

1979 in the United States

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Events from the year **1979 in the United States**.

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Incumbents

Federal Government

- President: Jimmy Carter (D-Georgia)
- Vice President: Walter Mondale (D-Minnesota)
- Chief Justice: Warren E. Burger (Minnesota)
- Speaker of the House of Representatives: Tip O'Neill (D-Massachusetts)
- Senate Majority Leader: Robert Byrd (D-West Virginia)
- Congress: 95th (until January 3), 96th (starting January 3)

Governors and Lieutenant Governors

Governors

- Governor of Alabama: George Wallace (Democratic) (until January 15), Fob James (Democratic) (starting January 15)
- Governor of Alaska: Jay Hammond (Republican)
- Governor of Arizona: Bruce Babbitt (Democratic)
- Governor of Arkansas:
 - until January 3: David Pryor (Democratic)
 - January 3-January 9: Joe Purcell (Democratic)
 - starting January 9: Bill Clinton (Democratic)
- Governor of California: Jerry Brown (Democratic)
- Governor of Colorado: Richard Lamm (Democratic)
- Governor of Connecticut: Ella T. Grasso (Democratic)
- Governor of Delaware: Pierre S. du Pont, IV (Republican)
- Governor of Florida: Reubin Askew (Democratic) (until January 2), Bob Graham (Democratic) (starting January 2)
- Governor of Georgia: George Busbee (Democratic)
- Governor of Hawaii: George Ariyoshi (Democratic)
- Governor of Idaho: John V. Evans (Democratic)
- Governor of Illinois: James R. Thompson (Republican)
- Governor of Indiana: Otis R. Bowen (Republican)
- Governor of Iowa: Robert D. Ray (Republican)
- Governor of Kansas: Robert F. Bennett (Republican) (until January 8), John W. Carlin (Democratic) (starting January 8)
- Governor of Kentucky: Julian M. Carroll (Democratic) (until December 11), John Y. Brown, Jr. (Democratic) (starting December 11)
- Governor of Louisiana: Edwin W. Edwards (Democratic)
- Governor of Maine: James B. Longley (Independent) (until January 3), Joseph E. Brennan (Democratic) (starting January 3)
- Governor of Maryland: Marvin Mandel (Democratic) (until January 17), Harry R. Hughes (Democratic) (starting January 17)
- Governor of Massachusetts: Michael Dukakis (Democratic) (until January 4), Edward J. King (Democratic) (starting January 4)
- Governor of Michigan: William Milliken (Republican)
- Governor of Minnesota: Rudy Perpich (Democratic) (until January 4), Al Quie (Republican) (starting January 4)
- Governor of Mississippi: Cliff Finch (Democratic)
- Governor of Missouri: Joseph P. Teasdale (Democratic)
- Governor of Montana: Thomas Lee Judge (Democratic)
- Governor of Nebraska: J. James Exon (Democratic) (until January 4), Charles Thone (Republican) (starting January 4)
- Governor of Nevada: Mike O'Callaghan (Democratic) (until January 1), Robert List (Republican) (starting January 1)
- Governor of New Hampshire: Meldrim Thomson, Jr. (Republican) (until January 4), Hugh J. Gallen (Democratic) (starting January 4)
- Governor of New Jersey: Brendan Byrne (Democratic)
- Governor of New Mexico: Jerry Apodaca (Democratic) (until January 1), Bruce King (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Governor of New York: Hugh Carey (Democratic)
- Governor of North Carolina: Jim Hunt (Democratic)
- Governor of North Dakota: Arthur A. Link (Democratic)
- Governor of Ohio: Jim Rhodes (Republican)
- Governor of Oklahoma: David L. Boren (Democratic) (until January 8), George Nigh (Democratic) (starting January 8)

- Governor of Oregon: Robert W. Straub (Democratic) (until January 8), Victor G. Atiyeh (Republican) (starting January 8)
- Governor of Pennsylvania: Milton Shapp (Democratic) (until January 16), Dick Thornburgh (Republican) (starting January 16)
- Governor of Rhode Island: J. Joseph Garrahy (Democratic)
- Governor of South Carolina: James B. Edwards (Republican) (until January 10), Richard Riley (Democratic) (starting January 10)
- Governor of South Dakota: Harvey L. Wollman (Democratic) (until January 1), William J. Janklow (Republican) (starting January 1)
- Governor of Tennessee: Ray Blanton (Democratic) (until January 17), Lamar Alexander (Republican) (starting January 17)
- Governor of Texas: Dolph Briscoe (Democratic) (until January 16), Bill Clements (Republican) (starting January 16)
- Governor of Utah: Scott M. Matheson (Democratic)
- Governor of Vermont: Richard A. Snelling (Republican)
- Governor of Virginia: John N. Dalton (Republican)
- Governor of Washington: Dixy Lee Ray (Democratic)
- Governor of West Virginia: Jay Rockefeller (Democratic)
- Governor of Wisconsin: Martin J. Schreiber (Democratic) (until January 3), Lee S. Dreyfus (Republican) (starting January 3)
- Governor of Wyoming: Edgar J. Herschler (Democratic)

Lieutenant Governors

- Lieutenant Governor of Alabama: Jere Beasley (Democratic) (until January 15), George McMillan (Democratic) (starting January 15)
- Lieutenant Governor of Alaska: Terry Miller (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Arkansas: Joe Purcell (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of California: Mervyn M. Dymally (Democratic) (until January 8), Mike Curb (Republican) (starting January 8)
- Lieutenant Governor of Colorado: George L. Brown (Democratic) (until January 10), Nancy E. Dick (Democratic) (starting January 10)
- Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut: Robert K. Killian (Democratic) (until January 3), William A. O'Neill (Democratic) (starting January 3)
- Lieutenant Governor of Delaware: James D. McGinnis (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Florida: J.H. Williams (Democratic) (until January 2), Wayne Mixson (Democratic) (starting January 2)
- Lieutenant Governor of Georgia: Zell Miller (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Hawaii: Jean King (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Idaho: William J. Murphy (Democratic) (until January 1), Phil Batt (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Lieutenant Governor of Illinois: Dave O'Neal (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Indiana: Robert D. Orr (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Iowa: Arthur A. Neu (Republican) (until January 12), Terry E. Branstad (Republican) (starting January 12)
- Lieutenant Governor of Kansas: Shelby Smith (Republican) (until January 8), Paul V. Dugan (Democratic) (starting January 8)
- Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky: Thelma Stovall (Republican) (until December 11), Martha Layne Collins (Democratic) (starting December 11)
- Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana: Jimmy Fitzmorris (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Maryland: Blair Lee III (political party unknown) (until January 17), Samuel Bogley (Democratic) (starting January 17)
- Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts: Thomas P. O'Neill III (Democratic)

- Lieutenant Governor of Michigan: James Damman (Republican) (until month and day unknown), James H. Brickley (Republican) (starting month and day unknown)
- Lieutenant Governor of Minnesota: Alec G. Olson (Democratic) (until January 3), Lou Wangberg (Republican) (starting January 3)
- Lieutenant Governor of Mississippi: Evelyn Gandy (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Missouri: William C. Phelps (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Montana: Ted Schwinden (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Nebraska: Gerald T. Whelan (Democratic) (until month and day unknown), Roland A. Luedtke (Republican) (starting month and day unknown)
- Lieutenant Governor of Nevada: Robert E. Rose (Democratic) (until January 1), Myron E. Leavitt (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Lieutenant Governor of New Mexico: Robert E. Ferguson (Democratic) (until January 1), Roberto Mondragón (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Lieutenant Governor of New York: Mario Cuomo (Democratic) (starting January 1)
- Lieutenant Governor of North Carolina: James C. Green (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of North Dakota: Wayne G. Sanstead (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Ohio:
 - until January 8: Dick Celeste (Democratic)
 - January 8-November: George Voinovich (Republican)
 - starting November: vacant
- Lieutenant Governor of Oklahoma: George Nigh (Democratic) (until January 3), Spencer Bernard (Democratic) (starting January 3)
- Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania: Ernest P. Kline (Democratic) (until January 16), William Scranton, III (Republican) (starting January 16)
- Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island: Thomas R. DiLuglio (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina: W. Brantley Harvey, Jr. (Democratic) (until January 10), Nancy Stevenson (Democratic) (starting January 10)
- Lieutenant Governor of South Dakota: vacant (until January 1), Lowell C. Hansen II (Republican) (starting January 1)
- Lieutenant Governor of Tennessee: John S. Wilder (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Texas: William P. Hobby, Jr. (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Utah: David Smith Monson (Republican)
- Lieutenant Governor of Vermont: T. Garry Buckley (Republican) (until January 10), Madeleine M. Kunin (Democratic) (starting January 10)
- Lieutenant Governor of Virginia: Chuck Robb (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Washington: John Cherberg (Democratic)
- Lieutenant Governor of Wisconsin: Martin J. Schreiber (Democratic) (until January 3), Russell A. Olson (Republican) (starting January 3)

Events

January

- January 1 – The United States and the People's Republic of China establish full diplomatic relations.
- January 4 – The State of Ohio agrees to pay \$675,000 to families of the dead and injured in the Kent State shootings.
- January 9 – The *Music for UNICEF Concert* is held at the United Nations General Assembly to raise money for UNICEF and promote the Year of the Child. It is broadcast the following day in the United States and around the world. Hosted by The Bee Gees, other performers include Donna Summer, ABBA, Rod Stewart and Earth, Wind & Fire. A soundtrack album is later released.

- January 19 – Former U.S. Attorney General John N. Mitchell is released on parole after 19 months at a federal prison in Alabama.
- January 21 – Super Bowl XIII: The Pittsburgh Steelers defeat the Dallas Cowboys 35–31 at the Miami Orange Bowl in Miami, Florida.
- January 29 – Brenda Ann Spencer opens fire at a school in San Diego, California, killing 2 faculty members and wounding 8 students. Her response to the action, "I don't like Mondays," inspired the Boomtown Rats to make a song of the same name.

February

- February 13 – The intense February 13, 1979 Windstorm strikes western Washington and sinks a 1/2-mile-long section of the Hood Canal Bridge.
- February 14 – In Kabul, Muslim extremists kidnap the American ambassador to Afghanistan, Adolph Dubs, who is later killed during a gunfight between his kidnappers and police.
- February 27 – The annual Mardi Gras celebration in New Orleans, Louisiana is canceled due to a strike called by the New Orleans Police Department.

March

- March 4 – The U.S. Voyager I spaceprobe photos reveal Jupiter's rings.
- March 25 – The first fully functional space shuttle orbiter, *Columbia*, is delivered to the John F. Kennedy Space Center, to be prepared for its first launch.
- March 26 – In a ceremony at the White House, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel sign the Egyptian–Israeli Peace Treaty.
- March 29 – America's most serious nuclear power plant accident at Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania.

April

- April 10 – A tornado hits Wichita Falls, Texas, killing 1000 people (the most notable of 26 that day).
- April 20 – President Jimmy Carter is attacked by a swamp rabbit while fishing in his hometown of Plains, Georgia.
- April 22 – The Albert Einstein Memorial is unveiled at The National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC.



April 1: President Jimmy Carter leaving Three Mile Island for Middletown, Pennsylvania

May

- May – The unemployment rate drops to 5.6%, the low point for the late 1970s business cycle and the lowest since July 1974.
- May 9 – A Unabomber bomb injures Northwestern University graduate student John Harris.
- May 21
 - San Francisco gays riot after hearing the verdict for Dan White, assassin of Mayor George Moscone and Supervisor Harvey Milk.
 - The Montréal Canadiens defeat the New York Rangers 4 games to 1 in the best-of-seven series, winning the Stanley Cup.
- May 25
 - American Airlines Flight 191: In Chicago, a DC-10 crashes during takeoff at O'Hare International Airport, killing 271 on board and 2 people on the ground.

- John Spenkeliink is executed in Florida, in the first use of the electric chair in America after the reintroduction of death penalty in 1976.
- Six-year-old Etan Patz disappears in New York City. The incident helps spark the missing children's movement.
- May 27 – Indianapolis 500: Rick Mears wins the race for the first time, and car owner Roger Penske for the second time.

June

- June – McDonald's introduces the Happy Meal.
- June 1 – The Seattle SuperSonics win the NBA Championship against the Washington Bullets.
- June 18 – Jimmy Carter and Leonid Brezhnev sign the SALT II agreement in Vienna.
- June 20 – A Nicaraguan National Guard soldier kills ABC TV news correspondent Bill Stewart and his interpreter Juan Espinosa. Other members of the news crew capture the killing on tape.

July

- July 2 – The Susan B. Anthony dollar is introduced in the U.S.
- July 3 – U.S. President Jimmy Carter signs the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul.
- July 8 – Los Angeles passes its gay and lesbian civil rights bill.
- July 11 – NASA's first orbiting space station *Skylab* begins its return to Earth, after being in orbit for 6 years and 2 months.
- July 12 – A *Disco Demolition Night* publicity stunt goes awry at Comiskey Park, forcing the Chicago White Sox to forfeit their game against the Detroit Tigers.
- July 17 – Nicaraguan dictator General Anastasio Somoza Debayle resigns and flees to Miami, Florida.
- July 19 – The Sandinista National Liberation Front concludes a successful revolutionary campaign against the U.S. backed Somoza dictatorship and assumes power in Nicaragua.

August

- August 9 – Raymond Washington, co-founder of the Crips, today one of the largest, most notorious gangs in the United States, is shot and killed 5 months after his arrest for quadruple murder (his killers have not yet been identified).
- August 10 – Michael Jackson releases his first breakthrough album *Off the Wall*. It sells 7 million copies in the United States alone, making it a 7x platinum album.
- August 29 – A national referendum is held in which Somali voters approve a new liberal constitution, promulgated by President Siad Barre to placate the United States.

September

- September 1 – The U.S. *Pioneer 11* becomes the first spacecraft to visit Saturn, when it passes the planet at a distance of 21,000 km.
- September 12 – Hurricane Frederic makes landfall at 10:00 p.m. on Alabama's Gulf Coast.
- September 23 – The largest anti-nuclear demonstration to date was held in New York City, when almost 200,000 people attended.^[1]

October

- October 1–6 – Pope John Paul II visits the United States.
- October 14 – A major gay rights march in the United States takes place in Washington, D.C., involving many tens of thousands of people.
- October 17
 - President Jimmy Carter signs a law establishing the Department of Education.
 - 1979 World Series: The Pittsburgh Pirates defeat the Baltimore Orioles.

November

- November 1 – Iran hostage crisis: Iranian Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini urges his people to demonstrate on November 4 and to expand attacks on United States and Israeli interests.
- November 2 – Assata Shakur (ne' Joanne Chesimard), a former member of Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army, is liberated from a Clinton, New Jersey prison and soon shuttled off to Cuba where she remains under political asylum.
- November 3 – Greensboro massacre in Greensboro, North Carolina, five members of the Communist Workers Party are shot to death and seven are wounded by a group of Klansmen and neo-Nazis, during a "Death to the Klan" rally.
- November 4 – Iran hostage crisis begins: 3,000 Iranian radicals, mostly students, invade the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and take 90 hostages (53 of whom are American). They demand that the United States send the former Shah of Iran back to stand trial.
- November 7 – U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy announces that he will challenge President Jimmy Carter for the 1980 Democratic presidential nomination.
- November 9 – Nuclear false alarm: the NORAD computers and the Alternate National Military Command Center in Fort Ritchie, Maryland detected purported massive Soviet nuclear strike. After reviewing the raw data from satellites and checking the early warning radars, the alert was cancelled.^[2]
- November 12 – Iran hostage crisis: In response to the hostage situation in Tehran, U.S. President Jimmy Carter orders a halt to all oil imports into the United States from Iran.
- November 14 – Iran hostage crisis: U.S. President Jimmy Carter issues Executive Order 12170, freezing all Iranian assets in the United States and U.S. banks in response to the hostage crisis.
- November 17 – Iran hostage crisis: Iranian leader Ruhollah Khomeini orders the release of 13 female and African American hostages being held at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.
- November 21 – After false radio reports from the Ayatollah Khomeini that the Americans had occupied the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the United States Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan is attacked by a mob and set afire, killing 4 (see Foreign relations of Pakistan).

December

- December 3
 - Eleven fans are killed during a stampede for seats before The Who concert at the Riverfront Coliseum in Cincinnati, Ohio.
 - The United States dollar exchange rate with the Deutsche Mark falls to 1.7079 DM, the all-time low so far; this record is not broken until November 5, 1987.
- December 6 – The world premiere for *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* is held at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.
- December 21 – Chrysler receives government loan guarantees upon the request of CEO Lee Iacocca.^[3]

Ongoing

- Cold War (1945–1991)
- Détente (c. 1969–1979)
- 1970s energy crisis (1973–1980)
- Iran hostage crisis (1979–1981)

Births

- January 10 – Chris Smith, rapper in (Kris Kross)
- January 15 – Drew Brees, football player
- January 16 – Aaliyah, R&B singer/actress (died 2001)
- January 24 – Tatyana Ali, actress
- January 29 – April Scott, model, actress, and producer
- February 4 – Ben Lerner, writer
- February 11 – Brandy Norwood, singer and actress
- February 17 – Josh Willingham, baseball player
- February 21 – Jennifer Love Hewitt, actress and singer
- March 1 – Éowyn, singer-songwriter
- March 11 – Benji Madden & Joel Madden, musicians (Good Charlotte)
- March 18 – Adam Levine, singer (Maroon 5)
- March 30 – Norah Jones, musician
- April 9 – Keshia Knight Pulliam, actress
- April 12 – Claire Danes, actress
- April 12 – Jennifer Morrison, actress
- May 4 – Lance Bass, singer ('N Sync)
- May 9
 - Matt Morris, American singer-songwriter and actor
 - Brandon Webb, American baseball player
 - Andrew W.K., American singer-songwriter, producer, and actor
- May 12
 - Andre Carter, American football player
 - Steve Smith, Sr., American football player
- May 23 – Matt Flynn, drummer (Maroon 5)
- June 19 – Quentin Jammer, American football player
- June 21 – Chris Pratt, actor
- June 26 – Ryan Tedder, singer (OneRepublic)
- July 18 – Jason Weaver, American actor and singer
- July 21 – David Carr, American football player
- July 26 – Tamyra Gray, singer
- September 8 – Pink, singer
- September 16 – Flo Rida, rapper
- October 4 – Rachael Leigh Cook, actress
- October 10 – Mýa, singer and actress
- October 14 – Stacy Keibler, professional wrestler, actress and model
- November 7 – Jon Peter Lewis, singer-songwriter
- November 12 – Crown J, rapper
- November 15 – Brooks Bollinger, American football player and coach
- December 7 – Sara Bareilles, singer-songwriter and pianist
- December 26 – Chris Daughtry, singer and guitarist

Deaths

- January 26 – Nelson A. Rockefeller, 49th Governor of New York from 1959 to 1973 and 41st Vice President of the United States from 1974 to 1977 (born 1908)
- March 28 – Emmett Kelly, clown (born 1898)
- May 16 – A. Philip Randolph, African American labor union leader (born 1889)
- July 7 – Morris Talpalar, sociologist (born 1900)
- October 15 – Jacob L. Devers, U.S. Army general (born 1887)
- November 1 – Mamie Eisenhower, wife of Dwight D. Eisenhower, First Lady of the United States (born 1896)

See also

- 1979 in American television
- List of American films of 1979

References

1. Herman, Robin (September 24, 1979). "Nearly 200,000 Rally to Protest Nuclear Energy". *New York Times*. p. B1.
2. False Alarms on the Nuclear Front (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/missileers/falsealarms.html>)
3. "1.5 billion in aid OK'd for Chrysler". *Chicago Tribune*. December 21, 1979.

External links

-  Media related to 1979 in the United States at Wikimedia Commons

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Categories: 1979 in the United States

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