

HANDOUT

1940 ELECTION



FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT

and Henry Wallace

POPULAR VOTE: 27,244,160

ELECTORAL VOTE: 449

DEMOCRAT



WENDELL WILLKIE

and Charles McNary

POPULAR VOTE: 22,305,198

ELECTORAL VOTE: 82

REPUBLICAN

Two issues dominated the 1940 election, the escalating **wars in Europe and Asia** and Roosevelt's decision to run for an **unprecedented 3rd term**. No U.S. President had ever served more than two terms, but war loomed. In 1940 Hitler had conquered Central Europe and the Battle for Britain was raging. In Asia, Japan was pursuing military conquest. Many Republicans openly feared that Roosevelt would become a dictator but most voters preferred to have the man who had led the country through the Great Depression be at the helm in a time of impending crisis.

Roosevelt was the **incumbent President**.

Roosevelt did not agree to run for a 3rd term until he was **"drafted"** at the Democratic National Convention.

Despite significant opposition from within his party, FDR insisted on the liberal **Henry Wallace** for his running mate. Wallace later ran on the Progressive Party ticket in 1948.

Eleanor Roosevelt was the first President's wife to address a nominating convention.

Big cities went solidly for Roosevelt.

FDR made anti-war speeches but **prepared for war**.

"I am an old campaigner, and I love a good fight."
- FDR in his first openly political speech of the campaign

Wendell Willkie was a **lawyer**, businessman, and radio quiz show contestant.

Willkie claimed that **government programs** like the Tennessee Valley Authority forced private industry out of business and hindered economic development.

Willkie's **inexperience** was a target for Democrats. As a former private utility executive he was criticized for his **ties to industry**.

Madison Avenue advertising firms advised the Republican campaign.

Willkie's managers hired a voice coach to help the candidate improve his poor **radio** delivery.

Willkie challenged FDR to **debate** but Roosevelt declined, saying that it would be unbecoming of a President.

Willkie opposed the war preparation and was supported by **isolationist** states in the Midwest and Great Plains.

DID YOU KNOW? FDR was listening on the radio as Willkie spoke to a labor audience in Pittsburgh. Willkie vowed to appoint a labor leader as Secretary of Labor. Roosevelt thought that made good political sense until Willkie added, "and it won't be a woman either." The remark drew laughter and applause at the rally for his reference to FDR's Labor Secretary, Frances Perkins, the first woman to be named to a presidential cabinet. FDR later said to Mrs. Perkins, "Why did he have to insult every woman in the United States? It will make them mad; it will lose him votes." Perkins responded that she had already received 500 telegrams from women who were angry at Willkie's remarks, "and more than half of them tell me they are Republican women."