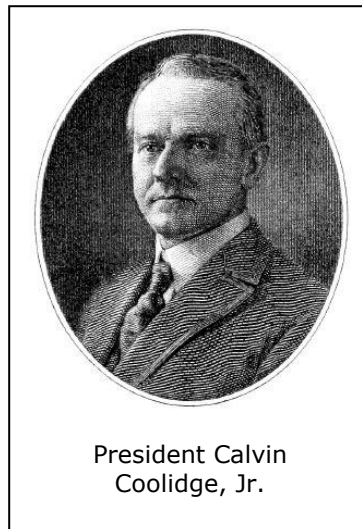


Sixty-Ninth Congress

March 4, 1925 – March 4, 1927

Second Administration of Calvin Coolidge, Jr.

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Historical Background

The nationalization of the nation’s railroad system during the First World War proved to be a stubbornly persistent problem for succeeding Congresses and administrations. A pair of laws—the Army Urgent Deficiency Appropriations of 1916 (39 Stat. 45, Chap. 56; Public Law 64-41) and the Federal Control Act (40 Stat. 451, Chap. 25; Public Law 65-107)—respectively enacted during the 64th and 65th Congresses, authorized the President to federalize the railroads during a time of war and established a mechanism for their administration as a public entity and provided compensation for those effected by the action. The move actually had a positive effect on the operation of the railroads as efficiency increased across the system under Federal control. Congress, therefore, was in favor of federalizing the railroads on a permanent basis after the war, but President Woodrow Wilson upon returning them to the private sector. As a compromise, the 66th Congress enacted the Transportation Act, 1920 (41 Stat. 456; Public Law 66-152), which, while returning the railroads to private ownership, attempted to preserve the best aspects of the federalized system and forestall future disruptions caused by labor disputes by creating the Railroad Labor Board (RLB), with the power to issue recommendations for resolving labor issues.

Unfortunately, the Congress’s attempt at devising a hybrid, public/private rail system proved unworkable. And so, the 69th Congress and the Coolidge administration were saddled with the responsibility of working out a problem that was a vestige of the war, which had ended six-and-a-half years earlier. Their solution, the Railway Labor Act, enacted May 20, 1926, abandoned compulsory arbitration in the case of labor disputes in favor of a system of mediation that would involve representatives of the railroads and labor unions. The Act established a Board of Mediation tasked with mediating disputes that the industry and labor unions were unable to resolve through traditional means.

House	Senate
Majority Party: Republican (247 seats)	Majority Party: Republican (54 seats)
Minority Party: Democrat (183 seats)	Minority Party: Democrat (41 seats)
Other Parties: Farmer-Labor (3 seats); American-Labor (1 seat); Socialist (1 seat)	Other Parties: Farmer-Labor (1 seat);
Speaker of the House: Nicholas Longworth IV	Majority Leader: Charles Curtis

That same day, the Congress enacted legislation addressing another national transportation-related issue. The Air Commerce Act of 1926 evinced an uncharacteristic confidence in the Federal government to administer public services. The Act granted extensive powers over commercial aviation to the newly-created Air Commerce Bureau, under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Commerce. The Air Commerce Bureau enjoyed broad control over matters pertaining to civil aviation safety, including the licensing of pilots and aircraft. And this wasn't the only piece of legislation that aimed at addressing some of the new technologies that were rapidly changing the way Americans went about their lives. Early the following year Congress enacted the Radio Act of 1927. The Act created the Federal Radio Commission—the predecessor to today's Federal Communications Commission (FCC)—with power to regulate the airwaves and issue and revoke broadcast licenses.

A last bit of Federal housekeeping addressed by the 69th Congress took the form of the Public Buildings Act of 1926. Despite the rapid expansion of the Federal government over the preceding years, including the creation of the Veterans' Bureau and other, sub-cabinet-level agencies, no monies had been appropriated for the construction of new Federal buildings since 1913. At the urging of President Coolidge, the Congress, including a somewhat reluctant Senate, enacted the Public Buildings Act, which authorized appropriations totaling \$165 million over five years, \$50 million of which was specifically earmarked for Washington D.C.

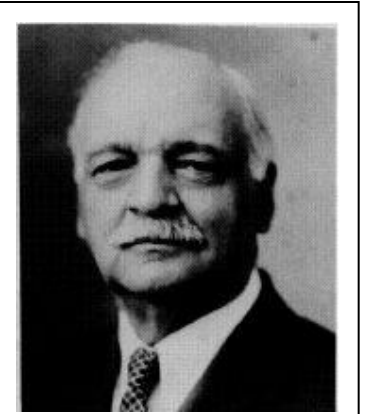
Source:

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

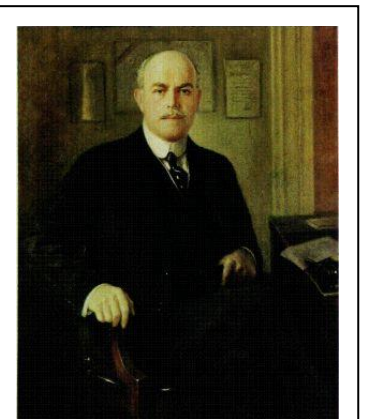
["Public Law 64-41: Army Urgent Deficiencies Appropriations, FY 1916."](#) (39 Stat. 45, Chap. 56; Mar. 3, 1916). ProQuest Congressional

["Public Law 65-107: Federal Control Act \(Transportation System\)."](#) (40 Stat. 451, Chap. 25; Mar. 21, 1918). ProQuest Congressional

["Public Law 66-152: Transportation Act, 1920."](#) (41 Stat. 456; Feb. 28, 1920). ProQuest Congressional



Senate Majority Leader
Charles Curtis



Speaker of the House
Nicholas Longworth IV

War or Peace?

A Changing Global Landscape

In his 1926 State of the Union address, President Coolidge emphasized his commitment to peace and keeping the United States out of armed conflicts. The Coolidge Administration had to confront a radical change in regime in China, which created uncertainties related to Chinese-American treaties. President Coolidge expressed his commitment to working with the new Chinese leadership. To that end, his Administration sent naval vessels to the region in order to ensure the safety of Americans in the area. President Coolidge also sent delegates to the Preparatory Commission for the

Disarmament Conference in Geneva, Switzerland, which covered issues related to the limitation of armaments.

Interventionist Foreign Policy in Latin America

Congress further addressed issues relating to American citizens and property in Mexico and Nicaragua and pledged intervention in both countries if Americans faced any problems. In 1926, a military presence was re-established in Nicaragua after the prior year's withdrawal, and an agreement was met between the two nations, which recognized the new President, Adolfo Diaz, and eased tensions. American interests were challenged in Mexico when the Mexican government cancelled oil permits of many American companies. President Coolidge continued his decree of peace and opened up further diplomatic relations to ease tensions with President Plutarco Calles. The U.S. and Mexico saw problems arise over the support for opposing sides in the Nicaraguan civil war.

Sources:

Committee on Foreign Affairs. House. [*Conditions in Nicaragua and Mexico*](#). GPO, Jan. 12-13, 28, Feb. 1, 1927. 69th Congress, 2nd Session, H458-6 (Y4.F76/1:N51/15). ProQuest Congressional, HRG-1927-FOA-0001

Coolidge, Calvin. [*Message of the President of the United States Communicated to the two Houses of Congress at the Beginning of the Second Session of the Sixty-ninth Congress 1926*](#). House, Dec. 7, 1926. 69th Congress, 2nd Session, H. Doc. 69-483. ProQuest Congressional, 8734 H.doc.483

Economic Trends and Conditions

Calvin Coolidge's Presidency coincided with the height of the so-called "roaring twenties," a period of American history that saw broad economic growth and prosperity largely realized thanks to a sustained bull market on Wall Street. In his 1926 address before the Congress, the President suggested that "nothing is more destructive of the progress of the Nation than Government extravagance." The President's economic program consisted of across the board income tax cuts, the elimination of governmental waste, and increased efficiency for manufacturing standards. This tripartite scheme, the President argued, the Coolidge Administration helped to facilitate reductions in commodity prices and increased wages, thereby reducing production costs and leaving more money in the pockets of workers. Coolidge's fiscal program, as conceived by Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, was set forth in the Revenue Act of 1926, which reduced personal income and inheritance taxes and abolished a wide variety of excise import fees.

Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon further highlighted the country's economic successes, noting a substantial decrease in federal debt, down from \$26.5 billion immediately following World War I, to \$19.5 billion by January 1927. Under Mellon's tenure as Treasury Secretary, the country enjoyed increased investment in public infrastructure. Further, the Public Buildings Act of 1926 authorized appropriations of \$165 million over five years for the

construction of new public structures and repairs of existing facilities. Secretary Mellon also pointed to the Federal government's ability to finance all public expenditures without increasing the national debt despite reductions in revenue resulting from cuts in income taxes mandated by the Revenue Act of 1926.

During this period, President Coolidge and the Congress were able to address the persistent problems associated with returning the nation's railroad system to the private sector. The Railway Labor Act, enacted May 20, 1926, abandoned compulsory arbitration in labor disputes in favor of a system of mediation that would involve representatives of the railroads and labor unions and established a Board of Mediation tasked with mediating labor disputes. The 69th Congress also enacted new initiatives aimed at assuring Federal regulation over new technological developments that were rapidly becoming part of Americans' everyday lives. The Air Commerce Act of 1926 created the Air Commerce Bureau, endowed with broad powers to oversee issues relating to the safety of civil aviation, including the licensing of pilots and aircraft. And the Radio Act of 1927 established the Federal Radio Commission, with authority to promulgate regulations and issue and revoke broadcast licenses.

Sources:

[Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1926.](#) Department of Treasury, Jan. 1, 1927. 69th Congress, 2nd Session, H.doc.513 (T1.1:926) ProQuest Congressional, 8740 H.doc.513

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Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

Gitlow v. New York, concluded that the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution had extended the reach of certain limitations on Federal government authority set forth in the First Amendment, specifically relating to protecting freedom of speech and freedom of the press, to the governments of the individual states, 268 U.S. 652 (1925)

Pierce v. Society of Sisters, concluded that requiring guardians to send their children to public school within the district that they reside was a violation of fundamental liberties and allowed for education and instruction to be performed by those other than public school teachers, 268 U.S. 510 (1925)

Euclid v. Amber Realty Co., concluded that village zoning ordinances shall be upheld unless there is a link between the ordinances and a threat to public welfare, 272 U.S. 365 (1926)

Myers v. U.S., concluded that the presidential appointment powers should not be restricted in appointing or removing postmasters of the first, second, and third classes, 272 U.S. 52 (1926)

Coronado Coal Co. v. United Mine Workers, held that in the event of strikes by local union workers, financed by international unions, where damages to property ensue, the liability of such damages are not to be imposed on the international organization, 268 U.S. 295 (1925)

United States v. General Electric Co., concluded that patentees who have granted a single license to a competitor to build their patented product are within their legal right to set prices for the licensee to sell the product, 272 U.S. 476 (1926)

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

1925 Events

- **Jan. 5:** [Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming becomes the first female governor in the U.S.](#)
- **Feb. 28:** The 1925 Charlevoix-Kamouraska earthquake strikes northeastern North America
- **Mar. 21:** Tennessee Governor Austin Peay signs the Butler Act, prohibiting the teaching of evolution in the state's public schools
- **Apr. 16:** The Communist assault on St. Nedelya Church claims roughly 150 lives in Sofia, Bulgaria
- **May 5:** Biology teacher John Scopes is arrested in Dayton, Tennessee for teaching Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution
- **June 13:** Charles Francis Jenkins achieves the first synchronized transmission of pictures and sound, using 48 lines, and a mechanical system, calling the transmission "radiovision," and viewed by the National Bureau of Standards, the U.S. Navy, Commerce Department, and others
- **Aug. 8:** The Ku Klux Klan hold a of 40,000 person parade in Washington DC; estimations of the groups total numbers, 5,000,000, made it the largest fraternal organization in the U.S. at the time
- **Sept. 3:** [The U.S. dirigible *Shenandoah* breaks up near Caldwell, Ohio, killing 14 crewmen](#)
- **Oct. 1:** Mount Rushmore is dedicated
- **Oct. 31:** [Reza Shah becomes Shah of Persia](#)

- **Nov. 5:** British secret agent Sidney Reilly is executed by the OGPU, the secret police of the Soviet Union; Reilly served as Ian Fleming's inspiration for his James Bond character
- **Dec. 16:** [U.S. recognizes the Reza as Shah of Persia](#)

1926 Events

- **Jan. 26:** John Logie Baird demonstrates a mechanical television system
- **Feb. 1:** Land on Broadway and Wall Street in New York City is sold at a record \$7 per sq. inch
- **Mar. 16:** [Robert Goddard launches the first liquid-fuel rocket, at Auburn, Massachusetts](#)
- **Apr. 12:** [By a vote of 45-41, the U.S. Senate unseats Iowa Senator Smith W. Brookhart, after only one year, and seats Daniel F. Steck after Steck challenged the results](#)
- **May 20:** [Congress passes the Air Commerce Act, licensing pilots and planes](#)
- **July 1:** The Kuomintang begins a military unification campaign in northern China
- **Aug. 18:** The first televised weather map is sent from NAA Arlington to the Weather Bureau Office in Washington, D.C.
- **Sept. 25:** [The League of Nations Slavery Convention, an international treaty binding signatory nations to abjure all forms of slavery, is signed in Geneva, Switzerland](#)
- **Oct. 23:** Leon Trotsky and Lev Kamenev are removed from the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
- **Nov. 11:** *U.S. Route 66* is established
- **Dec. 26:** In Japan, the Shōwa period begins due to the death of Emperor Taishō the day before. His son Hirohito will reign as Emperor of Japan until 1989

Sources:

Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, Senate. [Goddard Rocket Launching Site and Potomac River Historical Area](#). Feb. 24, 1976, 94th Congress, 2nd Session, 76-S441-54 (Y4.In8/13:R59/4). ProQuest Congressional, HRG-1976-IIA-0073

Keller, Kent Ellsworth. [Erection of a memorial to dead in wreck of U. S. dirigible "Shenandoah."](#) Committee on the Library. House. Apr. 15, 1936. 74th Congress, 2nd Session, H.rp.2413. ProQuest Congressional, 9993 H.rp.2413

[Protocol Amending the Slavery Convention of Sept. 25, 1926. Message from the President.](#) Senate, May 27, 1954. 83rd Congress, 2nd Session, Exec.Doc.F, 83-2 (Y1.83/2:F) ProQuest Congressional, SED-83-2-D6

["Nellie Taylor Ross, First Woman Governor."](#) Congressional Record, 90th Congress, 1st Session (Apr. 12, 1967) Vol. 113, pp. 9238-9239. ProQuest Congressional, CR-1967-0412

[Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States 1925.](#) Department of State. Dec. 8, 1925. 69th Congress, 1st Session, H.doc.476 (S1.1:925/v.2). ProQuest Congressional, 8585-2 H.doc.476

["Public Law 69-254: An Act To encourage and regulate the use of aircraft in commerce, and for other purposes."](#) (44 Stat. 568, Chap. 344; May 20, 1926). ProQuest Congressional

Subcommittee on S. Res. 21; Committee on Privileges and Elections. Senate. [Senator from Iowa. Part 2.](#) GPO, Jan. 26-28, 1926. 69th Congress, 1st Session, S250-8-B (Y4.P93/6:1o9/pt.2). ProQuest Congressional, HRG-1926-PES-0001

Major Acts

Revenue Act of 1926. Reduced personal income and inheritance taxes, abolished a wide variety of excise taxes, and increased the tax on corporations. Also repealed the publicity clause relating to income tax returns. Approved Feb. 26, 1926. ([44 Stat. 9, Chap. 27; PL69-20](#)) Certain provisions of this Act were subsequently held unconstitutional in *Reiner v. Donnan*, 285 U.S. 312 (1932)

Air Commerce Act of 1926. Vested extensive powers over commercial aviation in an Air Commerce Bureau under the Secretary of Commerce, with jurisdiction over the safety of civil aviation, including licensing of aircraft and pilots. Approved May 20, 1926. ([44 Stat. 568, Chap. 344; PL69-254](#))

Railway Labor Act. Abolished the Railroad Labor Board established under the Transportation Act of 1920 and set up a new agency known as the Board of Mediation. Substituted the principle of mediation for compulsory arbitration of disputes between railroad employers and employees. Provision made for appointment of an emergency board by the President to investigate and report in cases of unadjusted disputes. Approved May 20, 1926. ([44 Stat. 577, Chap. 347; PL69-257](#))

Public Buildings Act of 1926. Authorized an expenditure of \$165 million over a five year period for construction of Federal buildings, \$50 million of which was to be expended in the District of Columbia. Approved May 25, 1926. ([44 Stat. 630, Chap. 380; PL69-281](#))

Radio Act of 1927. Created the Federal Radio Commission (subsequently the Federal Communications Commission) of five members appointed by the President with power to make regulations and to issue and revoke licenses. Approved Feb. 23, 1927. ([44 Stat. 1162, Chap. 169; PL69-632](#))

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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