

# Twenty-Fourth Congress

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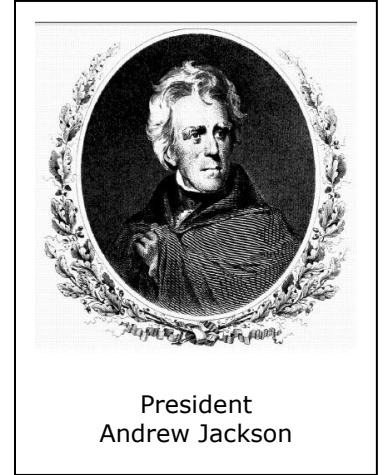
Mar. 4, 1835 - Mar. 4, 1837

## Second Administration of Andrew Jackson

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### Historical Background

The 24<sup>th</sup> Congress, controlled by Jacksonian Democrats, coincided with the final two years of President Andrew Jackson’s second Administration. During those last two years Jackson continued to seek changes in the government which he had proposed at the start of his first Administration. In his final State of the Union address Jackson again urged Congress to amend the Constitution to remove the provision authorizing Congress with the selection of the President and Vice President if circumstances warranted it. He also sought to resolve finalizing the borders with Mexico and Canada (then known as “British North America”). Those efforts were delayed due to the war between Texan rebels and the Mexican government, as well as the inability of Great Britain and the United States to agree upon a boundary.

Jackson also strove to reduce the size of the government by eliminating agencies he believed no longer relevant, including the Commissioners of Loans and the Sinking Fund, which administered debt payments. He argued these agencies would be made obsolete once the national debt was paid. Jackson also urged Congress to sever all connections with the Bank of the United States, which he said used Government funds to finance loans that produced “large profits” for the banks.

During the 1835 State of the Union address, Jackson also reported the removal of the Indian tribes living east of the Mississippi River to a territory west of the Mississippi, designated as Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), approached “its consummation.” However, during the State of the Union address a year later on Dec. 6, 1836, he reported the United States was engaged in conflict with the Seminole and Creek tribes resisting removal.

House	Senate
Majority Party: Jacksonian (143 seats)	Majority Party: Jacksonian (26 seats)
Minority Party: Anti- Jacksonian (75 seats)	Minority Party: Anti- Jacksonian (24 seats)
Other Parties: Anti- Masonic (16 seats); Nullifier (8 seats)	Other Parties: Nullifier (2 seats)
Speaker of the House: James K. Polk	President Pro Tempore: William R. King

The United States faced several economic issues in 1835, including the government's pursuit of about 24 million Francs in American claims for property seized, or destroyed by French forces. In 1831 France agreed to pay the claims, but the Government had delayed making payment. In another financial matter, Jackson spoke in 1836 of the need to reduce taxes and eliminate the collection of financial surpluses by the Government because money not needed "to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States" should remain with the people "for their own profit." In addition, while Jackson agreed to return surplus funds to the States based on population, he was not satisfied that population was the best way to disburse those funds. He argued, States with higher populations would receive larger sums, and such a policy could result in States with smaller populations receiving funds from the Federal Government disproportionate to what they paid.

Other matters before Congress included an effort by some lawmakers to suppress antislavery petitions sent to Congress by abolitionists. The House responded by automatically tabling those petitions without consideration, but antislavery members, including John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, undertook efforts to repeal the "gag" rule by denouncing it as a violation of their constituents' right to freedom of speech. Adams's opposition to the gag rule almost led to his censure.

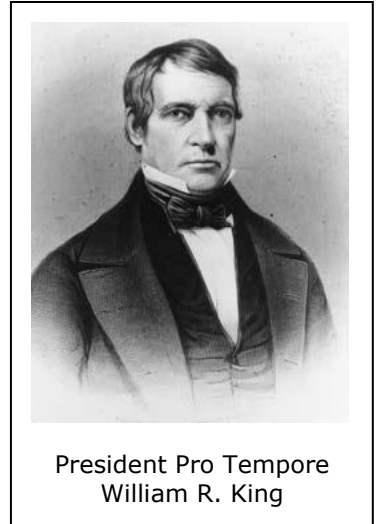
In addition, because of the demands placed upon the Supreme Court, in March 1837 Congress increased the number of Supreme Court Justices from seven to nine.

Sources:

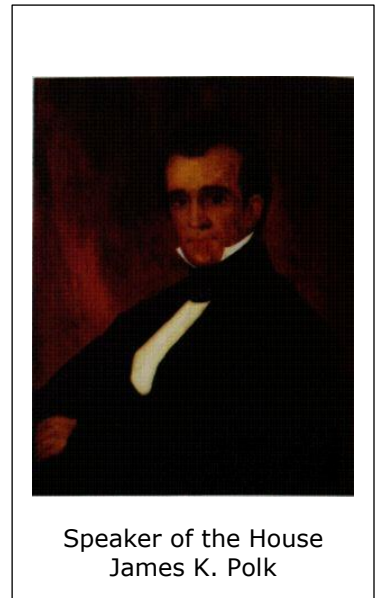
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President Pro Tempore  
William R. King



Speaker of the House  
James K. Polk

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## War or Peace?

### Disputes with France and the Texas Revolution

During the final two years of President Andrew Jackson's Administration, the Government kept a watchful eye on foreign conflicts, retaining neutrality, and working to maintain peace with militarily powerful governments. Those governments included the Ottoman Empire (metonymically known as the Sublime Porte) and the area of North Africa along the Mediterranean Sea known as the "Barbary Powers," which during the late-18<sup>th</sup> and early-19<sup>th</sup>

centuries had seized U.S. merchant ships. Jackson said there was reason to be concerned, not because those governments were expected to again start seizing U.S. merchant ships, but because a report from the Secretary of the Navy said, the U.S. naval force was “inadequate” to protect the nation’s merchant fleet.

There were also concerns about possible hostilities with France related to the debt owed by France to U.S. citizens whose property was seized or destroyed during conflicts involving the French government. During the effort by the U.S. to procure restitution for its citizens, the French accused Jackson of insulting France and recalled their ambassador from Washington. Jackson denied making an insult, and stressed “the United States had done nothing to injure the interests of France; or, in other words, that no steps had been authorized by Congress of a hostile character towards France.” In addition, Jackson said, “the conception that it was my intention to menace or insult the government of France” was “unfounded.” Nonetheless, Jackson instructed the U.S. *Chargé d’Affaires* assigned to Paris to ask the French government for a final determination on the debt, and if they refused to pay, the *Chargé* was to return to the United States.

To the south of the United States, the U.S. Government sought to maintain neutrality over the Texas Revolution. However, Jackson was aware of the “desire of the Texans to become a part of our system,” and U.S. forces were prepared “to advance into territory claimed as part of Texas.” However, he insisted that those forces would not take sides in the rebellion. Rather, they were to be deployed only “to protect our own of the neighboring frontier from Indian depredation.” After Texas declared its independence from Spain, on March 3, 1837, the last day of the 24<sup>th</sup> Congress and his last day as President, Andrew Jackson formally recognized the Republic of Texas by appointing a *Chargé d’Affaires* to the newly declared republic.

Following the passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the United States had signed the Treaty of Payne’s Landing on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1832 with several chiefs of the Seminole tribe in Florida negotiating the removal of the Seminole tribe west of the Mississippi River. However, in 1835 the removal of the Native American tribes to the Indian Territory stalled when the Seminole and Creek tribes in Florida took up arms and refused to be moved, claiming the treaty was signed under force and coercion. In response, Jackson sent a combined force of regular U.S. military units and State militias to capture or kill Seminoles and Creeks who refused to vacate their lands, including the chiefs and the Seminole leader Osceola.

On Dec. 28, 1835, the Seminoles ambushed and killed two companies of soldiers headed to Fort King in Florida in what would become known as the Dade Massacre and sparked the Second Seminole War. On the same day, at Fort King, Osceola and his followers killed the Indian agent, Wiley Thompson, and six others. The following January, more violence erupted when U.S. forces attempted to forcibly remove Seminole and Creek Indians resulting in the Battle of Wetumka.

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## **Economic Trends and Conditions**

During both 1835 and 1836, the financial growth of the United States had kept “pace with its (the country’s) improvement in all other aspects,” Jackson told Congress. However, while Jackson praised the “growth and prosperity” of the United States, he also warned of the growing control of companies—especially the banks—and of corporations achieving monopolies. “All the serious dangers which our system has yet encountered, may be traced to the resort to implied powers, and the use of corporations, clothed with privileges, the effect of which is to advance the interest of the few at the expense of the many,” he told Congress.

There was also a need for the State banks that had replaced the Bank of the United States to be depositories of government funds. In response to that need, the Deposit Act of 1836 was approved; it directed the Secretary of the Treasury to designate at least one bank in each state and territory as a place of public deposit.

During 1835 the United States’ public debt had been paid, leaving the country with a surplus of about \$19 million, and if the rate of revenue collection continued, a surplus of about \$20 million was expected for 1836, Jackson told Congress. There was a surplus recorded for 1836, but it was \$5.3 million short of the projection. The Treasury reported revenues for 1836 of more than \$47.6 million and expenditures of \$32 million leaving a balance of about \$14.7 million, and of that balance Jackson directed about \$9.7 million be allocated to the States. Jackson told Congress that “under our present revenue system there is every probability that there will continue to be a surplus beyond the wants of Government, and it has become our duty to decide whether such a result is consistent with the true objects of our Government.” Jackson made it known that he not only opposed the Federal Government amassing huge surpluses of money, he also opposed policies supporting the refunding of such surpluses to the States based on population. He said such a refund policy was not only unjust, but that it made it easier for the Federal Government to continue to collect those funds, and for the States to become dependent on the refunds. Rather than continue with the refunds to the States, Jackson favored cutting taxes and “letting the people keep the balance of their property.” Jackson also urged a review of existing trade tariffs and fees, which he said were “restrictions” imposed “on the trade and navigation of our citizens.”

Jackson also expressed support for the increased use of gold coins as a general currency rather than paper dollars, especially for the sale of public lands. During this period, the sale of public lands had increased so much it threatened to destabilize the nation's banks. Therefore, Jackson implemented a plan to curb bank destabilization by limiting the currency that could be used for such land transactions to gold and silver. To ensure the policy was communicated, Jackson directed Treasury Secretary Levi Woodbury to issue an executive order—called a “Specie Circular”—announcing the limits on the currency used to purchase public land. Jackson supporters credited the actions with saving many investors from bankruptcy, while critics claimed the Specie Circular caused a financial crisis within the United States—known as the Panic of 1837—that lasted until the mid-1840s. Also during this period, the use of gold as currency became a concern because the value of the metal increased outside of the United States, thereby creating a foreign market for those coins.

Sources:

Jackson, Andrew. [\*Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress at the Commencement of the First Session of the Twenty-Fourth Congress\*](#). House, Dec. 7, 1835. 24<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, H.doc.2/1 (Pr7.1/1:835). ProQuest Congressional, 286 H.doc.2/1

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## Major Treaties

**Treaty of New Echota.** Provided that the Cherokee Nation cede its land in Georgia to the United States and move to the Indian Territory; later became the legal basis for the forcible removal of Native American people, also known as the Trail of Tears. Concluded December 29, 1835. Approved by Senate May 23, 1836. ([7 Stat. 478](#))

Sources:

[“Treaty with the Cherokees. Dec. 29, 1835.”](#) (7 Stat. 478; Dec. 29, 1835). ProQuest Congressional

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## 1835 Events

- **Jan. 30:** [The first assassination attempt on a sitting United States President occurs when Richard Lawrence, an unemployed house-painter from England, tries to shoot Andrew Jackson outside the United States Capitol but fails when both guns misfire](#)

- **Jan. 8:** [The United States national debt contracts to zero for the first and only time](#)
- **Mar. 3:** [Congress authorizes the establishment of a U.S. Mint at New Orleans, La.](#)
- **June 25:** The first building is constructed at Yerba Buena, Calif., now known as San Francisco
- **Aug.:** [H. Fox Talbot exposes the world's first known photographic negatives at Lacock Abbey in England](#)
- **Aug. 10:** In Canaan, N.H, a mob uses about 100 oxen to pull a school serving both black and white students into a swamp, burning the remains
- **Aug. 18:** As part of the U.S. policy of Indian removal, the last Pottawatomie Indians leave Chicago
- **Sep. 17:** Charles Darwin lands on Chatham Island of the Galapagos-archipelago
- **Sep. 20:** The rebellion in southern Brazil known as the Farroupilha Revolution begins in Rio Grande do Sul
- **Oct. 2:** *Texas Revolution* - The Battle of Gonzales is fought between Texan settlers and Mexican forces; it is the first engagement of the Texas War for Independence
- **Nov. 2:** *Second Seminole War* - [The Second Seminole War begins in Florida](#)
- **Dec. 16-17:** [The Great Fire of New York destroys 530 buildings, including the New York Stock Exchange](#)
- **Dec. 23:** *Second Seminole War* - [Two companies of the U.S. army are killed by Seminole tribesmen in the Dade Massacre; The Indian agent Wiley Thompson is killed at Fort King by Osceola and his followers](#)
- **Dec. 29:** [The Treaty of New Echota is signed by the United States and some members of the Cherokee Nation; the treaty provides the U.S. with a legal basis for the forcible removal of Cherokees from land east of the Mississippi](#)

## 1836 Events

- **Jan. 12:** *Second Seminole War* - The effort to forcibly remove Seminole and Creek Indian tribes from Florida erupts into violence when U.S. forces engage those Indians at the Battle of Wetumka
- **Feb. 3:** The Whig Party holds its first national convention in Albany, N.Y.
- **Feb. 23:** *Texas Revolution* - [Mexico forces, led by General Santa Ana, begin the siege at the Alamo, in San Antonio, Texas](#)
- **Mar. 2:** *Texas War of Independence* - [The Republic of Texas declares independence from Mexico](#)
- **Mar. 6:** *Texas Revolution* - [After 13 days of fighting, the Battle of the Alamo ends when 3,000 Mexican troops overrun the rebels' killing 257 men, including William Travis, Jim Bowie, and Davy Crockett](#)
- **Mar. 27:** The first Mormon Temple is dedicated in Kirtland, Ohio



- **Apr. 14:** [Congress forms the Territory of Wisconsin](#)
- **Apr. 21:** *Texas Revolution* - [Texan rebels defeat Mexican forces at the Battle of San Jacinto and winning independence from Mexico](#)
- **July 1:** [Congress accepts James Smithson's bequest 100,000 gold sovereigns to be used to found an institution in Washington, D.C.](#)
- **July 21:** The first Canadian railroad line—the Champlain and Saint Lawrence Railroad—opens in Quebec connecting the towns of La Prairie and St John
- **July 29:** The Arc de Triomphe in Paris is inaugurated
- **Aug. 30:** The city of Houston is founded in Texas by Augustus Chapman Allen and John Kirby Allen
- **Oct. 22:** [Sam Houston is inaugurated as the first elected President of the Republic of Texas](#)
- **Nov. 11:** Chile declares war on Bolivia and Peru
- **Dec. 14:** The “Toledo War,” the boundary dispute between the state of Ohio and the territory of Michigan, unofficially ends

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[“An Act to authorize and enable the President to assert and prosecute with effect, the claim of the United States to the legacy bequeathed to them by James Smithson, late of London, deceased, to found at Washington, under the name of the Smithsonian Institution, an establishment for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men.”](#) (5 Stat. 64, Chap. 252; July 1, 1836). ProQuest Congressional

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## Major Acts

**Deposit Act of 1836.** Required the Secretary of the Treasury to designate at least one bank in each State and territory as a place of public deposit of U.S. funds. Also provided for the distribution of surplus revenue in excess of \$5 million among the States, in proportion to their representation in the Senate and House of Representatives, as a loan subject to recall by the Secretary of the Treasury. Approved June 23, 1836. ([5 Stat. 52, Chap. 115](#))

**Judiciary Act of 1837.** Increased the number of Supreme Court Justices from 7 to 9. Approved Mar. 3, 1837. ([5 Stat. 176, Chap. 178](#))

Sources:

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