

# KEY EVENTS IN A PROMISED LAND

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JANUARY 2009 – MAY 2011

2009

- January 20 Historic crowds gather on Washington's National Mall to witness the inauguration of Barack Obama as president.
- January 29 President Obama signs his first bill, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, extending the statute of limitations for filing equal-pay lawsuits regarding pay discrimination.
- February 17 President Obama signs into law the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The president also approves a deployment of seventeen thousand additional troops to Afghanistan.
- March The Federal Housing Finance Agency sets up the Home Affordable Refinance Program (HARP), which helps borrowers refinance their mortgages at lower rates even if their homes are underwater.
- April 2 World leaders gather in London for the G20 summit.
- April 12 Captain Richard Phillips, taken hostage by pirates in the *Maersk Alabama* hijacking, is freed by Navy SEALs.
- May 7 The results of the "stress test"—an assessment by the Federal Reserve of whether nineteen systemically significant banks had enough capital to survive a depression—are released to the public.
- May 20 With three million homes already in some stage of foreclosure and eight million more at risk, President Obama signs into law the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act, intended to help homeowners avoid foreclosure.

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- May 26 Federal judge Sonia Sotomayor is nominated to the Supreme Court, where she will be the third woman and first Latina to sit on the bench.
- June 1 The White House announces that an agreement has been reached for the structured bankruptcy and reorganization of General Motors and Chrysler, providing the auto industry with a lifeline.
- June 4 In Cairo, President Obama delivers a major speech, seeking to mend U.S. relations with the Muslim world.
- July 6–7 Visiting Russia, President Obama meets for the first time with Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.
- July 30 Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and police sergeant James Crowley join the president and vice president for a “Beer Summit” at the White House.
- October 9 The Norwegian Nobel Committee announces that President Obama will be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- October 24 After the H1N1 flu epidemic claims the lives of more than one thousand Americans, President Obama declares a national public health emergency.
- November 12–18 President Obama travels to Asia, visiting with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of Japan, President Hu Jintao of China, and other leaders in the region.
- December 1 At West Point, President Obama announces the deployment of thirty thousand additional troops to Afghanistan.
- December 18 At a U.N. global conference on climate change in Copenhagen, many of the world’s major carbon-emitting countries agree to submit emissions targets by the end of January 2010, setting a precedent for future climate treaty negotiations.

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### 2010

- March 23 President Obama signs into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, now commonly referred to as Obamacare, paving the way for an estimated 20 to 24 million additional people to receive health insurance by 2016.
- April 8 After months of negotiations, President Obama and President Dmitry Medvedev sign the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), a nuclear arms control agreement.
- April 20 The *Deepwater Horizon* offshore drilling rig explodes roughly fifty miles off the coast of Louisiana, killing eleven people and leading to the largest marine oil spill in history.
- May 10 Solicitor General Elena Kagan is nominated to the Supreme Court.
- June 9 The U.N. Security Council imposes unprecedented new sanctions on Iran, meant to pressure the nation to resume negotiations on curbing its nuclear program.
- June 23 In the wake of a media scandal, General Stanley McChrystal resigns as commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.
- July 21 The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, the most sweeping change to the rules governing America's financial sector since the New Deal, is signed into law.
- August 31 President Obama announces an end to the combat mission in Iraq.
- September 1 Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas visit the White House for direct Mideast peace talks.
- November 2 Midterm elections bring sweeping changes to Congress, with Republicans picking up sixty-three seats in the House.

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- December 3 On a surprise visit to Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, President Obama thanks U.S. military and diplomatic personnel for their service.
- December 6 President Obama and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell reach an agreement that extends the Bush-era tax cuts in exchange for hundreds of billions of dollars in additional economic stimulus.
- December 18 The DREAM Act, meant to provide a pathway to citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants, is defeated in the Senate.
- December 22 President Obama signs the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Repeal Act of 2010, ending the legal prohibition against openly gay and bisexual individuals serving in the U.S. armed forces—the culmination of one of the most productive “lame duck” sessions in history.

## 2011

- January 25 In his State of the Union address, President Obama expresses support for the people of Tunisia while close to fifty thousand Egyptians pour into Cairo’s Tahrir Square, demanding political change.
- February 11 Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak steps down from power after ruling the country for nearly thirty years.
- March 19 President Obama authorizes U.S. air strikes against Libya, after the U.N. Security Council approves a multilateral effort to protect civilians from attacks by Muammar Gaddafi’s forces.
- April 4 President Obama formally announces his bid for reelection.
- April 27 The White House releases a copy of the original long-form document that certifies President Obama’s birth at Kapi’olani Medical Center in 1961.
- May 2 Osama bin Laden is killed in Pakistan by U.S. Navy SEALs in a CIA-led action known as Operation Neptune’s Spear.