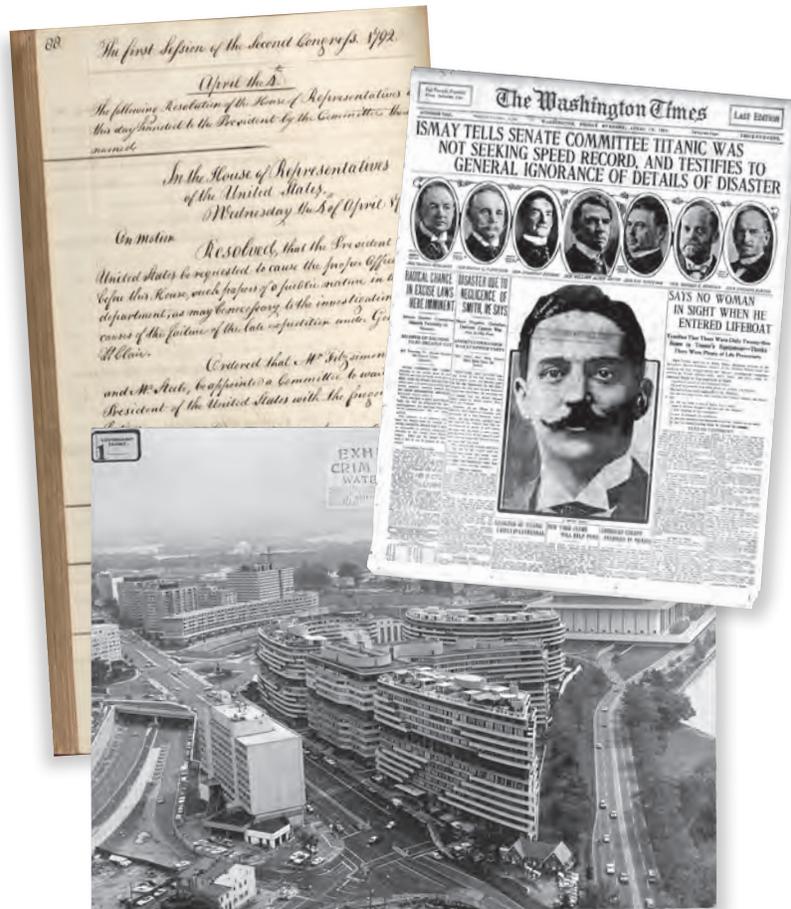


# CONGRESS INVESTIGATES

*Historic Treasures in Exhibition Hall*



The power to investigate, implied by the U.S. Constitution, is one of Congress's most important tools for developing effective public policy, conducting oversight, and informing the public. Congress has investigated issues throughout its history via formal investigations and fact-finding inquiries with wide-ranging results, often significantly affecting the history of the United States.

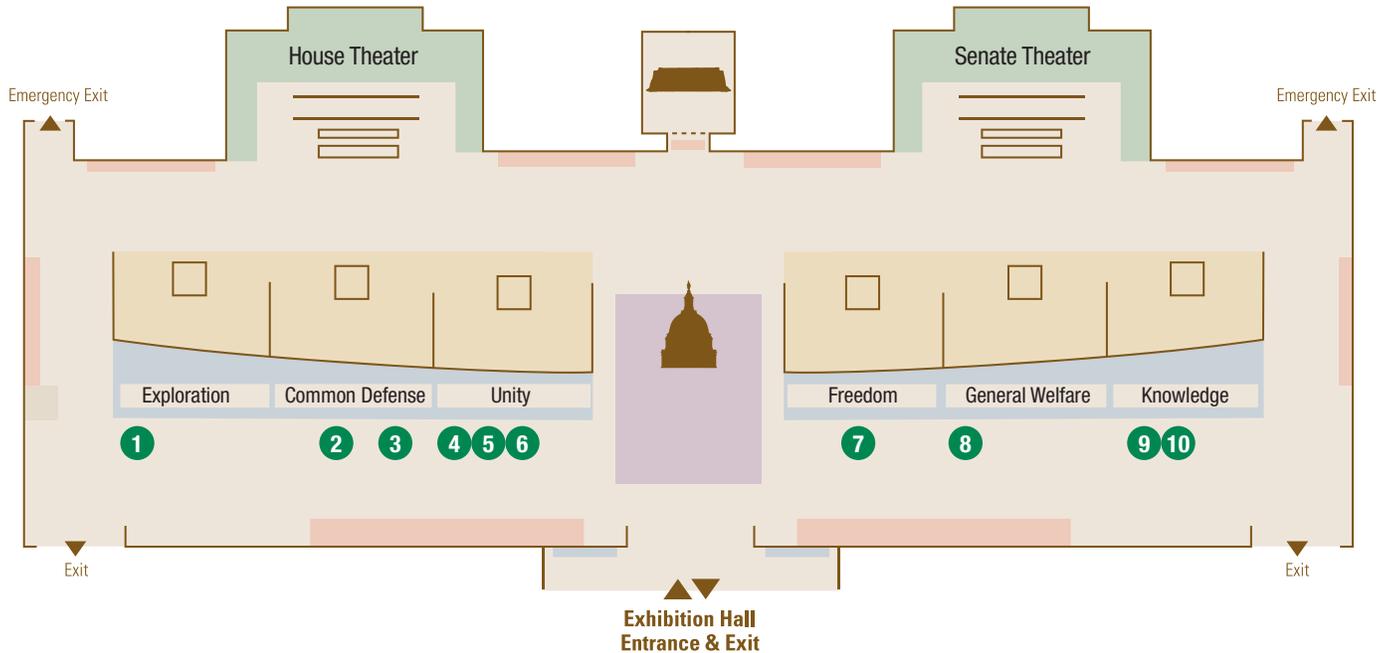


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# CONGRESS INVESTIGATES

*Historic Treasures in Exhibition Hall*

On exhibit through September 12, 2015



## 1 "Ismay Tells Senate Committee Titanic Was Not Seeking Speed Record..." *The Washington Times*, April 19, 1912

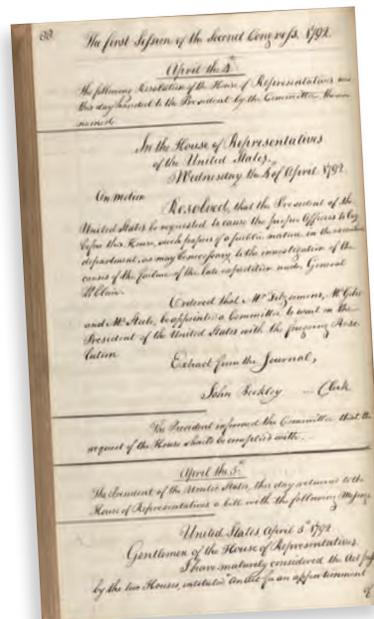
On April 14, 1912, the British ship R.M.S. *Titanic* collided with an iceberg and sank, killing many Americans. A subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Commerce investigated the disaster and concluded that the catastrophe was an "act of God." Congress responded with legislation to improve maritime safety.



*Serial and Government Publications Division, Library of Congress*

## 2 Resolution from the House of Representatives' Journal (extract), April 4, 1792

The first investigation occurred in 1792, when the House of Representatives studied the cause of an American Indian victory against U.S. troops. President George Washington initially restricted access to executive branch documents, setting a precedent for executive privilege. After Washington relented, a House committee determined that inadequate equipment and training contributed to the U.S. defeat.



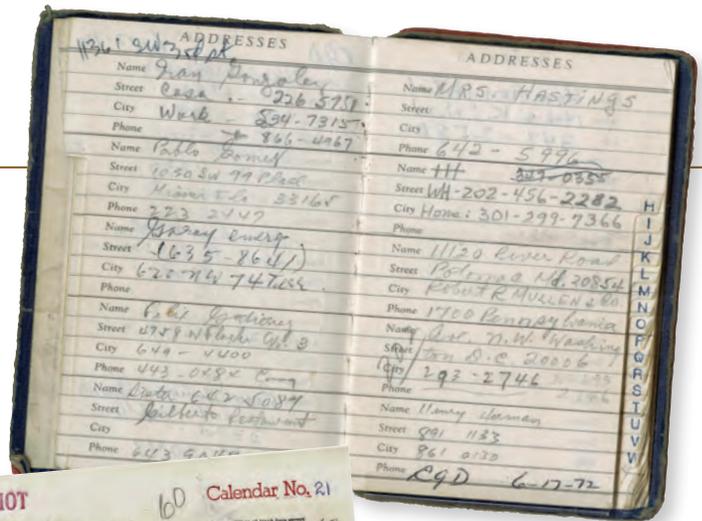
*Manuscript Division, Library of Congress*



**3 The Truman Committee visits the Ford Motor Company, photograph, April 13, 1942**

The Senate Special Committee to Investigate the National Defense Program, chaired by Senator Harry S. Truman of Missouri, was created in 1941 to investigate the defense industry. The committee saved taxpayer dollars by reducing corruption, waste, and inefficiency.

*Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress*



**5 Address book of Watergate burglar Bernard Barker, June 18, 1972**

*Records of District Courts of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration*

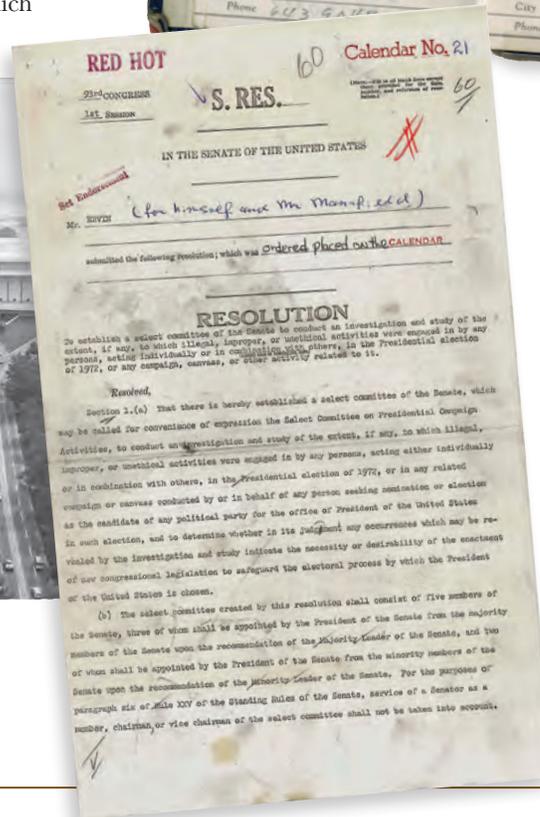
**THE WATERGATE BREAK-IN**

On June 17, 1972, police arrested burglars wiretapping the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C. Evidence linked the break-in to President Richard Nixon's re-election committee, so the Senate established a select committee to investigate the 1972 presidential election campaigns. The investigation revealed audiotapes incriminating President Nixon, which eventually led to his resignation.



**4 Government exhibit #1: Watergate building, photograph, ca. 1972**

*Records of District Courts of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration*



**6 S. Res. 60, Resolution to establish a select committee..., February 7, 1973**

*Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives and Records Administration*

**7 Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction and How It Works, engraving by Thomas Nast, September 1, 1866**

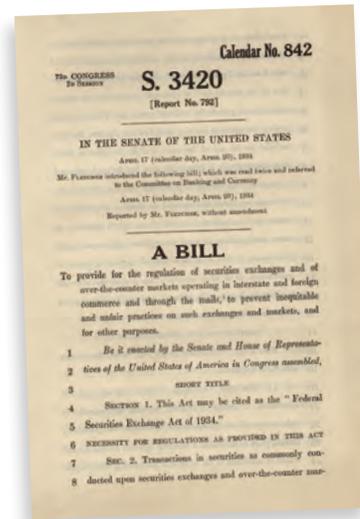
After the Civil War, Congress established the Joint Committee on Reconstruction to investigate under what terms the seceded states should regain their congressional representation. The committee strongly disagreed with President Andrew Johnson's efforts toward quick readmission. After a year-long study, the committee outlined qualifications for readmission, including ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.



*Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress*

**8 S. 3420, A Bill to provide for the regulation of securities exchanges (Federal Securities Exchange Act of 1934), April 17, 1934**

The 1929 New York stock market crash propelled the economic collapse known as the Great Depression. To understand the cause of the crash, the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency investigated the market practices of Wall Street financiers and financial institutions. The committee exposed wrongdoing and prompted Congress to pass new regulatory legislation.



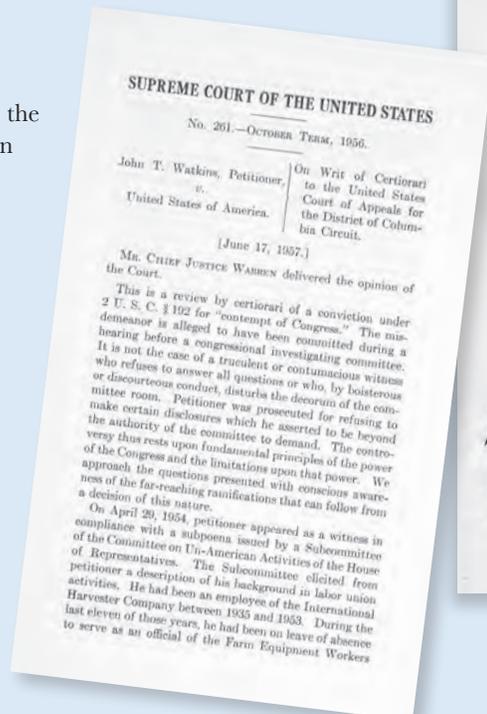
*Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives and Records Administration*

**CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS V. CONGRESSIONAL POWERS**

From the 1930s through the 1950s, the House Committee on Un-American Activities investigated perceived political radicals. In 1954 labor organizer John Thomas Watkins challenged a subcommittee's right to demand information not pertinent to the investigation. In 1957 the United States Supreme Court decided in his favor, limiting Congress's investigative powers.

**9 Watkins v. United States, Supreme Court of the United States, No. 261 – October Term, 1956, slip opinion, June 17, 1957**

*Manuscript Division, Library of Congress*



**10 Can You See Me Now?, cartoon by Herb Block, June 18, 1957**

*Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress*

## Looking at Documents

### Establishing a Select Committee

#### S. Res. 60, Resolution to establish a select committee..., February 7, 1973

A “red hot” Senate resolution was proposed to establish a select committee to study any illegal, improper, or unethical activities associated with the presidential election of 1972. The resolution passed unanimously, and the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities (popularly called the Watergate Committee), chaired by Senator Sam Ervin of North Carolina, began its hearings on March 28, 1973.

Look at the resolution (see number 6 on the map to locate the original document in Exhibition Hall). Why do you think it was stamped “red hot” at the top? Can you find the section that specifies the number of senators on this committee? Who chose the members on this committee, and why do you think it was done this way?

*Records of the U.S. Senate,  
National Archives and  
Records Administration*

**RED HOT**

93rd CONGRESS  
1st SESSION

60  
S. RES. 60  
Calendar No. 21

(Note.—Fill in all blank lines except those provided for the date, number, and reference of resolution.)

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Set Endorsement

Mr. ERVIN (for himself and Mr. Mansf: et al.)

submitted the following resolution; which was ordered placed on the CALENDAR

**RESOLUTION**

To establish a select committee of the Senate to conduct an investigation and study of the extent, if any, to which illegal, improper, or unethical activities were engaged in by any persons, acting individually or in combination with others, in the Presidential election of 1972, or any campaign, canvass, or other activity related to it.

*Resolved,*

Section 1. (a) That there is hereby established a select committee of the Senate, which may be called for convenience of expression the Select Committee on Presidential Campaign Activities, to conduct an investigation and study of the extent, if any, to which illegal, improper, or unethical activities were engaged in by any persons, acting either individually or in combination with others, in the Presidential election of 1972, or in any related campaign or canvass conducted by or in behalf of any person seeking nomination or election as the candidate of any political party for the office of President of the United States in such election, and to determine whether in its judgment any occurrences which may be revealed by the investigation and study indicate the necessity or desirability of the enactment of new congressional legislation to safeguard the electoral process by which the President of the United States is chosen.

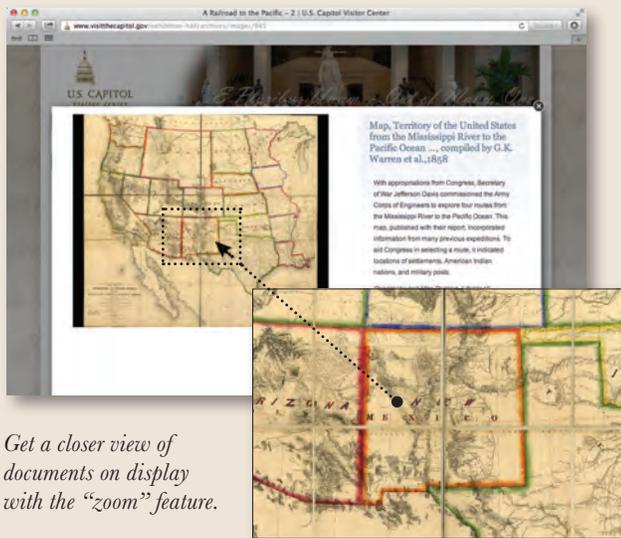
(b) The select committee created by this resolution shall consist of five members of the Senate, three of whom shall be appointed by the President of the Senate from the majority members of the Senate upon the recommendation of the Majority Leader of the Senate, and two of whom shall be appointed by the President of the Senate from the minority members of the Senate upon the recommendation of the Minority Leader of the Senate. For the purposes of paragraph six of Rule XXV of the Standing Rules of the Senate, service of a Senator as a member, chairman, or vice chairman of the select committee shall not be taken into account.

✓



## Exhibition Hall Online

Explore the Capitol Visitor Center's online exhibition. Find out more about the fascinating artifacts and documents in Exhibition Hall that tell the story of the history of Congress and the building of the Capitol at [www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibit](http://www.visitthecapitol.gov/exhibit).



Get a closer view of documents on display with the "zoom" feature.



ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

## A More Perfect Union

"Congress Investigates" is the theme of the documents currently on display in the exhibit **A More Perfect Union**.

This section of Exhibition Hall illustrates the role of Congress in defining and helping to realize national goals and aspirations. Treasured documents from the National Archives and the Library of Congress trace the journey toward "a more perfect union" through the actions of Congress.



ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

Documents are arranged in six thematic sections—**Exploration, Common Defense, Unity, Freedom, General Welfare and Knowledge**.



ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

## LOCATION & HOURS

The Capitol Visitor Center, the public entrance to the U.S. Capitol, is located below the East Plaza of the Capitol between Constitution and Independence Avenues.

**Hours:** The Capitol Visitor Center is open to the public from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Saturday. It is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and Inauguration Day.

**Official Business:** Visitors with official business appointments may enter the Capitol Visitor Center as early as 7:15 a.m.

**Accessibility:** Listening devices with audio description of the U.S. Capitol tour orientation film and Exhibition Hall are available at the Information Desks. Visitors may request wheelchairs at the North Coat Check located on the Upper Level or from Capitol Visitor Center staff. All restrooms are accessible.

**International Visitors:** Visitors may request listening devices for foreign-language versions of the U.S. Capitol tour orientation film and the Exhibition Hall audio tour at the Information Desks.

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On the Cover: (clockwise) Resolution from the House of Representatives' Journal (extract), April 4, 1792; "Ismay Tells Senate Committee Titanic Was Not Seeking Speed Record...," *The Washington Times*, April 19, 1912; and Government exhibit #1: Watergate building, photograph, ca. 1972



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