

# Five ex-presidents come together at hurricane relief concert

By Associated Press, adapted by Newsela staff on 10.25.17

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Former Presidents (from right) Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, George H.W. Bush and Jimmy Carter gather on stage at the opening of a hurricane relief concert in College Station, Texas, October 21, 2017. The concert raised money for relief efforts after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas, Hurricane Irma hit Florida, and Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Photo by: AP Photo/LM Otero

**AUSTIN, Texas** — The tragedy of this year's hurricanes has brought together an unlikely team: all five of the past presidents of the United States.

The group of former presidents put aside disagreements about politics and appeared together at a concert on October 21. The event's goal was to raise money for victims of devastating hurricanes in Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Democrats Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter and Republicans George H.W. and George W. Bush gathered in College Station, Texas, home of Texas A&M University. They hoped to unite the country after the storms.

Texas A&M is home to the presidential library of the oldest Bush, George H.W. Bush. At 93, he has a form of Parkinson's disease and appeared in a wheelchair at the event. His wife, Barbara, and George W. Bush's wife, Laura, were in the audience.

Grammy award winner Lady Gaga made a surprise appearance at the concert. Also performing were country music band Alabama, gospel legend Yolanda Adams, and Texas musicians Lyle Lovett and Robert Earl Keen.

The fundraiser backed by the ex-presidents has raised \$31 million since it began on September 7, said Jim McGrath, spokesman for George H.W. Bush.

### **Asking For National Unity**

President Donald Trump appeared at the event in a video greeting. He called the past presidents "some of America's finest public servants." In the past, Trump has criticized the former presidents.

"This wonderful effort reminds us that we truly are one nation under God, all unified by our values and devotion to one another," Trump said.

Four of the five former presidents — Obama, George W. Bush, Carter and Clinton — made brief remarks that did not mention Trump. George H.W. Bush did not speak but smiled and waved to the crowd. They all asked for national unity to help those hurt by the hurricanes.

"The heart of America, without regard to race or religion or political party, is greater than our problems," said Clinton.

### **Fundraising Is Better Together**

The last time the five were together was in 2013, to celebrate the creation of George W. Bush's presidential library in Dallas. At that time, Obama was still in office.

Former presidents have joined forces in the past to raise money after natural disasters. George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton raised money together after the 2004 South Asia tsunami and Hurricane Katrina the next year. Clinton and George W. Bush combined to seek donations after Haiti's 2011 earthquake.

Brandon Rottinghaus is a political science professor at the University of Houston. He says presidents are able to rally people to donate money more than any other politicians in the world. "When they send out a call for help, especially on something that's not political, they can rake in big money."

### **Ex-Presidents Are Less Divisive**

Trump has faced criticism that his administration was initially slow to aid troubled Puerto Rico. He has accused island leaders of "poor leadership." He later tweeted that, "Electric and all infrastructure was a disaster before hurricanes." He also said that Federal Emergency Management Agency, first responders, and military workers wouldn't be able to stay there forever.

But Rottinghaus said ex-presidents are seen as less divisive than the current president.

"They can't get away from the politics of the moment," he said of current presidents. "Ex-presidents are able to step back and be seen as the nation's grandfather."

## **People Are Hurting After Devastating Hurricanes**

Hurricane Harvey slammed into Texas and Louisiana Gulf Coast as a Category 4 hurricane on August 25, unleashing historic flooding in Houston and killing more than 80 people. Shortly thereafter, all five ex-presidents appeared in a commercial for a fundraising effort known as "One America Appeal." In it, George W. Bush says, "People are hurting down here." His father, George H.W. Bush, then replies, "We love you, Texas."

Hurricane Irma subsequently hit Florida and Hurricane Maria battered Puerto Rico. Both storms devastated the U.S. Virgin Islands.

## Quiz

- 1 Which sentence from the article would be MOST important to include in a summary of the article?
- (A) The event's goal was to raise money for victims of devastating hurricanes in Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
  - (B) Texas A&M is home to the presidential library of the oldest Bush, George H.W. Bush.
  - (C) The last time the five were together was in 2013, to celebrate the creation of George W. Bush's presidential library in Dallas.
  - (D) But Rottinghaus said ex-presidents are seen as less divisive than the current president.
- 2 Which sentence from the article BEST supports the article's CENTRAL idea?
- (A) Four of the five former presidents — Obama, George W. Bush, Carter and Clinton — made brief remarks that did not mention Trump.
  - (B) Former presidents have joined forces in the past to raise money after natural disasters.
  - (C) He says presidents are able to rally people to donate money more than any other politicians in the world.
  - (D) "Ex-presidents are able to step back and be seen as the nation's grandfather."
- 3 HOW is President Trump introduced in the section "Asking For National Unity"?
- (A) through an anecdote complaining about the past presidents
  - (B) through a description of speeches made by past presidents scolding Trump
  - (C) through facts describing how Trump handled hurricane relief efforts
  - (D) through a direct quote showing his support for the relief efforts
- 4 Which sentence from the section "People Are Hurting After Devastating Hurricanes" BEST introduces the urgent need for hurricane relief to the reader?
- (A) Shortly thereafter, all five ex-presidents appeared in a commercial for a fundraising effort known as "One America Appeal."
  - (B) In it, George W. Bush says, "People are hurting down here."
  - (C) His father, George H.W. Bush, then replies, "We love you, Texas."
  - (D) Hurricane Irma subsequently hit Florida and Hurricane Maria battered Puerto Rico.

**Answer Key**

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