

Sixty-Eight Congress

March 4, 1923 – March 4, 1925

Administration of Warren G. Harding/First Administration of Calvin Coolidge*

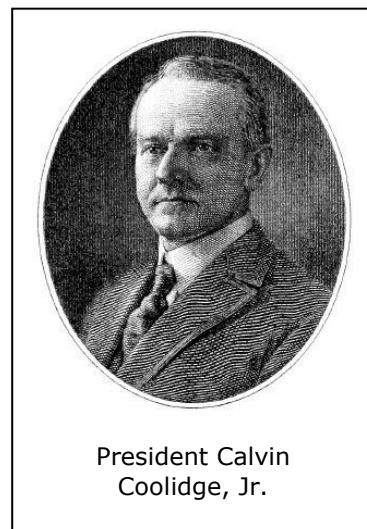
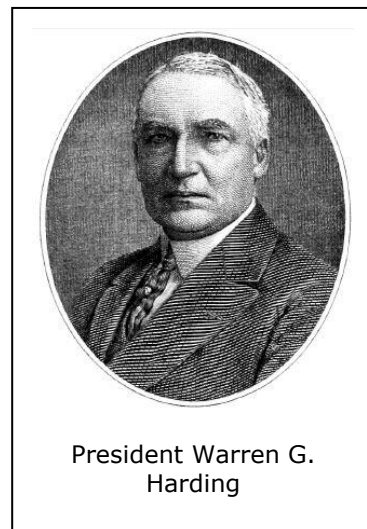
*Calvin Coolidge succeeds Warren Harding as the 30th President following Harding’s death on Aug. 2, 1923 in San Francisco

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Historical Background

The continued economic troubles afflicting the nation had significant consequences for President Warren G. Harding’s Republican Party in the midterm elections of 1922. Though they managed to maintain their majorities in both houses of Congress, it was by the thinnest of margins. In the House, the Republican majority declined from 302 of 435 seats in the 67th Congress to 225 of 435 seats in the 68th, and in the Senate, the Republicans’ majority declined from 59 of 96 seats in the 67th Congress to 53 of 96 seats in the 68th. During the summer of 1923, Harding embarked on a cross-country journey he called the “Voyage of Understanding,” hoping to see as much of the country as he could, including the territory of Alaska, and to work on material for his reelection campaign in 1924. By the end of July, however, the President’s grueling schedule began to exacerbate health issues that had been plaguing him in recent years. On July 27th, the President gave a speech before a crowd of 25,000 at the stadium at University of Washington in Seattle, but his exhaustion was such that he rushed through the speech and called for his physician, ultimately receiving a diagnosis of heart problems compounded by pneumonia. The President resumed his grueling schedule, however, and on the evening of August 2, as First Lady Florence Harding read aloud from the Saturday Evening Post, President Warren G. Harding died of a probable heart attack in their hotel room in San Francisco.

Hours later, at 2:47 a.m., on August 3, 1923, Vice President Calvin Coolidge assumed the Presidency and became the only Chief Executive to have the oath of office administered by his father, a notary public. In his first annual message before the Congress that December, Coolidge outlined a modest agenda, calling for the reorganization and consolidation of the U.S. Foreign



Service, revisions to the statutes establishing the Veterans Bureau, and amendments to the Immigration Act of 1921 to place greater strictures on immigration of people from certain countries. Within a year, each of these proposals was enacted into law: respectively, the Rogers Act of 1924, enacted May of that year, the World War Veterans' Act, 1924, enacted that June, and the Immigration Act of 1924, approved that May. The last of these continued the growing anti-immigrant sentiment in the country, amending the Immigration Act of 1917 to prohibit the immigration of any persons from any country on the continent of Asia, or any island adjacent thereto that was not under U.S. dominion.

Sensitive to the postwar economic contraction and the new vibrancy of the labor movement in the U.S., Congress approved the World War Adjusted Compensation Act. Veterans' organizations advocated for this bill, which provided for the payment of a "bonus" to ex-servicemen to compensate them for wages unrealized due to their service. Coolidge opposed the bill and vetoed it when he received it from the Congress, but his veto was overridden and the Act became law. Other legislation influenced by the organizing of soldiers who served during the World War included the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. This law granted citizenship to any Native Americans born within the territory of the United States and who had previously been denied citizenship. The Act was conceived, in part, in recognition of the thousands of Native Americans who served during the war and did not impinge upon a Native American citizen's rights associated with their tribal membership. With the Indian Citizenship Act of June 1924, Congress granted citizenship to non-citizen Indians born within the territorial limits of the United States.

Another major initiative influenced by the growing labor movement in the United States was the proposed Child Labor Amendment to the Constitution. The amendment would have granted the Federal government authority to regulate labor of persons younger than 18-years of age. The extraordinary step of amending the Constitution was necessitated when the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act, enacted in 1916, was held unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Hammer v. Dagenhart*, 247 U.S. 251 (1918), and a provision of the Revenue Act of 1918 that authorized the Federal government to levy taxes on companies that employed children was similarly struck down in *Bailey v. Drexel Furniture Co.*, 259 U.S. 20 (1922). Though approved by both houses of Congress in 1924 and ratified by a majority of the states, the amendment has yet to reach the 3/4 of states threshold required by Article V of the Constitution.

The Congress also enacted a substantial amendment to the nation's first campaign finance law, the Federal Corrupt Practices Act. This law, originally enacted in 1910 and amended in 1911, established spending limits for Federal election campaigns. The Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1925 amended the earlier law, extending the law's authority to multi-state parties and election committees, and mandated a regime of quarterly financial disclosures.

Approval of the Clarke-McNary Act of June 1924 expanded Federal assistance in protecting both public and private forest producing lands from

House	Senate
Majority Party: Republican (225 seats)	Majority Party: Republican (53 seats)
Minority Party: Democrat (207 seats)	Minority Party: Democrat (42 seats)
Other Parties: Farmer-Labor (2 seats); Socialist (1 seat)	Other Parties: Farmer-Labor (1 seat);
Speaker of the House: Frederick H. Gillett	Majority Leader: Charles Curtis



Senate Majority Leader Charles Curtis

fire and in producing seedlings for future forests. Also in June, Congress submitted the proposed Child Labor Amendment to the States for ratification, but was never able to gain the required two-thirds approval needed for it to become part of the Constitution.

Source:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [*Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980*](#), Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

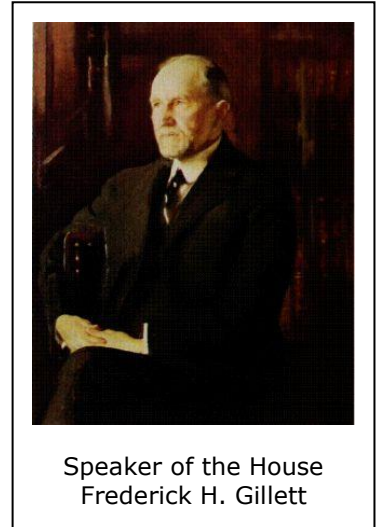
War or Peace?

Latin America

The United States remained intensely interested in developments in Latin America during the 68th Congress. There was considerable bitterness in the region over what was viewed as a paternalistic and interventionist U.S. foreign policy, including in Mexico, where the new, post-revolutionary government of President Álvaro Obregón was not recognized by the Harding administration, and in Nicaragua, which had experienced a series of U.S. interventions and occupations over the preceding decades. Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes worked to improve relations between the U.S. and the various Latin American states. At his encouragement, the new administration of Calvin Coolidge formally recognized the post-revolutionary government in Mexico and normalized relations between the two neighbors.

Potentially of even greater significance was the fifth Pan-American Conference, held in Santiago de Chile, from March 25-May 3, 1923. The Pan-American Union, the predecessor organization of today's Organization of American States (OAS), is an intergovernmental organization comprised of the governments of the various states of the American continents, the goal of which was to facilitate dialogue and cooperation in economic and security matters, and to prevent or defuse situations that might otherwise lead to armed conflict. The conference culminated in the drafting and signing of the Pan-American Treaty to avoid or prevent conflicts between the American States, which mandated the establishment of a Pan-American Commission, as a body empowered to investigate grievances among the signatory states, and prohibited the signatory states from mobilizing their armed forces against one another. The treaty was signed by the governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, and the United States.

It wasn't long before this new environment of cooperation would be put to the test. In Honduras, the instability of the major political parties led to the failure of any candidate to receive the required majority of votes in the Presidential election of October 1923. According to the terms of the Honduran Constitution, the responsibility for naming the next President fell upon the legislature, however, that body was unable to muster a quorum to facilitate a vote. Then President Rafael Lopez Gutierrez announced his



intention to remain in office until new elections could be held but refused to set a date for elections. Chaos ensued, with representatives of competing factions unilaterally declaring themselves to be President. A contingent of U.S. Marines was dispatched from the USS Denver to protect American citizens, property, and interests, while further naval vessels were directed to the country. On May 3rd, 1924, representatives of Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and the United States signed the Pact of Anapala which agreed to stop aid to rebel forces throughout Honduras if they kept threatening to overthrow Honduran President Rafael Gutierrez.

German Reparations

The aftermath of World War I and the reparations scheme devised by the victorious allies during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 was having a crippling effect on the German economy. The burden of reparations payments that the German government was required to pay to the victorious allied states were compounded by demands for reparations by German industrialists who lost their assets in Lorraine, which was annexed by France after the war. This led to a situation of hyperinflation of the German mark, which further contributed to the deterioration of the German economy. In early 1923, Germany defaulted on its reparations payments and German coal producers refused to ship any further coal out of the country, leading France and Belgium, who were heavily reliant upon German coal, to occupy the Ruhr River Valley, the heart of German industrial and coal production, to compel the coal producers to resume coal shipments as required by the Treaty of Versailles.

Hoping to forestall a deepening of the crisis, the Allied Reparations Commission tasked Charles G. Dawes, a member of the Commission from the United States to devise a plan. The resultant Dawes Plan, signed by the United States, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, and France, called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Ruhr Valley, presented a new scheme for German reparations payments, provided for short-term loans to Germany to help mitigate the economic crisis there, among other provisions. The plan proved unworkable, however, and a new plan was to be drawn up at the request of Germany in the coming years.

Meanwhile, the aftermath of the war continued to sow unrest in many corners. Though the Bolsheviks had largely trounced the White Russian opposition in the Russian Civil War by the end of 1922, there remained pockets of White Russian resistance in the Russian far east, as well as various rebellions in some of the satellite republics of the U.S.S.R. In Georgia (Sakartvelo), in the South Caucasus, a nascent and ultimately short-lived Democratic Republic of Georgia, founded by the opposition Social Democrats (Mensheviks), had been brutally crushed by Stalin in 1921. Still eager to escape the yoke of Russian domination, Social Democrats in Georgia planned a republic-wide uprising to begin on August 29, 1924. Though initially somewhat successful, Stalin again ordered the so-called August Uprising to be brutally crushed. An estimated 3,000 Georgians were killed in the fighting that ensued, and an estimated 10,000+ were executed by the Soviet authorities, with an additional 20,000 deported to Siberia or the Central Asian republics. Elsewhere, the campaign of violence by the Italian Fascist

Party continued in that country throughout this period, an attempted coup d'état by communists in Estonia was put down in September 1924, and similar unrest was seen in Romania and Bulgaria.

Sources:

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[Correspondence Between the U.S. and Great Britain Relating to the Participation of the U.S. in Payments Under the Dawes Plan, Nov. 15, 1924 to Jan. 3, 1925](#). Committee on Ways and Means, House, Jan. 1, 1925. 69th Congress, 1st Session, H11224. ProQuest Congressional, CMP-1925-WAM-0003

["Pan American treaty to avoid conflicts between American States. Signed at Santiago, May 3, 1923; proclaimed, January 12, 1927."](#) (44 Stat. 2527; May 3, 1923). ProQuest Congressional

Economic Trends and Conditions

Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon, a Harding appointee, advocated for pro-business and laissez-faire policies. In his 1923 report to Congress, Secretary Mellon stressed that high taxation meant higher prices and costs of living and that lowering taxes would help the 7,000,000 income tax payers and the nation as a whole. Upon President Harding's death in August 1923, Coolidge, having assumed office, echoed similar sentiments in his 1923 State of the Union by calling for the decrease in the overall wartime tax rates and dropping earned income tax rates. He also advocated for Federal budget cuts, deregulation of business, increased tariffs to protect American business interests, and reducing some of the Federal debt.

On June 2nd, 1924, Congress passed the Revenue Act of 1924, also known as the Mellon Plan, which reduced income tax rates and eliminated all income taxation for over two million people, with bottom rates dropping from 1.5% to 1.125%. President Coolidge's Administration helped usher in the period known as the "Roaring Twenties," which was characterized by rapid economic growth.

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Coolidge, Calvin. [Annual Message of the President of the United States to a Joint Session of the Senate and House of Representatives](#). House, Dec. 6, 1923. 68th Congress, 1st Session, H.doc.1 (Pr30.1:923). ProQuest Congressional, 8273 H.doc.1

Mellon, Andrew W. [Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1923](#). Department of Treasury, House, Nov. 20, 1923. 68th Congress, 1st Session, H.doc.63 (T1.1:923). ProQuest Congressional, 8276 H.doc.63

Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

Moore et al. v. Dempsey, held that mob-dominated trials went against the Fourteenth Amendment's due process clause and that if federal courts are petitioned under a writ of a habeas corpus, they must review discrimination claims in state trials and to order the release of unfairly convicted defendants, 261 U.S. 86 (1923)

United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind, concluded that persons of Indian descent were ineligible for naturalized citizenship after Bhagat Singh Thind, a man of Indian-origin tried to claim naturalized citizenship in Oregon on the basis of being part of the "Aryan race," but was denied because he was not a "white person" in the sense intended in the relevant 1790 statute governing naturalization, 261 U.S. 204 (1923)

Adkins v. Children's Hospital, concluded that women and children are not guaranteed a minimum wage by law, that employers and employees had a right to contract however they saw fit, and that women do not need greater protection than men in wage disputes, 261 U.S. 525 (1923)

Meyer v. Nebraska, declared a law prohibiting the teaching of young children any language besides English unconstitutional, stating a violation of Due Process, 262 U.S. 390 (1923)

Massachusetts v. Mellon, held that the administration of federal statutes concerning grants to states for health and welfare of infants and mothers was of public concern, rather than individual; the Court held that it could not review acts without a clear, immediate, and definite danger of injury to an individual, 262 U.S. 447 (1923)

Chung Fook v. White, concluded that a native-born citizen did not have the automatic right to bring their spouse to the United States even if they married them after they entered the country even if that exception was not explicitly mentioned in the law, 264 U.S. 443 (1924)

Sources:

Costello. George A. and Johnny H. Killian. [Constitution of the United States of America. Analysis and Interpretation](#). Senate, Jan. 1, 1996. 103rd Congress, 1st Session, S. Doc. 103-6. ProQuest Congressional, 14152 S.doc.6

1923 Events

- **Jan. 1-7: Rosewood Massacre** – When a group of White men lynched a Black resident of Rosewood, Florida, then a predominantly Black

community, the town's Black residents organized themselves to defend the town from further attacks. In response, a mob comprising several hundred White residents of neighboring communities descended on Rosewood, burning every structure in the town and hunting down Black residents and lynching them. The death toll is disputed, with official figures citing eight deaths, seven of whom were Black, eyewitness accounts put the toll much higher, with estimates as high as 150

- **Mar. 9:** Vladimir Lenin suffers his third stroke, which renders him bedridden and unable to speak; he consequently retires from his position as Chairman of the Soviet government
- **Apr. 5:** Firestone Tire and Rubber Company starts producing inflatable tires
- **Apr. 18:** Yankee Stadium opens its doors in the Bronx, NY
- **May 1:** *Weimar Republic* - Adolf Hitler and Ernst Rohm attempt to break up a socialist May Day demonstration
- **May 27:** The Ku Klux Klan defies a law requiring publication of its members
- **June 18:** Mount Etna erupts in Italy, making 60,000 homeless
- **July 3:** Dockers' strike in southern Great Britain and London
- **July 13:** Hollywood sign is officially dedicated in the hills above Los Angeles
- **July 24:** [Treaty of Lausanne is signed by Greece, Bulgaria and other countries that fought in the First World War, settling the boundaries of the Republic of Turkey and bringing an end to the Ottoman Empire](#)
- **July 25:** *Weimar Republic* - Extreme inflation continues with the German mark devalued at 600,000 Marks per 1 USD
- **Aug. 2:** [President Warren G. Harding, dies of a heart attack and is succeeded by Vice President Calvin Coolidge](#)
- **Aug. 20:** London Dock strikes ends
- **Sept. 1:** [The Great Kantō earthquake devastates Tokyo and Yokohama, killing an estimated 142,807 people](#)
- **Oct. 29:** [Turkey becomes a republic following the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, with Kemal Atatürk being elected as the president](#)
- **Nov. 8:** *Weimar Republic* - [Adolf Hitler leads the Nazis in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Bavarian government, known as the Beer Hall Putsch](#)
- **Dec. 10:** *Weimar Republic* - Government calls for a salary and price freeze in Germany to attempt to combat inflation

1924 Events

- **Jan. 21:** [After Vladimir Lenin's death, Joseph Stalin begins to purge his rivals to clear the way for his leadership](#)
- **Jan. 24:** USSR-Russian city of St. Petersburg renamed Leningrad, returning to its original name in 1991
- **Feb. 22:** Calvin Coolidge becomes the first President of the U.S. to deliver a radio broadcast from the White House

- **Mar. 3:** 1,400-year-old Islamic caliphate is abolished when Caliph Abdul Mejid II of the Ottoman Empire is deposed, one of the reforms of Turkish President, Kemal Atatürk
- **Apr. 6:** Fascists win the elections in Italy with a 2/3 majority
- **May 10:** J. Edgar Hoover is appointed head of Bureau of Investigation (predecessor of FBI)
- **May 24:** [The Immigration Act of 1924, which included the Asian Exclusion Act, is signed into law in the U.S.](#)
- **June 2:** President Coolidge signs the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, allowing for Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the U.S. to become citizens
- **Aug. 28:** The August Uprising, led by anti-Soviet political organizations, occurs in Georgia against the Soviet Union, leading to an estimated 15,000 deaths between fighting and executions
- **Sept. 28:** [U.S. Army pilots John Harding and Erik Nelson complete the first round-the-world flight, which takes 175 days and 74 stops along the way](#)
- **Oct. 2:** [The League of Nations adopted the Geneva Protocol to strengthen the League, but eventually failed ratification](#)
- **Nov. 4:** Republican Incumbent Calvin Coolidge defeats Democrat John W. Davis and Progressive Robert M. LaFollette, Sr. in the 1924 U.S. presidential election
- **Dec. 20:** *Weimar Republic* - Adolf Hitler is released from prison after serving nine months of an 8-year sentence for helping organize the 1923 Beer Hall Putsch

Sources:

[Commerce yearbook, 1923.](#) Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Department of Commerce, Jan. 1, 1923. C18.26 Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Commerce Yearbook (C18.26:923). ProQuest Congressional, C18.26-2

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Coolidge, Calvin. [Expenses incurred on account of the sickness and death of President Harding \[...\].](#) Committee on Appropriations, House, Jan. 4, 1924. 68th Congress, 1st Session, H.doc.139. ProQuest Congressional, 8273 H.doc.139

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["The Lausanne Treaty."](#) Congressional Record, 69th Congress, Special Session (Mar. 17, 1925) Vol. 67, pp. 290-297. ProQuest Congressional, CR-1925-0317

Lodge, Henry Cabot. [*Conditions in Russia. Speech of Hon. William H. King a senator from the state of Utah delivered in the Senate January 22 and April 24, 1924*](#), Senate, May 26, 1924. 68th Congress, 1st Session, S.doc.126. ProQuest Congressional, 8246 S.doc.126

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Major Acts

World War Adjusted Compensation Act. Provided for the veterans pay, including for how long each veteran served. Veterans received \$1 for each day served domestically and \$1.25 every day served abroad, with maximum domestic tours set at \$500 and tours abroad capped at \$625. Approved May 19, 1924. ([43 Stat. 121, Chap. 157; PL68-120](#))

Rogers Act of 1924. Provided for the merger of the diplomatic and consular services, a system for assigning diplomats and support personnel, competitive examinations for new personnel, merit promotions, and set retirement age at 65. Approved May 24, 1924. ([43 Stat. 140, Chap. 182; PL68-135](#))

Immigration Act of 1924. Provided for the limitation of numbers of immigrants to 2%, down from 3%, of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890. Approved May 26, 1924. ([43 Stat. 153, Chap. 190; PL68-139](#))

Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. Provided that all non-citizen Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the United States were declared to be citizens and established that U.S. citizenship would not impair or affect the right to any tribal or other property. Approved June 2, 1924. ([43 Stat. 253, Chap. 233; PL68-175](#))

World War Veterans' Act, 1924. Provided that veteran disability ratings would include effects of the disability on the pre-service occupation of the veteran in addition to the original measure of "average impairment." Approved June 7, 1924. ([43 Stat. 607, Chap. 320; PL68-242](#))

Clarke-McNary Reforestation Act. Provided for the expansion of the National forests, allowed the Secretary of Agriculture to work with State officials to increase forest protection, the continuous production of timber, helped assist in reforestation efforts by working with private land owners, and called for states to set up their own forestry agencies. Approved June 7, 1924. ([44 Stat. 618, Chap. 365; PL69-270](#))

Federal Corrupt Practices Act of 1925. (Title III of Reclassification Act of 1925 (Postal Salaries)) Provided for the extension of the original Federal Corrupt Practices Act's powers to multi-state parties and election committees, the requirement of quarterly financial disclosure reports, reporting requirements of contributions of \$100 and more, and raised

Senate campaign spending limits to \$25,000. Approved Feb. 28, 1925. ([43 Stat. 1053, Chap. 368; PL68-506](#))

Source:

Dell, Christopher and Stephen W. Stathis. [Major Acts of Congress and Treaties Approved by the Senate, 1789-1980](#), Government Division (CRS), Sept. 1, 1982. 97th Congress, 2nd Session, 82-156 GOV. ProQuest Congressional, CRS-1982-GOV-0005

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