

HANDOUT

# 1840 ELECTION



**WILLIAM H. HARRISON**  
and John Taylor

POPULAR VOTE: 1,274,624  
ELECTORAL VOTE: 234

**WHIG**

Harrison was a **military hero** and had been one of three Whig candidates in the 1836 election.

The **Whig Party** was formed in 1836 out of the old National Republicans and other anti-Jackson parties. They took the name "Whig" from the British party that opposed the power of the king.

Harrison's **Hurrah Campaign** built on the spectacle of Jackson's 1828 campaign with pageants, parades, and parties.

Whigs used the symbols of **log cabins** and **hard cider** to appeal to the "common man."

Whigs distributed the first and largest ever **campaign songbook**.

Harrison was presented as the hero of the **Battle of Tippecanoe**.

The **Penny Press**, one-cent newspapers, emerged as a major campaign medium and was used successfully by Harrison.



**MARTIN VAN BUREN**  
and Richard Johnson

POPULAR VOTE: 1,127,781  
ELECTORAL VOTE: 60

**DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICAN**

Van Buren was the **incumbent President**, having defeated several Whig candidates in 1836.

Van Buren's "**life of luxury**" was criticized by Whigs who claimed he drank champagne from gold cups. In fact Van Buren had a modest background while Harrison came from wealth.

Unlike Whigs, Van Buren opposed **government involvement** in the economy.

Democrats were hurt by the **Panic of 1837**, which took place while Van Buren was President and led to an economic depression.

New **target groups** including small farmers, immigrants, and Catholics supported Van Buren.

**The Changing Electorate**

- **Party allegiance** became ever more important to voters.
- More voters were literate due to the spread of **public education**.
- The **middle class** began to form and urban workers and trades people became targeted groups.

**"We were sung down, drunk down and lied down. Right joyous are we that the campaign of 1840 is closed. Its character and incidents will furnish matter for mortifying reflections for years to come. - Democratic editorial in *Wheeling Times***

**DID YOU KNOW?** At Harrison's inauguration in March 1841 he rode upon a white horse to the Capitol in the midst of a downpour without a hat. He then gave the longest inaugural speech ever, one hour 45 minutes, and caught a severe cold from prolonged exposure to the rain. He died on April 4, one month after being sworn into office.