



- It was the first time that the candidates made extensive use of jet air travel. This enabled them to fly across the nation and extend the campaign day. It also allowed Nixon to visit all of the 50 states including Alaska and Hawaii (both of whom had just been admitted to the Union).
- Four television debates were held and drew massive viewing audiences. 90% of American households had television in 1960 and the impact of these debates proved decisive.
- The Civil Rights movement was gaining momentum throughout the nation. Dozens of student demonstrators were engaged in peaceful sit down strikes protesting segregation in lunch counters in Greensboro, North Carolina. On October 19th, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was arrested in Georgia and sentenced to state prison for violating his parole for an earlier conviction for driving with an Alabama license while living in Georgia. Robert Kennedy intervenes with the Georgia governor and secures King's release. This proved decisive in swinging the African-American vote to the Democrats.
- The U-2 Crisis disrupted the Paris Summit between President Eisenhower and Soviet Premier Khrushchev. The captured pilot, Francis Gary Powers, would not be released until 1962 and Khrushchev later claimed that this event helped elect Kennedy.
- Nixon chose Henry Cabot Lodge, the American ambassador to the UN, for his running mate. Lodge was from Massachusetts, the same state as John Kennedy. This vice presidential choice provided little electoral advantage for the Republicans while the Democrats chose the Senate Majority leader, Lyndon Johnson, for a vice presidential candidate. Texas would ultimately go to the Democrats by just 40,000 votes and it proved decisive.
- Vice Presidential nominee, Henry Cabot Lodge, pledges that if elected, Richard Nixon would appoint the first African-American to a cabinet level position.
- The election marked a generational change in America's political leadership—both Nixon and Kennedy were young (Nixon was 47 and Kennedy just 43); both had served in World War II as young naval officers; both had been born in the 20th Century.
- The Cold War was a major issue with Cuba, China, and Berlin as major sources of contention between the free and Communist world.
- The election would be one of the closest in American history. Both candidates proved to be skilled campaigners.
- Computers were first used by the major networks to predict election results. At 7:15 Eastern Standard Time, CBS inaccurately predicted that Richard Nixon would be elected president. Later that evening, NBC projected Kennedy the winner with 401 electoral votes. He actually won with 301.
- Kennedy's popular vote plurality was just 114,673 votes out of 68 million cast—.2%. Nixon carried 26 states to Kennedy's 23 while some Southern electors voted for Harry Byrd.
- Theodore White wrote: *The Making of the President 1960*, a book which would define political journalism for the next two decades. White portrayed Presidential campaigns as classic contests which would ultimately result in one candidate's glorious triumph and the other's ignoble defeat.