

# Obama Looks to 'Finish What We Started' As Second Term Begins

Four years after making history by becoming the first African-American president, Barack Obama will kick off his second term on Monday with a scaled-back inauguration that reflects the tempered expectations for his next four years in office.

Lingering high unemployment, bitter political battles and a divisive re-election campaign have tempered the mood of optimism and hope that infused Obama's 2009 inauguration after he was swept into office on a mantle of hope and change.

This time, Obama's inauguration will feature smaller crowds and fewer inaugural balls and parties to match the more subdued tenor of the times.

But Obama, seeking to build on momentum from his decisive re-election on Nov. 6, will lay out a vision for the next four years in his inauguration speech while trumpeting several notable first-term achievements, including a healthcare overhaul, ending the war in Iraq and the killing of Osama bin Laden.

"We have a chance to finish what we started. Our work begins today. Let's go," Obama said in a pre-inauguration message on Twitter.

A second inauguration marks the latest rite of political passage for Obama, the Hawaiian-born son of a black father from Kenya and a white mother from Kansas. An electrifying speech at the 2004 Democratic convention as a little-known Illinois state legislator lifted him to the national stage, putting him on a rapid trajectory to the U.S. Senate and a few years later the White House.

But battles are now looming over budgets, gun control and immigration, with Republicans ready to oppose him at almost every turn.

When Obama raises his right hand to be sworn in by Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts outside the U.S. Capitol at 11:55 a.m. ET, it will be his second time taking the oath in 24 hours—but this time with tens of millions of people watching on television.

He had a private swearing-in on Sunday at the White House because of a constitutional requirement that the president be sworn in on Jan. 20. Rather than stage the full inauguration on a Sunday, the main public events were put off until Monday.

Obama and his family began the day worshipping at St. John's Episcopal Church across from the White House, an Inauguration Day tradition for U.S. presidents, before heading by motorcade to Capitol Hill.

He will take the oath again, in public, and then deliver his inaugural address from the Capitol's west front overlooking the National Mall, where a crowd of up to 700,000 was gathering to watch.

That is down significantly from the record 1.8 million people who jammed Washington in 2009 for Obama's first inauguration.

"We're a bit surprised by how few people are out here this morning. But that's fine—makes the crowds more manageable. The weather is delightful and we're happy to be here," said Kathy Reid, 61, from Waco, Texas.

As people streamed through the wintry cold to assemble on Capitol grounds, Washington was in security lockdown, with thousands of police and National Guard troops deployed, barricades up and Humvee military vehicles blocking major intersections.

Outside the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue, an elaborate presidential viewing stand, encased in bullet-proof glass, awaited Obama and other VIPs to watch the inaugural parade.

Even though the atmosphere lacked the euphoria of Obama's first inauguration, many of his supporters celebrated through the night.

"Yes, I can sense the inauguration is not as big as last time, but there is nonetheless excitement," said Carrie` Solages, a New York state legislator, as she attended a pre-inaugural ball late on Sunday. "We are still here to be a part of history."

At the Hawaii State Society inaugural ball, dancers swung their hips to traditional songs, and some partygoers sported tuxedos with Hawaiian-print cummerbunds as they ate suckling pig.

### **Inaugural Address Is Centerpiece**

The focal point of Monday's festivities will be Obama's inauguration address, which he will use to lay out in broad terms his goals for the next four years. But he will stay away from second-term policy specifics, saving that for his State of the Union speech to Congress on Feb. 12, aides said.

Obama arrives at his second inauguration on solid footing. He won an end-of-year fiscal battle against Republicans, whose poll numbers have continued to sag, and appears to have gotten them to back down, at least temporarily, from resisting an increase in the national debt ceiling.

But after a bitter election fight against Republican Mitt Romney, the daunting challenges facing Obama and his political battles with congressional Republicans have split public opinion about the prospects for the next four years.

An NBC/Wall Street Journal poll last week found 43 percent of Americans were optimistic about the next four years and 35

percent pessimistic, with 22 percent having a mixed opinion.

Obama's main political opponent in Congress, Republican House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner, attended a White House coffee before the ceremony, and then returned to the Capitol for the inaugural speech and a post-event lunch with the president and lawmakers.

The inauguration ceremony will include music—singers James Taylor and Kelly Clarkson will perform patriotic songs and Beyonce will sing the national anthem—and also feature Vice President Joe Biden taking the oath of office again after doing so already on Sunday.

Obama and his wife, Michelle, will join Biden and his wife, Jill, at the capital luncheon before the two couples take part in the inaugural parade down Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House.

Obama could get out of his limousine and walk part of the way to interact with the crowd, as have presidents in the last several inaugurals.

After watching the rest of the parade from a viewing stand in front of the White House, the Obamas will change and head to the two inaugural balls—an official ball and one for military personnel and their spouses.

That is a dramatic reduction in activities from 2009, when there were 10 official inaugural balls.

With the public ceremony falling on the national holiday honoring slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., Obama will be able to draw some historic parallels. While taking the oath, he will place his left hand on two Bibles — one once owned by Abraham Lincoln and the other by King.

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*Writing by Matt Spetalnick; Additional reporting by Margaret*

*Chadbourn, Jeff Mason and Robert Rampton; Editing by Alistair Bell and Jackie Frank.*

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