

Chapter 6

The Speaker and the President: Conflict and Cooperation

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It is all very well for the President of the United States to suggest to Congress a forward-looking legislative program. That is one of the duties of the President. It is a horse of another color to get such a program accepted by even the President's own party in either House or Senate . . . To accomplish this result it was necessary for the President and the Speaker to work in close harmony.¹

Joseph G. Cannon, Speaker of the House, 1903–1911

Under the Constitution, Congress and the executive branch are coequal. While the Constitution does not specify the relationship between the Speaker of the House and the President of the United States, it has been the practice in the past century that the Speaker regularly interacts with the President on a variety of legislative and political matters. In modern practice, political realities dictate that the Speaker and President regularly work together as policymaking partners. In that reality lies the potential for both tension and controversy. As political scientist Harold Laski wrote, “the President is at no point the master of the legislature. He can indicate a path of action to Congress. He can argue, bully, persuade, cajole; but he is always outside Congress, and

subject to a will he cannot dominate.”² On the congressional side, the constitutionally grounded position of equality is exemplified by Speaker Sam Rayburn. In an ABC news interview near the end of his life, Speaker Rayburn asserted the constitutional position between Speaker and President in the five decades he served in the House. Angered at a reporter's suggestion of subservience to the President, Rayburn replied, “I never served *under* any President. I served *with* eight.”³

Much has been written about the Presidents who have served during the past century, but observers note that comparatively little has been written about the Speakers. Twenty years ago, then-Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill suggested that “there is a great deal more we need to know about the history of the office and the lives of the men who have been Speaker.”⁴ Observers

² Harold J. Laski, *The American Presidency, An Interpretation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1940), p. 13.

³ Paul F. Boller, *Congressional Anecdotes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 227, italics in original. See also Joseph Martin, *My Fifty Years in Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 180 and Neil MacNeil, *Forge of Democracy: The House of Representatives* (New York: David McKay, Co., 1961), p. 67.

⁴ Thomas P. O'Neill, Foreword in Donald R. Kennon, *The Speakers of the U.S. House of Representatives: A Bibliography, 1789–1984* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. xxiii.

¹ Joseph Gurney Cannon, *The Memoirs of Joseph Gurney “Uncle Joe” Cannon*, transcribed by Helen Leseure Abdill (Danville, IL: Vermilion County Museum Society, 1996), p. 128.

note that an area of inquiry that is poorly understood is how the Speaker and the President interact as leaders of their respective branches. In the past century, 17 men have served as Speaker of the House of Representatives,⁵ while 18 others have been President of the United States.⁶ As national political leaders, the Speaker and President undertake a number of similar public functions. Each leader is in the public eye through speeches, appearances on radio and television, press conferences, and the print media. The President and the Speaker each publicize the achievements of their branches. They also assist their party members seeking election and reelection. When the majority party in the House is not the same as that of the President, the Speaker may act as a spokesman for the loyal opposition. Acts of Congress become law only when signed by the Speaker, presiding officer of the Senate, and the President. By statute, the Speaker is second in line, behind the Vice President, to succeed to the Presidency.⁷

While the activities of these two leaders may often be similar, relations between the Speaker and the President are complex and influenced by

⁵Those who have served in the past 100 years as Speaker of the House, and their years of service as Speaker, are: Joseph G. Cannon, 1903–1911; James B. “Champ” Clark, 1911–1919; Frederick H. Gillett, 1919–1925; Nicholas Longworth, 1925–1931; John Nance Garner, 1931–1933; Henry T. Rainey, 1933–1934; Joseph W. Byrns, 1935–1936; William B. Bankhead, 1936–1940; Sam Rayburn, 1940–1947, 1949–1953, and 1955–1961; Joseph W. Martin, Jr., 1947–1949, and 1953–1955; John W. McCormack, 1962–1970; Carl Albert, 1971–1977; Thomas P. O’Neill, Jr., 1977–1987; James C. Wright, Jr., 1987–1989; Thomas S. Foley, 1989–1995; Newt Gingrich, 1995–1999; and J. Dennis Hastert, 1999–

⁶Those who have served in the past 100 years as President of the United States, and their years in office, are Theodore Roosevelt, 1901–1909; William Howard Taft, 1909–1913; Woodrow Wilson, 1913–1921; Warren G. Harding, 1921–1923; Calvin Coolidge, 1923–1929; Herbert C. Hoover, 1929–1933; Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1933–1945; Harry S. Truman, 1945–1953; Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953–1961; John F. Kennedy, 1961–1963; Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963–1969; Richard M. Nixon, 1969–1974; Gerald R. Ford, 1974–1977; Jimmy Carter, 1977–1981; Ronald W. Reagan, 1981–1989; George H.W. Bush, 1989–1993; William J. Clinton, 1993–2001; and George W. Bush, 2001–

⁷The Presidential Succession Act of 1947 (61 Stat. 380) provides that if “there is neither a President nor Vice President to discharge the powers and duties of the office of the President, then the Speaker of the House of Representatives shall, upon his resignation as Speaker and as Representative in Congress, act as President.” To succeed to the Presidency, a Speaker would also need to qualify under the terms of Article II, Section 5 of the Constitution, which requires that the President be a “natural-born citizen,” at least 35 years of age, and a resident within the United States for 14 years. No Speaker has succeeded to the Presidency under these conditions. The 1947 law superseded the Succession Act of 1886 (24 Stat. 1), which placed in the line of Presidential succession after the Vice President the Cabinet officers in the chronological order in which their departments were created.

a number of factors. Their relationships are influenced by the Constitution, policy necessities, perceived prerogatives of the executive and legislative branches, world events, domestic politics, and their personalities and governing styles. At different times, these factors have the potential to create divergent personal, political, and institutional consequences. Understandably, the relationship between the two officials has been marked by periods of both conflict and cooperation. On occasion, the relationship between the Speaker and the President attracts widespread public notice due to an isolated incident that comes to the attention of the public. In spring 1991, for example, President George H.W. Bush came to the Capitol to deliver an address to a joint session of Congress regarding the role of the U.S. military in operations leading to the liberation of Kuwait. Departing from the typical protocol of these occasions, Speaker Thomas Foley said:

Mr. President, it is customary in joint sessions for the Chair to present the President to the Members of Congress directly and without further comment. But I wish to depart from tradition tonight and express to you, on behalf of the Congress and the country, and, through you, to the members of our Armed Forces our warmest congratulations on the brilliant victory of the Desert Storm Operation.⁸

Although Speakers may support Presidential actions, there also have been important instances of institutional, political, and even personal conflict between the two leaders over the past century. Seemingly isolated or trivial events may upset the relationship between the Speaker and the President in a much greater fashion than the incident appeared to warrant at the time. Noteworthy among such incidents are the following:

- In fall 1995, Speaker Newt Gingrich and other Members of Congress were reportedly angry with President Bill Clinton over his treatment of congressional leaders during a diplomatic trip. Gingrich and Clinton had traveled together on Air Force One with a delegation of current and former U.S. officials to attend the funeral of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who had been assassinated. Before the trip, congressional leaders were negotiating with Presi-

⁸Speaker Thomas Foley, “Joint Session of the House and Senate Held Pursuant to the Provisions of House Concurrent Resolution 83 to Hear an Address by the President of the United States,” remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, vol. 137, Mar. 6, 1991, p. 5140.

dent Clinton to set spending levels for the Federal Government, but the leaders held no talks regarding the budget during the flights between Washington, DC, and Tel Aviv. On arrival in Israel, the President exited Air Force One through the main door. The Speaker was reportedly angered that he and other officials, including Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole, and former Presidents George H.W. Bush and Jimmy Carter, were asked to disembark through the plane's rear door.⁹

• The evening before President Jimmy Carter's inauguration in 1977, a gala was held at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Speaker O'Neill and his wife were to be seated with the President-elect and Mrs. Carter. Speaker O'Neill requested an additional dozen tickets for friends and members of his family, and White House staff reportedly assured him that his guests would be seated near the stage in an area reserved for Members of Congress. In his autobiography, Speaker O'Neill described searching the audience for his relatives and friends. After the program, he was reunited with them and told that their seats were in the last row of the second balcony. On Inauguration Day, Speaker O'Neill, concerned about the tone the incident set between Congress and the White House, reportedly telephoned a senior Carter adviser to relate his displeasure. In a short time, the new President's adviser appeared in the Speaker's office to apologize in person and assure the Speaker that the seating arrangements were the result of a mistake. In his autobiography, Speaker O'Neill indicated that he had doubts about the sincerity of the apology, saying that as far as he could see, the aide appeared to regard "a House Speaker as something you bought on sale at Radio Shack. I could see that this was just the beginning of my problems with these guys."¹⁰

⁹ John E. Yang and Eric Pianin, "Interim Measures Advance in House; Spending, Debt Bills Include Provisions Strongly Opposed by Clinton," *Washington Post*, Nov. 8, 1995, p. A4; Todd S. Purdue, "November 5-11: on Air Force One, Cabin Fever," *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1995, p. 4; and Newt Gingrich, *Lessons Learned the Hard Way: A Personal Report* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), pp. 42-46.

¹⁰ Tip O'Neill with William Novak, *Man of the House: The Life and Political Memoirs of Speaker Tip O'Neill* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 310-311. See also John Aloysius Farrell, *Tip O'Neill and the Democratic Century* (New York: Little, Brown, 2001), pp. 450-453.

• During President Theodore Roosevelt's administration, dinners were held to honor the Cabinet, diplomatic corps and members of the Supreme Court. An invitation to these affairs was routinely extended to Speaker Joseph Cannon, who usually declined, often at the last minute, because he objected to seating arrangements that did not recognize his position in government. For the 1905 Supreme Court dinner, Cannon reportedly learned he was to be seated below the Associate Justices of the Supreme Court at the banquet table. On the basis of his position as Speaker, Cannon thought it more appropriate to be seated next in line to the Chief Justice of the United States and the Vice President, with the Associate Justices, who were among the honored guests, seated after him. In a letter to President Roosevelt, Speaker Cannon reportedly wrote that "even if 'a wooden Indian' were Speaker of the House, he would deserve that courtesy." Shortly thereafter, President Roosevelt instituted a dinner to honor the Speaker, and to invite no one in government who might be seated more prominently than the guest of honor.¹¹

Despite periodic conflicts between the two leaders, the Speaker and President must work together if policy proposals are to be enacted into law. As Speaker Joseph Cannon stated, "a President without both houses of Congress back of him doesn't amount to much more than a cat without claws . . ." ¹² To better understand the relationship between a Speaker and President, this chapter describes how two Speakers, Joseph Gurney Cannon, and Sam Rayburn, and two Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin

¹¹ See William Rea Gwinn, *Uncle Joe Cannon, Archfoe of the Insurgency: A History of the Rise and Fall of Cannonism* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), pp. 79-80; and Irwin Hood Hoover, *Forty-Two Years at the White House* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), pp. 2992-2993. In his memoirs, Speaker Cannon remembered a Presidential dinner given to honor the diplomatic corps. Due to a scheduling conflict, the Speaker asked the President's leave not to attend. Alluding to the importance placed on such matters by other Members of the House, and precedent established by Speaker Thomas Reed, who reportedly would not attend functions when other government officials might outrank him, Cannon suggested that he and Roosevelt discuss the matter and seek the assistance of the State Department's protocol experts. The outcome of these discussions was the Speaker's dinner. See Joseph Gurney Cannon, *The Memoirs*, pp. 123-124. While the dinners for the Speaker continued after Roosevelt left office, their efficacy was somewhat diminished. President William Howard Taft continued the tradition of honoring the Speaker with an annual dinner, and was accused of associating himself too closely with what some observers thought was Cannon's autocratic style of overseeing the House.

¹² "Wise Sayings that Made Joe Cannon the Sage of His Party," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 13, 1926, p. 4.

Delano Roosevelt, interacted on the national stage. The two pairs of leaders were chosen for pragmatic and practical purposes. The election of Representative Cannon as Speaker marked the high point of the autocratic speakership. Representative Rayburn's career in Congress spanned 48 years, and the administrations of 8 Presidents, with Rayburn serving as Speaker during periods in which the House and speakership were vastly changed from Cannon's time.

A review of the Speaker-President relationship during two contrasting periods underscores the importance of political context, leadership, and working relationships between leaders in shaping policy outcomes. The first examines how President Theodore Roosevelt had to deal with Speaker Cannon's "command and control" leadership of the House. As Speaker, Cannon dominated the Chamber and all its committees. He often worked to block Roosevelt's initiatives, which contributed to the revolt against him by progressive Republicans and minority Democrats. By comparison, Speaker Rayburn led a committee-centered institution where southern committee chairs exercised large sway over the fate of Presidential proposals. Rayburn employed a pragmatic leadership style of bargaining, employing political and personal cajolery to win legislative victories for President Franklin Roosevelt.

CONFLICT BETWEEN LEADERS: JOSEPH CANNON AND THEODORE ROOSEVELT

By fall 1902, several weeks before the adjournment of the 57th Congress (1901–1903), members of President Theodore Roosevelt's administration concluded that Representative Joseph Gurney Cannon of Illinois, then-chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, would be elected Speaker at the commencement of the 58th Congress (1903–1905). The two men knew each other from the periods when Roosevelt served at various times as Civil Service Commissioner, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and Vice President of the United States under William McKinley. During Roosevelt's time with the Civil Service Commission, for example, the agency had its budget cut by the House Committee on Appro-

priations.¹³ For his part, Cannon said that his impressions of Roosevelt from these earlier contacts were not positive.¹⁴ This unfavorable opinion appears to have grown out of the two leaders' divergent governing and political philosophies.

Roosevelt believed that the government should be the great arbiter of the conflicting economic forces in the Nation, especially between capital and labor, guaranteeing justice to each and dispensing favors to none. By contrast, Speaker Cannon's world view was developed by his early experiences as a self-made man, who had started adult life as a store clerk. Cannon described how his life's experience had impressed him "with the value of conservatism, and warned me against advocating 'change for change's sake.' The span of 30 years in Congress, before I became Speaker, had borne in upon me the dangers that lay in catch phrases, and popular slogans, and the difficulty of transforming reforming ideals into legislation that could be got through the Congress of the United States in recognizable form, and that would work after it became law."¹⁵

In spite of such widely divergent views, it is noteworthy that both leaders made a generally successful effort to work together. With Cannon's ascendance to the Speaker's chair all but assured, members of Roosevelt's Cabinet conveyed congratulations to the incoming Speaker. Included in the congratulations were assurances that the President and his Cabinet understood that, regarding Roosevelt's policies, "nothing could be done unless there was a 'very general consent in Congress.'" ¹⁶ President Roosevelt personally took steps to cultivate an improved relationship with Cannon. In August 1903, Roosevelt met with several Senate leaders in his summer home in Oyster Bay, NY, to discuss proposed currency and financial legislation.¹⁷ When the meetings were finished, the President wrote to Cannon to assure him that no financial plan

¹³Scott William Rager, *The Fall of the House of Cannon: Uncle Joe and His Enemies, 1903–1910* (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1991), pp. 34–49.

¹⁴Cannon, *The Memoirs*, p. 127.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 128.

¹⁶Gwinn, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, p. 74.

¹⁷The legislative proposal considered at the Oyster Bay meeting was the Aldrich bill, after Senator Nelson Wilmarth Aldrich of Rhode Island. The proposal would have authorized the use of customs receipts and nongovernmental securities as the basis for the issuance of currency.

would be proposed without first taking into account the views of the House. After summarizing his discussions with the Senators, the President asked Cannon, "Now what are your views on the subject? We are all decided that of course we would not make up our minds in any way until we found out what your judgement was."¹⁸ Cannon reportedly responded that, with a Presidential election to be held in 1904, he saw little benefit from considering financial legislation.

In November 1903, a month before the legislature was scheduled to convene, President Roosevelt called the 58th Congress into special session to consider Cuban reciprocity, but not financial issues.¹⁹ With the speakership vacant, however, House rules dictated that the first order of business was the election of Joseph Cannon as the new Speaker. On assuming the post, Cannon and Roosevelt worked to build an effective working relationship. Throughout their time as leaders, Roosevelt and Cannon met regularly to discuss measures that Congress was to consider. President Roosevelt wrote informally to the Speaker regarding matters before the House. The material in these missives could be used by the Speaker as he saw fit to persuade other Members regarding the President's positions.²⁰ In his autobiography, Speaker Cannon noted that, during the time he was Speaker and Roosevelt was the President, "Mr Roosevelt and I were on terms of full and free consultation. I went often to the White House in the evening, and the President came to my house at times to talk things over. When we differed, in principle or method, we were frank about it, and threshed the problem out to the end."²¹

For Roosevelt, Cannon was the spokesman for a majority of the House and a sounding board for the activist President. Roosevelt reportedly conferred with the Speaker regarding all of his serious legislative initiatives before making them public. Other notes reassured the Speaker that the President would work with him despite pub-

lication in newspapers of claims to the contrary. In one note to Cannon, who had returned to his Illinois district between sessions, Roosevelt implored the Speaker to visit the White House on his return to Washington, and dismissed press speculation regarding differences between the two:

Stop in here as soon as you can. I care very little for what the newspapers get in the way of passing sensationalism; but I do not want the people of the country to get the idea that there will be any split or clash between you and me ...²²

While Roosevelt and Cannon were mostly able to look past public speculation regarding their political relationship and work together, the Speaker took care that the President was not given free rein by the House. Cannon recognized that when a forceful, activist chief executive was in office, the legislature could sometimes be led by the executive. The Speaker's position was that while executive leadership was likely, the House must not be driven by a President, and that "Roosevelt was apt to try to drive" it.²³ Consequently Cannon's task was to move the President's programs forward in a House where some members had deep reservations regarding the President's progressive inclinations. Personally, Speaker Cannon, too, viewed certain Roosevelt policies with dismay. Their disagreements, Cannon suggested, occurred because "Roosevelt had the ambition to do things; I had the more confined outlook of the legislator who had to consider ways of meeting expenditures of the new departures and expansions in government."²⁴

A discussion regarding the President's 1905 annual message to Congress illustrates the different outlooks of the two leaders. In preparing the message, Roosevelt enquired of congressional leaders as to the possibility of revising the tariff. Based on those discussions, Roosevelt sent Cannon, who was at his home in Danville, IL, a draft of what he would say. The draft statement included a proposal that Congress create a minimum and maximum scale for setting tariffs that could be put into force at the discretion of the

¹⁸ Gwinn, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, pp. 74-77.

¹⁹ No legislation was passed during the special session, because the Senate was unable to reach agreement on its own measure, and did not adopt the version passed by the House.

²⁰ Under the rules of the House, formal written communications from the President of the United States to the Speaker of the House would be referred to the appropriate committee.

²¹ Cannon, *The Memoirs*, p. 131.

²² Letter from Theodore Roosevelt to Joseph Cannon, Jan. 13, 1905, in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 8 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), vol. 4, p. 1101.

²³ Cannon, *The Memoirs*, p. 129.

²⁴ L. White Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon: The Story of a Pioneer American*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927, republished 1970), pp. 217-218.

Executive. Cannon viewed this proposal as a power grab by the White House. On returning to Washington, Cannon and Roosevelt discussed the matter further. In the course of these discussions, which Cannon described as "very frank," the Speaker suggested that tariff legislation not be concluded during the lame duck session of the 58th Congress.²⁵ When the President's message arrived on Capitol Hill, it included legislative proposals to expand the authority of the Interstate Commerce Commission to fix railroad rates, a number of measures related to the District of Columbia, the creation of a forest service in the Department of Agriculture, and several other proposals. There was no mention of tariff revision.²⁶ Tariff policies, would, however, remain an issue between the two leaders throughout Roosevelt's tenure as President.

The collaboration between the Speaker and the President produced success for the President's legislative program, "... modified in practical ways by individuals and committees of the House and Senate ..."²⁷ During the 58th and 59th Congresses (1903–1907), Congress enacted changes to the railroad rates, the creation of the Bureau of Corporations in the newly established Department of Commerce and Labor, meat inspection laws, and other measures. The success of Roosevelt's legislative program was strongly determined by his ongoing consultation and cordial relations with Speaker Cannon.

Of course, some difficulties did develop during this period, due to political differences between the two men. The establishment of a forest service within the Department of Agriculture and the creation of national forests in the southern Appalachians and the White Mountains of New Hampshire were initiatives that caused personal tension between a conservationist President and a Speaker who, while Appropriations Committee chairman, would consider "not one cent for scenery."²⁸ Personal and institutional tensions between the leaders and branches were also exacer-

bated during frequent considerations of tariff policy throughout Roosevelt's time as President.

On balance, the working relation between the two leaders appears productive. The wear and tear of conflict and compromise, however, may have contributed to a serious rift between the two men regarding the Secret Service. By statute, the agency's role was to detect the counterfeiting of currency. Since the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901, the Secret Service had also unofficially assumed responsibility for Presidential protection. For several years the agency had exceeded its statutory mandate by spending some of its appropriation, which was intended to fund anticounterfeiting laws, on Presidential security and investigations.

In 1908, the House Committee on Appropriations amended the Sundry Civil Appropriation bill to institute restrictions on employment in the Secret Service as a way to curb its activities. The measure was subsequently passed by both Chambers and signed into law by Roosevelt. Later that year, the chief of the Secret Service requested that all limitations on the \$125,000 appropriation provided to the agency be lifted to allow him and the Secretary of the Treasury to allocate funds as they saw fit. The House Committee on Appropriations declined to remove the limitation.²⁹

President Roosevelt's response to the committee's action was to appeal directly to Speaker Cannon. In another personal message arguing that the provisions regarding the employment of Secret Service agents would "work very great damage to the government in its endeavor to prevent and punish crime,"³⁰ Roosevelt suggested that only criminals need fear the proposed changes. Before Speaker Cannon could solicit the thoughts of House Members, or respond to Roosevelt's personal message, the President's annual message arrived on Capitol Hill. In a departure from previous practice, Speaker Cannon reported that he had neither been consulted, nor seen a draft of the document before the message was officially presented. Cannon described himself "as much surprised as any one when it was found that this Message contained an assault upon Con-

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 207–209; and Gwinn, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, pp. 91–92.

²⁶ See Theodore Roosevelt, "Fourth Annual Message to the Senate and House of Representatives," Dec. 6, 1904, in James D. Richardson, comp., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, 20 vols. (New York: Bureau of National Literature, 1897–1911), vol. XIV, pp. 6894–6930.

²⁷ Cannon, *The Memoirs*, p. 130.

²⁸ Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1947), pp. 203–212, 242–243; quote found on p. 243.

²⁹ Rager, *The Fall of the House of Cannon*, pp. 47–48.

³⁰ Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, p. 231.

gress, and especially upon the House of Representatives," due to the limitations on the activities of the Secret Service.³¹

The President's message included a passage referring to the issue of the limitations imposed on the Secret Service. Regarding that matter, Roosevelt wrote, in part:

Last year an amendment was incorporated in the measure providing for the Secret Service, which provided that there be no detail from the Secret Service and no transfer therefrom. It is not too much to say that this amendment has been of benefit only, and could be of benefit only, to the criminal classes . . . The chief argument in favor of the provision was that the Congressmen did not themselves wish to be investigated by Secret Service men. Very little of such investigation has been done in the past; but it is true that the work of the Secret Service agents was partially responsible for the indictment and conviction of a Senator and Congressman for land frauds in Oregon. I do not believe that it is in the public interest to protect criminally {sic} in any branch of the public service, and exactly as we have again and again during the past seven years prosecuted and convicted such criminals who were in the executive branch of the Government, so in my belief we should be given ample means to prosecute them if found in the legislative branch. But if this is not considered desirable a special exception could be made in the law prohibiting the use of the Secret Service force in investigating Members of the Congress.³²

The House responded to this message with what Speaker Cannon described as indignation. On December 9, 1908, Representative James Breck Perkins, a friend of Roosevelt's and fellow Republican from New York, introduced H. Res. 451 (60th Congress) to authorize the Speaker to appoint a special committee to consider what action the Chamber should take in response to Roosevelt's message. In introducing the measure, Representative Perkins said "to the Congress is granted great power. And upon it are imposed great responsibilities. We can not neglect our duties nor shirk our responsibilities. The dignity of that body . . . should be properly maintained. The statements made by the President of the United States can not be lightly disregarded . . ." ³³

Cannon supported the special committee to appease House Members who wished to imme-

diately introduce a measure to censure the President. After a week of deliberation, the committee, on December 17, was prepared to report a measure to the House when it convened at noon. As Speaker Cannon was about to assume the chair and call the House to order, he received word from the President that he was to come to the White House for a consultation with the President. Upon being told that the Speaker was in the hall of the House, the President reportedly directed that the message be delivered to the Speaker personally, and that the consultation be held before the House considered the report of the special committee. Speaker Cannon indicated that:

. . . when the Secretary to the Speaker brought the message to the Chair, Mr. Perkins was on his feet demanding recognition to present his report . . . I held the gavel in the air for a moment as my secretary delivered the President's telephone message, which was probably the only one of its kind ever sent by the President to the Speaker of the House. I was indignant, but the business in hand saved me from making any comment. I simply brought down the gavel and recognized Mr. Perkins. Then I told my secretary to telephone the President's secretary just what had occurred and to say that the Speaker would be pleased to call upon the President as soon as the report of the committee was disposed of.³⁴

The special committee unanimously reported a resolution that the President be requested to provide any evidence upon which he based his claims, including: (1) that Members of Congress did not wish to be investigated by the Secret Service; (2) any evidence connecting any Member of the current Congress to criminal activity; and (3) whether the President had referred any Member to the courts for trial or reported any illicit behavior by Members to the House of Representatives.³⁵

The resolution was adopted by the House on December 17, 1908, and forwarded to the President. On January 4, 1909, the President responded with a special message, the contents of which Cannon described as "more offensive than the one to which the House had taken exception."³⁶ Roosevelt's message included references to a newspaper article written by a reporter who was currently serving as Speaker Cannon's per-

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

³² Theodore Roosevelt, "Eighth Annual Message to the Senate and House of Representatives," Dec. 8, 1908, in *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, vol. XVI, pp. 7198-7240; quote found on pp. 7225-7226.

³³ Representative James Breck Perkins, "Question of Privilege," remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, vol. 43, Dec. 11, 1908, p. 140.

³⁴ Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, pp. 235-236.

³⁵ Representative James Breck Perkins, "The Secret Service—President's Annual Message," remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, vol. 43, Dec. 17, 1908, p. 373.

³⁶ Busbey, *Uncle Joe Cannon*, p. 239.

sonal secretary. Again, the reaction of the House was to interpret the President's response as an attack on a coequal branch of government. In addition, some Members considered the inclusion of work done by the Speaker's secretary before he was employed by the government as a veiled broadside at the Speaker himself. In due course, the newspaper article was referred to the special committee established to respond to the first report. After three days of deliberation, the committee reported back, recommending that the House table the message from the President. After extensive debate, the House voted 212 to 36 to accept the committee's tabling proposal, and the President's message received no further consideration by the House.³⁷

Tabling an item in the House constitutes the immediate, final, and adverse disposition of a matter under consideration. At the time of the controversy between Roosevelt and the House, messages from the President and other executive branch communications were usually received by the House, and referred to the appropriate committee for consideration. As these communications were suggestive, and did not compel Congress to take specific action, the committee referral signified the effective end of congressional consideration. When the House went to the effort of introducing, debating, and voting on a motion to table the President's message, it signaled its symbolic refusal to accept the message. This was and is a rare occurrence. Before Roosevelt's Secret Service controversy, the House had not taken steps to refuse a Presidential message since the administration of President Andrew Jackson, more than 70 years earlier. A few weeks later, Roosevelt's term ended. Cannon continued as Speaker in the 61st Congress, and proceeded to forge a relationship with the new President, William Howard Taft.

COOPERATION BETWEEN LEADERS: SAM RAYBURN AND FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

When Representative Sam Rayburn of Texas was elected Speaker on September 16, 1940, following the death of Speaker William B.

Bankhead, Franklin Delano Roosevelt {FDR} was completing his second term as President. Like Theodore Roosevelt and Joseph Cannon, Rayburn and FDR had previous interactions, although Rayburn had come to view FDR more positively than Cannon saw Theodore Roosevelt. During FDR's first term, Rayburn had been chairman of the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce. Many of FDR's New Deal proposals were referred to the Rayburn-led panel, including measures which became the Securities Act of 1933; Home Owners Loan Act; Banking Act of 1933; National Industrial Recovery Act; Emergency Railroad Transportation Act of 1933; Securities Exchange Act of 1934; and Communications Act of 1934.³⁸ Further, Rayburn, who was majority leader during the 75th and 76th Congresses (1937–1940), regularly served as Speaker pro tempore because of Bankhead's ill health, and worked with FDR on a number of legislative issues, including the President's unsuccessful effort to change the number of justices on the Supreme Court.

Despite general political agreement between the President and congressional leaders during FDR's terms, Rayburn and Speaker Bankhead were often unaware of the President's intentions regarding policy and legislative proposals. Legislative initiatives, such as FDR's proposals to enlarge the Supreme Court, and the contents of the President's 1937 annual message to Congress, were unknown to the House leaders until they were delivered to the Chamber.³⁹ Often, Speaker Bankhead would be embarrassed when he made a statement to the media, only to find that the President had already issued a message contradicting the Speaker. In one instance when this occurred, Rayburn told Jimmy Roosevelt, the President's son and liaison to Congress, to "tell your father if I'm ever Speaker this kind of thing won't happen to me more than once."⁴⁰ Rayburn reportedly believed that FDR would have more success with his legislative initiatives if commu-

³⁸ Booth Mooney, *Roosevelt and Rayburn: A Political Partnership* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1971), pp. 45–53.

³⁹ "Basic Law Change Gains in Congress," *New York Times*, Jan. 8, 1937, p. 1. For a discussion of Speaker Bankhead's interactions with FDR, see William J. Heacock, "William B. Bankhead and the New Deal," *Journal of Southern History*, vol. 21, Aug. 1956, pp. 354–358.

⁴⁰ Alfred Steinberg, *Sam Rayburn: A Biography* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1975), p. 140.

³⁷ "Annual Message of the President—Secret Service," *Congressional Record*, vol. 43, Jan. 8, 1909, pp. 645–684. See also Rager, "The Fall of the House of Cannon," pp. 47–49.

nications were better between the White House and Capitol Hill. To address this problem, Rayburn set out to establish regular meetings between FDR and congressional leaders. He told Tommy Corcoran, a lobbyist with access to the White House that:

the President ought to be having a meeting every week with his House and Senate Leaders so we could tell him what we're planning, and he could tell us his plans. It could eliminate a lot of confusion. See what you could do—but don't you dare let him know I suggested it 'cause he thinks he "borned" every idea that ever was.⁴¹

At a subsequent White House meeting, FDR informed Rayburn that he had been thinking that "maybe it would be a good idea if I had a meeting with Bill ..." (Speaker Bankhead), Rayburn, Vice President John Nance Garner,⁴² and Senator Alben Barkley of Kentucky, who was majority leader of the Senate. Roosevelt proposed that the leaders could meet about once a week to discuss and coordinate planning. Rayburn replied that the suggestion was one of the smartest ideas that he had ever heard.⁴³

By the time Rayburn became Speaker, he and FDR had worked out their communications issues and were beginning to turn to legislative and policy matters. With war raging in Europe and Japan engaging in aggression in Asia, both leaders recognized that defense and preparedness issues would consume much of their time in the coming months. Rayburn believed strongly that the American system of government was best served by a strong, independent legislature. While the new Speaker liked and admired FDR, he was determined not to yield to the executive branch any constitutional prerogatives granted to the Congress.⁴⁴ At the same time, Rayburn understood that, in times of national jeopardy, the country needed to be led by the President. "When the nation is in danger," Rayburn believed, "you have to follow your leader. The man in the White House is the only leader this nation has ... Although we may disagree with him, we must follow our president in times of peril ..." ⁴⁵

Global events soon gave Rayburn the opportunity to act on his beliefs. On January 6, 1941, Speaker Rayburn's 59th birthday, President Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress to deliver his Annual Message to the Congress. Around the world, the forces of Germany, Italy, and Japan had engaged in invasions and other aggression. In Europe, France had fallen in 1940, and as Roosevelt stood before Congress, the United Kingdom was enduring regular attacks by the Nazi air force. In the course of the speech, FDR warned of the possibility that the United States could find itself involved in the conflict.⁴⁶ The President specifically requested authority from Congress to produce munitions and other war supplies that could be provided to countries that were at war with Germany, Italy and Japan, and whose defense was considered vital to the defense of the United States. This aid was to be directed primarily to the United Kingdom, but other countries would also be eligible for assistance. As these countries were unlikely to be able to pay for these materials, FDR also proposed funding their acquisition of ships, planes, tanks, and guns, through a program that would become popularly known as Lend-Lease.⁴⁷

On January 10, 1941, the President sent to Congress the first of several measures designed to move the Nation forward in war preparation. At Rayburn's behest, Representative John McCormack of Massachusetts, who served as majority leader,⁴⁸ introduced the lend-lease measure, which was deliberately assigned the number H.R. 1776. The measure provided the President with the authority to transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of any defense article to any government whose defense the President deemed vital to the defense of the United States. The proposal called for \$7 billion to fund the provision of war materials to nations that could not afford to pay. Under the proposal, the President would be the sole authority to de-

⁴¹ D.B. Hardeman and Donald C. Bacon, *Rayburn: A Biography* (Austin, TX: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), p. 227.

⁴² John Nance Garner of Texas, had been Speaker of the House in the 72d Congress (1931–1933).

⁴³ Hardeman and Bacon, *Rayburn*, p. 227.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Annual Message to the Congress, Jan. 6, 1941," in Samuel I. Rosenman, comp., *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 13 vols. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1938–1950), vol. 3, pp. 663–678.

⁴⁷ Steinberg, *Sam Rayburn*, pp. 166–167.

⁴⁸ McCormack later served as Speaker during the 87th through 91st Congresses (1961–1970).

cide which countries would receive military assistance.

Opponents of lend-lease expressed concern that the measure, if passed, would invest too much power in the President. These concerns focused on what appeared to some to be a Presidential request for a "blank check" which could be used with little congressional oversight. Others saw the measure as an outright abandonment by Congress of its power to declare war, allowing it to be transferred to the President so he could draw the United States into the global conflict.⁴⁹ For his part, Speaker Rayburn publicly supported granting the President wide latitude in carrying out the lend-lease program. "If we are to aid the democracies," Rayburn said, "Congress must enact a law giving the power to somebody to administer the law. There could be no one man in this country as well qualified to administer it as the President." Rayburn also discussed the possible consequence of failing to provide the President with the proposed authority, saying "either we give the President the flexible powers necessary to help Britain, or by our inaction, we strengthen Hitler's power to conquer Britain and attack us."⁵⁰

Privately, however, Rayburn communicated to the President the concerns of Members, and informed the President that the bill was dead without changes. At FDR's urging, Rayburn led efforts in the House to craft a compromise that addressed the concerns of the House. Working with the President, Representative Sol Bloom, chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and other committee members, Rayburn was able to negotiate amendments that preserved the basic outline of FDR's proposal while addressing the concerns that the measure would represent too large a grant of power to the executive. These included a prohibition on American shipping convoys transporting war materials, a requirement that the President report three times a month to Congress regarding the program's progress, and a 2-year limit on the program. In addition, the \$7 billion the President requested would have to go through scrutiny of the regular appropriations process.

On the floor, where debate began February 3, Speaker Rayburn, Majority Leader McCormack, and Chairman Bloom managed the progress of the lend-lease measure through 5 days of debate. Several Members who were opposed to the proposal offered amendments designed to scuttle the legislation. Many of these were declared non-germane by the chair. The House rejected 19 amendments before passing H.R. 1776 by a vote of 260 to 165.⁵¹ One month later, the Senate passed lend-lease with minor amendments. Rayburn convened the House soon thereafter, and, with little debate, the Chamber accepted the changes. An hour after the House gave final approval, the measure was signed into law by President Roosevelt.⁵²

Throughout 1941, Congress worked with the President to develop the Nation's capacity to defend itself and its allies. In one significant action, Congress approved an administration-backed measure to reauthorize the draft, and extend the time of enlistment for draftee soldiers under the Selective Service Act from 1 year to 30 months. Rayburn was opposed to the extension when it was first proposed. After meeting with the President, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, and Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, the Speaker reluctantly conceded the necessity of the extension, and agreed to advance the measure in the House. The Speaker faced a House that was very reluctant to extend the mandatory period of military enlistment. In addition to the efforts of the whip organization run by Representative Pat Boland, Rayburn personally approached several Members for their support, telling them to "do this for me. I won't forget it."⁵³ One Member reportedly said that the Speaker was quite successful at the effort: "Mr. Sam is terribly convincing . . . There he stands his left hand on your right shoulder, holding your coat button, looking at you out of honest eyes that reflect the sincerest emotion." Rayburn's effort proved indispensable as the House ultimately ap-

⁴⁹ Transcripts of the consideration of H.R. 1776 in the House can be found in the *Congressional Record*, vol. 87, Feb. 3-7, 1941, pp. 484-519, 522-568, 573-678, 710-749, and 753-815.

⁵⁰ 55 Stat. 31.

⁵¹ Alvin M. Josephy, *On the Hill: A History of the American Congress* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 334.

⁴⁹ Mooney, *Roosevelt and Rayburn*, pp. 159-162.

⁵⁰ Hardeman and Bacon, *Rayburn*, pp. 257-258.

proved the draft extension by 1 vote, 203 to 202.⁵⁴

As 1941, and the 1st session of the 77th Congress drew to a close, Rayburn and FDR collaborated once again on a national defense measure. For several months, German submarines and surface ships had been attacking American merchant ships. The Roosevelt administration wanted to repeal sections of the Neutrality Resolution, passed by the 74th Congress in 1935,⁵⁵ to permit the arming of American merchant ships, and to authorize those ships to enter combat zones and the ports of belligerent nations. In response, the House passed a bill that authorized the arming of merchant ships, but did not permit their entry into belligerent ports. In the Senate, amendments were added that allowed the President to send the ships to any port in the world. The Senate-passed version of the bill also authorized the President to order merchant ships to defend themselves against attack. The Senate version was returned to the House for review.

Following a day of debate on the Senate amendments, Rayburn's vote count showed that the merchant ships bill would be defeated. Rayburn and Majority Leader McCormack met with FDR to work out a strategy to win House acceptance of the Senate amendments. The three leaders agreed that the Speaker would provide a written letter summarizing the concerns of House Members, and that the President would provide a written reply.

When the House resumed the debate on the Senate amendments, Rayburn monitored the debate throughout the day. With 11 minutes of debate on the Senate amendments remaining, Rayburn descended from the chair to speak from the well of the House regarding his views and the position of President Roosevelt:

A great deal has been said about the position of the President. Does the President want these amendments? Does he advocate them? . . . Last evening late the gentleman from Massachusetts⁵⁶ and I addressed the following letter to the President of the United States:

A number of Members have asked us what effect the failure on the part of the House to take favorable action on the Senate amendments would have on our position in foreign countries, and especially in Germany. Some of these Members

have stated that they hoped you would make a direct expression on this matter.⁵⁷

Rayburn then read to the House the letter from FDR that he and Majority Leader McCormack had worked out with the President the previous evening. The President's letter said in part:

I had no thought of expressing to the House my views to the effect, in foreign countries, and especially in Germany, of favorable or unfavorable action on the Senate amendments.

But in view of your letter, I am replying as simply and clearly as I know how . . .

. . . In regard to the repeal of sections 2 and 3 of the Neutrality Act, I need only call your attention to three elements. The first concerns the continued sinking of American-flag ships in many parts of the ocean. The second relates to great operational advantages in making continuous voyages to any belligerent port in any part of the world; thus, in all probability increasing the total percentage of goods—foodstuffs and munitions—actually delivered to those nations fighting Hitlerism. The third is the decision by the Congress and the Executive that this Nation, for its own present and future defense, must strengthen the supply line to all of those who are keeping Hitlerism far from the Americas.

With all of this in mind, the world is obviously watching the course of this legislation.

In the British Empire, in China, and in Russia—all of whom are fighting a defensive war against invasion—the effect of the failure of the Congress to repeal sections 2 and 3 of the Neutrality Act would definitely be discouraging. I am confident that it would not destroy their defense or morale, though it would weaken their position from the point of view of food and munitions.

Failure to repeal these sections would, of course, cause rejoicing in the Axis nations. Failure would bolster aggressive steps and intentions in Germany, and in the other well-known aggressor nations under the leadership of Hitler.

Our own position in the struggle against aggression would definitely be weakened, not only in Europe and in Asia, but also among our sister republics in the Americas. Foreign nations, friends and enemies, would misinterpret our own mind and purpose . . .⁵⁸

Reading the President's letter consumed approximately 10 minutes. In the remaining moments of debate, Rayburn endorsed the President's approach, and added his own thoughts, saying:

In the moment, let me say this: Let us not cast a vote today that will mean rejoicing in Germany, or Italy, or Japan. Let me say that with all my heart, this moment, that the failure to enact these amendments will have repercussions too frightful to contemplate, and might break up the most serious conferences that have ever been held at this moment be-

⁵⁴ Steinberg, *Sam Rayburn*, p. 170.

⁵⁵ 50 Stat. 1081.

⁵⁶ Majority Leader McCormack.

⁵⁷ Representative Sam Rayburn, "Amending the Neutrality Act," remarks in the House, *Congressional Record*, vol. 87, Nov. 13, 1941, pp. 8890–8891.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8890–8891.

tween the representatives of Japan and the representatives of the United States of America. Let us show the world by our vote, at least a majority vote, where we stand. Let me appeal to you, whether you love one man or hate another, to stand up today for civilization as it is typified in the United States of America.⁵⁹

As time for debate expired, the roll call began. In the end, the House accepted the Senate amendments by a vote of 212 to 194.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the United States forces in Pearl Harbor, HI. Soon after the attack, Speaker Rayburn returned to Washington from a personal trip to Richmond, VA, and received a message that the President wanted to meet congressional leaders that evening. At the conclusion of the meeting, Rayburn was asked by a reporter if Congress would support a war declaration. Rayburn replied, "I think that is one thing on which there would be unity."⁶⁰ The next day, the President addressed a joint session of Congress to request a declaration of war against Japan. Following the joint session, each Chamber convened and passed a joint resolution declaring a state of war between the United States and Japan. The President signed the measure into law that afternoon.

In his first full year as Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn worked closely with President Franklin Roosevelt to roll back a neutral, isolationist policy, prepare the Nation for war, and assist nations already fighting the Axis. When the United States entered the conflict, the Speaker and the President successfully urged the Nation to produce the materials essential to combat the enemy, maintain morale on the home front, and bring "the war to its earliest possible conclusion."⁶¹ The first few months after the United States joined the conflict were marked by extensive gains for the Axis powers. In the Pacific theater, Japanese forces captured Guam, Wake Island, parts of the Aleutian Islands and the Philippines. In the Atlantic, the naval forces of Germany, which declared war on the United States 4 days after the Pearl Harbor attack, launched effective submarine attacks on American mer-

chant ships. Roosevelt's 1942 Annual Message to the Congress formed the basis of the American response. In the address, the President called for increased production of airplanes, tanks, and merchant shipping.⁶² When the goals of Roosevelt's program were questioned in the media and by the public, Speaker Rayburn embarked on a series of speaking engagements around the country to defend the proposed goals.⁶³

In the House, Rayburn guided numerous measures to passage that strengthened the American war effort. Measures passed included changes in tax law that allowed war industries to write off capital expenditures at an accelerated rate; the establishment and funding of several new executive branch agencies that controlled the distribution of raw materials, civilian goods production and rationing, prices, war propaganda, and economic warfare overseas; amendment of military draft laws to conscript 18-year-old men; and bills that prevented labor actions in war industries. Less publicly, Rayburn, Majority Leader McCormack, and Minority Leader Joseph Martin of Massachusetts were briefed by Secretary Stimson, General Marshall, and Dr. Vannevar Bush about a secret plan to construct an atomic bomb. Initial efforts to fund the program had come through illegal transfers of military appropriations. When the administration officials tried to tell the congressional leaders about the project, Rayburn cut them off, saying "I don't want to know . . . because if I don't know a secret I can't let it leak out." A few weeks later, Rayburn persuaded Representative Clarence Cannon, who was chairman of the Committee on Appropriations, to quietly insert an appropriation of \$1.6 billion for the Manhattan Project.⁶⁴

Summarizing congressional action and cooperation with the President in a speech in Texas in November 1942, Rayburn mentioned several other actions Congress had taken in support of the President's war program, saying:

... let no one tell you that the seventy-seventh Congress and the executive branch of the government have not worked together. The President asked for 185,000 airplanes. Congress provided the authority and the appropriation. He asked for

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ C.P. Russell, "Congress Decided," *New York Times*, Dec. 8, 1941, p. 1.

⁶¹ Sam Rayburn interview with Walter C. Hornaday, Jan. 7, 1944, in H.G. Delaney and Edward Hake Phillips, eds., *Speak Mister Speaker* (Bonham, TX: Sam Rayburn Foundation, 1978), p. 104.

⁶² Roosevelt, "The Annual Message to the Congress, Jan. 6, 1941," in *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, pp. 32–42.

⁶³ Steinberg, *Sam Rayburn*, pp. 210–211.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 211–213; quote, p. 212. See also Mooney, *Roosevelt and Rayburn*, pp. 177–182.

billions to build war plants. He got them. He asked for amendments to the Neutrality Act for . . . lend-lease shipments across the sea. He got them. He asked for authority to take over Axis ships. He got it. The executive recommended a wage and price bill and requested legislation by October 1. He got it on October 2 . . . We have made every attempt to weld our peacetime government machinery into a compact fist of steel.⁶⁵

While the war effort advanced, Rayburn's efforts appear to have come at a political price. Despite broad public support for the war, some of the new policies adopted by Congress, such as the extension of the Selective Service Act, and rationing measures, were not popular. Some have argued that this public displeasure led to a loss of more than 50 Democratic seats in the House in the 1942 elections. This left the Chamber with 222 Democrats and 209 Republicans, at the beginning of the 78th Congress in 1943.⁶⁶ During the first few weeks of the new session, several administration-backed measures were defeated by the House, despite Rayburn's efforts. Over the course of the session, a sense of national purpose appears to have overcome partisan and factional preferences in the House, and the President's proposals received more favorable consideration. Beyond the Chamber, Rayburn continued to tour the country as a spokesman and partner of the President. The Speaker began to carry out symbolic duties as well, including dedicating hospitals, war production facilities, and receiving honorary degrees.⁶⁷ Despite the occasional, temporary setbacks in Congress, FDR held Rayburn in high esteem. On the occasion of Rayburn's second anniversary as Speaker, Roosevelt acknowledged the milestone in a letter to Rayburn that said "the speakership has assumed a special importance because of the gravity of issues with which you have continually had to deal . . . the country has need of you."⁶⁸

Rayburn and Roosevelt would continue to work together on war measures and other issues

until Roosevelt died in 1945. On the afternoon of April 12, 1945, Speaker Rayburn adjourned the House at 5 o'clock and was in his private Capitol office known as the "Board of Education," where he often met with Members to discuss matters before the House. On this day, Vice President Harry S Truman was due at the close of the day's Senate session. Before the Vice President arrived, Rayburn received a call from the White House; Truman was to call as soon as he arrived. When Truman reached the Speaker's office, he called the White House and was told to come to the executive mansion. After he left, a special radio bulletin informed Rayburn and the Nation that President Roosevelt had died at Warm Springs, GA, earlier that afternoon. Later that evening, Speaker Rayburn went to the White House to see Truman take the oath of office as President.

The only Member of Congress to hold the speakership in four different decades, Rayburn served with, not under, Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy. Some time after World War II ended, Rayburn reflected on his collaboration with Roosevelt:

I would go to the White House with the other congressional leaders, and we would talk things out frankly and openly. Sometimes we agreed, and sometimes we disagreed, but in the end we would find more points of agreement than disagreement. And we would get things done. *We had to get things done.*⁶⁹

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A MORE COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERS

Although his focus was World War II and Franklin Roosevelt, Rayburn's observation suggests a starting point for efforts to understand the nature of the relationship between the Speaker and the President over the last century. The cases of Theodore Roosevelt and Joe Cannon, and Franklin Roosevelt and Sam Rayburn, strongly suggest that in war, peace, periods of prosperity, or periods of national emergency, things still need to get done, and that the Speaker and President are integral actors in achieving those ends. The institutional environment established by separation of powers brings together two leaders who have different, and sometimes contentious,

⁶⁵ Sam Rayburn speech to the Texas Forum of the Air, Nov. 1, 1942, in Delaney and Phillips, eds., *Speak Mister Speaker*, p. 93.

⁶⁶ House membership and party division is based on results reported by the Clerk of the House, based on immediate results of elections held in November 1942. Four vacancies were reported. U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, 2003–2004 *Official Congressional Directory*, 108th Congress, 108th Cong., 1st sess., S. Pub. 108–18 (Washington, GPO, 2003), p. 547.

⁶⁷ C. Dwight Dorrough, *Mr. Sam* (New York: Random House, 1962), pp. 348–357.

⁶⁸ Franklin Delano Roosevelt letter to Sam Rayburn, Sept. 16, 1942, in Delaney and Phillips, eds., *Speak Mister Speaker*, p. 91.

⁶⁹ Mooney, *Roosevelt and Rayburn*, p. 164, italics in original.

governing responsibilities. To some extent, the relationship between the two sets of leaders bridged that gulf and facilitated legislative activity. In both cases, Cannon and Rayburn served as an intermediary between the House and the President, who is always on the outside of the Legislature. Each Speaker reflected the mood and will of the House, and provided advice to the Presidents on the basis of those observations. When both Presidents followed the advice, whether Cannon's suggestion to avoid the tariff issue in 1907, or Rayburn's suggestion to revise a lend-lease program that was sure to be defeated without changes in 1941, both Presidents enjoyed the benefits of reduced conflict and the advancement of their legislative programs. When the two Chief Executives ignored advice, or failed to seek consultation with the Speakers, as with Theodore Roosevelt's contretemps over the Secret Service, or the setbacks FDR's New Deal pro-

grams suffered as a result of his failed court reorganization, each suffered political damage.

Both cases strongly suggest that to govern, Speakers and Presidents must surmount the challenges of divergent constitutional responsibilities, political contexts, and personal chemistry. Without recourse to similar studies of the relationship between other Speakers and Presidents over the last century, however, it is unclear whether these findings are generally applicable to the other 15 Speakers and 16 Presidents that have served during this time. The volatility of political contexts and interpersonal relationships shown in the Cannon and Rayburn eras, as well as Speaker O'Neill's observation that there is much still to be learned about the Office and men who have been Speaker, strongly suggests that further inquiry into the relationship between other Speakers and Presidents would make a valuable contribution to understanding American Government.