

Sixtieth Congress

Mar. 4, 1907-Mar. 4, 1909

Second Administration of Theodore Roosevelt

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Historical Background

The 60th Congress saw the beginnings of many sweeping changes for the United States when the first session began on March 4, 1907. Immigration, foreign and military policy, and economic recovery were at the forefront of policymakers' minds as they sought to tackle problems with policies advocated by a very strong progressive movement and popular presidency. Efficiency, modernization, and global expansion also played key roles in the shaping of legislation during the Congress.

During the previous congress, the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization was established to deal more effectively with the ever-increasing numbers of immigrants. Another measure from the 59th Congress set forth the basis for issuance of U.S. passports to non-Americans and specific requirements for the act of expatriation. These acts could not have had better timing. 1907 was the busiest year ever seen at New York's Ellis Island, with 1,123,844 reported immigrant arrivals. In total, 1,285,349 immigrants entered the United States in 1907.

Even so, there were signs of backlash against immigrants in California, as a recent increase in Japanese immigration to cities such as San Francisco triggered a nativist response among some of the populace. Japan, having recently defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, was keen to be seen and treated as an equal on the world stage. To that end, the Japanese government was eager to prevent any soiling of its reputation by anti-immigrant actions such as those taken against Chinese immigrants with the Chinese Exclusion Acts. To avoid this, President Roosevelt entered into a so-called "Gentleman's Agreement" with Japan in 1907, in which the United States agreed not to apply any restrictive measures against Japanese immigration and, in return, Japan would no longer permit emigration of Japanese subjects to the U.S.



President Theodore Roosevelt

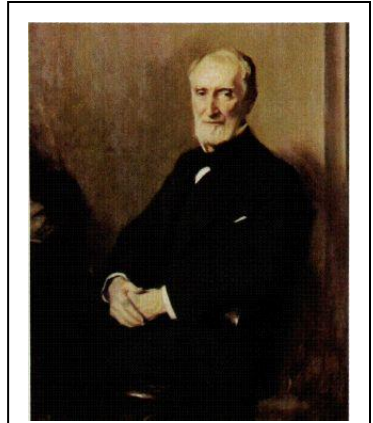
House	Senate
Majority Party: Republican (223 seats)	Majority Party: Republican (61 seats)
Minority Party: Democrat (167 seats)	Minority Party: Democrat (31 seats)
Other Parties: Independent (1 seat)	Other Parties: Independent (0 seat)
Speaker of the House: Joseph G. Cannon	President Pro Tempore: William P. Frye

Racial tensions also flared in Springfield, Illinois during the 60th Congress. On August 14, 1908, after two Black men were arrested on suspicion of raping white women, a mob of nearly 5,000 white men sought to lynch the men, only to find that the Sheriff had transferred them from the city to prevent such an incident. The mob proceeded to Black neighborhoods in the city, destroying property, burning homes, and murdering innocent Black residents over the next three days. The Springfield Race Riot of 1908 was a watershed moment in the history of race relations in the U.S., in part because the incident took place in a northern state—indeed, the “Land of Lincoln”—and would be an important catalyst in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

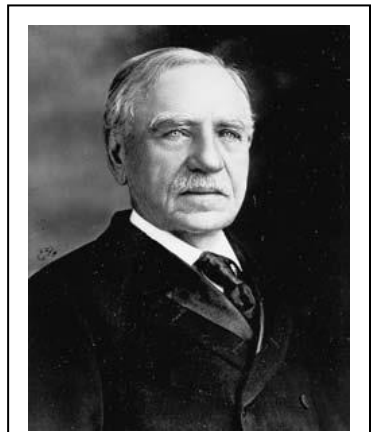
Overseas, the Second Hague Peace Conference was convened. Work on a permanent international judicial tribunal had begun and a new system for settling international disputes between nations was being developed. The United States reinforced its commitment to international peace by taking part in these and many other conferences. Lastly, the United States continued its intervention in Cuba to maintain stability and order within the island nation.

The 60th Congress also saw the final two years of the Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency, famously known for his progressive values and conservationism. During his 1907 State of the Union address, he pushed for “Square Deal” policies ranging from the conservation of natural resources, consumer protection, control of corporations, and a stronger American presence abroad. Congress responded by increasing diplomatic and military appropriations, introducing anti-trust and liability reforms, and enacting heavier safety regulations on transportation. Though the phrase “Square Deal” was first used by the press to describe Roosevelt’s approach to these issues, particularly as concerns curbing the excesses of corporations and other large interests, President Roosevelt took to it and incorporated into his political rhetoric. Roosevelt saw anti-competitive practices aimed at reserving power for the already powerful as perhaps the chief moral issue of his time. But these same policies that led many journalists to admire the President were also a source of contention between the President and his own party, ultimately coming to a head with the Stock Market Panic of March 1907. On January 8, 1909, the House of Representatives accepted a resolution condemning outgoing President Theodore Roosevelt, voting 212-35 to effectively censure him. That same day, the Judiciary Committee was directed to investigate any wrongdoing by the President during the Panic of 1907. The Panic also prevented the President from fully realizing his “Square Deal” agenda. On March 4, 1909, he was officially succeeded by his former Secretary of War, William Howard Taft.

Despite signs of economic strength in certain sectors, the Stock Market Panic followed by business failures in the mid-year revealed serious flaws in the U.S. currency and credit structure. In May of 1908, Congress passed the Aldrich-Vreeland Emergency Currency Act, designed to introduce an element of elasticity into the national currency with the object of preventing future panics. Other major legislation enacted during the 60th Congress include the Narcotic Drugs Import and Export Act, enacted February 1909, which established the Federal Narcotics Control Board (FNCB) to oversee



Speaker of the House
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President Pro Tempore
William P. Frye

the importation and exportation of psychoactive drugs derived from opium and coca, and the Conspiracy Act (Offenses Against U.S.), enacted that March, which codified criminal statutes relating to crimes committed against the United States.

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War or Peace?

Unrest in Cuba and Expanding American Influence

Shortly before the 60th Congress convened, in the face of unrest in Cuba following the resignation of President Tomás Estrada Palma, the United States exercised its prerogative under the Cuban-American Treaty of Relations of 1903, which states, in part:

“The Government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the Treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the Government of Cuba.”

The conflict in Cuba began with the heavily contested election of 1905, in which the party of Estrada Palma engaged in widespread fraud to guarantee his victory over the liberal candidate José Miguel Gómez. Partisans on both sides of the conflict sought the intervention of the United States. President Roosevelt sent Secretary of War William H. Taft to Cuba on a fact-finding mission, though he was dubious of the prospect of supporting either side in the conflict. Following the resignation of Estrada Palma, Secretary Taft invoked the 1903 treaty and organized a provisional government. Roosevelt and the Congress authorized a deployment of as many as 18,000 soldiers, though the number never reached even half that total. The military mission centered around the urban centers and transportation corridors, focusing on ensuring the stability and continued operation of the sugar cane industry, in

which there were deeply entrenched U.S. interests. In October, the Provisional Governor Charles E. Magoon certified that stability had been restored to a sufficient degree to plan for new elections, which were held in May 1908. José Miguel Gómez prevailed in the U.S. military-supervised elections, and the U.S. began its withdrawal from the country in early-1909, shortly after his inauguration.

Roosevelt greatly expanded the military establishment during his presidency and pushed through Congress several large military appropriations to support it. Prior to the 60th Congress, the United States had the fifth largest navy in the world—by 1907 it had the third largest. In a demonstration of this new naval might, Roosevelt sent the Great White Fleet (named after its gleaming white paint) on an around-the-world cruise in 1908-09. Consisting of 16 U.S. Navy battleships, its voyage included passage from the Indian Ocean into the Mediterranean Sea through the Suez Canal. It was the largest group of ships to pass through the Canal up to that time and the Canal was closed to all other traffic.

Despite military appearances, Roosevelt's foreign policy was not heavily marked by war, but by peace. Diplomacy through the use of stern proclamations and effective negotiation gave the United States a new reputation. As the world and the U.S.'s position in it continued to change at breakneck pace, policymakers, President Roosevelt chief among them, saw an opening to redefine and the Monroe Doctrine, allowing for greater U.S. influence in economic and military affairs. Throughout 1908 and 1909 Congress focused on expanding U.S. consular presence in Asia; solidifying the boundaries between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico; and increasing general participation abroad through conferences and exhibitions.

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Economic Trends and Conditions

The country was seeing a developing economic recession at the beginning of the first session of the 60th Congress in 1907. Caused by several factors originating from events between September 1906 and March 1907, the stock market slid a dramatic 9.8% between March 9 and March 26, 1907. A cascading failure erupted in the financial system. Common stocks used as collateral dropped in valuation. In June, an offering of New York City bonds failed. In July, the copper market collapsed. In August, Standard Oil Company was fined \$29 million for antitrust violations, causing tremors on the market. By September 1907, stocks had fallen by 24.4% from the beginning of the year.

This culminated in the Panic of 1907, also known as the 1907 Bankers' Panic or Knickerbocker Crisis, in which the New York Stock Exchange fell almost 50% from its peak in the previous year. Caused by stock manipulation

beginning on October 14th, the Panic resulted in mass runs on banks and trust funds and caused dozens of bank and business failures. Without a centralized banking system, the Federal Government struggled to control the crisis. The Panic continued to spread and by October 22, the New York Stock Exchange nearly collapsed.

On October 24, the impending collapse was averted when J. P. Morgan and other Wall Street financiers created a \$25,000,000 pool to invest in shares on the plunging New York Stock Exchange. Treasury Secretary George Cortelyou agreed to deposit Federal money in New York banks to ensure further investment borrowing and stability. On October 29, J.P. Morgan purchased \$30 million in New York City bonds to keep the city solvent.

On November 2, the large stock of Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Company began to collapse, and in an effort to stop the damage to the already weakened financial system, U.S. Steel proposed to purchase the company. On November 4, President Theodore Roosevelt gave tacit approval of U.S. Steel's takeover of Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Company, despite anticompetitive concerns and his own antimonopoly stance. By November 6, 1907 the markets began to recover and the runs on banks and trusts ended.

The Panic revealed serious flaws in the U.S. currency and credit structure. In response, Congress passed the Aldrich-Vreeland Emergency Currency Act, an act designed to introduce an element of elasticity into the national currency with the object of preventing future panics. The act allowed national banks to start currency associations for the issuance of emergency funds in times of panic, provided tougher securities restrictions to ensure against bank failures, and guaranteed bank notes. This act also created the National Monetary Commission.

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Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

Loewe v. Lawlor, (Danbury Hatters' Case) concerning the application of the Sherman Antitrust Act to labor union protests obstructing interstate commerce. Also held that individual unionists could be held personally liable for damages incurred by the activities of their union, 208 U.S. 274 (1908)

Adair v. United States, upheld the use of employer-employee "yellow-dog" contracts that forbade workers from joining labor unions. Held that Section 10 of the Erdman Act was unconstitutional, 208 U.S. 161 (1908)

Muller v. Oregon, upheld Oregon state restrictions on the working hours of women as justified by the special state interest in protecting women's health, 208 U.S. 412 (1908)

Ex parte Young, upheld Oregon state restrictions on the working hours of women as justified by the special state interest in protecting women's health, 208 U.S. 412 (1908)

Bobbs-Merrill Co. v. Straus, concerning the scope of rights accorded owners of a copyright. Ruled a copyright holder cannot control resale prices by use of licenses. Established what came to be known as the "first-sale doctrine," 210 U.S. 339 (1908)

Berea College v. Kentucky, upheld the rights of states to prohibit private educational institutions chartered as corporations from admitting both black and white students, 211 U.S. 45 (1908)

Twining v. New Jersey, held the Fifth Amendment did not apply to state trials, 211 U.S. 78 (1908)

Sources:

Bennett, Charles Goodwin. [Federal Anti-Trust Decisions](#), Department of Justice, May 17, 1911, 62nd Congress, 1st Session. S.doc.111. ProQuest Congressional, 6102 S.doc.111

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[Message of the President of the United States Transmitting the Report of the Employers' Liability and Workmen's Compensation Commission](#), Senate, May 10, 1911, 62nd Congress, 2nd Session. S.doc.338. ProQuest Congressional, 6152 S.doc.338

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1907 Events

- **Jan. 23:** Charles Curtis from Kansas becomes the first Native American U.S. Senator by popular vote
- **Mar. 5:** At the opening of the new State Duma in St. Petersburg, Russia, 40,000 demonstrators are dispersed by Russian troops
- **Mar. 9:** [Reclamation Service is established within the Department of the Interior](#)
- **Mar. 15-16:** Nineteen women are elected in the Finland parliamentary elections in the first elections in Europe where universal suffrage is applied

- **Apr. 17:** [The busiest day of immigration in the history Ellis Island with 11,747 arrivals](#)
- **June 15:** [The Second Hague Peace Conference is held](#)
- **July 25:** [Korea becomes a protectorate of Japan](#)
- **Aug. 31:** Count Alexander Izvolsky and Sir Arthur Nicolson sign the St. Petersburg Convention, which results in the establishment of the Triple Entente alliance between France, Britain, and Russia
- **Sept. 7:** The largest passenger liner in the world RMS Lusitania makes its maiden voyage from Liverpool, England to New York City
- **Oct. 14-Nov. 6:** [Panic of 1907 - A stock manipulation scheme aimed at cornering the market for shares in the United Copper Company unraveled, causing the stock to lose 50% of its value and instigating a panic on Wall Street that lasted for three weeks and worsened the nation's economic contraction](#)
- **Oct. 17:** [Guglielmo Marconi initiates commercial transatlantic radio communications between his high power longwave wireless telegraphy stations in Clifden, Ireland and Glace Bay, Nova Scotia](#)
- **Oct. 18:** [Hague Convention is revised by the Second Hague Peace Conference](#)
- **Nov. 16:** [Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory were merged and admitted as the 46th state Oklahoma](#)
- **Dec. 4:** [Monongah Mining Disaster - A coal mine explosion kills 362 workers in Monongah, West Virginia, United States](#)
- **Dec. 16:** [The Great White Fleet departs Hampton Roads, Virginia on a 14-month circumnavigation of the globe, returning on February 22, 1909](#)

1908 Events

- **Jan. 1:** Nimrod Expedition begins when Ernest Shackleton sets sail from New Zealand on the Nimrod for Antarctica
- **Jan 11:** [Grand Canyon is designated as a national monument](#)
- **Feb. 1:** King Carlos I of Portugal and Infante Luis Filipe are shot dead in Lisbon
- **Feb. 18:** [Japanese emigration to the U.S. is forbidden under terms of the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907](#)
- **Mar. 23:** American diplomat Durham Stevens, an employee of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is assassinated in San Francisco by two Korean immigrants unhappy with his recent support for the increasing Japanese presence in Korea
- **Apr. 27:** The Games of the IV Olympiad, the 1908 Summer Olympics, are held in London
- **July 3:** [Young Turk Revolution in the Ottoman Empire begins](#)
- **Aug. 14:** Springfield Race Riot of 1908 in Springfield, Illinois
- **Aug. 24:** Sultan Abdelaziz of Morocco is deposed, and is succeeded by his brother Abd al-Hafid
- **Sept. 17:** At Fort Myer, Virginia, Thomas Selfridge becomes the first person to die in an airplane crash. The pilot, Orville Wright, is severely injured in the crash but recovers
- **Sept. 27:** [Henry Ford produces his first Model T automobile](#)

- **Oct. 5:** Bulgaria declares its independence from the Ottoman Empire
- **Oct. 6:** The Bosnian Crisis begins after the Austro-Hungarian Empire annexes Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Nov. 24:** The first credit union in the United States begins operation in Manchester, New Hampshire
- **Dec. 2:** [Child Emperor Pu Yi ascends the Chinese throne at age 2](#)
- **Dec. 28:** [The 7.1 magnitude Messina Earthquake and tsunami hit Sicily and Calabria, destroying Messina, Italy and kills over 70,000 people](#)

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Roosevelt, Theodore. [Convention: Japan \[reciprocal patent rights for Korea\]. May 19, 1908](#). Unnumbered Executive Orders, Aug. 11, 1908, ProQuest Congressional, 1908-29-16

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U.S. House. 110th Congress, 1st Session "[H. Con. Res. 261: Commemorating the centennial anniversary of the sailing of the Navy's Great White Fleet, launched by President Theodore Roosevelt on December 16, 1907, from Hampton Roads, Virginia, and returning there on February 22, 1909](#)" (Version: Engrossed in House; Version Date 12/11/07). ProQuest Congressional, 110 H.Con.Res. 261

U.S. Senate. 110th Congress, 1st Session "[S. 587: Model T Ford Automobile Commemorative Coin Act](#)" (Version: Introduced in Senate; Version Date 2/14/07). ProQuest Congressional, 110 S. 587

Major Acts

Aldrich-Vreeland Emergency Currency Act. Established a National Monetary Commission to study the banking and currency systems of the United States and foreign countries. Provided also that national banks in the same locality might form "national currency associations," and in times of emergency could issue circulating notes based on commercial paper and State, county, and municipal bonds. A graduated tax of up to 10 percent was to be levied on such notes. Approved May 30, 1908. ([35 Stat. 546; PL60-169](#))

Narcotic Drugs Import and Export Act. Amended the Opium Importation Prohibition Act of 1909 to establish the Federal Narcotics Control Board (FNCB) to oversee the importation and exportation of opioid and other psychoactive drugs, including those derived from coca. Approved Feb. 9, 1909. ([35 Stat. 614, Chap. 100; PL60-221](#))

Conspiracy Act (Offenses Against U.S.). Codified criminal statutes relating to offenses committed against the United States, including treason, offenses against neutrality, and offenses against the operation of the government. Approved Mar. 9, 1909. ([35 Stat. 1088, Chap. 321; PL60-350](#))

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