

Inventory of the

Thomas Corcoran
Ottawa, Illinois

Papers

In the
Regional History Center

RC 234

INTRODUCTION

Thomas Corcoran of Ottawa, Illinois donated his congressional papers to the Northern Illinois Regional History Center on December 18, 1984.

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Collection 234

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The Thomas Corcoran Congressional Papers document his career as an U.S. Representative. The material in the collection spans his four terms in Congress, beginning in January 1977 and ending in the fall of 1984. The collection is divided into eight series: Personal Files, Legislative/Bill Files, Subject Files, Committee Files, Constituent Correspondence, County Grants and Projects, News Secretary Files, and District Office Files.

The first series, Personal Files, is divided into five subseries. The first subseries contains sparse biographical information on Corcoran. The second subseries consists of published voting and attendance records. The third includes briefing memos and floor briefs on pending legislative issues. The fourth, subject files, contains information on Energy Tours and statements and memos on various topics. The fifth subseries includes correspondence to and from Corcoran and his colleagues in Congress and lobbyists.

Legislative/Bill Files, the second series, are arranged alphabetically by topic or by the title of the bill. The files usually include a copy of the bill, committee reports, staff memos, and correspondence to illustrate the bill's introduction and movement through Congress. Only bills sponsored and cosponsored by Corcoran are included in this series and may duplicate Committee Files.

Series three, the Subject Files, contains topically arranged material that cannot be directly connected to a specific bill or committee. This series includes published reports, correspondence and newspaper clippings. Patrons should crosscheck subjects in the Legislative/Bill Files for related information.

The fourth series, Committee Files, includes bills, hearings, testimony, memos, minutes, agendas, and correspondence that document the committee's work and decisions. There is a subseries for each of the four committees. The first subseries is for the Energy and Commerce Committee which replaced the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee in 1980. The second is for the Government Operations committee but the information here is extremely sparse. The third is for the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee and the fourth is the Post Office and Civil Service Committee. These files may duplicate bills found in the Legislative/Bill Files.

Constituent Correspondence, series five, contains LOMAX model letters, dead form letters, issue mail indexes, mail counts, and directories.

County Grants and Projects, the sixth series, contains applications for community block grants, correspondence, reports developed by the applicants, and results or status reports on the grants.

The seventh series, News Secretary Files, is divided into four subseries: press releases, TV/radio material (cassettes and a 16 mm color film of Corcoran), subject files, and speeches.

District Office Files, the eighth and last series, is arranged by office. The Geneva office is the first subseries and contains questionnaire results and press releases. The Ottawa office subseries contains subject files, travel schedules, and the records of Corcoran's Congressional Advisory Committee.

Researchers interested in other congressional collections held by the Center should consult Center's Guide to Resources.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Thomas Joseph Corcoran was born on the family farm near Ottawa, Illinois on May 23, 1939. After his primary and secondary education in LaSalle County schools, he went on to graduate from the University of Notre Dame with his B.A. in 1961. He continued his education at the University of Illinois (1961-1962), University of Chicago (1962-1963), and Northwestern University (1966-1968). From 1963-1966 he served in the Army as an artillery officer. Corcoran married Helenmarie Anderson and the Corcorans have five children.

Corcoran began his political career as a legislative assistant to Illinois State Senate President Pro Tempore, W. Russell Arrington (1966-1969). After leaving this position he served as Director of the State of Illinois office in Washington, D.C. (1969-1972). Corcoran then became Staff Director for William C. Harris, President of the Illinois State Senate (1972-1974). After failing to win the Republican nomination for the 15th Congressional District in the spring of 1973, Corcoran entered the private sector to become Vice President of the Chicago Northwestern Transportation Company from 1974-1976. In November of 1976, Corcoran again ran for the 15th Congressional District Seat on the Republican ticket and defeated incumbent Democrat Tim Hall by nearly 15,000 votes. He served in that office from the 95th through the 98th Congresses (1977-1984).

While in the House of Representatives, Corcoran served on four committees: Post Office and Civil Service (1977-1984); Government Operations (1977-1978); Interstate and Foreign Commerce (1979-1980); and Energy and Commerce (1981-1984). His Energy Committee assignments reflect his legislative interests in issues such as nuclear waste, acid rain, natural gas decontrol, the Synthetic Fuels Corporation, the emergency preparedness act, and the electric vehicle act. Since his district includes several community colleges and Northern Illinois University, he also involved himself in the tuition tax credit bill. His rural constituents and his own family background of farming guide his interest in government farm policy.

In March 1984, near the end of Corcoran's fourth term in Congress, Corcoran challenged incumbent Charles Percy in the Republican primary for the U.S. Senate and lost. After losing his bid to Percy, Corcoran was appointed by President Reagan to the Synthetic Fuels Board then worked as an independent consultant to various corporations. In 1991 he became full general partner in the law firm of O'Connor and Hannan.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Corcoran served on four committees during his term as U.S. Representative. His appointment to the Post Office and Civil Service Committee spanned his tenure (1977-1984). This committee is concerned with legislation relating to the postal service, the civil service and the census. Within this committee, Corcoran was a member of the subcommittees on Postal Operations and Services, Compensation and Employee Benefits, and Human Resources. As a freshman representative, Corcoran was a member of the Government Operations Committee (1977-1979) which reviewed legislation relating to budgeting, relations among government branches, and governmental branches and governmental operations. His subcommittee assignment was Legislation and National Security. In 1979 Corcoran began his service on the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee to oversee legislation relating to interstate commerce, communications and transportation. He was on the Energy and Power Subcommittee and the Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee. In 1980 this committee was renamed the Energy and Commerce Committee and its duties were expanded to cover energy legislation. His subcommittee assignments changed to include the Energy Conservation and Power Subcommittee and the Fossil and Synthetic Fuels Subcommittee. Corcoran continued to serve on the Energy and Commerce Committee until he left office in 1984.

SUBJECT TRACINGS

Agriculture
Corcoran, Thomas
Energy
Illinois and Michigan Canal
Legislators
Nuclear Energy
Ottawa
Politics
Republican Party

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