

Foreword

Twenty-first century technology has transformed the 2005 *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*—a publication with a 16-edition lineage dating to 1859. This is the first edition printed since the entries for the *Biographical Directory* were published online at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/>. It also is the first assembled entirely from machine-readable files. Now the complete contents of the *Biographical Directory*—including valuable Membership rosters of each Congress—also can be made available over the worldwide web, allowing for updates to be published instantly as changes take place.

The *Biographical Directory* has evolved to reflect the changing face of Congress, in which more than 12,000 individuals have served during the past two centuries. Since the country achieved its independence in 1776, our national legislatures have balanced tradition with the necessity of adapting to new circumstances. The role and procedures of Congress remain the same—to serve as the central lawmaking body of the national government. Many of its practices trace roots back to the British Parliament and beyond.

And yet, like the country it represents, Congress has been transformed—often by the very technologies it helps to promote. The early records of Congress were created with pen and paper, and original documents were bound within leather-covered boards. Today both houses of Congress process most records electronically. Audio-visual broadcasts and recordings supplement proceedings on the floor and in committee. In the 19th century, Members used horses, coaches, or ships to come and go from Congress—spending months at a time in the capital without returning to their districts. Members now jet in or drive from faraway points in a country that spans thousands of miles, often returning to their constituents the very next weekend. Today citizens contact their Members individually by telephone, e-mail, letters, and fax. Rare are the petitions, handwritten or printed, that once arrived in the post signed by many hands.

Where other legislative assemblies have drifted into silence and irrelevance, the House and Senate comprise one of the most powerful and vibrant legislatures in world history. While the secret to this success lies, in part, with the far-sighted Constitutional framework, much of the vitality of Congress also is due to the individuals whom voters have sent to represent themselves. It is with great pleasure, that we present the 2005 edition to the nation.

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