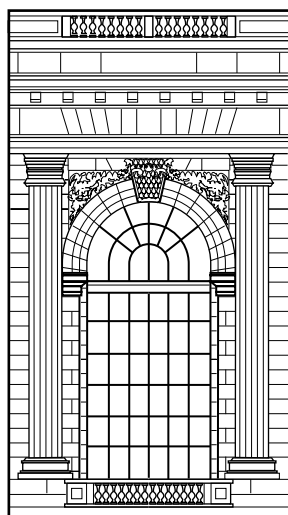


A History of the  
United States Senate  
Republican Policy Committee  
1947-1997



*Larry E. Craig, Chairman, Senate Republican Policy Committee.*

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Republican Policy Committee  
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*with the concurrence  
of the*  
U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee  
Larry E. Craig, Chairman

Printed by authority of S. Res. 67, 105th Congress, 1st Session  
Senate Document 105-5

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 1997



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# Introduction

*Leadership in the Senate has sometimes been described as “herding cats” or “keeping frogs in a wheelbarrow.” Or, as former Majority Leader Howard Baker once characterized it, “trying to push a wet noodle.” In recognition of the extraordinary difficulties in steering a body of equals, the United States Senate, fifty years ago, authorized each party to create a policy committee. Since 1947, the U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee, under its various chairmen and staff directors, has dedicated itself to promoting party cohesiveness, and better enabling Republican senators to determine and implement their legislative strategies.*

*Over the past half century, the two political parties developed strikingly different organizations in the Senate. Democrats tended to concentrate leadership with their floor leader, who usually has chaired both their conference and their policy committee. By contrast, Senate Republicans have distributed authority among a floor leader, whip, Conference chairman, Conference secretary, and Policy Committee chairman. Over time, the functions of these leadership posts have evolved and changed, adjusting to new personalities, political realities, and technology.*

*Today, the Republican Policy Committee, again in the majority party, has moved toward more direct involvement in the formulation and development of party policy, with our weekly working lunches for all Republican senators, and the many resources we provide to Republican senators and their staffs. We offer the analytical expertise of our talented staff who stay abreast of the issues, and research and write the Legislative Notice, policy papers, and Record Vote Analysis, and surely every senator relies at times on our in-house legislative-information cable channel. As the senators work toward achieving their legislative priorities, the Policy Committee provides the framework that helps pull the party together and push the agenda forward.*



Yet, as we stand at this important threshold, our fifty-year mark, it is valuable to examine the past and understand how we came to where we are, and reflect on where we ought to go. From the start, the Senate Republican Policy Committee has reflected the “faith in expertise” of its founder, Senator Robert A. Taft. Created in an era when senators and committees had little staff support, the Policy Committee has continually supported Republican senators on a broad array of legislative issues. In recent years, the Committee’s adoption of new technology has allowed us to effectively broaden our ability to communicate with and aid Republican senators as we approach the 21st century, but our strength, I believe, remains our long tradition of credible and reliable service.

Many people deserve credit for helping put this publication together, but perhaps I first should offer a tribute to my predecessors who, as chairmen of the Policy Committee, developed it into the very fine resource that it is today. I’d also like to offer sincere thanks to Dr. Donald Ritchie, Associate Historian in the Senate Historical Office, who drafted the manuscript, culled in part from the fifty years’ worth of minutes of Policy meetings that have been maintained by the Policy Committee. That represents thousands of pages of reading on his part, and I thank him for his dedication. Also, thanks to Matthew Cook, the Photohistorian, for providing the illustrations for this volume, to Dr. Richard Baker, the Senate Historian, for seeing this project through, and to former Secretary of the Senate (and former Policy Committee staff director) Kelly Johnston, who conceived this project, and as Secretary, set it in motion for both Republican and Democratic policy committees. Thanks also to Jade West, current staff director of the Policy Committee, to Judy Gorman of the Policy Committee, and to Eric Ueland, formerly with the Policy Committee, for their researching and editorial assistance.

Larry E. Craig

Chairman, U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee

