


# WHY PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH LOCATIONS MATTER



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## ANALYZING SPEECHMAKING FROM TRUMAN TO OBAMA

Shannon Bow O'Brien



# The Evolving American Presidency

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# Why Presidential Speech Locations Matter

Analyzing Speechmaking from Truman to Obama

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The Evolving American Presidency  
ISBN 978-3-319-78135-8 ISBN 978-3-319-78136-5 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78136-5>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018937856

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Printed on acid-free paper

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The idea for this project began in a bathtub around 2001. As I was drifting with my thoughts, I had a moment where I began to think about where presidents give speeches. At the time, there had not been much written on speechmaking below the national level and I believed there was a story to tell about these locations. That project became my dissertation which I completed at the University of Florida in 2007. My dissertation committee was supportive and believed in me and my ideas. In many ways, that belief has been one of the most important things in my academic career. I also made extremely good friends at Florida who have always been some of my best critics and champions. I also met and married my husband at Florida. He has been my best friend and academic counterpart for almost 20 years. While we research and work in completely unrelated fields, it has always been helpful to have a partner who understands the schedules, pressures, and demands of academia. I followed him to the University of Texas where we have worked since 2004. The project has grown and changed somewhat in that time, but the heart of it has always been the same. When I started this project, the George W. Bush administration made me question if I was observing a fundamental shift in speechmaking patterns. After Barack Obama, it was more apparent that Bush was simply unusual and more of an interesting blip than a change. With the conclusion of the Obama presidency, this book is better than it would have been even a couple of years ago. His administration, from my point of view, resembles many previous ones which gave me comfort that much presidential behavior was enduring across time.

I am appreciative and thankful for every person who has read ideas and pieces of this work at conferences over the years on panels, generally at the Midwest Political Science Conferences and the American Political Science Associations national conferences. I have been lucky enough to get great feedback and comments which have helped me work on these ideas more fully.

There have been several web sites that helped make this work possible. When I first started cataloging speeches, I did it all by hand out of the physical copies of the *Public Papers of the President* from the library. From 1992 onward, I was able to use the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents published online by the Government Publishing Office. It sped up my work and has been invaluable. The State Department also publishes online all the foreign travel of the president as well as official visits by foreign leaders. Both lists were extremely useful in the chapters about foreign speeches and vacation residences of the presidents. As I began to research the vacation locations, I discovered most of the presidential travel diaries were available online at their different archives. Each archive uses a different method to publish the material, but its existence and accessibility were vital. In particular, I would like to thank the libraries of Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, and Clinton for publishing this material online. I would like to especially acknowledge the archivists at the George H. W. Bush library who provided me with the lists I needed when I contacted them about this material. They currently do not have the daily diaries online, but were extremely kind in sharing the necessary information. I could not have completed that section without their assistance. I also thank Freedom House for publishing their archival rankings on their Web site. I could not have completed the chapter without that information. Another Web site that has been critical for compiling this information is Dave Leip's Atlas of US Presidential Elections. His web site is a wonderful resource to double check elections and make sure I had all my swing states correct. I am truly grateful for all the trips to the library and hours he saved me over the years. His site is accurate, thorough, and contains a huge amount of information about each election going back to the founding.

There have been many people over these years that have been instrumental with advice, thoughts, and support. I know I will miss people if I even attempt a list, but in particular, I'd like to single out a few:

Larry Dodd, Peggy Conway, Beth Rosenson, Lynda Lee Kaid, Renee Johnson, Ken Wald, Phillip Williams, David Hedge, and the rest of the faculty at Florida who made me a better academic and person. The faculty at Texas have been wonderful and insightful colleagues who I have been honored to work with and share ideas.

As I was preparing this section, I learned the principal at my elementary school, Audubon Traditional in Louisville, Kentucky, passed away. It may seem silly, but when I think of many of the important lessons of life, I often think about the friends and teachers from my elementary, middle, and high schools. Shirley Shelton made all of us at Audubon feel special, wanted, and valuable as a person. Children value themselves when others make them understand they are important. I know those early interactions left their mark on my soul and her fundamental kindness surely impacted the way I view others. So, for that, I thank her and all my teachers at Audubon, JCTMS, and Male High for encouraging me to dream of bigger worlds and ideas.

I would also like to thank my parents, David and Jean Bow for their support and encouragement. Finally, I'd like to thank my husband, Bill O'Brien who I love and am grateful for every day. He encouraged me to thank Elly, our ever present and spoiled terrier who considers both of us her servants, food handlers, and comfort coordinators.



# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Overview</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Growth in Speechmaking</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Census Regions</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Media Markets</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Electoral College Results</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Presidents Abroad: Foreign Speeches</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>All Work and No Play: How Presidents Use Vacation Locations</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>191</b>
	<b>Index</b>	<b>201</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Total percentage of overall speeches each year	42
Table 3.1	Presidential speeches by Census region and term	55
Table 3.2	Campaign-oriented speeches by Census region and term	61
Table 4.1	Total speeches in designated media markets by term	76
Table 4.2	Campaign-oriented speeches in designated media markets by term	89
Table 5.1	Total Electoral College speeches by term	108
Table 5.2	Campaign-oriented Electoral College speeches by term	109
Table 6.1	Presidential speeches by continent	148
Table 6.2	Freedom House scores by term and percentage of foreign speeches by term	152



## CHAPTER 1

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# Overview

The presidency occupies a special status within American society. The office has clearly defined powers and limitations. However, the constitutional powers fail to capture the true nature of the evolving power of the executive. It is the only branch of the American government headed by a solitary person. Though not a monarch, this individual is simultaneously a person, position, and branch of government. The presidency exists as a multilayered entity that cannot easily be teased apart into compartmentalized notions. The person functions both as the head of state and the chief executive. Ceremonial and administrative duties fall squarely upon their shoulders. They are ideally supposed to represent our nation in various social functions while managing the entire executive branch bureaucracy. The American presidency balances the pageantry of our nation with the responsibility of bureaucratic management. Both are interlinked and critical to the successful functioning of our government. When one is favored over the other, presidents appear to either be out of touch with either the people or the system. Our presidents attempt to manage the branch while simultaneously attending to the needs of the population.

As conceived in Article I of the USA Constitution, the legislative branch wields a tremendous amount of power. Many scholars consider this branch as the most powerful of the three. Our founding fathers were deeply concerned about the emergence of a monarch. As a result, they vested the majority of authority into the legislative branch with

the idea of power diffused among the electorate. All systems, however, need leaders to organize and guide ideas into actualizations. Within the Congress, formal and informal leadership structure developed, and over time, institutionalized into a set hierarchy governing member interaction and activity. The legislative branch has long been involved in power struggles with the executive branch. While our founders were apprehensive about a powerful executive, they understood a single president was psychologically important for the country. Voters demand accountability, and an elected president provides a figurehead for the public to galvanize around, and look toward as the ultimate voice for the people. Over the years, the American presidency has grown in power disproportionate to its original constitutional provisions. The development of the bureaucracy allowed for the executive branch to exert a large amount of influence upon the federal government. As presidents have transitioned away from their role as “chief clerk,”<sup>1</sup> they challenged the legislative branch’s historical dominance of government. The public looks to the president for guidance and leadership as the country’s primary elected official. This fluidity of executive responsibility lends itself toward a flexible model of leadership. Presidents throughout history mold the branch and office to suit their current administration’s needs. Because of the diverse responsibilities held by the executive, the sitting president regularly sees to the obligations of the office through personal appearances, speeches, meetings, executive orders, messages, or other means to communicate his opinions and preferences. It is difficult to distill all presidential actions into uniform categories. Each executive has brought their own distinctive style to the office along with personal proclivities toward specific methods of public interaction. Some, like Eisenhower and Nixon, preferred a more formal White House while Carter and Clinton gravitated toward a more collegial one. Within all the uniqueness and idiosyncratic behavior of administrations, are there patterns across time we can observe? Can we compare presidencies to see certain aspects are stable across administrations and if changes have occurred over the years? Is it feasible to treat presidential administrations as units of comparison rather than exceptional events without counterparts?

When presidents choose to speak in public, they do so for a variety of reasons. Many explanations exist, but they often include announcing policy, recognizing individuals, informing the country, and building support. Location of a public speech often indicates the motivation and rationale for the activity. If we assume presidents have the ability to give

as well as refrain from speechmaking, the act itself has implications of intentional activity. Presidents speak because they have grounds for doing it. Sometimes, it can be as innocent as presenting an award, but other times, it may involve building support for national programs or authorizing international military action.

Presidents are only as powerful as their ability to align support for their policies. Though presidents have dramatically increased the total volume of speeches over the past seventy years, do they solely rely upon large cities and media markets to convey the messages or do they utilize smaller, less national media outlets and regional addresses to connect with the citizenry? Presidential speeches give us tools to better explore choices made by administrations in terms of priorities. When presidents speak, people listen. The topics they address, the words they choose can help guide and direct the public in specific ways. Jason Barabas asserts “citizens learn from the presidential rhetoric in SOTU addresses, especially policy proposals highlighted in the mass media.”<sup>2</sup> People listen to what a president says, and how he says it. Tone<sup>3</sup> can affect perceptions and when “public opinion moves in favor of the president’s advocated policy, an effect that is strongest among the attentive audience.”<sup>4</sup> Competing ideologies over the role of the president has sawed the balance of power back and forth between the congressional and executive branches. In the twentieth century, presidential dominance emerged and has never been subjugated. American president acts as the lead policy maker within the hearts and minds of most citizens. This research explores several basic questions about modern presidential speechmaking. First, has the basic nature of presidential speechmaking changed over time? Through examining the volume of speeches on a yearly basis, it is possible to see that new patterns of yearly speechmaking that emerged especially after the Nixon administration continuing through today. In particular, this research suggests almost much modern presidential speechmaking is cyclical in nature, both during governing and election periods. Can we determine if any consistent patterns within speech location exist across presidencies? In particular, the usage of media markets helps us better understand where presidents choose to speak throughout the USA. If presidents do prefer certain media market sizes to others, what types of speeches occur there? Do they use certain sized markets primarily for campaigning, policy announcements, or consensus building publicity stops? Through media markets and use of speech types (i.e., election speech), clear profiles emerge

with how and when presidents choose to talk in different parts of the USA. Some presidents prefer to reinforce base support while others engage in more outreach activities. By comparing and contrasting speeches organized by more conventional Census areas and the less traditional media markets, this project unearths some striking and surprising results. Unquestionably, the volume of presidential speeches over the past fifty years has exploded. Chief executives give public speeches almost constantly, talking on a variety of topics ranging from mundane to vital issues impacting life in America. However, do presidents give preferential treatment to specific areas of the USA? Furthermore, over the past thirty years, a body of literature has emerged around the continuous or permanent campaign of presidential administrations. In the world of the continuous campaign, presidents theoretically never cease the campaigning process. Richard Nixon in March 1971 said to Haldeman “[t]he staff doesn’t understand that we are in a continuous campaign.”<sup>5</sup> Polling public opinion becomes paramount, and every speech has some sort of audience. In short, administrations never disengage from campaigning. This situation implies presidents must maintain the same level of speechmaking during nonelection years as they do within periods of reelection or risk erosion. My belief is this premise may be flawed. These findings suggest Nixon indeed engaged in permanent campaigning during his entire time in office. Much of the early research on continuous campaigning emerged during or soon after his presidency. However, his administration appears to be the exception rather than the norm for most subsequent chief executives. Nixon was, in retrospect, less of a model and more of an outlier for generalized behavior in office. Because the volume of speeches exploded following the Nixon presidency, an assumption was made that others were behaving in a similar matter, but the rapid growth in quantity clouded their true behavior. In reality, every presidency post-Nixon until Obama has engaged primarily in cyclical speechmaking, seriously altering pattern during election seasons, particularly during their own reelection periods. The sheer number of speeches often swamps these dramatic changes, but when filtered by Census areas or media markets, distinctive and persuasive patterns of cyclical speechmaking are more apparent. By using an additional lens of Electoral College success, we can also see presidents choose and prefer relying on their bases of support both during and not during periods of election-oriented speechmaking.

Presidents have different patterns throughout the country when engaging in election-focused speeches compared to generalized ones. This project also integrates swing states into the Electoral College assessment. It will show that George W. Bush focused on swing states at a far higher level than any other president. Barack Obama, on the other hand, eschewed them and reinforced his base with veracity. Recent presidents have also seriously altered the ways in which they “go public.” The underlying theory within much of the rhetorical presidency literature relies upon the notion the president primarily addresses national audiences. Several scholars<sup>6</sup> pay careful attention to presidents’ interaction with media and the public, but their focus clearly centers on national level appeals. Samuel Kernell’s book, *Going Public: New Strategies for Presidential Leadership*, first published in 1986 engages this material during a period of heightened presidential speechmaking in Washington, DC. While the concept of “going public” has been an institution within American research for about 30 years, my research suggests George W. Bush broke with the tenets of this idea and interacts with the public in a localized speechmaking model. Both Richard Nixon and George W. Bush appear as outliers in a rather regular pattern of behavior. While Barack Obama was often publicly criticized for his speechmaking, his regional patterns more closely resemble administrations such as George H. W. Bush than his immediate predecessors. He goes more national, helping support a nationalized “going public” model.

Much of the rhetorical presidency literature relies upon the idea the president primarily addresses national audiences. Recent attention to local audiences has grown,<sup>7</sup> but there is still often a focus at the national level speeches. Some presidents have utilized local media outlets and regional addresses to connect with the citizenry while others gravitated toward broader, national audience approaches. These noticeable styles and differences highlight marked patterns which have more to do with how they approach the presidency rather than simple partisan distinctions. The research borrows some methods utilized in marketing research to identify and explain regional patterns of speechmaking and underscores the importance of regional appeals to the “rhetorical presidency.”

As the twentieth century saw the rise of the institutional presidency, the public engaged in perhaps its most intimate relationship between the president and population. Radio and later television transitioned

the president from an abstract office to friend and ally. Verbal and video communication promoted the presidency in new ways to the American public. Presidential activities were no longer solely chronicled in third person newspaper articles or theatrical newsreels. Chief executives explained justified or appealed directly to individual voters inside their homes. Successful presidents transcended the divide between the conceptual and tangible in the psyches of their constituents. Thus, presidential authority arises from the chief executive choosing specific points in time to act. Presidents are fully aware the press corps closely scrutinizes their public movements, words, and activities. People want to know intimate details about the president, and astute leaders use this desire at opportune moments for their advantage. "The presidency is a battering ram, and the presidents who have succeeded most magnificently in political leadership are those who have been best situated to use it forthrightly as such."<sup>8</sup> Chief executives use their sway over the media and other outlets to get their message out without expending too many resources. "Rhetorical power is a very special case of executive power because simultaneously it is the means by which an executive can defend the use of force and other executive powers and it is a power itself."<sup>9</sup> The language of the president sends clear indications of his justifications for action as well as their power over the decision itself. "A successful rhetorical president has become so by developing three resources: public trust, an image of managerial competence, and a coherent rhetoric that unites trustworthiness and competence into a vision that coordinates public choices."<sup>10</sup>

American presidents have understood the appeal of direct communication with the public. President Calvin Coolidge was the first president to address the nation from the White House in 1924. In fact, during his run for the presidency that same year, Coolidge gave his final campaign speech on the radio garnering the largest listening audience of any broadcast to date. Franklin Roosevelt most notably employed radio broadcasts with his "Fireside Chats." Thirty speeches spanning between 1933 and 1944, the Fireside Chats humanized an American president in ways no previous administration had achieved. The term was coined because Roosevelt sought to cultivate an image of him actually sitting in the living room of individual citizens informally conversing about his policies and actions. These talks were enormously successful in forging a new relationship between the public and presidency.



People viewed Roosevelt as a friend and partner who took the time to carefully explain his strategies in clear, but straightforward terms. Television further served to amplify the president's relationship with the American public. Though Franklin Roosevelt was the first president to appear regionally on television in 1939 at the opening of the World's Fair on Long Island, Harry Truman was the first president to have an address nationally broadcast in 1951. Neither president, however, used television as a mechanism to directly connect with the public.

It was Dwight Eisenhower who pioneered the application of television to bring his message to Americans. Between 1952 and 1956, television ownership grew from 37 to 76%.<sup>11</sup> Starting in 1953, Eisenhower gave regular televised news conferences interacting with reporters and answering their questions. Like Roosevelt with radio, he saw this new medium as a way to manage his image and foster a bond between him and the public. By the time he sought reelection in 1956, Dwight Eisenhower was not in the best physical shape. Between his heart attack in 1955 and intestinal surgery in June 1956, Eisenhower needed a way to conserve his energy and health<sup>12</sup> during the election campaign. The Republican Party turned to television as a novel approach to interject Eisenhower into American homes with minimal commitment from the ailing chief executive. Television campaign commercials cultivating an image of vitality put Eisenhower into practically every American household. The television approach succeeded with Eisenhower winning in a landslide.

In the early years of both radio and television, presidents drew large audiences and used the tools as a way to avoid exhaustive travel. Franklin Roosevelt's paralysis and Dwight Eisenhower's declining health inhibited them from vigorously engaging in speaking tours throughout the country. Both saw their respective communication mediums as their best means for "going public" to the American people. In fact, during the 1956 campaign, Eisenhower was only away from Washington for 13 days, 6 of which were devoted to stops explicitly for television appearances.<sup>13</sup>

With the exception of the Gerald Ford and the first terms of Harry Truman and George W. Bush, every president after Franklin D. Roosevelt gave over 50% of all speeches in each four-year term in Washington, DC. Harry Truman gave 38.3% of his speeches in Washington, DC, during this first term though he increased to 56.1% in the second. Gerald Ford gave 43.6% while George W. Bush was at 48.3%. Three presidents (Reagan 54.4%, George H. W. Bush 52.3%, Barack Obama 53.3%)

gave slightly over half of their speeches in the nation's capital during this first term. The remainder (Eisenhower 66.9%, Kennedy 66.9%, Johnson (1963–1968) 71.9%, Carter 60.8%, Reagan 62.9%, Clinton 60.6%) all gave at least 60% of their total first-term speeches in Washington, DC. Second terms are slightly different. Every second-term administration gave at least 50% or more of their speech totals in Washington, DC. Most administrations (Truman 56.1%, Nixon 65.6%, Reagan 65.7%, Bush 43 59.3%, Obama 58.2%) gave a higher percentage in Washington, DC, in their second term when compared to their first. Eisenhower (59.4%) and Clinton (53.3%) were distinctive because they gave a smaller percentage in Washington during in their second term in office.

These numbers suggest presidents conduct a large portion of the public discourse in the nation's capital. The focus should be self-evident considering presidents in modern times use the White House as not only a residence, but also their seat of power. The White House functions not only as a home, but also their base of operation. The West Wing and nearby Executive Office Buildings house employees within the Executive Office of the President (EOP) and the Executive Branch bureaucracy. These staffers exist to better inform the chief executive and perform the duties of the branch. It is natural, therefore, to assume presidents tend to give the bulk of their speeches within the Washington, DC, vicinity.

Percentages, however, are different than volume. Broadly speaking, each American president speaks more frequently than his predecessor. Exceptions exist, but usually these outliers involve extraordinary circumstances like the premature resignation of Nixon during his second term. The first terms of Truman and Eisenhower both have under 300 public speeches in Washington, DC, with 228 and 275, respectively. While Truman almost doubles in his second term to 447, Eisenhower barely increases to 307. John Kennedy, even with a truncated first term, has a far higher speech number (523) in Washington, DC, than his two predecessors. Lyndon Johnson presents a conundrum because of the unusual nature of this presidential term. During the time he served out Kennedy's first term, Johnson gave 321 public speeches in Washington, DC. It is a remarkable number for the remaining 425 days of Kennedy intended term. Johnson's full term clocked in with 909 public speeches in Washington, DC, more than the combined two full terms of either Truman or Eisenhower. Johnson is followed by an equally unusual administration with Richard Nixon. His first term was lower than his two immediate predecessors, but more than Truman or Eisenhower with a

total 457. The abbreviated second term was shockingly low with only 162 public speeches in Washington, DC. The second term of Richard Nixon lasted 567 days. If we were to compare Nixon's shortened term to Johnson in 1963–1964, Nixon averaged fewer than 3 Washington, DC, speeches every 10 days with Johnson at around 7 and a half. The final atypical term is the presidency of Gerald Ford who served out the remainder of Nixon's second term in office. He gave 557 public speeches in Washington, DC, during his 896 days in office with an average of 6.2 speeches every 10 days. With the Carter administration, we see an increase in public speeches in Washington, DC. Carter and Reagan both were under a thousand public speeches in Washington during all their terms. Carter was at 886, and Reagan, 983 and 940, respectively. The first terms for both Bushes were very similar to the elder at 1060 public speeches in Washington and the younger at 1056. George W. Bush increased in his second term up to 1092. Barack Obama was also in the range of the Bush presidents with 1079 Washington speeches in his first term though he declined to 915 in his second. While there has clearly been a collective increase since the Nixon administration, Bill Clinton's public speaking numbers are unique and stand apart. His first term is almost 500 speeches higher than any other president. At 1560 speeches, Bill Clinton spoke in Washington, DC, on a very regular basis. Though it declined to 1412 speeches in his second term, it is still well and above any other American president. When averaged out, Clinton spoke enough in Washington, DC, almost once a day. As a comparison, Clinton's aggregate overall totals of every speech average toward 17 speeches for every 10 days in office.

Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Carter, Reagan, and Clinton all gave over 60% of their public speeches in that city. In fact, Reagan perhaps epitomized the image of a presidency that spent a majority of its time either in DC or presidential residences such as Camp David or his personal home at Rancho del Cielo in California. Presidents seem to prefer to use tools at their disposal they consider the most comfortable. Public speeches in Washington, DC, give the chief executive a level of control over his public image. Speeches in these locations allow for both stronger security and more power over access. In this "bubble" within DC, chief executives can more easily convey information they want while risking little to their public image. Reagan, a product of the motion picture studio system, gave the most speeches in DC since Lyndon Johnson's second term. A later chapter will explore the increasing usage

of presidential retreat locations as places to work as well as escape from the pressures of the position.

Ultimately, what do numbers imply? Presidents speak more, but have mostly concentrated fewer of their speeches in the Washington, DC, area since the Reagan presidency. Prior notable exceptions of decreased DC speeches include Nixon and Ford, but these administrations also have palpable rationales for avoiding the press corps (i.e., Watergate). What does this mean for “going public”? If we agree on presidents indeed “go public” during their presidencies, can we look at the process in differing ways? During their terms in office, presidents have the ability to speak anywhere and generally on any topic. Almost any occasion where the president speaks publicly will draw attention from a local, if not national or international audience. When a president makes the choice to speak, it becomes a matter of public record, permanently archived in his public papers. Therefore, it can be somewhat safe to assume every president carefully chooses his words on most occasions, scripted or unscripted. When a president decides to speak in a particular location, it can be inferred the administration or the man has made a conscious choice to interact with the public or media. Sometimes, it is not as important what he says, than where he says it. “When a president chooses to travel around the country he leads in order to meet the people he represents, his decision to go to a specific place and not others can reveal a great deal about his strategic priorities.”<sup>14</sup> Has the president decided to draw attention to a locale for a specific policy purpose, or is he attempting to connect with people?

Richard Neustadt states in *Presidential Power*, “presidential power is the power to persuade.”<sup>15</sup> Neustadt offers what can best be described as suggestions for presidents on the nature of power and the challenges of governing. If presidential power truly is the “power to persuade,” how does that influence manifest itself? Many point to the power behind rhetoric as a focal point for his authority. However, is presidential rhetoric the same as the rhetorical presidency?<sup>16</sup> The former examines the actuality while the latter refers to a broader theoretical approach to conceptualizing the public actions of chief executives.

Carefully chosen words wield tremendous power if implemented effectively. However, does language lose its sway when comes to resemble a cacophony of information? “One of the great ironies of the modern presidency is that as the president relies more on rhetoric to govern, he finds it more difficult to deliver a truly important speech, one that will

stand by itself and continue to shape events.”<sup>17</sup> Ceaser et al. prescribe a change in the character of rhetoric. They suggest presidents, referring specifically to Carter, should speak less, and thereby cause their words to carry more weight.<sup>18</sup> Over the next twenty years, if anything, presidents spoke more than ever. “The greatest loss from the evolution of the rhetorical presidency has been a decrease in the integrity of the word.”<sup>19</sup> American presidents’ appearances are higher,<sup>20</sup> but researchers question how much the public actually listens to their message.

At one time, television appeared to offer the president the ideal way to send his message out to the national American public. In March 1969, Nixon’s prime-time press conferences were watched by 59% of American television households. By 1995, only 6.5% of households viewed prime-time news conferences.<sup>21</sup> In March 2009, Barack Obama had 25.9% of television households watch his press conference on economic recovery.<sup>22</sup> What caused this shifts to occur? While current viewership is generally higher than the mid-1990s, it is still significantly lower than during the 1960s. More importantly, how has this change affected presidential rhetoric? Theodore Windt suggests the “technological media era of politics has created a new ‘checks and balances’... Congress now serves principally has a legislative check on the presidency, and media news – primarily television – functions as a rhetorical check on presidential pronouncements.”<sup>23</sup>

With the decline of national viewers, presidents rely more upon image than content. “Publicity has become essential to governing.”<sup>24</sup> Image appeal overrides content thus making national speeches less content driven.<sup>25</sup> In short, television has become “our emotional tutor”<sup>26</sup> offering intimacy without any personal involvement. Social media platforms with messages sent out directly to our personal devices has only amplified this effect. Richard Nixon once wrote, “the media are far more powerful than the president in creating public awareness and shaping public opinion, for the simple reason that the media always have the last word.”<sup>27</sup> National speeches allow for instantaneous criticism over the president’s address. Analysis often exists as thinly veiled denigration without the capacity for rebuttal. “Flippant and insinuating comments by television personalities have, on such occasions have a way of undermining presidential authority.”<sup>28</sup> Some scholarship<sup>29</sup> suggests that the televised “bully pulpit” may not be as powerful as many people think while others<sup>30</sup> refute their assertions. Many Americans rely upon sound bites or recaps to learn about the content of presidential speeches. Studies indicate content retention is much lower for these people than ones who watch the

speech in its entirety. "For a president to be successful using a televised address to communicate his message to the American people, it is essential they watch the address rather than rely on the stories on television, radio, and newspapers that edit, interpret and include counterarguments to the president's remarks."<sup>31</sup> George Edwards asserts such speeches do not have their desired impact because presidents are primarily "preaching to the converted"<sup>32</sup> and do not expand their public support. Amnon Cavari asserts "Americans who watch a president's speech are more supportive of the president's policy than those who do not watch the speech"<sup>33</sup> and "the tool of public address does not fall on deaf ears."<sup>34</sup> Elvin Lim finds that over time, presidents have changed the way they speak in an attempt to appeal to listeners. "Contemporary presidential rhetoric may have become more conversational and anecdotal, but it has brought the orator down from the pulpit to a closer intellectual and emotional rapport with his audience."<sup>35</sup> Presidents use speeches both to "manipulate their popularity ratings"<sup>36</sup> and "lead public opinion on specific policies."<sup>37</sup> While a wealth of scholarship exists on agenda setting,<sup>38</sup> little has been done exploring the aggregate commonalities regarding locations of speeches. Granted, presidents wield a wealth of resources associated with the office. Jeffrey Cohen<sup>39</sup> accurately points out the interpersonal skills of the office holder makes the utilization of these resources highly variable from occupant to occupant. Presidents are neither passive nor incompetent media managers. In light of the difficulties of national addresses, a shift has inevitably occurred toward regional media. Local media sources offer both an escape from national commentary and an attempt to reforge connections to alienated voters. Why would presidents go into local areas to address the public? Some suggest local news provides more positive coverage than national outlets.<sup>40</sup> "The negativity and process orientation of national news coverage encourage (presidential) candidates to take their campaign on the road where they can general intense local media coverage in strategically chosen locations and wrest control of the political agenda from the national media."<sup>41</sup> Local audiences became of paramount importance particularly to the George W. Bush administration. "President Bush made targeting local news central to his media relations strategy and a top priority throughout his tenure."<sup>42</sup> Local speeches, in many cases, have supplanted long-standing patterns of both concentrated DC speeches, as well as speeches in the largest media areas of the USA. "Getting local media coverage is important because it is a more trusted source of news than national newspapers and television."<sup>43</sup>