

6 things that would change if the US elected a woman as president

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SAUL LOEB/AFP via Getty Images



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Kamala Harris could become the first woman to serve as president of the United States.

Instead of a first lady, Doug Emhoff could carry out traditional hosting duties as first gentleman.

Disney World's Hall of Presidents and the National Museum of American History would undergo changes.

For the second time in US history, a woman is running for president as a major-party nominee.

Vice President Kamala Harris already made history in 2020 as the first female, Black, and South Asian American vice president. If she wins the 2024 election against former President Donald Trump, she will become the first woman ever to serve as president of the United States.

Since the US has not yet had a woman as president, aspects of White House protocol and popular culture would change to account for Harris' historic presidency if she wins.

The Harris campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Here are six things that would change if the US elects its first female commander in chief.

If Kamala Harris is elected president, she would be referred to as "Madam President" instead of "Mr. President."



The presidential seal is placed on a podium in front of the White House. SAUL LOEB/AFP via Getty Images

"POTUS," the acronym for "president of the United States" often used by White House staffers to refer to their boss, would remain the same regardless of gender.

Instead of a first lady, the president's husband would use the title "first gentleman."



Chairs reserved for the first lady of the United States (FLOTUS) and president of the United States (POTUS). Theo Wargo/WireImage for Turner/Getty Images

The acronym for first lady, "FLOTUS," would change to "FGOTUS," standing for "first gentleman of the United States." The Office of the First Lady would also be retitled to the Office of the First Gentleman.

"The first gentleman would inherit a well-established office that has grown over time and has been fully integrated into the operations of the White House," Anita McBride, who served as first lady Laura Bush's chief of staff from 2005 to 2009, told Business Insider via email. "We have Rosalynn Carter to thank for firmly establishing the modern Office of the First Lady in 1978 with an established budget and also with moving her personal office into the East Wing to be among her staff. First ladies have benefited from that structure ever since."

If Harris wins the election, her husband, Doug Emhoff, would not only be the first-ever first gentleman but also the first Jewish presidential spouse in US history.

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Place settings at a White House state dinner. DREW ANGERER/AFP via Getty Images

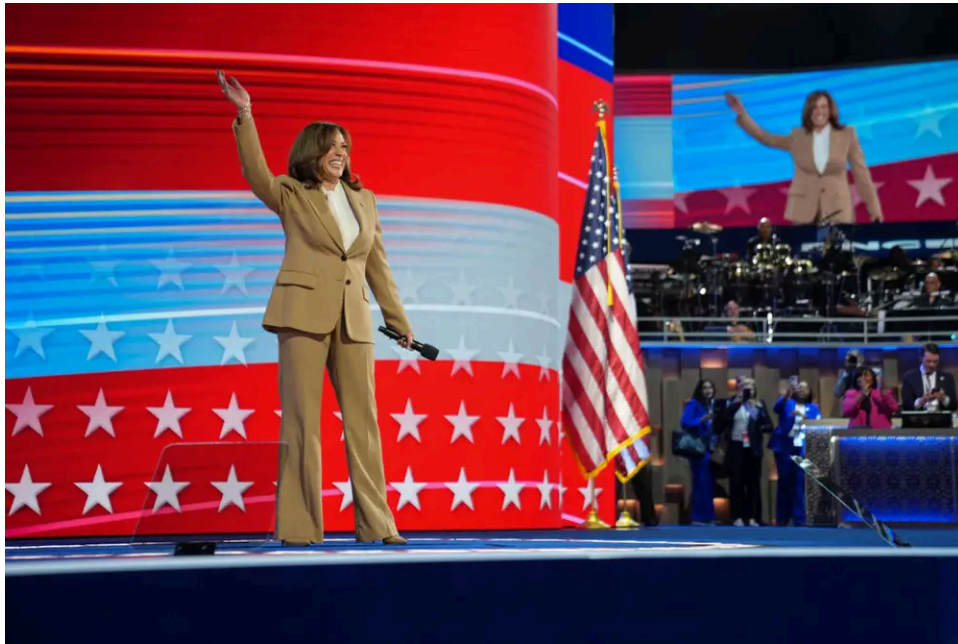
While there's no official job description for first ladies, they have traditionally designed the White House Christmas decorations, planned state dinners, and acted as hostesses of the White House.

"We understand what the president's job is and that there are set pieces to the president's job," Lisa Kathleen Graddy, the National Museum of American History's political history curator, told Business Insider. "The first lady's job is much more ad hoc. It's created anew by each inhabitant of the position. It will be interesting to see if there are things that a man in that position chooses."

Graddy said that a first gentleman could continue to carry out traditional White House tasks or reshape the role for future generations. It's also possible that Harris would weigh in on some aspects of the job.

"In that family, I think it's very possible the president would have more of an interest in the menu selection," she said. "She's the chef, isn't she, in the family? So they can build it as they choose."

Presidential fashion would include more room for creativity.



Kamala Harris at the Democratic National Convention. Demetrius Freeman/The Washington Post via Getty Images

Most men's suit designs only allow for a few customizable options, such as the width of the lapel or the threading color of buttonholes, Lauren Rothman, a corporate and political fashion stylist, image expert, and author of "Style Bible: What to Wear to Work," told Business Insider. Women's suits allow for more creativity, which could change the look of presidential fashion.

"There's a ton of opportunity, whether that is asymmetrical buttons, belting, waist details, notch collar, mandarin collar, peak collar," she said of women's suits. "There are many more customizable options."

If Harris is elected, Rothman says that she will likely continue wearing tailored suits and work with a team of stylists to further reinvent the presidential uniform.

"I think that there is an opportunity here for us to redefine what leadership looks like if there is a female president," Rothman said. "I don't necessarily see her moving from where she's been to doing something that feels first lady-ish. I think if she becomes the next president, we're going to see something presidential, and I hope that's unlike anything we've ever seen a first lady wear."

The Hall of Presidents at Walt Disney World would be updated to include its first woman.



The Hall of Presidents. Disney Plus

Walt Disney World's Hall of Presidents opened in 1971. The 25-minute show includes audio-animatronic figures of every US president up to President Joe Biden.

If a woman is elected president, the attraction would be updated with its first female leader.

The Walt Disney Company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The National Museum of American History would also update its separate galleries of presidents and first ladies to account for the change.



"The First Ladies" exhibit at the National Museum of American History. JEWEL SAMAD/AFP via Getty Images

The National Museum of American History in Washington, DC, features two distinct exhibits about presidential history: "The American Presidency" about US presidents and "The First Ladies" about the various relatives of presidents who have acted as first ladies.

"In some ways, the core of both exhibits is 'What is this job and how do you do it?'" Graddy said.

Graddy told Business Insider that "The First Ladies" exhibit would undergo the biggest changes if Harris is elected. It would likely be retitled "The First Ladies and Gentlemen," and Emhoff's inaugural suit could join the collection of inaugural gowns if he chooses to donate it, a striking transformation for an exhibit dating back to 1912.

"It would be very interesting to see two wall cases filled with dresses and then, in that center case, a tuxedo," she said.



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