

Al Gore

Biography

- Born 1948
- Son of Albert Gore, influential democratic politician who was first a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for fourteen years and then a U.S. Senator 1953-1971.
- Bachelor of Arts degree in government from Harvard University and studied at the Vanderbilt Divinity School.
- Enlisted in the U.S. army and served in Vietnam for four months.
- Gore worked 1971-76 as a reporter for The Tennessean in Nashville, Tennessee (his home state).
- Represented Tennessee in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1976-1984.
- Represented Tennessee in the U.S. Senate, 1985-1992.
- Candidate for the Democratic nomination for President in 1988; won Democratic primaries and caucuses in seven states.
- Vice President of the United States, 1993-2000.
- Democratic candidate for President in 2000, lost against Bush because the disputed vote count in Florida gave Bush Florida's electoral votes.
- In 2004 Gore started the investment company for sustainable development "Generation" together with Goldman Sachs' former CEO.
- Married since 1970 to Tipper Gore; 3 daughters Karenna, Kristin, Sarah and one son Albert III. Two grandchildren.
- Al and Tipper Gore live in Nashville.

What has influenced Al Gore's interest in the environment?

- Gore began to take an interest in the environment in his early teens after his mother, Pauline, read Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring" published in 1962. The book was about the frightening environmental effects of DDT and other pesticides.
- His older sister Nancy was heavy smoker and died in lung cancer at the early age of 46. This event deeply affected Al Gore, in part because the family farm in Tennessee grew tobacco and in part because of the parallel between the cynical denial by the tobacco industry of the connection between cigarette smoking and cancer and the denial of the oil industry that burning fossil fuels causes global warming.
- While studying at Harvard at the end of the 60s one of Gore's teachers, Professor Roger Revelle, was convinced that there was a connection between the increase in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (greenhouse gases) and the rise of the earth's average temperature. Revelle had initiated regular measurements of carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere from 1958. He convinced Gore and the other students in his class that the growing level of carbon dioxide would heat up the earth, in other words create the greenhouse effect.
- In 1989 Gore's then 6 year old son Albert was almost killed when he ran out into the street and was hit by a car. Al Gore took time-out from politics to be by his side while his son recovered in the hospital. This event led him to think about how fleeting life is and what is truly important in life and he began to write "Earth in the Balance" (see below).

Political career

Al Gore was elected to the House of Representatives in 1976, only 28 years old, and he was a Rep eight years. During this period he was a member of several important committees, among them the Armed Services Committee. In 1984 Gore was elected to the Senate and remained a Senator until he became Vice President in the Clinton Administration from 1993 to 2000.

In 2000 Al Gore ran for President as the Democrats candidate but lost to George W. Bush after an election full of vote counting discrepancies. Although Gore won the popular vote the American system of electoral votes gave Bush the victory.

As a member of Congress Al Gore traveled around the world, from the Arctic to the Antarctic and from the Aral Sea to the Dead Sea. He also visited Chernobyl, the Amazon, Greenland, Galapagos Islands and many other places. He had the opportunity to follow an American nuclear submarine under the ice in the North Sea. Through his discussions with researchers and others everywhere he traveled he gathered a slew of first-hand testimonies on the changes in the environment and climate. At the end of the 70s Gore held congressional committee hearings on toxic waste and in the 80s he held hearings on global warming. Roger Revelle was his first witness.

At the end of the 80s Gore introduced a bill that facilitated the development of the Internet. During his tenure in the Senate Gore tried twice to force the government to stop supporting Saddam Hussein in Iraq (which was then allied with the U.S.A. against Iran). The bills were stopped in part by a veto threat from President Reagan.

Earth in the Balance

The first edition of the book was released in June 1992 a few months before the presidential election, when Al Gore was running as Bill Clinton's candidate for Vice President. In June 1992 Al Gore led a congressional delegation to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Gore wrote the book from his personal conviction, without help from ghostwriters or political advisors. The book attracted a great deal of interest and made the New York Times bestseller list, the second time ever a book written by an active top politician has landed there.

The book consists of three sections: Balance at Risk, The Search for Balance, Striking the Balance. In the last section Gore introduces "The Global Marshall Plan" modeled after the Marshall Plan created at the end of the Second World War, when the United States provided financial support to help rebuild a war-torn Europe. Gore's Global Marshall Plan contains five strategic goals:

- Stabilizing world population
- Developing and sharing appropriate technologies
- A new global economy
- A new generation of treaties and agreements
- A new global environmental consensus

Two (of many) memorable lines in the book are: "We must make the rescue of the environment the central organizing principle for civilization" and "The minimum that is scientifically necessary far exceeds the maximum that is politically feasible."

A reprint of the book with a new foreword was published in 2000 before the presidential election. Gore's messages in his book and the Global Marshall Plan are still, 15 years later, extremely relevant. In fact, while the book has become increasingly prophetic, criticism from political and ideological adversaries has paled. As Gore pointed out, "The average citizen is still ahead of the politicians on global warming."

Vice President 1993-2001

Bill Clinton chose Gore as his running mate in the presidential election of 1992. They took office on 20 January 1993 and were re-elected for the period of 1997-2001. U.S.A.'s economy grew during this eight year period. This was in part due to collaboration with a Republican Congress to control public spending and balance the budget. Gore set up a program to reduce waste and fraud in federal agencies and to reduce bureaucracy and regulations. Gore also promoted free trade and worked on the free trade agreement NAFTA, which is between U.S.A., Canada and Mexico.

When Gore was Vice President he had a hard time getting politicians, business and the American people to understand the looming environmental threat, in particular global warming. He struggled to convince his own party colleagues and the situation became even more difficult when the Republican Party won the Congress in 1994. The Democrats were forced to defend their positions concerning environmental protection laws and had to concentrate on upholding the most vital existing laws such as the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. In 1997, when negotiations on the Kyoto Protocol were about to collapse (because of resistance by the negotiators from the U.S.), Gore flew to Kyoto, despite strong opposition within the Clinton Administration, and helped save the Kyoto Protocol. Gore convinced Bill Clinton to sign the Kyoto Protocol but it was never sent to the Senate for approval where it would have been voted down.

President campaign 2000

In his campaign Gore pointed out that during the Clinton/Gore years the economy had a strong, positive development, the budget was balanced, unemployment had been the lowest for 30 years and federal taxes as well.

The election was one of the most even and controversial presidential elections in the history of the United States. The result in Florida, where George W. Bush won by only 537 votes after a dubious vote count, was decisive. The election results were finally confirmed by the Supreme Court, giving Bush four more electoral votes than Gore. However, Al Gore received over half a million more popular votes than Bush.

Post Vice Presidential Years

In January 2001 Gore became unemployed for the first time in his life. His wife Tipper suggested he use his slide show that he had created more than 20 years ago to communicate about global warming. He modernized it to be a PowerPoint show with computer graphics and began traveling around the United States giving lectures on global warming.

In April 2005 he gave his presentation at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in LA where film producers and directors sat in the audience. One of them, producer Lawrence Bender, reacted spontaneously and thought "We have to make a film of this." Production began that summer and the finished film "An Inconvenient Truth" was presented at the Sundance Festival in

January 2006. In May 2006 it was shown at movie theaters in the U.S. and shortly after that it hit cinemas all over the world. The film is also a DVD.

The film was an enormous catalyst in raising American consciousness about climate change, which was only emphasized by hurricane disasters that struck in the autumn of 2005, in particular Katrina in New Orleans. According to an opinion poll taken by New York Times/CBS in the spring of 2007, 78 % of Americans think global warming/environmental threats require immediate action. Through Gore's film and book with the same name, followed by the Stern report in the autumn of 2006 as well as the IPCC reports, which came in the first half of 2007 concerning existing and future changes in the climate, billions of people all over the world have become aware of the tremendous environmental problems facing the planet.

To get the message out to as many people as possible Gore teaches "climate trainees" (Gore's Calvary). More than one thousand trainees have done the two-day course, at their own expense. They come from all walks of life, from Cameron Diaz to employees at Wal-Mart, and all ages, from retirees to students. They are both Democrats and Republicans.

The success of "An Inconvenient Truth" has also raised the esteem held for Al Gore personally. He has become an "Environmental Statesman" throughout the world. Al Gore, his film and message about the climate received even more attention when the film won an Oscar for Best Documentary. Gore was asked up by the producer to receive the award in front of the world's greatest filmmakers and stars and more than 100 million TV watchers. The income from the film, DVD and book about "An Inconvenient Truth" is donated to the Alliance for Climate Protection.

Another event which received a tremendous amount of attention was Live Earth on July 7, 2007 (070707), the largest entertainment event in the world up to now. The Alliance for Climate Protection, chaired by Al Gore, initiated the event together with the famous rock concert organizer Kevin Wall. During 24 hours rock concerts were broadcasted live from seven continents with more than 200 artists and with a TV audience of approximately two billion people. The goal of this giant 24 hour event was to make people aware of a three-year campaign aimed at showing humankind how we can solve the environmental crisis in time. Live Earth asked everyone who attended or listened to the concerts to sign a personal pledge to take specific steps to combat climate change. The campaign is led by the Alliance for Climate Protection. Other national or international organizations are also participating in the campaign.

Al Gore has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2007 for his work to raise consciousness in the world about climate change. Two members of the Norwegian Parliament have nominated Gore to the Norwegian Nobel Committee, the former conservative Environment and Industry Minister Børge Brende and left-wing Heidi Sørensen. The two are in other words political opponents. Gore is nominated together with Sheila Watt-Cloutier, a Canadian Inuit who has fought to make the world aware of the affects of climate changes on the Arctic.

Al Gore today

Al Gore continues to travel the world over with his PowerPoint show and participates in events to increase people's understanding and awareness of climate change. He has held more than 2,000 such presentations. Gore has proven to be a captivating, inspiring communicator.

He tries to practice what he preaches, for example, the Gores pay extra for 100 % renewable energy and they drive hybrid cars. The Nashville family home has been retrofitted with all kinds of available energy efficient solutions and Al flies commercial for most of his intensive world travels.

In February this year during Global Awareness Month Gore and Richard Branson announced "The Virgin Earth Challenge", a competition with a prize of \$25 million to the first person or organization that can present a practical solution for the reduction of greenhouse gases.

Gore is a member of the Board of Apple and he is an advisor to Google's executive management.

He has started the "Generation Investment Management" which invests in companies that have a responsible view in their operations for climate change and major global issues.

Together with good friend Joel Hyatt he bought a TV channel which was relaunched as Current TV. It is a politically independent voice serving a target audience of people between 18-34.

Since 2000 he has been given visiting professorships at several universities, received several awards and one honorary doctorate.

In March this year, Gore returned for one day to his old work place on Capitol Hill. Gore gave the same message to a joint session of two House committees in the morning and a Senate panel in the afternoon: Global warming has led to a "planetary emergency" which requires an aggressive federal response. Substantial reductions of greenhouse gases (90 % by year 2050) are necessary and will only happen if the United States takes the lead. To get there, Gore suggested that payroll tax should be eliminated and replaced by a carbon tax, so that the cost of the pollution is finally priced into the market. Furthermore Gore introduced a cap-and-trade program allowing the U.S. industry to meet reduction targets in part by trading pollution credits. He also proposed a moratorium on new coal-fired power plants that do not capture and store their carbon emissions as well as much higher fuel-economy standards for cars.

Gore's latest book "An Assault on Reason" was published in May.

Moving beyond Kyoto

The week before the Live Earth event Al Gore wrote an article titled "Moving beyond Kyoto" in The New York Times. He emphasized that global warming is not a political issue, it is a moral issue which affects the survival of human civilization. It is not a question of left versus right; it is a question about right versus wrong.

He believes the Kyoto Protocol is too demonized in the U.S. and therefore it will never be ratified here. Negotiations need to begin soon on a new, tougher treaty. The next President must immediately focus on concluding an even more demanding climate change pact. Gore says this should be concluded by the end of 2009, not 2012 as currently planned. Greenhouse gases (GHG) should be "cut by 90 % in the developed countries and by more than half worldwide in time for the next generation to inherit a healthy Earth."

Gore is pushing for a new treaty with differentiated commitments; countries must be asked to meet different requirements based upon their historical contributions to the problem and their relative ability to carry the burdens.

Al Gore is convinced that if the next administration manages to organize the domestic work needed to start reduction of greenhouse gases by 2009 and gives industry goals, tools and the flexibility needed for their contributions, the U.S. will be able to quickly conclude a new treaty. This a great challenge and focuses on the enormous opportunities offered by a clean energy future.