



EDWARD M. KENNEDY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interviewer's Briefing Materials Thad Cochran Interview, 09/19/2006

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Miller Center Documents¹

- Thad Cochran Timeline.

Secondary Source Materials

- Thad Cochran bio, <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.
- Albert R. Hunt, "Kennedy Is Bullish on Judiciary Panel's Prospects Despite Resistance to His Goals," *The Wall Street Journal*, 04/30/1979.
- Ruth Marcus and Helen Dewar, "Reagan Vetoes Civil Rights Restoration Act," *The Washington Post*, 03/17/1988.
- Jessica Lee and Leslie Phillips, "Bush Vetoes Rights Bill," *USA Today*, 10/23/1990.
- "Dems' Insurance Proposal Gets Push," *Chicago Sun-Times*, 1/22/1992.
- "School Technology," *1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1995, p. 402.
- "Kennedy Submits Bill to Enhance U.S.-Muslim Understanding," State Department Press Release, 05/13/2002.
- "Investing in Stroke Care," *The Boston Globe*, 01/30/2005

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SENATOR THAD COCHRAN TIMELINE

Prepared by James McGill Patterson

Miller Center, University of Virginia, 9/18/2006

1978

November Thad Cochran is elected Senator for the state of Mississippi, becoming the first Republican elected to a statewide office since Reconstruction.

1979

April Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA) proposes to the Senate Judiciary Committee legislation overturning the Supreme Court decision *Illinois Brick v. Illinois*. Because of the *Illinois Brick* decision, plaintiffs can only sue manufactures for damages resulting from price fixing if the plaintiffs are either a direct consumer or a direct seller. As a result, state attorneys general cannot sue companies suspected of price-fixing. To achieve compromise, EMK supports an amendment proposed by Senators Charles M. Mathias (R-MD) and Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ), which removes language facilitating class-action lawsuits and disqualifies foreign governments from triple damages in suits over price-fixing. Senator Thad Cochran (R-MS) offers an amendment removing indirect sellers as possible plaintiffs in price-fixing cases, but the amendment does not pass. The bill never makes it to the Senate floor, due to credible filibuster threats. (1979 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1980, pp. 385-386)

May When asked about EMK's performance as the new chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Cochran comments, "He isn't at all oppressive; he's very fair-minded." (*Wall Street Journal*, 5/30/1979)

July Cochran opposes bills sponsored by EMK to restrict mergers among the sixteen largest oil companies operating in the United States. Cochran states, "We are hoodwinking ourselves if we think legislation like this is going to create energy supplies." (*The Washington Post*, 6/31/1979)

October EMK is part of a group of Senators submitting legislation establishing guidelines and procedures for removing federal judges from the bench. The bill creates judicial councils of eleven federal judges to investigate complaints. Cochran amends the bill explicitly permitting judges to dismiss frivolous complaints. The bill passes out of committee, but the House fails to act. (1979 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 399-400)

November Cochran and Senator Birch Bayh (D-IN) offer to the Subcommittee on Antitrust, Monopoly, and Business Rights a bill protecting exclusive territorial franchises of soft drink bottlers from antitrust litigation. In 1978, the Federal Trade Commission had ruled that these exclusive territorial licenses were violations of

the Sherman Act of 1890 and the FTC Act of 1914, but the ruling is under appeal during consideration of the Cochran-Bayh bill. Cochran and Bayh argue that existing small bottlers experience a high degree of competition, and the removal of these exclusive territorial licenses will permit large regional bottlers to take over contracts and eventually push the small bottlers out of the market. EMK opposes the bill and casts one of two votes against it. The bill passes the subcommittee, while the House version awaits consideration. (1979 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 388-389)

1980

December EMK is the floor manager for a bill strengthening federal fair housing laws and organizes the Senate to vote for limited debate (cloture) on the motion to consider the bill. When the Senate considers the actual bill, however, EMK loses votes, while Cochran, who was not at the first cloture vote, attends the second to oppose limiting debate. The fair housing bill, as a result, stalls on the floor, and Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), the bill's sponsor, withdraws it. (1980 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1981, p. 373)

1982

June During the debate over the extension of the Voting Rights Act on the Senate floor, Cochran proposes an amendment to broaden coverage under Section Five from specific Southern states to every state. Section Five requires nine Southern states and portions of thirteen others to submit changes in election laws and procedures to the Justice Department for review. EMK, Mathias, and Senator Bob Dole (R-KS) refuse to support any amendment during floor debate in the interest of preserving the compromise bill very closely passed in the Judiciary Committee. Cochran's amendment fails to pass. (1982 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1983, pp. 375-376)

1988

February EMK and Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) offer legislation before the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee to prohibit private employers from using polygraph tests for any purposes besides the investigation of a possible criminal incident. Cochran opposes the bill and votes against it. (1988 *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1989, p. 268)

March President Ronald Reagan vetoes the EMK-sponsored Civil Rights Restoration Act. The bill would place any institutions receiving federal aid under federal antidiscrimination laws, undoing the Supreme Court's decision *Grove City College v. Bell* that ruled only specific federally funded programs at the institution—rather than the entire institution itself—are bound by

antidiscrimination laws. Cochran, as a member of Senate Republican leadership, is charged with finding Republicans willing to support the veto and Reagan's alternative legislation but finds very few. (*The Washington Post*, 03/17/1988)

1989

July President George H. W. Bush announces his intent to spend \$25 million to create the Points of Light Foundation to encourage volunteerism and community outreach; however, Bush never sends a version of his legislation to the Capitol. Democratic Senators George Mitchell (D-ME), Sam Nunn (D-GA), and EMK condense several national service bills into one comprehensive bill and present it to the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. The Democratic bill uses \$300 million to create national service programs with financial benefits for participants. Bush rejects the Senate version on the grounds that "volunteers" cannot be paid, but Cochran and Senator Dave Durenberger (R-MN) vote for the Senate version in committee. (*1989 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1990, pp. 195-196)

November EMK cosponsors a bill with Senator Bill Bradley (D-NJ) to require every university receiving federal assistance to report the graduation rate of their student-athletes to the Secretary of Education, who would then be responsible for compiling the information and making it available to the public. Known as the "Athlete's Right to Know" bill, it passes the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee 15-1, with Cochran as the lone dissenter. Further action on the bill stalls until the House version is considered. (*1989 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 199-200)

1990

October Cochran supports Bush's veto of the 1990 Civil Rights Act, saying, "Politically he loses in the short term to the civil rights activists, but what the president is doing is better for the country." EMK disagrees, believing Bush is, "siding with those who are willing to divide the nation for their own partisan advantage." (*USA Today*, 10/23/1990)

1991

April With Bush set to announce his education reform bill, the EMK-led Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee passes a Democratic education reform bill containing many provisions Bush is planning to include in his own version. Cochran charges that Republicans are "shut out of the process" and Democrats are waging in a game of, "political one-upsmanship at its worst." (*The Washington Post*, 04/18/1991)

Cochran becomes chair of the Senate Republican Conference.

1992

January

On the floor of the Senate, Hatch offers an amendment to the Neighborhood Schools Amendment Act. The amendment would allocate federal money to fund school choice vouchers for low income students. Students could choose to use these vouchers to attend religious private schools. EMK vigorously denounces the amendment as an attempt to privatize public school districts. The Hatch amendment fails to pass, and Cochran proposes a compromise amendment. Cochran's amendment would provide \$100 million for then Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander to choose who would create public and private "model" schools in order to experiment with improvements to public education. Democrats accept the funding level but insist on only financing public schools and having education officials at the state level make decisions about which model school programs to approve and fund those programs with up to twenty-five percent of their federal block grants. Cochran's compromise passes the Senate unanimously. The Senate version passes, as does the House version. Senate Republicans, however, block the vote on the conference report, preventing the bill from going to Bush. (*1992 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1993, pp. 455-460)

EMK successfully passes his national health insurance plan, HealthAmerica, in the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. Cochran, representing Republican leadership, quips that the bill should be called, "Bankrupt America." (*Chicago Sun-Times*, 01/22/1992)

May

EMK and Hatch support a \$2 billion emergency aid bill to American cities as a response to the Los Angeles riots following the decision of the Rodney King beating trial. The Senate votes to fund the bill as an emergency, thus permitting breaking spending caps to prevent deficit spending. Cochran strongly opposes the bill on the floor, believing the emergency funding forces Bush to oppose assisting the inner city because he opposes deficit spending. Cochran describes the situation as "creating an ambush for the president. The beneficiaries of those programs are going to be told that the Congress believes you need these additional funds, but the president doesn't." Bush eventually supports the bill but asks for cuts during conference. The bill has its funding reduced to \$1 billion, and Bush signs it. (*1992 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, pp. 581-582)

1994

February

Cochran and Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) propose legislation in the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee to spend \$200 million to create the Office of Educational Technology to ensure technology used in schools assists students in meeting their state testing standards. The bill also provides funding to help the least advantaged school districts purchase new technology, training, and

technical support. EMK speaks in support of provisions in the bill, saying, “Without a work force that is prepared to use new technology effectively, the promise of greater productivity and higher wages will be more difficult to achieve.” The bill does not reach the Senate floor, although parts of it are added to the Goals 2000 and Elementary and Secondary Education reauthorization education bills. (*1994 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 1995, p. 402)

1997 Cochran steps down as chair of Senate Republican Conference.

1999

March EMK cosponsors legislation with Cochran to revise the National Writing Project. The bill increases the maximum amount of grant money that can be given to individual contractors working with schools to improve writing skills in public schools and eliminates programs directly funding teachers. The bill is referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, where no further action is taken. (Library of Congress Thomas online resource)

May Cochran is one of three Republicans to side with Democrats in a vote against cloture for a bill limiting corporate liability for damages from “Y2K” complications. “Y2K” stands for Year 2000. The fear is that the change from 1999 to 2000 in computer calendars will result in a change to 1900, causing multiple errors in computing time—such as negative age and dating bills. EMK votes against cloture on the grounds that business interests are pushing many Republicans to expand the scope of the bill to include limiting liability on issues not related to Y2K. The Senate eventually settles on a compromise McCain and Dodd offer at the end of the month. President Bill Clinton threatens to veto the bill until conference committee members settle on minimum damage thresholds for bringing a case before federal courts. Clinton signs in the bill in July. (*1999 Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2000, pp. 22-11 to 2-19)

2001

February Cochran, with EMK as one of the cosponsors, again attempts to pass legislation improving the National Writing Project. The bill never moves out of the Senate Committee of Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. (Library of Congress Thomas online resource)

2002

May EMK sponsors the Cultural Bridges Act to authorize a \$75 million increase in spending on cultural programs in the Islamic world. The bill would also authorize \$20 million in student exchange programs for the competitive selection of students from the Islamic world to study for one year in the U.S. at a public high school. Cochran is one of fourteen cosponsors. The bill is referred to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, where no further action is taken. (State Department Press Release, 05/13/2002)

2003

September Cochran proposes, with EMK as a cosponsor, the Diabetes Prevention and Treatment Act. The Diabetes Prevention and Treatment Act requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to work through the Director of the Centers for Disease Control in creating a program to reward competitive grants for projects designed to control and prevent the spread of diabetes specifically among underserved populations, to promote diabetes research, and to work with the Diabetes Mellitus Interagency Coordinating Committee a national diabetes education program and research plan for diabetes. The bill is referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, where no further action is taken. (Library of Congress online resource)

November EMK and Cochran sponsor the STOP Stroke Act, a bill requiring the Department of Health and Human Services to create an information campaign to educate the public about how to recognize and treat strokes. (STOP Stroke Act Legislative Update, 08/12/2004)

2004

August The STOP Stroke Act stalls in the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, since Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) does not want to consider a bill addressing only one disease and, reportedly, the Senate is not willing to spend the money on any new programs. (STOP Stroke Act Legislative Update, 08/12/2004; *Boston Globe*, 01/30/2005)

2005

May Cochran and EMK submit the STOP Stroke Act once again. The bill is referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions. (Library of Congress Thomas online resource)

July Cochran proposes the Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act, an amendment to the 1965 Higher Education Act that would authorize the Secretary of Education to fund programs improving knowledge of geography for American students. EMK

is a cosponsor. The bill is referred to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Cochran becomes chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee.