**Chapter 32, Section 2: The Watergate Scandal**

**I. The Roots of Watergate** *(pages 958–960)*

**A.** The **Watergate** scandal began as the Nixon administration attempted to cover up its involvement in the break-in at the Democratic National Committee (DNC) headquarters, as well as other illegal actions committed during Nixon’s re-election campaign.

**B.** Richard Nixon had become defensive, secretive, and resentful of his critics during his long and difficult climb to the presidency. He went as far as creating an “enemies list,” naming people from politicians to members of the media.

**C.** In an effort to win re-election, Nixon and his team looked for ways to gain an edge anyway they could. On June 17, 1972, five Nixon supporters broke into the Democratic Party’s headquarters to locate campaign information and install wiretaps on telephones. Discovered by a security guard, the burglars were arrested.

**D.** One of the burglars, James McCord, was an ex-CIA official and a member of the Committee for the Re-election of the President (CRP). As the questions about the break-ins began, the cover-up started. Although it is thought that Nixon did not order the break-in, it is believed that he did order the cover-up.

**E.** Most Americans believed the president when he claimed he had no involvement in the break-in, and Nixon won re-election in 1972.

**II. The Cover-Up Unravels** *(pages 960–962)*

**A.** In 1973 the Watergate burglars went on trial. Defendant James McCord agreed to cooperate with the grand jury investigation and the Senate’s Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, established under Senator **Sam J**. **Ervin** of North Carolina. McCord’s testimony created a floodgate of confessions, and officials and White House staff exposed illegalities.

**B.** Counsel to the president, **John Dean** leveled allegations against Nixon himself. John Dean testified before Senator Erwin’s committee that Attorney General John Mitchell ordered the Watergate break-in and Nixon was active in its cover-up.

**C.** On July 16, White House aide Alexander Butterfield testified that Nixon had ordered a taping system installed in the White House to record all conversations to help him write his memoirs once he left office. These tapes were sought by all groups investigating the scandal. Nixon refused to hand over the tapes, pleading **executive privilege**— the principle that White House conversations be kept confidential to protect national security.

**D.** In the fall of 1973, Vice President Spiro Agnew was forced to resigned after it was discovered he had taken bribes from state contractors while governor of Maryland. The Republican leader of the House of Representatives, Gerald Ford, became the new vice president.

**E.** Nixon released edited transcripts of the tapes in April 1974, claiming they proved him innocent. Investigators went to court again to force Nixon to turn over unedited tapes. In July the Supreme Court ruled that Nixon had to turn over the unedited tapes.

**F.** The House Judiciary Committee voted to **impeach,** or officially charge Nixon of presidential misconduct. On one of the tapes was found evidence that Nixon had ordered the CIA to stop the FBI’s investigation of the break-in.

**G.** On August 9, 1974, Nixon resigned, and Gerald Ford became the 38th president of the United States.

**III. The Impact of Watergate** *(page 962)*

**A.** Watergate prompted the implementation of several new laws limiting the power of the executive branch and reestablishing a greater balance of power.

**B.** The **Federal Campaign Act Amendments** limited campaign contributions and set up an independent agency to administer stricter election laws.

**C.** The Ethics in Government Act required financial disclosure by high government officials in all three branches of government.

**D.** The FBI Domestic Security Investigation Guidelines restricted the bureau’s political intelligence-gathering activities.

**E.** Watergate left Americans distrustful of public officials. Other Americans felt that Nixon’s impeachment and resignation proved that in the United States, no one is above the law.