

[Table 5-14]

**INSTANCES OF SITTING/FORMER PRESIDENTS AND SITTING VICE PRESIDENTS WHO
HAVE TESTIFIED BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES***

SITTING PRESIDENTS/VICE PRESIDENTS:

President Abraham Lincoln¹
House Judiciary Committee
February 13, 1862

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

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

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

President Woodrow Wilson
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
August 19, 1919

Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee took testimony from President Wilson at the White

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

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

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

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

FORMER PRESIDENTS:

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

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

William Howard Taft²
House Select Committee on Budget
October 4, 1919 (National Budget System)

Senate Committee on the Judiciary
October 5, 1921 (additional judges, Conference of Senior Circuit Judges)

House Committee on the Judiciary
November 7, 1921 (additional judges, Conference of Senior Circuit Judges)

House Committee on Military Affairs
January 19, 1922 (Fort Nathan Hale Park)

² Former President William Howard Taft testified before Congress frequently as a result of his service as co-chair of the National War Labor Board during World War I and Chief Justice of the United States from 1921-1930. The testimony listed here relates to legislation and claims before Congress but omits the numerous times Taft testified in support of appropriations for the judiciary.

House Committee on the Judiciary
March 30, 1922 (Jurisdiction of the U.S. Supreme Court)

House Committee on Claims
April 26, 1922 (claims of employees of Bethlehem Steel)

House Committee on the Judiciary
January 23, 1924 (additional judges for the Eighth Circuit)

House Committee on the Judiciary
December 18, 1924 (Jurisdiction of the U.S. Supreme Court)

House Committee on Claims
March 4, 1926 (award to employees of Minneapolis Steel Co.)

House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization
May 1, 1926 (naturalization administration)

Subcommittee of House Committee on the Judiciary
May 10, 1928 (creating Tenth Circuit)

House Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds
May 16, 1928 (Supreme Court building)

Harry S. Truman

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
April 18, 1955 (United Nations Charter)

Gerald R. Ford

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

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* This list is not exhaustive. New information will be added as information is documented.