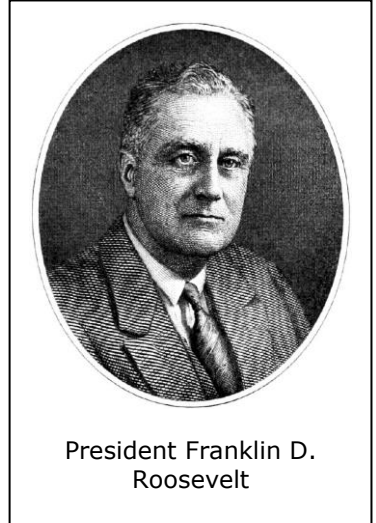


Seventy-Eighth Congress

Jan. 6, 1943-Dec. 19, 1944

Third Administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt

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Historical Background

The 78th Congress included the most critical period of the U.S. involvement in the Second World War. In Europe, Allied forces invaded Sicily in July of 1943, followed by an invasion of mainland Italy in September. The great offensive into France would follow in June of 1944, with U.S. and British forces on the western frontier of Germany by year’s end. In the Pacific, the U.S. and Allied forces pushed the boundaries of Imperial Japan back further and further in many hard-fought campaigns.

Domestically, President Roosevelt called for national unity, and called on Congress to pass legislation for the mobilization of labor and industry, national service requirements, and to stabilize the economy against wartime shocks and disruptions – including a call for a “second Bill of Rights” promoting economic security. Prior to the national elections of 1944, Congress enacted the Soldier Vote Act permitting servicemen to vote through the agency of the U.S. War Ballot Commission.

The return home of the first wave of U.S. veterans of World War II triggered passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, otherwise known as the "G.I. Bill," looking to the academic and economic education of the veteran population and their consequent rise in the national economic scale. Supervision of the disposal of surplus Government property became the responsibility of a three-member board under the provisions of the Surplus Property Act of October 3, 1944. With enactment of the War Mobilization and Reconversion Act the same day, the responsibility for contract settlements, surplus disposal, and reemployment programs was centralized in the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion.

House	Senate
Majority Party: Democrat (222 seats)	Majority Party: Democrat (57 seats)
Minority Party: Republican (209 seats)	Minority Party: Republican (38 seats)
Other Parties: Progressive (1 seat) Farmer-Labor (1 seat), American Labor (1 seat)	Other Parties: Progressive (1 seat)
Speaker of the House: Samuel T. Rayburn	Majority Leader: Alben W. Barkley

Sources:

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War or Peace?

World War II

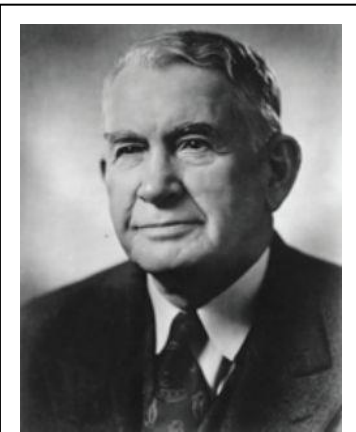
The continuing war against Germany, Japan, and their Axis allies was the defining reality of life in the U.S. during the 78th Congress. The North African campaign ended in May 1943 with the surrender of Axis forces in Tunisia. In Europe, the invasion and collapse of fascist Italy in 1943 was followed by the opening of the “second front” and the liberation of France, Belgium, and the Netherlands in 1944, ending on the doorstep of Germany itself. In the Pacific, U.S. and Allied forces fought numerous grueling “island-hopping” campaigns to push the Japanese back from captured territory, culminating in the beginning of the fight to liberate the Philippines in October 1944. Heavy fighting in Soviet territory and Eastern Europe throughout 1944 saw the end of the brutal two-year siege of Leningrad (St. Petersburg), the liberation of Ukraine from Germany, and the decimation of the Polish Home Army in the Warsaw Uprising.

By December of 1944, Germany was backed against a wall. The Nazis launched a failed attempt to re-conquer Belgium and split the Allied forces in the Battle of the Bulge. It would be their last offensive in Western Europe. In the months before the battle, the Axis lost Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia to the renewed Soviet offensive. Majdanek, or KL Lublin, became the first major extermination camp to be liberated intact when the Soviets swept through Poland in July 1944. A Polish-Soviet commission was formed in August to investigate and document the atrocities found at the camp. War crimes trials based on evidence from Majdanek began shortly after in November 1944.

On the diplomatic front, the U.S. participated in a number of conferences throughout the war. Between January 1943 and December 1944, there were twelve conferences, with seven in 1943. The first conference of 1944, the Casablanca Conference, produced the Casablanca Declaration. The Declaration essentially stated the Allies would accept nothing less than “unconditional surrender” from the Axis powers. The Third Moscow Conference in October of 1944 produced the Moscow Declaration, officially known as the Declaration of Four Nations on General Security, reaffirming the doctrine of unconditional surrender and providing the impetus for the



Speaker of the House
Samuel T. Rayburn



Senate Majority Leader
Alben W. Barkley

creation of the United Nations. The Moscow Declaration also provided the foundation for the conducting of trials and treatment of war criminals.

Late November 1943 the first of a series of high-level conferences between the “Big Three” Allied leaders—Joseph Stalin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill—on the execution of the war against Germany and the post-war reconstruction of Europe was held. The Tehran Conference, as it was called, resulted in the commitment to the opening of a second front against Germany; an agreement to move the Soviet Union’s and Poland’s borders west; and a separate protocol pledging recognition of Iran’s independence.

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Economic Trends and Conditions

Economic policy during the 78th Congress was almost entirely focused on providing for the production of material and supplies needed by the military, while meeting the reasonable needs of the civilian population. The War Production Board, created in 1942, and the Office of War Mobilization, created in May 1943, became the primary bodies in charge of regulating the growing war economy. While war production was at its peak in 1944, the previous two years saw disputes and strikes between the military and civilian manufacturers. The Smith Connally Anti-Strike Act granted the President powers to control vital war industries and prevent strikes and labor disruptions of the war effort.

Price regulations were put in place to control consumer price-gouging, speculation, and inflation beginning in 1942 and were kept in place between April 1942 and June 1946. During this time, the annual rate of inflation held steady at 3.5 percent. Wages increased steadily throughout the war and in 1944 unemployment hit an all-time low of just 1.2 percent. Labor unions saw record membership. Large-scale population migration, an unexpected result of the war, led to large increases in population in major labor centers and shortages in agricultural labor.

Plans for reconversion began circulating in 1944 but were not put into effect until early 1945. With the first wave of servicemen returning home and flooding back into the workforce in 1944, the women who had replaced them began to, both voluntarily and involuntarily, leave the workforce. In 1940,

women made up 25 percent of the workforce. At the peak of war production in 1944, women made up almost 40 percent of the workforce.

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Landmark U.S. Supreme Court Decisions

National Broadcasting Co. v. United States, ruling that the Federal Communications Commission had authority to regulate the interaction between broadcasting networks and their affiliate stations, 319 U.S. 190 (1943)

West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette, holding that the free speech protections of the 1st Amendment prevent the government from compelling students from saluting the U.S. flag and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools. Overturned *Minersville School District v. Gobitis* (1940), 319 U.S. 624 (1943)

Hirabayashi v. United States, holding that the government could impose curfews against members of a national identity when the U.S. is at war with that nation, 320 U.S. 81 (1943)

Yakus v. United States, holding that Congress maintains authority to fetter judicial review and delegate broad lawmaking power to an administrative agency, thereby upholding the constitutionality of the Emergency Price Control Act of 1942, 321 U.S. 414 (1944)

Smith v. Allwright, overturning Democratic Party whites-only primary election rules in Texas and other states, 321 U.S. 649 (1944)

Northwest Airlines v. Minnesota, holding that a Minnesota law imposing a property tax on all personal property within the state, including that of corporations employing said property in interstate commerce, does not violate the Constitution's Commerce Clause or the Due Process Clause of the 14th Amendment, 322 U.S. 292 (1944)

United States v. South-Eastern Underwriters Assn., holding that the Congress has the authority to regulate insurance under the Commerce Clause and therefore the Sherman Antitrust Act applies to insurance providers, 322 U.S. 533 (1944)

Korematsu v. United States, confirming the constitutionality of the 1942 Executive Order 9066 ordering the detention of Japanese-Americans in internment camps, 323 U.S. 214 (1944)

Source:

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1943 Events

- **Jan. 14-24:** *World War II* - [Casablanca Conference, establishing Allied “unconditional surrender” policy and plans for invasion of mainland Europe by Allied forces](#)
- **Feb 2:** *World War II* - [Battle of Stalingrad in Russia ends with surrender of German 6th Army](#)
- **Feb. 14-23:** *World War II* - [Battle of Kasserine Pass in Tunisia; first major defeat for the U.S. forces](#)
- **Mar. 12:** [Congress votes to extend the Lend-Lease program](#)
- **Mar. 12:** *World War II* - [Battle of the Komandorski Islands: In the Aleutian Islands, battle begins when U.S. Navy intercept Japanese troops attempting to reinforce a garrison at Kiska](#)
- **Apr. 19:** *Holocaust* - [The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising begins](#)
- **May 9-12:** Japanese troops carry out the Changjiao massacre in Changjiao, Hunan, China
- **May 11:** *World War II* - [American troops invade Attu in the Aleutian Islands, in an attempt to expel occupying Japanese forces](#)
- **May 13:** *World War II* - German and Italian forces in North Africa surrender
- **May 16:** *Holocaust* - [The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising ends with approximately 13,000 deaths and over 50,000 Jews deported to the Treblinka extermination camp](#)
- **June (late):** *Holocaust* - [Belzec extermination camp is closed and remaining prisoners are either executed or deported to Sobibor](#)
- **June 30:** *World War II* - U.S. offensive begins in south Pacific, leading to isolation of Japanese forces in the Solomon Islands and the key base at Rabaul
- **July 10:** *World War II* - [Allied invasion of Sicily](#)
- **July 24:** *World War II* - Operation Gomorrha begins: Allies begin bombing Hamburg, resulting in a massive firestorm that destroyed the city and the deaths of over 42,000 civilians
- **July 26:** *World War II* - [Benito Mussolini resigns as Premier of Italy](#)
- **Sept. 9:** *World War II* - [Italian fascist government surrenders to Allies](#)
- **Sept. 11:** *World War II* - [German forces occupy central and northern Italy](#)
- **Oct. 13:** *World War II* - [New Italian government sides with the Allies and declares war on Germany](#)
- **Oct. 14:** *Holocaust* - [Uprising in Sobibor extermination camp](#)

- **Nov. 9:** [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration Agreement signed by 44 countries in Washington, D.C.](#)
- **Nov. 21-24:** *World War II* - [U.S. forces capture Tarawa and Makin in the Gilbert Islands](#)
- **Nov. 28-Dec. 2:** *World War II* - [Teheran Conference, meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin to discuss Allied war plans](#)
- **Dec. 1:** *World War II* - Cairo Declaration, announcing Allied plans for war against Japan
- **Dec. 24:** [U.S. General Dwight D. Eisenhower becomes Supreme Allied Commander Europe](#)
- **December:** *World War II* - British prototype Colossus Mark 1, the world's first totally electronic programmable computing device, begins work at Bletchley Park decrypting Nazi intelligence code

1944 Events

- **Jan. 27:** *World War II* - [The 2-year Siege of Leningrad is lifted](#)
- **Feb. 11:** *World War II* - Allies establish civil government in occupied portions of Italy
- **Mar. 1:** *World War II* - [Allied offensive to recapture New Guinea begins](#)
- **Mar. 19:** *World War II* - German forces occupy Hungary in Operation Margarethe
- **Apr. 19:** *World War II* - The Japanese launch the Operation Ichi-Go offensive in central and south China
- **Apr. 28:** *World War II* - German e-boats attack Exercise Tiger, a full-scale rehearsal for the Normandy Landings, in Start Bay off the Devon coast
- **May 18:** *World War II* - [Battle of Monte Cassino ends in Allied victory against Nazi forces entrenched in the famed Abbey of Monte Cassino](#)
- **June 4:** *World War II* - [Rome captured by Allied forces](#)
- **June 6:** *World War II* - [D-Day invasion of Normandy begins \(Operation Overlord\); in the largest amphibious military operation in history, Allied troops shipped from England land on the beaches of Normandy in northern France; Allied soldiers quickly break through the Atlantic Wall and push inland](#)
- **June 9:** *World War II* - Stalin launches the Vyborg-Petrozavodsk Offensive against Finland
- **June 15:** *World War II* - [Battle of Saipan: U.S. forces land on Saipan, the largest island of the Northern Mariana Islands](#)
- **June 29:** *Holocaust* - [Deportation of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz and other Nazi concentration camps begins](#)
- **July 1:** [United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference, known as the Bretton Woods Conference, begins at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire in the U.S.](#)
- **July 20:** *World War II* - [German military coup and assassination attempt against Adolf Hitler fails](#)
- **Aug. 2:** *World War II* - [Polish resistance forces launch uprising in Warsaw](#)

- **June 16-Oct. 13:** *World War II* - U.S. forces recapture Marianas Islands
- **Aug. 21-Oct. 7:** [Washington Conversations on International Peace and Security Organization, or the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, held in Washington, D.C., resulting in the proposal to establish the United Nations](#)
- **Aug. 23:** *World War II* - Free French forces enter Paris
- **Sept. 12-Oct. 21:** *World War II* - Allied assault on German "Siegfried Line" defenses; U.S. forces enter Germany
- **Oct. 19:** *World War II* - U.S. forces begin operations to liberate Philippines
- **Oct. 23:** *World War II* - Allies recognize provisional governments in Italy and France
- **Dec. 16:** *World War II* - [Battle of the Bulge begins as German forces launch winter offensive in Belgium and Luxembourg](#)

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["Warsaw Ghetto Uprising."](#) Congressional Record, 103rd Congress, 1st Session (Apr. 21, 1993) Vol. 139, pp. 7939-7941. ProQuest Congressional, CR-1993-0421

Major Acts

War Labor Disputes Act. Broadened the President's power to place firms necessary to the war effort under the control of the Government and made it illegal for a union to strike any war industry. Declared that in plants not essential to the war effort unions had to observe a 30-day cooling-off period before they could call a strike and outlawed monetary contributions by unions to political campaigns and candidates. Approved June 25, 1943. ([57 Stat. 163, Chap. 144; PL78-89](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act (Magnuson Act). Permitted immigration of Chinese nationals into the U.S., reversing the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and allowed limited naturalization of immigrants already residing in the U.S. Approved Dec. 17, 1943. ([57 Stat. 600, Chap. 344; PL78-199](#))

Mustering-out Payment Act of 1944. Provided for monetary assistance to veterans upon mustering out of military service. Approved Feb. 3, 1944. ([58 Stat. 8; PL78-225](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Soldier Vote Act. Authorized absentee voting in time of war by members of the land and naval forces, members of the merchant marine, and others absent from the place of their residence. Under the terms of the Act, the U.S. War Ballot Commission was denied authority to subvert any State voting laws applicable to the voters involved. Approved Apr. 1, 1944. ([58 Stat. 136, Chap. 150; PL78-277](#))

Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G.I. Bill). Granted authority to the Veterans Administration to assist veterans of World War II in adjusting to the conditions of civilian life through the provision of academic training, Federal loans, employment programs, and medical assistance. Approved June 22, 1944. ([58 Stat. 284, Chap. 268; PL78-346](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Veterans' Preference Act of 1944. Established Federal civil service hiring preferences for returning veterans. Approved June 27, 1944. ([58 Stat. 387, Chap. 287; PL78-359](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Public Health Service Act. Codified and streamlined previous legislation pertaining to the Public Health Service, strengthened the commissioned corps of the PHS, provided additional appropriations, and authorized PHS to make grants-in-aid to research institutions. Approved July 1, 1944. ([58 Stat. 682, Chap. 373; PL78-410](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

Surplus Property Act of 1944. Established a three-member board to supervise the disposal of surplus Government property through transfer or sale at fair market value and assigned preferences in acquiring such property to other Federal agencies, State and local governments, nonprofit educational institutions, veterans, and small businesses. Approved Oct. 3, 1944. ([58 Stat. 765, Chap. 479; PL78-457](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

War Mobilization and Reconversion Act of 1944. Centralized responsibility for contract settlement, surplus disposal, and redeployment programs in the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion and spelled out the general objectives of reconversion. Also authorized interest-free loans or advances to State and local governments to help finance the planning of public works. Approved Oct. 3, 1944. ([58 Stat. 785, Chap. 480; PL78-458](#)) ([Regulatory History](#))

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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