disappears somewhere off the northeast coast of Brazil with 228 people on board, en route from Rio de Janeiro to Paris.

June 8: A court in North Korea convicts American journalists Euna Lee and Laura Ling of "illegal entry" and sentences them to 12 years in a labor prison. The women were employed by Current TV and were arrested in March while working on a story about North Korean refugees.

June 13: Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad wins his reelection campaign by a landslide victory with almost 63% of the vote, while main challenger Mir Hussein Moussavi receives just under 34%. Accusations of ballot tampering and fraud leads to wide-scale and deadly protests in Tehran. June 21: The death toll in the Iranian protests reaches at least 17, according to state media. June 22: The Guardian Council, Iran's oversight group, admits to irregularities in the recent presidential election, revealing that votes counted in about 50 cities exceed the number of eligible voters by 3 million. They claim the mistake does not affect the final election result, however. June 30: The Guardian Council of Iran announces that the election of President Ahmadinejad is valid.

June 28: Honduran president Manuel Zelaya is ousted by a military coup. Zelaya had faced wide criticism recently for attempting to extend presidential term limits. June 30: Roberto Micheletti, named the interim president by the Honduran Congress, threatens Zelaya with arrest if he returns to the country.

June 30: As a signal of the United States' diminishing role in Iraq, and in compliance with the status of forces agreement between the U.S. and Iraq, U.S. troops complete their withdrawal from Iraqi cities, including Baghdad, and transfer the responsibility of securing the cities to Iraqi troops. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki names June 30 "National Sovereignty Day" and declares a public holiday.

July 6: Rioting in Urumqi, China between two ethnic groups—Muslim Uighurs and Han Chinese—kills at least 156 people.

Aug. 4: The government of North Korea pardons two imprisoned American journalists after former President Bill Clinton visits the country and its president, Kim Jong-il. Laura Ling and Euna Lee were arrested in March and sentenced in June to 12 years in prison for "illegal entry" into the country.

Aug. 5: Controversial president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad begins his second term amid a crisis in Iran sparked by the June election that was widely condemned as rigged in Ahmadinejad's favor. The vote set off protests that resulted in mass arrests of opposition figures, journalists, and lawyers.

Aug. 5: Baitullah Mehsud, the leader of the Taliban in Pakistan, is killed by a C.I.A. drone strike in South Waziristan. The assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister of Pakistan, the terrorist attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, Pakistan in Sept. 2008, and dozens of other suicide bombings have been attributed to Mehsud.

Aug. 20: Abdel Basset Ali al-Megrahi, the Libyan terrorist convicted of bombing of Pan Am Flight 103, which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988 and killed 270 people, is freed from prison on compassionate

grounds by Scotland's Justice Minister, Kenny MacAskill. He is suffering from terminal prostate cancer and is expected to die within three months.

Aug. 30: Japan's opposition party, the Democrats, win in a landslide over the ruling Liberal Democrats, who have been in power nearly uninterrupted for a half-century.

Aug. 20: Afghanistan holds provincial and presidential elections. Violence spiked in the days leading up to the elections. More than 30 candidates challenged incumbent President Hamid Karzai, with Abdullah Abdullah as the most formidable contender. Early results put Karzai well ahead of Abdullah, but allegations of widespread and blatant fraud surfaced immediately. Sept. 8: The United Nations-backed commission that is reviewing the presidential election in Afghanistan orders a recount of the votes, citing evidence of fraud. Oct. 31: Abdullah Abdullah withdraws from the second round of Afghanistan's presidential race in protest of the Karzai administration's refusal to dismiss election officials accused of taking part in the widespread fraud that marred the first round of the election. Results released earlier in October showed that Karzai came up short in garnering 50% of the vote, necessitating a second round of voting. Nov. 20: Karzai is sworn in as the president of Afghanistan, marking the beginning of his second five-year term.

Oct. 2: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil wins the bid for the 2016 Olympics and will be the first South American city to host the Games. Rio beat Tokyo, Madrid, and Chicago, Ill.

Oct. 25: Two suicide bombings in Baghdad, Iraq kill at least 155 people and wound 500 others. These are the deadliest attacks in the country since 2007, and raise the question of the safety of Iraq.

Oct. 30: The U.S. brokers an agreement between ousted Honduran president Manuel Zelaya and self-appointed leader of the country, Roberto Micheletti, that left Zelaya's reinstatement up to a congressional vote, called for the establishment of a government of national unity and a truth commission, and required Zelaya to abandon a referendum on constitutional reform. Nov. 19: Micheletti agrees to temporarily cede power to his cabinet ministers while awaiting presidential election day, scheduled for November 29. (Nov. 29): Conservative candidate Porfirio Lobo wins the presidential election, beating his main opponent, Elvín Santos, by a wide margin.

Nov. 5: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announces he will not seek reelection in Jan. 2010's general and presidential elections, citing the protracted impasse between Israelis and Palestinians and the United States' failure to aggressively take steps toward negotiating a settlement.

At least 21 men and women are killed and 22 are missing in a rash of election-related violence in the Philippines. The victims were en route to file candidacy papers for Esmael Mangudadatu, who intends to run for governor of Maguindanao, a province on the island of Mindanao. Family members of Mangudadatu are among the dead. Nov. 25: The number of victims in the Philippines election killings rises to 57. Authorities voice their suspicion of a powerful clan tied to President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo; Andal Ampatuan Jr., the son of the current governor of Maguindanao and the prime suspect in the murders, turns himself in.

Dec. 5: An Italian jury convicts Amanda Knox, an American student, of murdering her former roommate, English student Meredith Kercher, in 2007. Knox and Kercher were exchange students in Italy at the time. Knox's then-boyfriend, Raffaele Sollecito, was also convicted. They received prison sentences of 26 and 25 years, respectively.

Dec. 18: President Barack Obama announces that the U.S., China, India, Brazil, and South Africa have reached an agreement to combat global warming. The accord that will set up a system for monitoring pollution reduction, require richer nations to give billions of dollars to poorer nations more greatly affected by climate change, and set a goal of limiting the global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels by 2050.

Jan. 15: After allegedly striking a flock of geese, US Airways Flight 1549, en route from La Guardia Airport, New York City, to Charlotte, N.C., is forced to land in the Hudson River. All 150 passengers and 5 crew members survived. The pilot, Chesley B. "Sully" Sullenberger III, was hailed as the "Hero of the Hudson" for his quick thinking and deft landing of the plane.

Jan. 20: Hundreds of thousands of people watched in front of the Capitol as President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden are sworn into office. Obama makes history as the first African-American president.

Jan. 22: President Obama signs executive orders closing all secret prisons and detention camps run by the CIA, including the infamous Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, and banning coercive interrogation methods.

Jan. 31: Michael Steele is selected by the Republican National Committee to be its new chairman. He is the first African-American to hold the position.

Feb. 27: President Obama announces his intention to withdraw most American troops from Iraq by August 31, 2010. As many as 50,000 troops will remain there for smaller missions and to train Iraqi soldiers.

March 2: Insurance giant American International Group reports a \$61.7 billion loss for the fourth quarter of 2008. A.I.G. lost \$99.3 billion in 2008. The federal government, which has already provided the company with a \$60 billion loan, will be giving A.I.G. an additional \$30 billion, making it the largest company loan the government has provided during the bailout. March 14: A.I.G. announces they will pay top executives more than \$165 million in bonuses, despite having received \$170 billion in bailout funds from the U.S. government. The company claims the bonuses were promised in contracts and are no longer negotiable. Nearly 80% of A.I.G. is now owned by the federal government. March 16: President Obama has asked Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner to pursue all "legal avenues" in order to block the bonuses to A.I.G. executives.

March 6: Unemployment in the U.S., which has been steadily growing for several months, reaches 8.1% in February 2009. This is the highest rate since 1983.

March 12: Bernard Madoff, who has admitted to operating a massive Ponzi scheme that defrauded his many clients out of billions of dollars over the past 20 years, pleads guilty to 11 counts of fraud, money laundering, perjury and theft. The judge revoked bail and remanded the financial swindler due to his relatively high flight risk.

April 2: Rod Blagojevich, the former governor of Illinois charged with attempting to sell President Obama's vacated senate seat to the highest bidder, is indicted on 19 charges, 16 of them felonies.

April 3: The Iowa Supreme Court unanimously rejects a state law banning same-sex marriage. April 27: Same-sex couples are granted marriage licenses for the first time in Iowa. Iowa is the third state to allow same-sex marriages, after Massachusetts and Connecticut.

April 7: Vermont becomes the fourth U.S. state to legalize same-sex marriage, just days after Iowa becomes the third. The legislature votes to override Governor Jim Douglas's veto of a bill allowing same-sex couples to marry, nine years after the state became the first in the nation to allow civil unions. Vermont is the first state legislature to legalize the practice; the other three U.S. states' approval of same-sex marriage came from the courts.

April 13: President Obama announces that Cuban-Americans will no longer be restricted from visiting and sending money home to family. American companies will also be able to provide telephone services to Cuba. The original embargo will remain in effect until Congress votes otherwise.

April 26: After confirming 20 cases of swine flu in the United States, including eight in New York City, the U.S. declares the outbreak a public health emergency.

April 30: Justice David H. Souter announces he is retiring from the U.S. Supreme Court when the current term ends in June. He was appointed by President George H. W. Bush in 1990. This will be the first Supreme Court pick for President Obama.

May 6: Gov. John Baldacci of Maine signs a bill legalizing same-sex marriage. The law will not go into effect until summer 2009.

May 11: Gen. David McKiernan, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, is fired and replaced by Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal. Defense Secretary Robert Gates says McKiernan brought too conventional an approach to the war and the Pentagon wanted a more innovative leader.

May 26: President Obama announces his nomination of New York federal appeals judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court.

May 26: The California Supreme Court upholds the ban on same-sex marriage, solidifying the vote made by California residents last November. The 18,000 same-sex couples who were married before the ban went to effect are still legally married, however.

June 4: In a speech during a visit to Cairo, Egypt, President Obama calls for "a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world," asking for new alliances based on mutual respect and common interests.

June 18: The Supreme Court rules in a 5–4 decision that prisoners have no right to a DNA test to prove their innocence long after they are convicted of a crime. The Court claims that most states already have laws in effect concerning DNA testing, so a federal law is unnecessary.

June 25: Michael Jackson, lifelong musician, pop singer, and superstar, dies at age 50. He is found unconscious in his home, then rushed to a Los Angeles hospital where he is pronounced dead.

June 30: Nearly eight months after the election and a long battle over a recount, the Minnesota Supreme Court rules that Al Franken (Dem.) wins the U.S. senate seat for Minnesota. The final recount gives Franken a 312-vote lead. His rival, Norm Coleman (Rep.) concedes. Franken's win gives the Democrats in the Senate the filibuster-proof 60-seat majority they have been hoping for.

July 3: Sarah Palin, the first-term Republican governor of Alaska and former vice-presidential candidate, announces her resignation. Palin cites a desire to spend more time with her family and a lack of interest in running for reelection in 2010. Lt. Gov, Sean Parnell will take over for her.

Aug. 6: The Senate approves, 68 to 31, the nomination of Sonia Sotomayor to the U.S. Supreme Court. She's the first Hispanic Supreme Court justice and the third woman to serve on the Court.

Aug. 25: Senator Edward "Ted" Kennedy, a fixture in the Senate for 46 years, dies of brain cancer at the age of 77. Sep. 24: Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick names Paul Kirk, former Democratic National Committee chairman and friend of the late Ted Kennedy, as Kennedy's temporary replacement in the Senate.

Oct. 1: President Obama signs an executive order banning federal workers from texting while driving.

Oct. 19: The federal government announces it will no longer prosecute those who use or sell marijuana for medical reasons, if they are complying with state law.

Nov. 3: Maine voters overturn a law allowing same-sex marriage, which had been instated by the state governor in May 2009. Maine is the 31st state to block same-sex marriage through a public referendum.

Nov. 5: A shooting at the Fort Hood army post in Texas kills 13 and injures 29. Ten of those killed are military personnel, while one is a civilian. Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, an army psychiatrist, is the alleged shooter. He

was shot four times by an officer on the scene, but he survived the attack. Nov. 12: Hasan is charged with 13 counts of premeditated murder; he will be tried in military court.

Nov. 10: John Allen Muhammad, known as the D.C. sniper who killed 10 people in shooting spree in Maryland and Virginia in 2002, is executed in a Virginia prison.

Dec. 1: President Obama announces that the U.S. military will be sending an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, in an attempt to prevent further Taliban insurgencies. The troop surge will begin in Jan. 2010, and will bring the total number of American troops in Afghanistan to 100,000.

Dec. 25: A Nigerian man on a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit allegedly attempted to ignite an explosive device hidden in his underwear. The explosive device that failed to detonate was a mixture of powder and liquid that did not alert security personnel in the airport. The alleged bomber, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, told officials later that he was directed by the terrorist group Al Qaeda. (Dec. 26): Officials charge Abdul Farouk Abdulmutallab with trying to blow up the Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day. The suspect was already on the government's watch list when he attempted the bombing; his father, a respected Nigerian banker, had told the U.S. government that he was worried about his son's increased extremism. (Dec. 28): Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, a group based in Yemen, takes responsibility for orchestrating the attack.

Jan. 29: President Obama signs his first bill into law: the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, an equal-pay act. The law expands workers' rights to sue in pay disputes.

Jan. 9: Unemployment is at a 16-year high, 7.2%, according to the Labor Department. 524,000 jobs were lost in December 2008, for a total of 2.6 million in 2008.

The U.S. Labor Department reports that January 2009 saw 598,000 jobs lost, the highest number since December 1974.

Feb. 17: President Obama signs the \$787 billion stimulus package into law. The president's hope is that the package will create 3.5 million jobs for Americans in the next two years.

April 30: Chrysler files for bankruptcy protection while entering into a partnership agreement with Fiat. It is the first time since 1933 that an American automaker has been forced to restructure under bankruptcy protection.

June 1: General Motors files for bankruptcy and announces it will close 14 plants in the United States.

Sept. 9: The Federal Reserve releases a survey that concludes that the economy is showing signs of slow recovery. Credit conditions and retail sales remain down, but other aspects of the economy, such as employer hiring in some markets, are improving.

Oct. 21: The Obama administration orders pay cuts for the top-paid employees at those firms that received the most stimulus money. The top 25 earners at seven of the companies that received the most taxpayer money will have compensation cut up to 50%.

## 2010

Jan. 12: 7.0-magnitude earthquake devastates Port-au-Prince, Haiti. It is the region's worst earthquake in 200 years. The quake levels many sections of the city, destroying government buildings, foreign aid offices, and countless slums. Jan. 13: Assessing the scope of the devastation, Prime Minister Préval says, "Parliament has collapsed. The tax office has collapsed. Schools have collapsed. Hospitals have collapsed." He calls the death toll "unimaginable," and expects fatalities to near 100,000. The United Nations mission in Haiti is destroyed, 16 members of the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti are killed, and hundreds of UN employees are missing. The death toll was 200,000 people.

Feb. 12: The 2010 Winter Olympics opened in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The games got off to a tragic start when a luger from the Republic of Georgia, Nodar Kumaritashvili, dies tragically in a crash during training run.

Feb. 12: Multi-country offensive launched in Afghanistan as thousands of American, Afghan, and British troops storm the city of Marja, Afghanistan in an attempt to destroy the Taliban's latest haven. The attack by the 6,000 troops is the biggest offensive in the country since the United States invaded Afghanistan in 2001. Feb. 15: The Taliban's top military commander, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, is captured in Karachi, Pakistan in a secret joint operation by the American and Pakistani intelligence forces. American officials claim that Baradar is the most significant human capture since the war in Afghanistan began in 2001. Feb. 22: A NATO airstrike launched by the United States Special Forces in Kabul, Afghanistan, targeted at insurgents, accidentally kills 27 Afghan civilians. President Hamid Karzai condemns the killings.

Feb. 27: An 8.8 magnitude earthquake rocks Chile. Fatalities are relatively low, with some 750 people killed in the devastation. However, as many as 1.5 million people are displaced. Chile's electricity grids, communication, and transportation systems are badly damaged, severely hampering rescue and aid efforts. The epicenter of the quake was 70 miles northeast of Concepcion in central Chile. Massive waves continue to cause additional damage along the coast. Mar. 1: After refusing contributions from foreign governments, Chile officials change course, requesting generators, water filtration equipment, and field hospitals from other countries.

Mar. 7: Explosions disrupt general election day in Iraq when two bombs kill at least 38 people. Iraq's election commission reports that 62% of Iraqis voted in the election, though that number drops to just 53% in Baghdad, where the violence occurred. Final results are not expected for several weeks, but preliminary figures put the State of Law alliance, led by Prime Minister Maliki, and the Iraqi National Movement, headed by former prime minister Ayad Allawi, in a close race ahead of the other candidates. Election officials said none of the alliances will emerge with a clear majority, forcing the winner to assemble a broad coalition to form a government. Mar. 29: Final results of the election give the Iraqi National Movement, led by former

prime minister Ayad Allawi, 91 seats in Parliament out of 325. The State of Law alliance, headed by Prime Minister Maliki comes in a close second with 89 seats. A Shia religious movement, including followers of radical cleric Moktada al-Sadr, wins 70. The two main Kurdish parties together receive 43 seats. Maliki refuses to accept the results and says he will challenge them in court.

Mar. 24: The United States and Russia report a breakthrough in arms control negotiations. Both countries agree to lower the limit on deployed strategic warheads and launchers by 25% and 50%, respectively, and will also implement a new inspection regime. President Obama and President Medvedev will sign in a treaty that outlines this agreement. Apr. 8: The United States and Russia usher in a supposedly new era in nuclear arms control after President Obama and President Medvedev sign an arms reduction treaty and agree to act in a united fashion against the threat of Iran's nuclear program. The pact, called the New Start, has each country promise to scale back on their nuclear arsenals.

Mar. 29: Two female suicide bombers, acting just minutes apart, detonate bombs in two Moscow subway stations, killing at least 39 people. This is the first terrorist attack in the capital city since 2004, when Moscow experienced a string of deadly violence. Authorities attribute the attacks to the mostly Muslim north Caucasus region. Doku Umarov, a former Chechen separatist and the self-proclaimed emir of the north Caucasus, claims responsibility for masterminding the attack. Mar. 31: Two explosions kill 12 people in the north Caucasus region of Dagestan. The attacks prompt concern that Prime Minister Putin will crack down on civil liberties and democracy as he did in 2004, following the siege of a school in Beslan.

Apr. 5: Militants launch an assault on the United States Consulate in Pakistan. Six Pakistanis are killed and 20 are wounded; no Americans are harmed. At least five suicide bombers mounted the attack, though they were unable to reach the inner area of the compound. Azam Tariq, a spokesperson for the Pakistani Taliban, claims responsibility for the attack, saying they were acting in retaliation to American missile strikes and Pakistani military operations in the area.

Apr. 7: Kyrgyzstan President Bakiyev flees Bishkek amid deadly protests and demonstrations. Former foreign minister Roza Otunbayeva, acting as the leader of the opposition, assumes power as acting president. Government troops and demonstrators are battling in the streets, and nearly 70 people are killed and more than 400 wounded. Demonstrations over sharp increases in utility prices broke out in the city of Talas and promptly spread to the capital of Bishkek, where protesters are also rallying against government corruption. Bakiyev refuses to resign despite Otunbayeva's support.

Apr. 14: An explosion in the Eyjafjallajokull volcano in Iceland results in a volcanic ash plume in the atmosphere over northern and central Europe. Air travel in the region is halted for several days, causing the cancellation of several thousand flights and disrupting the travel plans of millions of people. Apr. 21: After millions of travelers have been stranded for days in Europe and North America, airports around the world begin operation again.

Apr. 20: An explosion on a BP oil drilling rig off the coast of Louisiana kills 11 people and injures 17. Experts estimate that 13,000 gallons of crude oil per hour are pouring into the Gulf of Mexico. Apr. 26: Authorities

estimate that the amount of oil spilling from leaks in the oil rig is approximately 42,000 gallons of crude oil per hour. Remote-controlled robots are being used to try and seal off the oil well. Apr. 30: The oil slick from the rig explosion reaches the Gulf Coast of Louisiana. For the first time, President Obama criticizes BP's handling of the crisis; he chastises the company for not stemming the flow of oil and cleaning up the spill before it reached land. July 15: After 86 days of gushing oil into the Gulf of Mexico and several previous attempts to contain the flow, BP caps its leaking oil well. The cap, which can be removed in the future for oil collection or left on indefinitely, is an interim measure, put in place until a relief well can be drilled to fix the problem permanently.

May 3: Prime Minister of Thailand, Vejjajiva Abhisit, offers to hold early elections—one of the key demands of protesters loyal to former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, called red shirts, who have been rioting since April—if the protesters called off their demonstrations, but they reject the gesture. Abhisit withdraws his offer and orders troops to blockade the protest area. May 13: What started as a peaceful protest disintegrates into violence; the military fires upon the protesters and hits Khattiya Sawatdiphol, a general who sided with the red shirts. He later dies of his injuries. His death sparks further violence, and the protesters retaliated with grenade attacks. May 17: The red shirts offer to negotiate with the government, but are rebuffed. They then engage in large-scale rioting, looting, and the firebombing of several buildings, including Thailand's stock exchange and largest department store. The government cracks down on the movement May 19: Rioters disperse, and protest leaders surrender. They will face terrorism charges. In the 68 days of the protests, 68 people died. The red shirts bore the brunt of most of the casualties.

May 5: A Picasso painting sells for a record-breaking \$106.5 million at a Christie's auction. The painting, "Nude, Green Leaves and Bust," depicts Picasso's mistress and was painted in just one day in 1932.

May 11: British Prime Minister Gordon Brown formally resigns as prime minister after acknowledging that his Labour Party will be unable to form a majority in Parliament. He recommends Conservative Party leader David Cameron as his successor; consequently, Cameron creates a coalition government with the ideologically opposed Liberal Democrats and becomes the prime minister of the United Kingdom. The leader of the Liberal Democrats, Nick Clegg, will become deputy prime minister. This is the first coalition government in the U.K. since World War II.

May 19: The United States, Russia, China, and others agree to impose a fourth set of sanctions on Iran's nuclear program, in an attempt to stop the country from enriching uranium. None of the three previous sets of sanctions had any effect on Iran's program to enrich uranium nor its willingness to fully disclose actions to international inspectors.

May 31: Nine people are dead after an Israeli navy commando attacks a flotilla of cargo ships and passenger boats on their way to Gaza to provide aid and supplies for the area. Israel claims that the passengers on the flotilla, who were pro-Palestinians and mostly Turks, presented themselves as humanitarians, but were clearly hostile.

June 1: Just nine months into his term as Prime Minister of Japan, Yukio Hatoyama announces his resignation from office. His countrymen reportedly find him an indecisive and ineffective ruler and have been clamoring for him to quit. He will be the fourth prime minister to leave in just four years.

June 13: The United States finds more than \$1 trillion in mineral resources in the mountains of Afghanistan, far more than expected or previously estimated. The findings, which include previously unknown deposits of iron, copper, gold, and lithium, could drastically improve the country's economy and fundamentally change the outcome of the war there.

June 17: Street fighting between ethnic Kyrgyz and minority Uzbeks escalated in the city of Osh, Kyrgyzstan, leaving at least 200 people dead. Thousands of people are displaced after Uzbek neighborhoods are torched, and approximately 100,000 people have crossed the border into Uzbekistan, forcing that country's government to close its borders. June 24: The death toll in the ethnic fighting in Kyrgyzstan rises to 2,000, yet the cause of the original skirmish remains unknown. Many of those who fled the country have begun to return.

June 20: In a surprise victory, Graeme McDowell wins golf's U.S. Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links in California, beating second place Frenchman Gregory Havret by just one stroke. McDowell, from Northern Ireland, is the first European to win the tournament since 1970.

July 9: After discovering and imprisoning 10 Russian spies masquerading as civilians in the United States, the U.S. and Russia agree to and implement a swap of the captured spies. The Russian government traded four Russians who were purportedly spying for the U.S. or another Western country.

July 11: After four weeks and 64 games, the 32 countries who entered the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa were whittled down to just two; the final game, between Spain and the Netherlands, went into overtime after a scoreless game. Spain finally scored in the 129th minute, winning the game and the World Cup title.

July 25: Alberto Contador wins the Tour de France, his third title in the world's most prestigious cycling race, and his second in a row.

July 30: Massive flooding in Pakistan, following two days of record rainfall, kills over 400 people and leaves thousands homeless. Damage to infrastructure has left many villages and towns inaccessible to government aid, stranding many survivors of the floods. Aug. 12: After two weeks of catastrophic flooding in Pakistan, the UN now estimates that at least 1,600 people have been killed and 14 million displaced from their homes.

Aug. 5: Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin bans the export of grains from his country, citing the widespread drought and wildfires that are crippling Russia. They are suffering from the country's worst heat wave in 130 years. Aug. 6: At least 52 people have been killed in the more than 800 wildfires that have swept across Russia.

Aug. 18: The U.S. State Department announces that it will increase the presence of civilian contractors in 2011 as the military prepares to leave the country. Contractors will be responsible for training Iraqi police and preventing confrontations between the Iraqi Army and civilian groups.

Sept. 12: The female American hiker imprisoned in Iran on charges of espionage is released on \$500,000 bail. Sarah Shourd has been in prison for over a year, along with the two male American friends she was hiking with, Shane Bauer and Joshua Fattal. The three friends were hiking in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq in July 2009 when they allegedly passed over into Iranian territory and were arrested.

Oct. 12: First of 33 trapped Chilean miners is rescued after spending 68 days trapped in a mine half a mile underground. He is pulled to safety via a capsule made for the rescue mission. The rest of the miners will be carried to safety over the next 24 hours. Oct. 13: All 33 Chilean miners trapped underground for over two months are pulled to safety in what is being hailed as a brilliant rescue mission.

Oct. 29: Suspicious packages found on an airplane originating in Yemen and bound for the United States contained explosive materials. Saudi intelligence officials tipped the U.S. government about the packages, resulting in a brief terrorism scare across the country. No additional explosives were found.

Nov. 22: Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen announces he will dissolve his government and hold a new election after the 2011 budget passes. This announcement comes just one day after the Irish government requested a \$100 billion bailout package from the European Union and IMF to help save its flailing economy.

Nov. 22: At least 300 people are killed and hundreds more injured in a stampede during Cambodia's annual water festival. The stampede reportedly occurred after people panicked when a densely crowded bridge began to sway.

Nov. 23: The military of North Korea unexpectedly attacks the island of Yeonpyeong in South Korea, killing two civilians and two marines. Eighteen others are wounded. This is the first time North Korea has fired on a civilian target since the suspension of the Korean War in 1953.

Dec. 2: Russia wins its bid as host for the 2018 World Cup, while Qatar secures the host duties for the international soccer tournament in 2022. The United States, in particular, was disappointed by the announcement; the country was hoping to host the World Cup in 2022. Qatar will be the first Middle Eastern country to the tournament; Russia has never had the privilege either.

Dec. 7: Julian Assange, the Australian-born co-founder of WikiLeaks, is arrested in England on a Swedish warrant in connection to accusations made in August: two women in Sweden accused him of sexual assault. He is denied bail by a London court. Dec. 8: Hundreds of Internet activists attack several businesses seen as "enemies" of WikiLeaks, in response to Assange's imprisonment. Amazon.com, Paypal.com, and the MasterCard website are among those attacked with an onslaught of web traffic. Dec. 14: Assange is released

on \$310,000 bail, but remains in British custody temporarily. He faces possible extradition to Sweden for his alleged sexual assaults on two women.

Jan. 3: The Transportation Security Administration announces stricter screening requirements for passengers traveling by air to the U.S. from 14 countries, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Nigeria. Passengers with passports or originating flights from any of the countries on this list will be required to undergo full-body pat downs and extra scrutiny of carry-on luggage. More advanced screenings will also be necessary at certain airports. The new regulations result from the attempted bombing by a Nigerian citizen on December 25. Jan. 6: Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Nigerian man accused of attempting to detonate a suicide bomb on an airplane bound for Detroit, Michigan on December 25, 2009, is indicted on six counts. Charges include attempted murder and attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction.

Jan. 19: In a stunning upset, Republican Scott Brown, a former member of the state senate, wins a special election in Massachusetts for Ted Kennedy's vacated U.S. Senate seat, beating Democrat Martha Coakley, the state attorney general, by a wide margin. His victory marks the end of the Democrats' "super" majority in the Senate and raises questions about the viability of the Democratic party and the pending health-care reform bill. Kennedy passed away in Aug. 2009, ending a 46-year run in the Senate.

Jan. 21: In a 5/4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that the government cannot restrict the spending of corporations for political campaigns, maintaining that it's their First Amendment right to support candidates as they choose. This decision upsets two previous precedents on the free-speech rights of corporations. President Obama expressed disapproval of the decision, calling it a "victory" for Wall Street and Big Business.

Jan. 28: The U.S. Senate agrees to give Ben Bernanke, Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, another term, a 70–30 vote. This will be Bernanke's second, four-year term.

Jan. 29: A jury finds Scott Roeder, charged with first-degree murder for killing George Tiller—a doctor known for performing late-term abortions—guilty. Tiller was killed in May 2009 in his own church. Roeder claims he killed Tiller to stop the abortions the doctor was performing.

Feb. 1: President Obama presents to Congress his 2011 budget of \$3.8 trillion and his 10-year budget plan. The budget includes a \$1.6 trillion deficit in the next fiscal year, which begins in October, and then steadily declines over the following 10 years. Included in the budget are cuts to domestic programs and spending; some programs, including NASA's return trips to the moon, will be eliminated all together

Feb. 2: Following President Obama's State of the Union Declaration that he wants an end to the military policy "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," which forbids openly gay men and women to serve in the military, top officials at the Department of Defense look for a way to end the law. Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, announces that he feels repealing the policy is "the right thing to do." Defense Secretary Robert Gates says he will follow through with Obama's orders.

Feb. 5: The unemployment rate drops to 9.7% in January 2010, down from 10% in December, reports the Labor Department. An additional 20,000 jobs were lost. Both numbers show that the economy is beginning to improve, as they demonstrate a decline in joblessness in the United States following the recession.

Feb. 12: Amy Bishop, a professor at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, is arrested after allegedly killing three faculty members and wounding three others at the university in a shooting rampage. Bishop was upset over recently being denied tenure in the biology department.

Feb. 18: A man crashes his plane into an office of the Internal Revenue Service in Austin, Texas, killing himself and one other person. Apparently the pilot, Andrew Joseph Stack III, was holding a grudge against the government and the tax system. Thirteen others were injured.

Feb. 22: President Obama announces his detailed plan for a health-care reform bill. The plan closely follows the version currently in the Senate. Obama asks Republicans to submit their ideas or agree to his version of the bill.

Mar. 11: Thousands of rescue and cleanup workers—who worked for months in Ground Zero after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001—reach a settlement with New York City over their health claims. The deal is worth approximately \$657.5 million. The 10,000 plaintiffs will be awarded settlement money according to the severity of their illnesses and the time worked in the disaster zone. Money for the settlement will come from a federally financed insurance company that covers the city.

Mar. 21: The House of Representatives passes a bill that will overhaul the American health-care system. The bill will be sent to President Obama to sign into law. Among other things, the bill will allow children to stay on their parents' health insurance plans until the age of 26, prevent insurance companies from denying coverage due to a patient's "pre-existing conditions," subsidize private insurance for low- and middle-income Americans, and require all Americans to have some sort of health insurance. The budget office estimates that the law will reduce federal budget deficits by \$143 billion over the next 10 years. The government plans to earn money for the law with a tax on high-cost employer-sponsored health plans and a tax on the investment income of the wealthiest Americans. Mar. 23: President Obama signs the health-care overhaul bill, called the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, into law. Mar. 30: Obama signs the "reconciliation" bill, which outlines minor changes and additions to the new health-care act, coupled with the bill that overhauls the student loan industry. The health care revisions were drafted by the U.S. Senate as a measure to prevent Republicans from filibustering the original health-care bill.

Apr. 1: The Environmental Protection Agency issues formal guidelines for the amount of greenhouse gas emissions cars will be able to produce. The new emissions and mileage standards would mean that combined fuel economy average for new vehicles must be 35.5 by 2016.

Apr. 5: President Obama announces a revised American nuclear strategy that will limit the instances in which the U.S. will use nuclear weapons. Part of the strategy includes renouncing the creation of new nuclear weapons. However, Obama points out that exceptions will be made to countries such as Iran and

North Korea who have violated the nuclear proliferation treaty in the past. This announcement significantly changes the protocol of past administrations; the United States is declaring for the first time its commitment not to use nuclear weapons against nonnuclear states.

Apr. 9: Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens announces he will retire this summer, after serving on the court for 35 years. Though he was appointed in 1975 by a Republican president, Gerald Ford, and considered a moderate conservative at the time, he has proved to be one of the most reliably liberal-voting judges on the court. Stevens is the most senior member of the court. President Obama promises to name his nominee for the position quickly; it will be the second opportunity for Obama to select a Supreme Court justice in his first two years of office. His first pick, Sonia Sotomayor, proved divisive and controversial, but was confirmed to the position in August 2009.

Apr. 23: The governor of Arizona, Jan Brewer (Rep.), signs into law the country's toughest immigration bill. It is designed to identify and deport illegal immigrants. Law enforcement officials are now allowed to ask those people suspected of being illegal immigrants for their proof of citizenship or visas.

May 2: After discovering a bomb in a smoking vehicle parked in Times Square, in New York City, police evacuated several blocks around the popular tourist spot. The bomb was made of propane, gasoline, and fireworks and did not explode. A T-shirt vendor in the area saw the smoking car and alerted the authorities. May 3: Federal agents and New York City police arrest a man in conjunction with the Times Square car bomb. The man, Faisal Shahzad, is Pakistani but recently became a naturalized U.S. citizen and has been living in Connecticut with his family. Authorities are investigating whether Shahzad was working with a terrorist group or alone. May 4: Terrorism suspect Faisal Shazhad is charged with attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and several other federal charges related to explosives. Shahzad admitted to the crime and claims to have worked alone. May 5: American officials announce that the Pakistani Taliban likely played a role in the Time Square bomb plot, including training the suspect in the case, Shahzad. May 13: The F.B.I. takes three Pakistani men into custody for their alleged role in the Times Square bomb plot. The men are under suspicion for providing money to Faisal Shazhad so he could carry out the plot.

May 10: President Obama selects Solicitor General Elena Kagan as his nominee for the Supreme Court Justice position that will be vacated by Justice John Paul Stevens this summer. Kagan is a scholar and a lawyer, and was the first female dean of Harvard Law School, has served on all three branches of the Federal Government, and has been the Solicitor General in the Obama administration. She has no prior judicial experience however, a qualification that hasn't been lacking in a justice for forty years.

June 4: President Obama names Lt. Gen. James R. Clapper Jr. as the new director of national intelligence. Clapper is tasked with improving the coordination between the 16 U.S. spy and intelligence agencies. The former director, Adm. Dennis C. Blair, was forced out of the job two weeks earlier.

June 23: After a controversial interview with Rolling Stone that included some demeaning remarks about President Obama and his administration, General Stanley McChrystal is relieved of his position as commander of the American Forces in Afghanistan and replaced by his boss, General David Petraeus.

June 28: The Supreme Court rules in a 5-to-4 decision that the Second Amendment's guarantee, the right to bear arms, applies to local and state gun control laws. Justice Samuel Alito, who spoke for the majority, said the right to self defense is fundamental to American civil liberties. The decision is a particular blow to local government in Chicago and Oak Park Illinois, where handguns are essentially banned.

July 6: The United States Justice Department files a lawsuit against the state of Arizona in protest of its new immigration law, which allows law enforcement professionals to question suspected illegal immigrants of their immigration status. The U.S. government claims that immigration is a federal issue, not to be enforced by state governments, due to the possibility that their laws would interfere with federal cases and issues. July 28: A federal judge blocks key sections of the Arizona immigration law, including law enforcement's ability to request legal documentation of U.S. citizenship from suspected illegal immigrants, and the requirement for immigrants to carry papers at all times. A less controversial version of the immigration enforcement law will still pass.

July 15: Congress approves a landmark financial regulation bill, strongly supported by President Obama and by and large the Democratic Party. The bill increases the number of companies that will be regulated by government oversight, a panel to watch for risks in the financial system, and a consumer protection agency. Some Democrats and critics argue that the bill is not tough enough; Republicans claim it gives the government too much power in the business sector.

July 15: Goldman Sachs has agreed to \$550 million settlement with the federal government after being accused of misleading investors during the subprime mortgage crisis and housing market collapse. Goldman Sachs reported a profit of \$13.39 billion in 2009.

Aug. 4: A federal judge strikes down the voter-approved gay marriage ban in California, calling the law unconstitutional. Judge Vaughn Walker, the chief judge of the Federal District Court of the Northern District of California, claims that the law, which was voted into place with 52% of the vote in 2008 as Proposition 8, discriminates against gay men and women. Aug. 12: Judge Walker lifts the stay on the banning of gay marriage in California, allowing same-sex couples to marry while higher courts consider the matter. He delays implementation of the order until August 18, however. Aug. 16: A U.S. appeals court rules that same-sex couples cannot marry in the state of California while the court considers the constitutionality of the ban.

Aug. 5: The United States Senate votes 63 to 37 to confirm President Obama's most recent nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court, Elena Kagan, as the newest Justice. Kagan is only the fourth woman to ever hold this position, and she'll be the third female member of the current bench, joining Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor.

Aug. 31: Seven years after the war in Iraq began, President Obama announces the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom with a withdrawal of combat troops. Obama emphasizes that U.S. domestic problems, mainly the flailing economy and widespread unemployment, are more pressing matters to his country. The U.S. will

continue to be a presence in Iraq, mainly with civilian contractors but also with a smaller military contingent of approximately 50,000 troops. The remaining troops are scheduled to leave Iraq by the end of 2011.

Sept. 7: President Obama announces that he will not approve an extension of the Bush-era law that gives a tax break for the wealthy, or those families who earn over \$250,000 per year and individuals who earn over \$200,000 annually. President George W. Bush passed the tax cuts for those in the higher income bracket in 2001.

Sept. 16: The percentages of American living below the poverty line, or \$10,830 for an individual and \$22,050 for a family of four, reached 15-year high in 2009, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Over 44 million people, or 14.3 percent of Americans, are considered living in poverty. The U.S. is experiencing its worst economic period since the Great Depression.

Sept. 21: Lawrence Summers, the chief architect of President Obama's economic policy and head of the National Economic Council, is leaving his position with the White House. Several of Obama's top advisors have recently left; the White House says Summers' exit was long planned and that he'll be returning to his tenured position at Harvard.

Oct. 12: U.S. District Judge Virginia Phillips, of California, orders the government to stop the enforcement of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell Law," which forbids gays and lesbians from openly serving in the U.S. military. Defense Secretary Robert Gates announces that ending the enforcement of the law so abruptly would have negative effects on the men and women currently serving in the military, though President Obama and his administration officially oppose the law. Gates claims Congress should decide on the validity of the law. The ban has been in place for 17 years. Oct. 20: A federal appeals court temporarily stalls the U.S. district court decision to allow gays to serve openly in the military. The military will continue to enforce the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy for the time being.

Nov. 4: The Republican Party gains control of the House of Representatives in the midterm elections, but the Democratic party retains the majority in the Senate. Two members of the Tea Party also have victories, Rand Paul of Kentucky and Mark Rubio of Florida. Senate majority leader Harry Reid wins his reelection in Nevada and his fellow Democrats win key Senate races across the country; therefore, Reid maintains his leadership position. Representative John Boehner of Ohio is poised to become the new Speaker of the House, replacing Democratic Representative Nancy Pelosi of California.

Nov. 24: Tom Delay, the former House Majority Leader from Texas, is convicted of money laundering and conspiracy to commit money laundering involving corporate campaign contributions. He faces up to 99 years in prison in his sentencing.

Nov. 30: After surveying 115,000 active-duty and reserve service members in a nine-month study, the Pentagon announces that repealing the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," law, which forbids gay and lesbian service members from serving openly in the military, will not affect the military's strength. Of those military

personnel surveyed, 70 percent believed repealing the law would impact their units in a positive, mixed, or neutral way.

Dec. 2: The House of Representatives votes 333–79 to censure Representative Charles Rangel (Dem., N.Y.) for ethics violations, including failure to pay income taxes and improperly soliciting donations. Censure is the worst punishment Congress can give to a member, short of expulsion. Rangel is the 23rd member of the House to be censured.

Dec. 2: The House of Representatives votes 264–157 to pass the child nutrition bill, which expands the scope of the current school lunch program and implements improvements to the overall health of the foods available and provided through that program. The Senate previously passed the bill unanimously. The program will cost approximately \$4.5 billion to implement; about half of that budget will be provided by a cut to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, better known as food stamps.

Dec. 13: Henry Hudson, a federal judge from Virginia, rules that one of the main provisions of the health-care reform law is unconstitutional. The ruling claims that under the Commerce Clause, a law requiring all Americans to hold health insurance, as the reform law states, is beyond the regulatory power of the federal government. The judge does not request that the implementation of the act be suspended, however.

Dec. 18: The Senate votes 65 to 31 in favor of repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell, the Clinton-era military policy that forbids openly gay men and women from serving in the military. Eight Republicans side with the Democrats to strike down the ban. The repeal is sent to President Obama for his final signature. The ban will not be lifted officially until Obama, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, and Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, agree that the military is ready to enact the change and that it won't affect military readiness. Dec. 22: President Obama officially repeals the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" military policy.

Dec. 22: After years of debate and compromise, Congress passes a \$4.3 billion health bill for the rescue workers involved in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in New York City. The bill will cover \$1.8 billion in health-care costs for the 60,000 rescue workers registered for monitoring and treatment; the City of New York will pay 10% of the bill's overall costs. The bill will also reopen the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund for five years, which provides money to compensate for job loss.

## 2011

Jan. 11: The Arab Spring movement begins in Tunisia when demonstrators take to the streets to protest chronic unemployment and police brutality. Jan. 14: After 23 years of authoritarian rule, Tunisian president Ben Ali flees the country for Saudi Arabia amid protests. Jan. 25: Similar protests break out in Egypt. Feb. 11: Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak announces his resignation and handed power of the country over to the military. Feb. 14: Violence erupts in Bahrain as protestors select Feb. 14th as a day of protest to coincide with the 10th anniversary of the National Action Charter. Feb. 16: In Benghazi, Libya, thousands of protesters demand that Col. Muammar al-Qaddafi step down. The next day, declared the Day of Rage, saw the number of demonstrations burgeon throughout the country. March 18: Bahrain brings in troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to crack down against peaceful protestors clamoring for reform. March 20: In Egypt, 77.2% of voters approve a referendum on constitutional amendments that lays the groundwork for upcoming legislative and presidential elections. March 29: Syrian president Bashar al-Assad accepts the resignation of his cabinet. Aug. 3: Former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak is rolled into the courtroom on a hospital bed for the beginning of his trial. Mubarak faces charges of corruption and complicity in the killing of protesters. Aug. 18: Britain, France, and Germany release a joint statement stating that Syrian president Bashar al-Assad has lost legitimacy as a leader and that he must step down. For the first time, President Obama calls for Assad to leave office. Nov. 18: Protesters-representing both Islamists and the liberal opposition-return to Tahrir Square in Egypt to demand the ruling military council step aside in favor of a civilian-led government. Nov. 21: As the protests in Egypt grow in size and intensity and police are widely criticized for their crackdown, Prime Minister Essam Sharaf and his cabinet resign. In an agreement reached with the Muslim Brotherhood, the military council vows to install a civilian prime minister and to accelerate the transition to a civilian government, with presidential elections being held by June 2012. Former prime minister Kamal al-Ganzouri is named to replace Sharaf, and in response to the demands of protesters, the military council transfers most powers of the president to him. Nov. 28: Parliamentary elections begin in Egypt.

April 29: Kate Middleton marries Prince William in a lavish royal wedding at Westminster Abbey in London.

May 2: U.S. troops and CIA operatives shoot and kill Osama bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan, a city of 500,000 people that houses a military base and a military academy.

May 4: Fatah and Hamas, rival Palestinian parties, sign a reconciliation accord. The two factions cite common causes behind the accord: opposition to the Israeli occupation and disillusionment with the American peace efforts. The deal remakes the Palestine Liberation Organization, which until now excluded Hamas. Hamas will now be part of the political leadership.

May 14: Dominique Strauss-Kahn, head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and a leading political figure in France, is arrested for sexually assaulting a maid at a Manhattan hotel. All charges against Strauss-Kahn were later dropped when his accuser was found to be unreliable.

May 26: Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb general responsible for the massacre of over 8,000 Muslims at Srebrenica in 1995, is found and arrested in Lazarevo, a farming town north of Belgrade, Serbia.

June 3: Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh barely survives an attack when a bomb hits the mosque at the presidential compound where he and other government officials are praying. Days later he travels to Saudi Arabia for treatment.

July 9: After more than 50 years of struggle, South Sudan declares independence and becomes Africa's 54th state.

July 11: The News of the World, a British newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch, closes after several allegations that the paper's journalists hacked into voicemail accounts belonging to not only a 13-year-old murder victim, but also the relatives of soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Prime Minister David Cameron orders two separate investigations. Murdoch's News Corporation feels an immediate impact as its stock price falls. July 13: Murdoch's News Corporation withdraws its \$12 billion bid to buy British Sky Broadcasting. July 17: Rebekah Brooks, former editor of the News of the World, is arrested on suspicion of illegally intercepting phone calls and bribing the police. Her arrest comes two days after her resignation as chief executive of News International, which runs the British newspaper operations of Murdoch's News Corporation. July 18: Paul Stephenson and John Yates, two Scotland Yard senior police officials, resign. Both officers have ties to Neil Wallis, a former deputy editor at the News of the World who was recently arrested on suspicion of phone hacking and bribery of police officers.

July 22: Norway is hit with consecutive terrorist attacks. First, a bomb explodes in Regjeringskvartalet, the government quarter of Oslo. The explosion happens right outside the prime minister's office, killing eight people and wounding several others. Two hours later, a gunman disguised as a policeman opens fire at a camp for young political activists on the island of Utoya in Tyrifjorden, Buskerud. The gunman kills 68 campers.

July 23: The award-winning, internationally known singer-songwriter Amy Winehouse is found dead in her apartment in London.

Sep. 23: Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas officially requests a bid for statehood at the UN Security Council. The request comes after months of failed European and U.S. efforts to bring Israel and Palestine back to the negotiating table.

Sep. 25: King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia grants women the right to vote and run for office in future elections. The new ruling will not go into effect until the next election cycle in 2015.

Oct. 18: Gilad Shalit, a 25-year-old Israeli soldier, is released after being held for more than five years by Hamas, a militant Palestinian group. He is exchanged for 1,000 Palestinians who have spent years in Israeli jails. Shalit had been held in Gaza since Palestinian militants kidnapped him in 2006.

Oct. 20: Libya's interim government announces that Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi has been killed by rebel troops in Surt, his hometown.

Oct. 24: Millions of Tunisians vote in their first ever free election. The vote is for an assembly to write a constitution and shape a new government. Ennahda, a moderate Islamist party, is the winner with 41% of the vote.

Oct. 26: Led by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, leaders of the euro zone agree on a package to bring the debt crisis in Europe under control. The terms include forcing banks to take a 50% cut in the value of Greek debt and to raise new capital to protect them from future defaults, increasing the euro-zone's bail-out fund to \$1.4 trillion, more austerity measures in Greece, and a reduction of Greece's debt to 120% of its GDP by 2020.

Nov. 12: Silvio Berlusconi, who has weathered political and personal scandals that would have ended most political careers, steps down as prime minister of Italy. Mario Monti, an economist and former antitrust commissioner for the European Commission, takes over, leading a cabinet of technocrats to implement the austerity plan.

Dec. 4: International and local monitors condemn parliamentary elections in Russia as fraudulent. United Russia, the party led by Vladimir Putin, comes out on top, receiving nearly 50% of the vote, but the party lost 77 seats. Monitors say that United Russia would have lost more seats were it not for ballot-box stuffing and voting irregularities. Protests—the largest since the 1990s—take place near the Kremlin.

Jan. 8: Arizona Representative Gabrielle Giffords is among 17 shot by a gunman who opened fire on the congresswoman's constituent meeting outside a local grocery store. Six people are fatally wounded, including United States District Court Judge John Roll, and a young girl. The gunman, who police identify as Jared Lee Loughner, is apprehended.

Jan. 25: President Obama announces his intention to reduce the federal deficit by \$400 billion over 10 years in his State of the Union Address. His plan for enacting this dramatic reduction includes budget cuts and freezes, including a spending freeze on many domestic programs.

Feb. 14: President Obama's \$3.8 trillion budget proposal runs into trouble in Congress among lawmakers who say that the plan doesn't go far enough to reduce the deficit, despite a \$1.6 trillion savings over 10 years. March 2: Congress approves a two-week budget extension that keeps federal agencies open through March 18 while work continues to reach a budget agreement. March 17: The Senate passes a second measure to keep the government open while budget talks continue. April 1: With less than two hours to spare, an agreement on the federal budget is made, avoiding a government shutdown. Republicans demand a provision to restrict

financing to Planned Parenthood and other groups that provide abortions. Obama and the Democrats refuse to budge on the abortion provision, but they do agree to tens of billions in spending cuts.

Feb. 15: State employees and teachers stage protests in Madison, Wisconsin and Democratic senators flee the state in an effort to halt Governor Scott Walker's plan to cut bargaining rights and benefits of public workers. May 26: Judge Maryann Sumi of Dane County Circuit Court grants a permanent injunction that voids the new Wisconsin law curbing collective bargaining rights for many state and local employees. The ruling comes because Republicans in the state senate violated the state's open meetings law during their vote on March 9th, when they failed to give at least two hours' notice to the public.

Feb. 23: The Obama Administration determines that the Defense of Marriage Act is unconstitutional. The Justice Department will stop defending the law in court. The Defense of Marriage Act is the 1996 law that bars federal recognition of same-sex marriages.

March 1: The Interior Dept approves the first new deepwater drilling permit in the Gulf of Mexico since the BP explosion and spill last spring. The approval is a milestone after a period of industry uncertainty.

April 27: In one of the worst U.S. tornado seasons, 137 reported tornadoes sweep through the south, killing nearly 300 people in six states. Most of the fatalities occur in Alabama. May 22: At least 140 people are killed and hundreds more injured as a three-quarter-mile-wide tornado hits Joplin, Missouri. The tornado is among the deadliest in the nation's history, destroying nearly a third of the city and damaging about 2,000 buildings, including water treatment and sewage plants.

May 5: Heavy rains cause flooding in the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys. People in Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Arkansas are forced to leave their homes. May 14: Engineers open a portion of the Morganza Spillway to relieve pressure on levees along the Mississippi River and to protect New Orleans and other areas downriver from flooding. The decision to open the Morganza Spillway does have consequences; water pours into the Atchafalaya River basin, flooding marshes, bayous, farmland, and thousands of homes. May 15: According to the Army Corps of Engineers, the Mississippi River breaks the elevation record in Vicksburg, Miss., which was set by the 1927 flood. The river rises to 56.3 feet, 13 feet above flood stage, at a rate of nearly 17 million gallons per second.

May 19: President Obama declares that the borders before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war should be the basis of a Mideast peace deal between Israel and Palestine. The Israeli government protests immediately, saying that a return to the pre-1967 borders would leave Israel "undefensible."

June 22: Legendary Boston crime boss, James "Whitey" Bulger is found and arrested by federal authorities in Santa Monica, Calif. Bulger is on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted list and has been indicted in 19 murders. The arrest ends a 16-year international search.

June 24: New York passes a law to allow same-sex marriage, becoming the largest state that allows gay and lesbian couples to marry. The vote comes on the eve of the city's annual Gay Pride Parade and gives new momentum to the national gay-rights movement.

July 19: With the Aug. 2 deadline to raise the \$14.3 trillion debt ceiling quickly approaching, members of the House and the Senate as well as President Obama work to agree on a budget deal to lower the deficit. If a deal is not reached by the debt ceiling deadline, the U.S. would be forced to default, affecting its credit rating. July 31: With the debt ceiling deadline only 48 hours away, an agreement still has not been reached. Credit rating agencies, such as Moody's and Standard & Poor's, report that they will downgrade the country's current AAA rating if the U.S. defaults and fails to pay its bills on August 2nd. Aug. 1: Congress makes an 11th-hour deal to prevent a national default. The deal raises the debt ceiling in two steps to \$2.4 trillion and cuts an initial \$1 trillion in spending over ten years. Also, a bipartisan committee will be formed to recommend \$1.5 trillion in additional budget cuts. Aug. 5: For the first time in history, the U.S. has its credit rating lowered. Credit agency Standard & Poor's lowered the nation's credit rating from the top grade of AAA to AA+, removing the U.S. from its list of risk-free borrowers. Nov. 21: The Congressional Supercommittee in charge of finding \$1.2 trillion in deficit reductions fails to agree on what programs to cut after more than 10 weeks of meeting. Because the group could not agree on a deficit reduction plan, automatic cuts to military and domestic programs will go into effect in 2013.

Aug. 13: The race for the Republican Presidential Nomination heats up as Texas Gov. Rick Perry announces his candidacy in South Carolina while Michele Bachmann wins the Iowa straw poll. Sept. 25: Mitt Romney wins the Michigan Straw Poll with 51% of the vote. Herman Cain wins the Florida straw poll by nearly 40%. Dec. 3: Cain suspends his campaign for the U.S. presidency after five women come forward with accusations of sexual misconduct.

Aug. 27: Beginning as a Category 3 with 115-mile-per hour winds, Hurricane Irene moves up the eastern seaboard. At least 44 people are killed in 13 states. Evacuations are ordered for about 2.3 million people. Damage is estimated at \$7 billion.

Oct. 17: Occupy Wall Street, an organized protest in New York's financial district, expands to other cities across the U.S., including Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Occupy Wall Street defines itself as a group of activists who stand against corporate greed, social inequality, and the disproportion between the rich and poor. Nov. 3: The Occupy Wall Street movement turns violent in Oakland, Calif. when a small group of about 100 demonstrators break windows, burn garbage, and spray graffiti. Dozens of protesters are arrested. Nov. 15: During a sweep of Zuccotti Park in New York City, 140 protesters are arrested. A judge rules that the city has the right to enforce the rule against camping in the park. Nov. 21: A video showing two University of California, Davis police officers using pepper spray at close range on seated, passive protesters goes viral.

Nov. 5: Former Penn State defensive coordinator, Jerry Sandusky, is arrested on charges of 40 counts of sexual abuse over a 15-year period. Nov. 9: Celebrated Penn State head football coach Joe Paterno is fired by the school's Board of Trustees because he failed to notify the police in 2002 after he was informed of a

suspected assault by Sandusky. Dec. 7: Sandusky is arrested again after two more victims came forward. With the additional charges, Sandusky now faces more than 50 counts of child sexual abuse. Penn State is being investigated for its handling of the abuse allegations by the U.S. Department of Education.

Nov. 8: In the general election, voters choose against conservative-backed measures across the nation. An anti-abortion measure in Mississippi, an anti-labor law in Ohio, and a measure to clampdown on voting rights in Maine are all rejected. Overall, voters show support for current officials on city and state levels. Mayors win re-election bids in Philadelphia, Indianapolis, and Baltimore. In Iowa, Republicans fail to take over the State Senate.

## 2012

Jan. 4: The European Union imposes an oil embargo on Iran in an attempt to get Iran to halt uranium enrichment and end its nuclear weapons efforts. Feb. 15: Iran warns six European countries that it might cut them off from Iranian oil. The threat is made to the ambassadors of Italy, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Greece and Portugal at the Foreign Ministry in Tehran.

Feb. 1: At least 73 people are killed in a fight between fans of rival teams at a soccer match in Port Said, Egypt.

March 4: Vladimir Putin wins the presidential election in Russia, claiming 64% of the vote. It will be his third full term as president of Russia.

March 10: A U.S. soldier goes on a door-to-door rampage in Afghanistan, brutally killing 17 civilians, including nine children. March 23: The U.S. military announces that Army Staff Sgt. Robert Bales has been charged with 17 counts of premeditated murder in the attacks.

March 21: Syrian president Bashar al-Assad agrees to a cease-fire. The UN-brokered plan calls on the Syrian government to stop killing civilians, engage in talks with the opposition, withdraw forces from the streets, and begin a transition to a democratic, political system. The country has been in a civil war for several months, following the March 2011 uprising. April 12: The cease-fire goes into effect, but observers are skeptical that it will last. May 26: 32 children under age 10 are killed when the Syrian government attacks the village of Houla. The United Nations blames the deaths on government tanks and artillery, saying many of the victims were executed in their homes. President Assad, however, claims terrorists carried out the attack. The cease-fire is considered moot. June 12: A United Nations official declares that Syria is in a state of civil war. June 22: The Syrian military shoots down a Turkish military jet. President Abdullah Gul of Turkey responds by saying that his country will do "whatever is necessary" in retaliation. Aug. 2: Kofi Annan resigns as UN special envoy to Syria, citing the refusal of the Syrian government to implement the UN-backed peace plan, intensifying violence by rebels, and discord within the Security Council.

April 1: Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who in October 2010 was released after spending nearly 20 years under house arrest, wins a seat in parliament.

May 1: On the first anniversary of the killing of Osama bin Laden, President Barack Obama makes a surprise visit to Afghanistan. During his visit, Obama signs an agreement with Afghan president Hamid Karzai that says the U.S. will provide Afghanistan development assistance for 10 years after troops withdraw in 2013.

May 6: Francois Hollande defeats Nicolas Sarkozy to become president of France. With the victory, Hollande becomes the first Socialist president since Francois Mitterrand left office in 1995.

June 11: Hosni Mubarak, former president of Egypt, is sentenced to life in prison for being an accomplice in the killing of unarmed protestors during the January 2011 demonstrations.

June 17: The Center-right New Democracy party prevails in parliamentary elections in Greece. June 20: New Democracy quickly forms a coalition with Pasok and the Democratic Left, and Antonis Samaras, the leader of New Democracy, is sworn in as prime minister.

June 24: Egyptian election officials declare Mohamed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood candidate, the winner of presidential election. Nov. 22: Morsi announces a brazen power grab when he declares authority over the courts, thereby removing any check on his actions by the courts. He says the move is necessary because the judiciary, made up of Hosni Mubarak appointees, is threatening to suspend the constitutional assembly before it completes the task of drafting a new constitution. Nov. 29: Under threat of being suspended by the courts, the constitutional assembly hastily approves a draft document, which is widely criticized for its ambiguity and lack of depth and originality. Dec. 26: President Morsi signs the new constitution into law. The referendum passed in two rounds of voting, on Dec. 14 and Dec. 22. About 64% of voters approved the constitution, but turnout was low—less than 33%.

July 7: For the first time since Col. Muammar Qaddafi was ousted, Libyans vote in a national election. The National Forces Alliance, a secular party led by Mahmoud Jibril, a Western-educated political scientist, prevailed over Islamist parties, including the Muslim Brotherhood, in the election to form a national congress.

July 27: The 2012 Summer Olympics open in London. More than 10,000 athletes from 205 countries participate in the Games. July 31: Michael Phelps wins his 19th Olympic medal, becoming the winningest Olympic athlete of all time. He surpassed the record held by Russian gymnast Larisa Latynina.

Aug. 22: After 19 years of negotiations, Russia joins the newest member of the World Trade Organization.

Sep. 11: Armed gunmen storm the American consulate in Benghazi, Libya, and shoot and kill U.S. ambassador to Libya Christopher Stevens and three other embassy officials.

Oct. 7 Hugo Chávez is elected to a third term as president of Venezuela.

Oct. 9 In Pakistan, Taliban members shoot 14-year-old Malala Yousafzai in the head and neck. The shooting occurs while Yousafzai is on her way home on a school bus filled with children. She was targeted for her outspokenness against the Taliban and her determination to get an education.

Nov. 29: The UN General Assembly upgrades the status of the Palestinian Authority from current observer to non-member state.

Dec. 12: North Korea successfully launches a rocket into orbit. The launch indicates that the country is inching closer toward developing the expertise to build an intercontinental ballistic missile.

Jan. 3: The Iowa caucuses kick off U.S. Presidential Election. President Barack Obama goes uncontested in the Democratic caucus. In the Republican caucus, at first, Mitt Romney is declared the winner over Rick Santorum by eight votes. Certified results in Iowa show that Rick Santorum narrowly beat Romney by 34 votes in the Jan. 3 caucus. However, since results from eight precincts could not be located for certification, Santorum and Romney officially tie and split the delegates in Iowa.

Jan. 5: President Obama makes a rare appearance at the Pentagon briefing room to outline a new national defense strategy. The new strategy takes into account the Pentagon budget cuts, the end to the war in Iraq as well as new threats from Iran and China.

Jan. 22: Representative Gabrielle Giffords, still recovering from the 2011 assassination attempt, announces that she is vacating her seat in the House of Representatives.

Jan. 24: In his election-year State of the Union address, President Obama argues that the government should strive to bridge the gap between rich Americans and the rest of the U.S. by changing the tax code and other policies. In his speech, he says: "We can either settle for a country where a shrinking number of people do really well, while a growing number of Americans barely get by, or we can restore an economy where everyone gets a fair shot."

Feb. 7: A federal appeals court in California rejects the voter-approved ban on same-sex marriage passed in 2008. The court rules that the ban, known as Proposition 8, violates the constitution rights of gay men and lesbians in California.

Feb. 9: The Pentagon announces that women will now be permanently assigned to battalions. Many women already serve in those battalions due to demand in Iraq and Afghanistan. The new ruling only makes these job assignments official and upholds the ban on women serving in combat.

Feb. 10: President Obama announces a change to a recent rule requiring all health insurance plans, including those offered by Roman Catholic institutions, provide birth control coverage to female employees. The revision will require that insurance companies, not religious institutions, offer free contraceptive coverage.

Feb. 13: Washington becomes the seventh state to legalize same-sex marriage as Gov. Christine Gregoire signs the legislation. Opponents are already working to block the bill and put the issue before voters in a referendum.

Feb. 13: President Obama issues a budget plan for 2013. The plan includes job-creation initiatives for infrastructure as well as job-training. The proposal comes up short as far as the goal to cut the deficit in half by 2013. Republicans seize on this, calling it a broken promise in deficit reduction.

March 6: In the Super Tuesday primaries, Mitt Romney wins six states, including a crucial victory in Ohio, Rick Santorum takes four states and Newt Gingrich Newt Gingrich wins one.

March 26: The U.S. Supreme Court reviews the constitutionality of the Affordable Health Care Act. June 28: The Supreme Court upholds the individual mandate in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The ruling is a victory for President Obama and a loss for the twenty six states that sued over the individual mandate, which requires that individuals buy health insurance by 2014 or face a fine.

April 10: Rick Santorum announces his decision to end his campaign for the Republican nomination. His decision comes after taking Easter weekend off from the campaign and after his youngest daughter, who suffers from a chromosomal disorder, was hospitalized again.

April 3: Mitt Romney takes three more primaries, inching closer to the nomination. Romney wins Wisconsin, Maryland, and the District of Columbia where his main rival, Rick Santorum, is not on the ballot.

May 8: North Carolina passes an amendment to ban gay marriage by a margin of more than twenty percent. By doing so, North Carolina becomes the 30th state in the U.S. to include an anti-gay marriage amendment in its constitution.

May 9: During an interview at the White House with Robin Roberts, President Obama declares his support for gay marriage for the first time. Regarding the issue, he says, "For me personally, it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same-sex couples should be able to get married." With the declaration, Obama becomes the first U.S. president to back gay marriage while in office.

May 17: The Census Bureau releases data stating that over a 12-month period, which ended in July 2011, Asians, blacks, Hispanics and mixed races made up just over 50 percent of all births, becoming a majority for the first time in the history of the United States.

June 5: Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker easily wins a recall election against his 2010 opponent, Tom Barrett. Receiving 53 percent of the vote, Walker becomes the first governor in U.S. history to win a recall election. The win is a huge loss for Democrats and labor unions. Walker has been in the national spotlight for his ongoing battle with unions over his plan to trim the state budget by decreasing collective bargaining rights and benefits for public workers.

June 12: Ron Barber, one of the top aides of Gabrielle Giffords, wins a special election to replace her in Congress. Also wounded in the 2011 shooting, Barber defeats Republican rival Jesse Kelly.

June 25: The United States Supreme Court rules against all but one provision in the 2010 immigration law in Arizona. The one provision the Supreme Court upholds is the one which allows the Arizona police to check the immigration status for any person they arrest.

July 20: During a midnight screening of *The Dark Knight Rises*, a gunman opens fire on the crowded theater in a Denver suburb. Twelve people are killed and 58 others are wounded. Directly after the incident, James Holmes, age 24, is arrested in a parking lot behind the theater.

Aug. 5: Wade Michael Page, age 40, opens fire in a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, killing six people and wounding three others. Police shoot and kill Page, an Army veteran who had ties to the white supremacist movement.

Aug. 11: Mitt Romney introduces Wisconsin Representative Paul Ryan as his presidential running mate during an appearance in Norfolk, Virginia. The announcement immediately energizes the Romney campaign, which raises over a million dollars in just four hours after the announcement.

Aug. 28: Due to Hurricane Isaac, major events at the Republican National Convention begin a day late. Held in Tampa, Florida, convention highlights include a keynote speech from Gov. Chris Christie of New Jersey and a personal address from Ann Romney who assured female voters that they can trust her husband.

Sept. 5: Former U.S. President Bill Clinton gives a rousing speech which brings the audience at the Democratic National Convention to its feet as he officially nominates Barack Obama as the 2012 Democratic candidate for president. Like the Republican National Convention, the DNC has to work around bad weather. The convention, held in Charlotte, North Carolina, is moved indoors.

Sept. 10: Twenty-six thousand public school teachers go on strike in Chicago to protest against proposed changes. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, has proposed a number of concessions, including that the school board revoke a promised four percent raise and that student test scores count more toward whether teachers receive tenure or not. Sept. 18: The strike ends when 800 union delegates vote to suspend the strike and agree on a contract. The contract gives annual raises to teachers, but evaluates them, in part, on student test scores. The contract also makes the school day longer.

Sept. 17: Occupy Wall Street marks its one-year anniversary with a demonstration at the New York Stock Exchange. Protesters attempt to block access to the New York Stock Exchange and 185 arrests are made. Rallies are also held in other parts of New York City and in more than 30 cities around the world.

Oct. 3: President Obama and Mitt Romney square off in the first debate. Romney and Obama come out aggressive on issues such as the tax policy, budget deficit, and the role of government. Romney has an energetic performance that provides a much needed boost to his campaign.

Oct. 9: Jerry Sandusky, the former Penn State football coach, is sentenced to 30 to 60 years in prison for molesting young boys.

Oct. 16: In the second presidential debate, both candidates are aggressive, often interrupting each other with accusations of lying. President Obama takes charge of the tone and terms of this debate with observations such as, "When he said behind closed doors that 47 percent of the country considers themselves victims who refuse personal responsibility think about who he was talking about."

Oct. 22: President Obama continues to be aggressive in the third debate. In response to a comment from Mitt Romney about downsizing the U.S. military, Obama says, "You mentioned that we have fewer ships than we did in 1916. Well, Governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets. And so the question is not a game of Battleship."

Oct. 24: Hurricane Sandy hits Cuba, Haiti and Jamaica. A category 2 hurricane, Sandy leaves 44 dead in the region. Oct. 26: Hurricane Sandy blows through the Bahamas. As it approaches Florida and the east coast of the United States, it is downgraded to a category 1. Oct. 27: Although it is downgraded, the storm picks up energy when it collides with a midlatitude trough. The storm system grows as it barrels up the East Coast, spreading to some 1,000 miles wide. Oct. 29: Hurricane Sandy makes landfall in Atlantic City, N.J., and is re-classified as a post-tropical cyclone. New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut are hardest hit by Sandy. Eight million people lose power as a result of the storm. Sandy has caused at least 132 deaths and an estimated 82 billion in damages, making it the second costliest hurricane in the United States, behind Katrina.

Nov. 6: President Obama is re-elected, narrowly defeating Republican nominee Mitt Romney. Obama prevails in both the electoral college and the popular vote, buoyed largely by taking several crucial battle states, including Colorado, Iowa, Ohio, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Nov. 6: In the 2012 election, Democrats keep their majority in the Senate. Democrats take Republican Senate seats in Massachusetts and Indiana. Key victories for the Democrats also include a win for Tammy Baldwin in Wisconsin. Her victory makes her the first openly gay candidate to capture a seat in the Senate. The Republicans keep the majority in the House of Representatives with 232 seats to 191 for the Democrats.

Nov. 9: Former four-star general David Petraeus resigns as CIA director after the FBI uncovers evidence that he had an extramarital affair. Paula Broadwell is the woman with whom Petraeus had the affair. Broadwell is the author of "All In: The Education of General David Petraeus", a biography published in 2012.

Nov. 29: The lame duck session of Congress faces the Bush-era tax cuts as well as the stimulus measures expiring on December 31, 2012. These measures and cuts are set to expire just as the government plans to severely cut federal spending, thus sending the U.S. economy over a fiscal cliff. Treasury Secretary Timothy F. Geithner presents the deficit reduction proposal from President Obama in a meeting with Speaker of the House John Boehner. The proposal asks for a \$1.6 trillion tax increase over ten years, refinancing of home mortgages, an end to Congressional control over statutory borrowing limits, and \$50 billion for immediate stimulus spending. Republicans react immediately to the proposal with very strong resistance. Dec. 3: Republicans make a deficit reduction proposal of their own. Their proposal is for a \$2.2 trillion deficit decrease over the next ten years by cutting \$1.2 trillion in spending and raising \$800 billion in revenue. Dec.

4: President Obama rejects the proposal by Republicans to avoid the rapidly approaching fiscal cliff. He tells them he will not agree to any proposal that does not include increases on tax rates for the wealthy. Dec. 9: President Obama meets privately with House Speaker John Boehner in an attempt to hammer out a deal and avert a fiscal crisis. Republican Senator Bob Corker, of Tennessee, says in a TV interview that a growing number of Republicans are open to compromising on tax rates. Dec. 30: Republicans in the Senate back off on their demand that the deal has to include new inflation calculations for Social Security and other programs. Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell works with Vice President Joe Biden into the late hours of the night finalizing a deal.

Nov. 14: The case count for the meningitis outbreak continues to rise in the United States. Thirty-two people have died. More than 400 have been infected while 14,000 may have been exposed.

Dec. 7: The U.S. Supreme Court agrees to hear two cases that challenge federal and state laws over the issue that marriage is defined only as a union between a man and a woman. Decisions on the cases are expected no later than June 2013.

Dec. 14: Adam Lanza, age 20, forces his way into Sandy Hook Elementary School, in Newtown, Connecticut, and kills 26 people, including 20 children between the ages of six and seven. Then Lanza takes his own life while still inside the school.

## 2013

Jan. 1: France sends its military forces to Mali to fight against extreme Islamist militants. (Jan. 16): Islamist militants take about 40 foreign hostages at a remote BP site in Algeria. Many fear that the hostage situation is a result of the conflict in Mali.

Jan. 22: Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu is elected to a third term.

Jan. 25: Violent protests erupt throughout Egypt on the second anniversary of the revolution. Demonstrators focus their ire on the Muslim Brotherhood and the government of President Mohammed Morsi, frustrated that the country is on an ideologically conservative path and that Morsi has failed to bolster the economy or fulfill promises to introduce broader civil liberties and social justice. Dozens of people are killed in the violence. Morsi declares a state of emergency in three large cities: Suez, Ismailia, and Port Said.

Feb. 11: Pope Benedict XVI announces his retirement, becoming the first pope to do so since 1415. He cites advancing age and a growing physical weakness as his reasons for retirement. He steps down on Feb. 28.

Feb. 12: North Korea says it has detonated a third nuclear bomb. Earlier nuclear tests were conducted in 2006 and 2009.

Feb. 14: South African runner Oscar Pistorius is arrested after police find his girlfriend, Reeva Steenkamp, dead from multiple gunshot wounds in his apartment. He is later charged with premeditated murder.

March 5: Hugo Chavez, the president of Venezuela, dies of cancer at age 58. He had been in office for 14 years.

March 8: In response to North Korea's nuclear test in February 2013, the UN Security Council unanimously passes another round of strict sanctions against North Korea. In a first, China is involved in drafting the sanctions. In response, North Korean president Kim Jong-un promises to launch "a pre-emptive nuclear strike" against the U.S. and South Korea and says he has voided the 1953 armistice that ended the war between North and South Korea.

March 13: Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina is elected as the new pope, succeeding Benedict XVI. Bergoglio, 76, becomes the Catholic Church's 266th pontiff. He is the first pope from Latin America and the first Jesuit pope. He chooses the name Francis.

March 14: Xi Jinping assumes the presidency of China. Of the 2,956 delegates, only one votes against Xi. He had earlier been named chairman of the Central Military Commission and general secretary of the Communist Party.

April 1: Despite stiffer sanctions from the UN, North Korean president Kim Jong-un announces plans to expand his country's nuclear weapons and strengthen the economy. Kim prohibits South Korean workers from entering the Kaesong industrial park, which is run jointly by the two countries and is located in North Korea. Apr. 3: At a rare plenary meeting of the Central Committee, Kim says North Korea will continue to develop its nuclear weapons program despite sanctions and restart the mothballed nuclear facility in Yongbyon. Apr. 4: The U.S. announces it is deploying a missile defense system to Guam as a precautionary move.

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April 13: Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad resigns amid infighting among the top echelon of the Palestinian Authority and popular discontent. Fayyad is credited with cracking down on corruption in the West Bank, improving infrastructure, and boosting the economy, which resulted in an increase in international aid.

April 14: Nicolas Maduro wins the special presidential election in Venezuela the successor of Hugo Chavez. He takes office on April 19.

April 18: Diplomats from both Britain and France report to the United Nations that there is credible information that the government in Syria has used chemical weapons recently in its civil war. According to both diplomats, the Syrian government has used chemical weapons multiple times since December 2012. Officials from Israel also say they have evidence that the Syrian government has used chemical weapons. President Obama has said that the use of chemical weapons by Syria's government could lead to a military response by the United States.

April 24: A large building containing several factories in Bangladesh collapses, killing at least 900 people. Hundreds more are missing in the building's rubble. Known as Rana Plaza, the factories within the building make clothing for European and American retailers such as JC Penny, Cato Fashions, Benetton and others.

May 31: In Istanbul, Turkey, a sit-in protesting government plans to raze Gezi Park in Taksim Square to build a shopping mall develops into enormous anti-government demonstrations after police begin spraying protesters with tear gas and water cannons. The demonstrations spread to dozens of cities throughout Turkey. June 13: Police storm the park, again spraying protesters with tear gas and water, and force protesters out of the area.

June 4: A human rights team working for the United Nations reports that there are "reasonable grounds" to believe that government forces in Syria have used chemical weapons. French foreign minister Laurent Fabius reports that sarin, a nerve gas, has been used on multiple occasions.

June 9: Edward Snowden, a former CIA employee, admitted that he was the source of leaks about the top-secret surveillance activities of the National Security Agency. June 21: The U.S. government filed espionage and theft charges against Snowden, who had earlier fled to Hong Kong. The government also requested that Hong Kong extradite Snowden. June 23: Fighting extradition, Snowden traveled from Hong Kong to Moscow.

June 15: Hassan Rowhani, a moderate cleric and Iran's former negotiator on nuclear issues, wins Iran's presidential election, taking just under 51% of the vote.

June 18: The Afghan National Security Force assumes complete responsibility for the security of the country, taking over the last areas under NATO control.

June 26: Australian prime minister Julia Gillard resigns after being ousted as Labor Party leader in a party vote. Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd replaces her as party leader and, the following day, replaces her as prime minister.

June 30: On the first anniversary of President Mohammed Morsi's inauguration, as many as one million people take to the streets in planned demonstrations throughout Egypt and call for the president to step down. Their complaints against Morsi include the dismal state of the economy, Morsi's installation of members of the Muslim Brotherhood into many positions of power, as well as his failure to stem the sectarian divide between Sunnis, Shiites, and Christians, among other issues.

July 4: The military deposes Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi and suspends the constitution, saying the move is an attempt at "national reconciliation" rather than a coup. Morsi, however, calls it a "complete military coup." He is taken into custody and several members of his inner circle are placed under house arrest. The move sparks massive protests in support of Morsi.

July 22: Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge, gives birth to a baby boy. The baby is born at 4:24 p.m. and weighs 8 pounds 6 ounces. He is later named George Alexander Louis. He will also have the title His Royal Highness Prince George of Cambridge and is be third in line to the throne, following Prince Charles and Prince William.

July 30: Israeli and Palestinian negotiators agree to begin new peace talks with the goal of reaching an agreement within nine months. The negotiations will be mediated by Martin Indyk, the U.S. State Department's new Mideast peace envoy.

Aug. 1: Russia grants Edward Snowden, the American who leaked info about U.S. surveillance, asylum for one year. The temporary asylum allows him to leave the Moscow airport where he has been since June.

Aug. 14: Police raid camps in Cairo, Egypt, where protesters have been demonstrating since the July ouster of President Mohammed Morsi. More than 500 people are killed, and the government declares a state of emergency. Mohamed ElBaradei resigns as vice president in protest of the military's action.

Aug. 14: Israelis and Palestinians officially begin peace talks in Jerusalem. Expectations are low going into the talks, the third attempt to negotiate since 2000, and nearly five years since the last attempt. The talks begin just hours after Israel releases 26 Palestinian prisoners.

Aug. 21: Opposition groups accuse the Syrian government of attacking rebel areas in Zamalka, Ein Terma, and Erbeen, suburbs east of Damascus, with chemical weapons. Gruesome, graphic images in the media show victims foaming at the mouth and twitching and lines of covered corpses. The opposition say as many as 1,000 people died in the attack. The government denies it used chemical weapons.

Sep. 1: President Barack Obama announces that he will seek Congressional approval for military action against Syria in response to its alleged attack with chemical weapons on civilians. Sep. 4: The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee votes, 10 to 7, to authorize military action in Syria. Sep. 15: A U.S.-led military attack is averted and diplomacy prevails when Russia and the U.S. reach an agreement that Syria must provide an inventory of its chemical weapons and production facilities within a week and either turn over or destroy all of its chemical weapons by mid-2014. If the government fails to comply, then the UN Security Council will take up the issue.

Sep. 16: The UN confirms in a report that the chemical agent sarin was used near Damascus on Aug. 21. "Chemical weapons have been used in the ongoing conflict between the parties in the Syrian Arab Republic, also against civilians, including children, on a relatively large scale," the report says. Sep. 26: The five permanent members of the Security Council agree on a resolution that requires Syria to hand over its stockpile of chemical weapons. If Syria fails to comply, then the Security Council will reconvene to determine repercussions, which could include military action or sanctions.

Sep. 21: Shabab militants, based in Somalia, attack an upscale mall in Nairobi, Kenya, killing nearly 70 people and wounding about 175.

Sep. 22: Chinese politician Bo Xilai is sentenced to life in prison. Eastern China's Jinan Intermediate People's Court finds him guilty of embezzlement, accepting bribes, and abuses of power, including a failed attempt to stifle the murder allegations against his wife.

Oct. 5: U.S. commandos capture Nazih Abdul-Hamed al-Ruqai, a high-ranking al-Qaeda operative who is known as Abu Anas al-Libi, in Tripoli, Lebanon. He was indicted for helping plan the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

Oct. 18: Saudi Arabia declines a non-permanent seat on the Security Council, a position it had been working toward for several years. The unprecedented move stuns both the UN and U.S. diplomats. "Allowing the ruling regime in Syria to kill and burn its people by the chemical weapons, while the world stands idly, without applying deterrent sanctions against the Damascus regime, is also irrefutable evidence and proof of the inability of the Security Council to carry out its duties and responsibilities," the Saudi ambassador to the UN says in a statement.

Nov. 1: Hakimullah Mehsud, the leader of the Taliban in Pakistan, is killed in a CIA drone strike in Danday Darpa Khel, a militant stronghold in North Waziristan. It is an important victory over the Taliban for the U.S.

Nov. 1: The trial of deposed Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi on charges of inciting the murder of protesters opens briefly in Cairo, but is adjourned until January 2014.

Nov. 24: Iran reaches a six-month deal with the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany to scale back its nuclear program. Iran agrees to halt production of uranium beyond 5 percent, which means it could only produce uranium for peaceful purposes; dilute or convert to oxide its stockpile of uranium enriched to 20 percent; not install new centrifuges; give UN inspectors daily access to enrichment facilities at Natanz and Fordo. In return, the crippling sanctions against Iran will be eased, pumping between \$6 billion and \$7 billion back into Iran's economy.

Dec. 1: Hundreds of thousands of protesters in Kiev, Ukraine, demand that President Viktor Yanukovich resign. The protesters also call for the country to develop stronger ties to Europe and the West and move away from Russia. The protests started earlier after Yanukovich refused to sign political and free trade agreements with the European Union under pressure from Russia.

Dec. 5: Nelson Mandela dies at age 95, after a lung infection and several months of ill health.

Jan. 1: The Senate approve a last minute deal to raise tax rates from 35 to 39.9 percent for those earning more than \$400,000. The deal also temporarily suspends across-the-board spending cuts. Later that night, the House also passes the legislation. The House vote ends the long dramatic showdown over the fiscal cliff with only a few hours left of the 112th Congress.

Jan. 16: In response to recent massacres, including the killing of 20 first graders in Newtown, Conn., and 12 moviegoers in Aurora, Colo., President Barack Obama introduces proposals to tighten gun-control laws. His plan includes universal background checks for gun sales, the reinstatement and strengthening of the assault weapons ban, limiting ammunition magazines to a 10-round capacity, and other measures.

Jan. 21: On Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President Obama is sworn in for a second term. He becomes the first president to say the word gay in an Inaugural Address when he compares the battle for same-sex marriage to past battles over gender and racial equality.

Feb. 12: In the first State of the Union Address of his second term, President Obama focuses on the role government should play in growing the economy and stabilizing the middle class. He veers away from any ambitious proposals such as a new stimulus plan in the speech.

March 1: Congress and President Obama do not reach an agreement in time to stop the large budget cuts to federal spending. As the cuts go into effect, Congressional leaders pledge to end the disagreements over the federal budget that have threatened to shut down the government for the last two years.

March 26: The Supreme Court begins two days of historical debate over gay marriage. During the debate, the Supreme Court will consider overturning Proposition 8, the California initiative banning same-sex marriage, and the Defense of Marriage Act, a federal law passed during the presidency of Bill Clinton, which defines marriage as between a man and a woman. The Supreme Court decision will be announced in June 2013.

April 15: Multiple bombs explode near the finish line of the Boston Marathon. At least three people are killed. One is an eight year old boy. More than 170 people are injured. Apr. 18: The FBI releases photos and video of two suspects in the hope that the public can help identify them. Just hours after the FBI releases the images, the two suspects rob a gas station in Central Square then shoot and kill a MIT police officer in his car. Afterwards, the two men carjack a SUV and tell the driver that they had set off the explosions at the marathon. Police pursue the vehicle into Watertown. During the shootout, a MBTA officer is shot and one of the suspects, identified as Tamerlan Tsarnaev, age 26, is killed. Apr. 19: The other suspect, Dzhokhar A. Tsarnaev, age 19, remains at large for several hours, causing a massive manhunt and lockdown for all of Boston, Cambridge, and many other surrounding communities. The manhunt ends that evening when he is found alive, but seriously injured, hiding in a boat behind a house in Watertown.

May 2: After same-sex marriage legislation passes in both houses of the state legislature, Governor Lincoln Chafee signs it into law. The new law, legalizing same-sex marriage, goes into effect in Rhode Island on August 1, 2013.

May 7: Governor Jack Markell signs the Civil Marriage Equality and Religious Freedom act, legalizing same-sex marriage for the state of Delaware. The new law goes into effect on July 1, 2013.

May 13: In Minnesota, the State Senate votes 37 to 30 in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage. The vote comes a week after it passes in the House. Governor Mark Dayton, a supporter of same-sex marriage, says he will sign the bill the following afternoon. Gay couples will be able to marry in Minnesota in August 2013.

June 6: The Guardian receives information that reveals that the National Security Agency (NSA) is using PRISM to spy on the web activities, including email, of U.S. citizens. Through PRISM, a clandestine national security surveillance program, the NSA has direct access to Facebook, YouTube, Skype, Google, Apple, Yahoo and other websites. June 7: The Wall Street Journal reports that the NSA also monitors the credit card transactions and customer records of three major phone service providers. June 8: The Guardian publishes a

report on another NSA tool called Boundless Informant, used by the U.S. government to watch activity in every country in the world. President Obama confirms the existence of PRISM and its use to spy on the online activity of U.S. citizens. June 9: Edward Snowden, a former CIA employee, comes forward and admits that he is the source of the recent NSA leaks.

June 24: In *Fisher v. University of Texas*, the Supreme Court allows universities to continue considering race as a factor in admissions to achieve diversity, but it does tell them that they must prove that "available, workable race-neutral alternatives do not suffice" before considering race. The ruling is considered a compromise between conservative and liberal factions of the court.

June 25: In *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Supreme Court strikes down Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, which established a formula for Congress to use when determining if a state or voting jurisdiction requires prior approval before changing its voting laws. Currently under Section 5 of the act nine-mostly Southern-states with a history of discrimination must get clearance from Congress before changing voting rules to make sure racial minorities are not negatively affected. While the 5-4 decision does not invalidate Section 5, it makes it toothless.

June 26: The Supreme Court rules that the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) is unconstitutional. In a 5 to 4 vote, the court rules that DOMA violates the rights of gays and lesbians. The court also rules that the law interferes with the rights of each state to define marriage. It is the first case ever on the issue of gay marriage for the Supreme Court. June 26: The Supreme Court rules that same-sex marriage opponents in California did not have standing to appeal the lower court ruling that overturned the ban, known as Proposition 8. This ruling will most likely remove legal battles for same-sex couples wishing to marry in California. However, the ruling does not directly affect other states.

July 13: A jury in Florida finds George Zimmerman not guilty of murdering Trayvon Martin. The verdict sparks outrage on the internet and protests in cities throughout the U.S., but no riots or extreme violence are reported.

Aug. 12: Notorious Boston gangster James (Whitey) Bulger is found guilty of 31 of the 32 charges he faced, including murder, extortion, money laundering, drug dealing and possession of weapons. Nov. 14: Bulger, age 84, receives two consecutive life sentences, plus five years.

Aug. 21: Private Bradley Manning, age 25, is sentenced to 35 years in prison for leaking over 700,000 U.S. government files to WikiLeaks, files that contained classified U.S. military activities. It is the longest sentence ever given in the U.S. involving leaked government data to the public. Private Manning can be up for parole in seven years, according to his attorney. Aug. 22: The day after his sentencing, Manning announces that he is female and wants to be referred to from now on as Chelsea. In his statement, Manning writes: "As I transition into this next phase of my life, I want everyone to know the real me. I am Chelsea Manning. I am a female. Given the way that I feel, and have felt since childhood, I want to begin hormone therapy as soon as possible. I hope that you will support me in this transition. I also request that, starting today, you refer to me by my new name and use the feminine pronoun."

Sept. 10: Voters in Colorado throw out of office Democrats John Morse and Angela Giron for their support of recently enacted gun-control laws that mandate background checks on private gun sales and limit magazine clips to 15 rounds. The election draws national attention not only for the ouster of the officials but also for the influx of money on both sides, from the National Rifle Association and New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, a gun-control advocate.

Sept. 16: Former Navy reservist Aaron Alexis, 34, kills 12 people at the Washington Navy Yard, near the U.S. Capitol. Alexis, who had been employed at the base by a military subcontractor, is killed in a shootout with police.

Sept. 30: The Senate rejects a Republican bill that will fund the government but delay the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. The rejection increases the chance of a government shutdown at midnight because the spending bill must pass to fund the government. With just hours left before the deadline, the Senate votes against the spending bill, which the House approved over the weekend. The rejection by the Senate sends the bill back to the House. Oct. 1: Congress fails to agree on a budget and pass a spending bill, causing the government to shut down. Republicans show no signs of backing down, passing a new bill of their own in the House. Their bill will fund the government but delay the Affordable Care Act and eliminate a tax on medical devices that would cover some costs of the new health care program. The government shutdown forces about 800,000 federal workers off the job. Oct. 10: In an effort to end the shutdown they began, Republicans in the House offer President Obama a plan to increase the debt limit through Nov. 22 if he promises to negotiate with them on a tax overhaul and long-term deficit reduction deal. Oct. 16: The night before the debt ceiling deadline, both the House and Senate approve a bill to fund the government until January 15, 2014, and raise the debt limit through February 7, 2014. The bill ends the 16-day government shutdown. It also ends the Republican standoff with President Obama over the Affordable Care Act.

Oct. 21: In an unanimous vote, the New Jersey Supreme Court rejects a request by Gov. Chris Christie to delay the implementation date of same-sex weddings. Immediately same-sex couples begin to marry, making New Jersey the 14th state to recognize same-sex marriages.

Nov. 5: In November general elections, the Democrats get a key victory in Virginia when Terry McAuliffe is elected governor in a tight race. In New Jersey, Republican Chris Christie easily wins a second term as governor. The decisive win cements him as a frontrunner for the Republican presidential contender in 2016. In New York City, Democrat Bill de Blasio is elected mayor in a landslide. He defeats Joseph J. Lhota, former Metropolitan Transportation Authority chairman, by 49 percent. It is the biggest victory for a New York City mayor since Edward Koch won by 68 percent in 1985. Boston elects a new mayor for the first time in twenty years in a nonpartisan election. Democrat Martin J. Walsh narrowly beats Democrat City Councilman John R. Connolly, 52 to 48 percent.

Nov. 5: Illinois becomes the 15th state to recognize same-sex marriages when the House of Representatives approves the Religious Freedom and Marriage Fairness Act, which passed the state Senate in February 2013. The new law will be implemented on June 1, 2014.

Nov. 12: Hawaii becomes the 16th state to recognize same-sex marriages when the Senate passes a gay marriage bill, which had already passed in the House. Beginning December 2, gay couples who are residents of Hawaii as well as tourists can marry in the state.

Nov. 21: The Senate deploys the "nuclear option," voting 52-48 to end the right of the minority to filibuster executive and judicial branch nominees. Under the new rules, a simple majority is required to end debate and move forward with a vote on nominees. The vote is called a monumental, once in a generation change to Senate procedure.

Dec. 16: The first ruling against the NSA surveillance program is handed down by Judge Richard Leon of Federal District Court for the District of Columbia. He says the program is "significantly likely" to violate the Fourth Amendment which addresses protection against unreasonable searches. Dec. 18: Just days after the ruling, an advisory panel commissioned by President Obama releases a 300-page report that recommends 46 changes to the NSA surveillance program.

## 2014

The shooting of Michael Brown, an unarmed 18-year-old teenager, and the unrest over the decision by a grand jury not to indict the police officer dominated headlines in the U.S. during 2014. Midterm elections, bad calls in the National Football League, the VA medical scandal, uninvited White House guests, net neutrality, and General Motors recalls were some of the other stories that received a lot of attention throughout the year.

### Ferguson Shooting Sparks National Outrage

The shooting of a teenager by a police officer in a St. Louis suburb leads to unrest and unanswered questions

### 2014 Midterm Elections

Republicans take control of the Senate

### National Football League Drops the Ball

The NFL fumbles on issues of domestic violence and more

### Obama's Executive Action Delays Deportation of 5 Million Immigrant

Policy does not offer a path to citizenship

### Migrant Minors: FAQs, Facts, and Statistics

Unaccompanied children entering the U.S. from Central America create a humanitarian crisis

### Sexual Abuse on Campus

A national debate on how to handle the problem continued throughout the year

### VA Medical Care Controversy

Hundreds of veterans in Phoenix wait to see doctors

### General Motors Stalled

General Motors knew about defective ignition switches for almost a decade before ordering recalls

### Net Neutrality Explained and Answers to FAQs

The history and controversy surrounding net neutrality

### White House Intruder

An uninvited guest sheds light on Secret Service shortcomings

### Obamacare Rebounds After Shaky Health Care Roll-out

Millions enroll as website glitches are fixed

Senate Intelligence Committee Report Is Highly Critical of CIA Interrogation Techniques  
Accusations made by senator prove true with release of report

Botched Executions Raise Concerns  
Questions increase over drugs used in lethal injections

Washington State Mudslide Tragedy  
The mudslide in the town of Oso is one of the worst in U.S. History

O'Bannon v. NCAA  
Ruling against the NCAA could be a game changer

Bit Confused  
The Bitcoin receives a lot of attention in 2014

The NSA Surveillance Program: 2014 Developments  
An update on the NSA surveillance program

Two States Find Out If the Grass Is Greener on the Legal Side  
Starting in 2014, marijuana can be sold legally in Colorado and Washington

Common Core Debate  
The argument over intensifies over standards in education

The R Word  
The debate heats up over one NFL team's name

The Ebola outbreak in Western Africa, Russia's annexation of Crimea, the ongoing turmoil in Ukraine between Russian-backed separatists and government troops, and the emergence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) dominated the headlines in 2014. President Barack Obama's pledge to "degrade and destroy" ISIS led to airstrikes in Iraq and Syria and sparked widespread concern that the U.S. might become dragged into another long conflict. However, 2014 wasn't all doom and gloom on the diplomatic front, and there were some positive steps toward democracy in 2014. The U.S. and Cuba restored diplomatic relations, and elections were held in Afghanistan, Brazil, Egypt, Iraq, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine. Some of the elections were considered largely free and fair, while others were less so. In addition, 86% of voters in Scotland turned out to decide if Scotland should remain independent. Here's an overview and analysis of some of the biggest international stories of 2014.

ISIS Explained  
Sunni militants terrorize Iraq and Syria in their bid to implement an Islamic state

Ebola Outbreak in Western Africa  
The worst single Ebola outbreak in history kills thousands

Russia Annexes Crimea  
Putin reclaims region after referendum

The U.S. and Cuba Resume Diplomatic Relations  
Pope Francis helped to broker a deal between Presidents Obama and Castro

Russian-Backed Separatists Seek to Claim Territory in Ukraine  
After the annexation of Crimea, Russian-backed rebels seize other cities in eastern Ukraine

Taliban Attack on an Army-Run School Kills Dozens in Pakistan  
Gruesome attack is retribution for military offensive that killed 1,800 militants

North Korea Accused of Launching a Cyberattack on Sony  
Move thought to be in retaliation for comedy about an attempt to assassinate Kim Jong-un

Senate Report Highly Critical of CIA Interrogation Program  
Dianne Feinstein accused CIA not only of downplaying torture techniques but also of spying on the Senate Intelligence Committee and hacking its computer network

Scottish Independence Referendum  
Record number of voters head to the polls

U.S. Frees Taliban Prisoners in Exchange for Army Sergeant  
Obama criticized for potentially compromising anti-terrorism agenda

New Prime Minister of Iraq Forms a Power-Sharing Government  
Nuri al-Maliki finally steps aside, allowing Haider al-Abadi to become prime minister

Significant Elections Held Around the Globe  
Some were more democratic than others

Boko Haram Kidnaps Hundreds of School Girls in Nigeria  
Islamic sect that opposes Western education terrorizes civilians

U.S. and NATO End Combat Operation in Afghanistan  
Remaining U.S. troops will continue to seek out militants

Former President Hosni Mubarak Cleared; Protesters and Journalists Receive Harsh Sentences

Rulings largely turned back the clocks on the Arab Spring protests

The 2014 Hamas Israel Conflict

The murders of Israeli and Palestinian teenagers ignite another conflict in Gaza

New Military Legislation and Call for New Elections Dominate the Political Front in Israel

New law exempts ultra-Orthodox Israelis from military service and Netanyahu dismisses members of his cabinet

UN-Led Negotiations Fail in Syria

Syrian government criticized for its lack of commitment to the peace process

Iran Agrees to Scale Back Nuclear Program, but Permanent Deal Remains Elusive

Hopeful a deal can be reached, the permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany and Iran extend talks

Migrant Minors Flood into the U.S.

Unaccompanied children entering the U.S. from Central America create a humanitarian crisis

Protesters Occupy Government and Business Districts in Hong Kong

Demonstrators demand that citizens have a direct say in who can run in upcoming elections

President of Burkina Faso Deposed in a Coup

Under pressure from the African Union, military agrees to a year-long transition to democracy

Turkey Resists Engaging in the Fight Against ISIS

Eventually shifts its policy under pressure from the U.S.

Military Stages a Coup in Thailand

Country experiences second military coup in less than 10 years

The Artist Known As Banksy

The mysterious artist who continues to make headlines throughout the year