1993

December On the 20th, President Clinton names Patrick Griffin Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs. Griffin will replace departing congressional liaison Howard Paster. *(The Wall Street Journal, 12/21/1993)*

1994

January Griffin officially assumes the post on the 1st. *(Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 04/07/2004)*

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY) chides the Administration for moving too slowly on welfare reform and suggests that he might hold up consideration on the President’s health care initiative if welfare reform is not made a priority. *(The Washington Post, 01/10/1994)*


Clinton’s second State of the Union address highlights his legislative agenda for the coming year, including health care, crime, welfare reform and campaign finance reform. In the address, Clinton pledges to veto any health care reform legislation that does not include universal coverage. *(The Washington Post, 01/26/1994)*

February The Administration sends Congress a budget proposal that offers to combine spending cuts with modest initiatives to promote technology, fight crime, and expand educational opportunities. According to reports, a primary concern of the White House is the avoidance of additional tax increases. *(1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, pp. 67-69; The New York Times, 02/08/1994)*

On the 9th, the Congressional Budget Office reports that the Clinton health care reform plan would not reduce the budget deficit by $59 billion over the next five years, but rather increase the deficit by $74 billion. *(The Washington Post, 02/09/1994)*

March The proposed balanced-budget amendment falls four votes shy of the two-thirds votes necessary to pass in the Senate. Forty-one Republicans and 22 Democrats
vote for the measure, which was opposed by President Clinton. Supporters state that they will move their efforts to the House where greater support is expected. (*The Christian Science Monitor*, 03/03/1994)

White House officials reportedly struggle over the details of welfare reform. The primary issue is how to fund the $15 billion the plan is expected to cost over its first five years. (*The New York Times*, 03/21/1994)

After a meeting on the 22nd, Democratic and Republican congressional leaders agree to hold talks about the “time and place” of hearings on the Whitewater matter. (*The Independent-London*, 03/23/1994; *The Washington Post*, 03/24/1994)

After passage by the House, 306-121, and the Senate, 63-22, President Clinton signs the Goals 2000 Educate America Act into law on the 31st. The law creates eight national education goals for students and schools, and establishes a nineteen-member National Education Standards and Improvement Council to develop national curriculum content and student performance standards. State participation in the plan is voluntary. (*The Washington Post*, 04/01/1994)

**April**

Democratic congressional leaders push to delay hearings on Whitewater until Independent Counsel Robert Fiske, Jr. concludes his investigations. (*Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 04/17/1994)

President Clinton signs the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, which makes it a federal crime to use force to intimidate abortion clinic workers or women seeking abortions. (*1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 355)

Justice Harry A. Blackmun announces his decision to retire from the U.S. Supreme Court. (*The Washington Post*, 04/10/1994)

President Clinton and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) discuss more moderate legislative alternatives to the Clinton health care reform plan at a Democratic Party policy retreat. (*Financial Times-London*, 04/19/1994)

**May**

On the 13th, Clinton nominates Stephen Breyer to replace departing Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun.

Griffin remarks that the Clinton agenda is still “health care, health care, and health care,” acknowledging that “there is a very small window of time left” to pass a health care reform measure during the 103rd Congress. (*Buffalo News*, 06/01/1994)

**June**

Clinton names Office of Management and Budget Director Leon Panetta, a former member of Congress, his new Chief of Staff. (*The Washington Post*, 06/28/1994)
Both the House and Senate adopt plans for Whitewater hearings that would limit the inquiry to the Washington phase of the Whitewater matter and would take place after Fiske concludes his investigation. (*1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 111)

On the 30th, Fiske announces his findings on the Whitewater matter, concluding that there is no evidence to warrant charges against the President or any other Administration official. (*1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 111)

**July**

By a narrow vote, the Senate supports the Administration’s refusal to unilaterally withdraw from the international arms embargo on Bosnia. The Senate accepts a proposal by Senator Mitchell and Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn (D-GA) to seek a multinational agreement to lift the embargo as part of a broader Balkan peace settlement. (*The New York Times*, 07/02/1994; *The Washington Post*, 07/02/1994)

Facing growing opposition to the President’s health care reform proposal and the introduction of a significant number of competing proposals from members, the House Democratic leadership begins negotiations to offer a leadership health care reform measure to the Democratic Caucus. With the support of the White House, the leadership consents to a plan that falls short of the Administration’s goal of universal coverage. (*The Washington Post*, 07/10/1994)

The nation’s Roman Catholic bishops announce a national campaign to pressure Congress to abandon abortion coverage in the Administration’s health care plan. The topic becomes a key issue in congressional debates on a potential federal health care plan. Joint House-Senate leadership meetings are held to seek a compromise on the issue. (*The Washington Post*, 07/14/1994)

Both the House and the Senate commence Whitewater hearings the week of the 25th. (*1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 112)

On the 29th, the Senate easily confirms Breyer’s nomination to the Supreme Court.

Also on the 29th, House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO) releases the House Democratic leadership health care bill. (*1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 321)

**August**

On the 2nd, Mitchell unveils the Senate Democratic leadership health care measure. The Senate begins floor debate on the Mitchell health care bill a week later. (*1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 321)

A judicial panel replaces Whitewater independent counsel Robert Fiske Jr. with another Republican, Kenneth Starr, a former judge. The judges indicate they acted to protect “against perceptions of conflict.” (*Newsday*, 08/06/1994)
On the 11th, debate over the Administration’s anti-crime bill keeps the U.S. House from taking up the Democratic leadership’s health care reform measure. Fifty-eight Democrats join House Republicans in a successful effort to keep the conference crime bill from getting to the House floor. (1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 31; The New York Times, 09/27/1994)


After bitter debate, the Senate clears the crime bill, 61-38, on the 25th. The Senate starts its August recess without passing health care legislation. (1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, pp. 321, 273)

On the 19th, a group of Senators known as the “Mainstream Group,” led by John Chafee (R-RI) and John Breaux (D-LA), offer a bipartisan compromise to health care reform. (1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 321)

**September**

On the 13th, Clinton signs the Omnibus Crime Control Act, which bans several assault weapons, allows for the death penalty for dozens of federal crimes, and authorizes new spending for police and prisons. (The Washington Post, 08/14/1994)

Mitchell and House Speaker Thomas Foley (D-WA) urge President Clinton to ask for a vote of approval before invading Haiti. (The Christian Science Monitor, 09/15/1994)

On the 23rd, the telecommunications regulation bill dies in the Senate. The bill’s sponsor, Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ernest F. Hollings (D-SC), concedes defeat after a compromise worked out with “the Bells” falls apart. (1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 203)

On the 26th, the health care reform plan officially dies in the 103rd Congress when Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell informs Senator Chafee that there are not enough votes for the compromise measure negotiated with the “Mainstream Group.” (1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 321)

**October**

Following two failed attempts to invoke cloture on a Republican filibuster against the House-Senate campaign finance reform conference bill, campaign finance reform dies in the Senate. (1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 34)

On the 30th, Mitchell announces that the Senate will have to return after the elections for a lame duck session. According to reports, the reason for the first lame-duck session in a dozen years is Senator Hollings refusal to allow a vote on General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Senate leadership agrees to return on November 30th to take up the GATT treaty implementation legislation. (1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 6)
November  On the 8th, Republicans take over the House, creating the first GOP majority in more than forty years. Republicans also capture a 52-48 majority in the Senate. *(1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 565)*

December  The 103rd Congress ends on the 1st, with the passage of the GATT treaty legislation. *(1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 3)*

On the 8th, President Clinton signs the GATT treaty legislation. *(1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 123)*

On the 20th, the Mexican government devalues the peso. *(The Wall Street Journal, 2/1/1995)*

Newt Gingrich (R-GA) is elected Speaker of the House. Senator Tom Daschle (D-SD) is elected the next Senate Minority Leader, succeeding Mitchell as the head of the Democratic Party in the Senate. Senator Robert Dole (R-KS) is selected Majority Leader by Republicans in a closed caucus. *(1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, pp. 16-17)*

1995

January  Republican congressional leaders offer their own version of welfare reform. *(The Washington Post, 01/07/1995)*

On the 12th, as the peso drops to 6.50/dollar, President Clinton reveals a $50 billion rescue plan to Congress. The plan includes $40 billion in loan guarantees. *(1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1996, p. 10-16)*

On the 24th, Clinton delivers his State of the Union address. In the speech, Clinton calls for bipartisan cooperation and cautions the new Congress to strive for a “leaner, not meaner” government. *(1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 1-5)*

On the 31st, President Clinton abandons the proposed $40 billion rescue plan legislation for Mexico and opts instead to use an executive order to tap the U.S. Treasury’s Exchange Stabilization Fund and provide Mexico with $11 billion in loan guarantees. *(The Wall Street Journal, 02/01/1995)*

February  Clinton’s nominee for Surgeon General, Henry Foster, Jr., comes under fire from conservative lawmakers and antiabortion groups. *(The Washington Post, 02/13/1995)*

March  In the wake of the Republican takeover of Congress, the Administration develops its ties with congressional Republicans. On the 17th, Griffin and Deputy Assistant
to the President for Legislative Affairs Steve Ricchetti attend a weekly meeting of Senate Republican committee staff directors. The following week, Griffin meets with a group of House Republican moderates during one of their regular Tuesday meetings. One Republican at the meeting describes Griffin interaction with the group as “open and honest.” (National Journal, 03/11/1995; The Washington Post, 03/25/1994)

May

The Administration announces it will support efforts to balance the budget but will not be bound by the seven-year deadline being set by Republicans. (The Washington Post, 05/15/1995)

June

In a nationally televised address, President Clinton unveils his proposal for balancing the budget within ten years. The plan includes a modest tax-cut for middle-income Americans and reductions in Medicare and Medicaid. (The Washington Post, 06/16/1995)

On the 29th, Republicans propose their own budget measure, which aims to balance the budget within seven years. (1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 2-3)

July

Clinton calls for new restrictions on “cop-killer” bullets as he touts his anti-crime legislation, which includes gun control measures and the expansion of the federal death penalty. (The Washington Post, 07/01/1995)

On the 19th, the House begins hearings into charges that federal law enforcement officials with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and the Federal Bureau of Investigation made serious mistakes during the 1993 standoff with Branch Davidians at their compound near Waco, Texas. Hearings continue through August 1st and include more than 90 witnesses. (1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 6-33)

The House passes, 328-101, the conference version of the welfare reform bill, on the 31st. The Senate clears the measure, 78-21, the following day. (1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 6-3)

August

On the 11th, Clinton vetoes a measure that would lift the embargo of arms to Bosnian Muslims. (1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 1-7)

On the 22nd, Clinton signs welfare reform legislation into law, having vetoed two previous pieces of legislation containing welfare reform provisions. Among its provisions, the measure imposes work requirements on welfare recipients and gives block grants to states to manage the welfare programs. Clinton (1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 6-3)

September

The Administration reaches a deal with Congress to prevent a government shutdown. The agreement gives six weeks reduced allowance to many of the
federal agencies whose 1996 appropriations bills are either facing a presidential veto or are still being debated in Congress. (*The New York Times*, 09/28/1995)

**October**

Clinton vetoes the FY 1996 legislative branch appropriations bill on the 3rd. (*1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 1-7)

**November**

On the 12th, the Administration rejects a Republican call for a seven-year balanced budget. If no bill is passed, federal spending authority will expire at midnight on the 13th. (*The New York Times*, 11/13/1995)

On the 13th, Clinton vetoes a continuing budget resolution and a bill to increase temporarily the public debt ceiling. (*1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 1-7)

The federal government shuts down on the 14th. The shutdown lasts through the 20th. During this period, and during the later shutdown, agencies without signed appropriations bills are closed and all “non-essential” personnel are sent home. (*The Washington Post*, 11/20/1995)

In an effort to avoid another government shutdown, the Clinton Administration proposes to sign all seven outstanding spending bills and to accept most GOP cuts in exchange for the restoration of $6.8 billion of the $22 billion requested in the spending bills. (*The Washington Post*, 11/30/1995)

**December**

On the 6th, Clinton vetoes the budget reconciliation bill. (*1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 1-7)

The federal government shuts down again on the 16th. The shutdown lasts until January 5, 1996.

On the 18th and 19th, Clinton vetoes three more FY 1996 spending bills and a measure that would limit class-action lawsuits by shareholders. (*1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, p. 1-7)


**1996**

**January**

On the 4th, Griffin informs the President of his intention to resign, effective February 1. Of his departure, Griffin says, “This is the most rewarding and challenging job of my life, and I will always be grateful to [the President] for giving me this opportunity. But two years in this job is like a career in most others. After a lot of thought, I have concluded that it is time for me to move on.” In a statement released to the press, Clinton says, “Pat has done an extraordinary
job working with the Congress on behalf of my policies and priorities. During the last year especially, he has done so under very challenging circumstances. His unceasing hard work, his commitment, his knowledge and experience, and his loyalty have meant a great deal to me, and I am going to miss him.” (U.S. Newswire, 01/04/1996)

On the 5th, Republicans agree to reopen the government with a series of short term appropriation measures and budget negotiations resume. (1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 2-5)

With the latest stopgap budget measured set to expire on the 26th, Speaker Gingrich and Republicans concede defeat on the budget after Clinton’s State of the Union address. (1995 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, p. 2-5)

February Griffin’s resignation takes effect on the 1st.
TIMELINES

• Dr. Patrick J. Griffin Congressional Timeline, prepared by Darby Morrisroe, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 02/25/2004.

• Timeline of the Clinton Presidency, prepared by Robbie Robinson, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 05/30/2002.

SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY DR. PATRICK J. GRIFFIN


• Patrick J. Griffin, “Promoting the President’s Foreign Policy Agenda in Congress,” *U.S. Foreign Policy Agenda*, 1 (July 1996).

ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT FOR LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Joining the Administration

The Office of Legislative Affairs

Leaving the Administration
• “Clinton Lobbyist Issues Final Barbs Over GOP Tactics,” Congress Daily, 01/01/1996.
• Patrick Jasperse, “Clinton Wrote Off House Last Year, Ex-Strategist Says; Former Milwaukeean Says Focus on Senate Has Undermined GOP,” Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, 02/05/1996.
CLINTON AND THE CONGRESS

General Commentary


103rd Congress


104th Congress


MAJOR ISSUES

103rd Congress

Health Care

GATT

Welfare Reform

Education/Goals 2000

Whitewater

Anti-Crime Bill

104th Congress

Budget


**Welfare Reform**

**Mexico Bailout**

**Bosnia**
Joining the Clinton Administration
• How did you come to join the Clinton Administration?
• What kinds of conversations did you have with Howard Paster and others in preparation for taking the job?

Office of Legislative Affairs
• Describe your role and responsibilities as Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs.
• Was there anything unique about the way the office was organized during your tenure? Describe how the office was set up in relation to the two chambers, geography and issue areas. How much control did you have in staffing the office?
• How involved was Clinton in the crafting and implementation of the Administration’s legislative strategy? Was there a particular method Clinton preferred to use to deal with Congress (phone calls, breakfast meetings, etc.)?
• Describe your relationships and interactions with other members of the White House staff. With whom did you work most closely? What was the effect of having senior White House officials with extensive experience working with Congress (i.e. Panetta, Stephanopoulos)?
• What role did members of the Cabinet play in legislative affairs? Which Cabinet members or White House officials were especially useful for you, and which gave you the most trouble?
• What role did Gore play in legislative affairs? Was Hillary Clinton involved in this area?
• What were the major issues and legislation that most occupied the time of the legislative affairs staff? To what extent were congressional investigations part of your portfolio?
• Discuss your role in the Administration’s quest for health care reform.
• Describe the budget process and your role in it. At what point did you and your office become involved? Comment on the 1995/1996 budget negotiations and government shutdowns.
• Other issues: welfare reform, GATT, Mexico bailout, budget, crime, Bosnia, education, Breyer nomination, campaign finance reform.

Congressional Relations During the Clinton Administration
• How would you assess the effectiveness of Clinton’s dealings with Congress during your tenure? Did you observe differences in Clinton’s dealings with the House and the Senate?
• Discuss the 1994 midterm elections and the Contract with America. How did the Republican victory affect the way the Clinton Administration operated? How did it alter the Clinton Administration’s strategy in dealing with Congress?
• Comment on Clinton’s relationship with both the Democratic and Republican leadership in both houses, especially Speaker Gingrich, Rep. Armey, and Rep. DeLay.

The Clinton Presidency in Retrospect
• What do you consider your greatest accomplishments as Director of Legislative Affairs?
• Having worked in Congress during previous administrations, you are in a unique position to offer a comparative perspective on presidential congressional relations. Discuss parallels and differences observed between the Clinton Administration and previous administrations.
• Comment on Clinton as a legislative leader. How was Clinton perceived by members of Congress? How effective was Clinton as a party leader?
• What were the strengths and weaknesses of Bill Clinton in his dealings with Congress?
• How should the Clinton presidency be viewed in history?