



The Catafalque

United States Capitol

THE CATAFALQUE WAS HASTILY CONSTRUCTED in 1865 to support the casket of Abraham Lincoln while the president's body lay in state in the Rotunda. The catafalque has since been used for all those who have lain in state in the U.S. Capitol, as listed below. When not in use, the catafalque is on view in a specially constructed display area in Exhibition Hall in the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center.

No law, written rule or regulation specifies who may lie in state; use of the Rotunda is controlled by concurrent action of the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate. Any person who has rendered distinguished service to the nation may lie in state if the family so wishes and Congress approves. In the case of unknown soldiers, the president or the appropriate branch of the armed forces initiates the action.

The catafalque is a simple bier of rough pine boards nailed together and covered with black cloth. Although the base and platform have occasionally been altered to accommodate the larger size of modern coffins and for the ease of the attending military personnel, it is basically the same today as it was in Lincoln's time. Presently the catafalque measures 7 feet, 1 inch (216 cm) long; 2 feet, 6 inches (76 cm) wide; and 2 feet (61 cm) high. The attached base is 8 feet, 10 inches (269 cm) long; 4 feet, 3½ inches (131 cm) wide; and 2 inches (5 cm) high. The platform is 11 feet, 4 inches (345.44 cm) long; 6 feet, 9 inches (205.74 cm) wide; and 2½ inches (6.35 cm) high. Although the cloth covering the catafalque has been replaced several times, the style of the drapery is similar to that used in 1865.

Since 1865, the Lincoln catafalque has been used for most of the services in the U.S. Capitol



The catafalque in 2006, after the most recent replacement of its fabric covering.

Rotunda. In the case of the Unknown Soldiers of World War II and the Korean War, an additional catafalque was built and the coffin of each at some point rested on the Lincoln catafalque.

The Lincoln catafalque has not been used for most of those lying in honor: U.S. Capitol Police officers Jacob Chestnut and John Gibson in 1998 and Brian Sicknick in 2021, Rosa Parks in 2005, and Billy Graham in 2018. In 2021, U.S. Capitol Police Officer William Evans became the first person to lay in honor on the Lincoln catafalque.

A list of those who have lain in state, in honor, or in repose, where the catafalque is used for a public viewing outside of the U.S. Capitol, appears on the next page.

December 2023

Persons Who Have Lain in State or in Repose on the Catafalque

The location is the U.S. Capitol Rotunda unless otherwise specified.

Abraham Lincoln	April 19–21, 1865	
Thaddeus Stevens	August 13–14, 1868	
Salmon P. Chase	May 11, 1873	Supreme Court Room, U.S. Capitol
Charles Sumner	March 13, 1874	
Henry Wilson	November 25–26, 1875	
James A. Garfield	September 21–23, 1881	
John A. Logan	December 30–31, 1886	
William McKinley Jr.	September 17, 1901	
Pierre Charles L'Enfant (re-interment)	April 28, 1909	
George Dewey	January 20, 1917	
Unknown Soldier of World War I	November 9–11, 1921	
Warren G. Harding	August 8, 1923	
William H. Taft	March 11, 1930	
John J. Pershing	July 18–19, 1948	
Robert A. Taft	August 2–3, 1953	
Unknown Soldiers of World War II and the Korean War	May 28–30, 1958	
John F. Kennedy	November 24–25, 1963	
Douglas MacArthur	April 8–9, 1964	
Herbert C. Hoover	October 23–25, 1964	
Dwight D. Eisenhower	March 30–31, 1969	
Everett M. Dirksen	September 9–10, 1969	
J. Edgar Hoover	May 3–4, 1972	
Lyndon B. Johnson	January 24–25, 1973	
Earl Warren	July 11–12, 1974	Supreme Court Building
Hubert H. Humphrey	January 14–15, 1978	
Unknown Soldier of the Vietnam Conflict	May 25–28, 1984	
Claude D. Pepper	June 1–2, 1989	
Thurgood Marshall	January 27, 1993	Supreme Court Building
Warren E. Burger	June 28, 1995	Supreme Court Building
Ronald H. Brown	April 9–10, 1996	Department of Commerce Building
William J. Brennan Jr.	July 28, 1997	Supreme Court Building
Harry A. Blackmun	March 8, 1999	Supreme Court Building
Ronald W. Reagan	June 9–11, 2004	
William Rehnquist	September 6–7, 2005	Supreme Court Building
Gerald R. Ford Jr.	December 30, 2006– January 2, 2007	
Daniel K. Inouye	December 20, 2012	
Antonin Scalia	February 19, 2016	Supreme Court Building
John S. McCain III	August 31, 2018	
George H.W. Bush	December 3–5, 2018	
John Paul Stevens	July 22, 2019	Supreme Court Building
Elijah Cummings	October 24, 2019	Entrance to House Chamber
John R. Lewis	July 27, 2020;	Rotunda
	July 27–28, 2020	East Central Front Portico
Ruth Bader Ginsburg	September 23–24, 2020;	Supreme Court Building
	September 25, 2020	National Statuary Hall

William F. Evans
Robert J. Dole
Harry M. Reid
Sandra Day O'Connor

April 13, 2021
December 9, 2021
January 12, 2022
December 18, 2023

Supreme Court Building