Good Morning, Friends:

Your nation's capitol has just had a week of fitful action. Congress reconvened on Monday and immediately political barrages were laid down. The President, still not fully recovered from a rather severe attack of the flu and perhaps also suffering a let-down from the ardors and responsibility of his trip abroad, sent his annual state-of-the-union message to Congress in writing where it was read by a clerk instead of delivering it in person as he has done heretofore since becoming president.

This annual state-of-the-union message to Congress and the nation has been sent to the Congress in writing by most of our Presidents. It was the early practice of Presidents to deliver their messages in person, but then for many years it was the custom to send it in writing, where it was always read by the clerk of the House. In recent years, the practice of personal delivery has been revived. It seems to me that a personal delivery of the message by the President is preferable, and it is regrettable that the President's illness made it inadvisable for him to come to the capitol.

The President has, at times, said to friends that he is not a politician because he does things which politicians would not do. He certainly recommended some things in his message to Congress which a lot of politicians would not have done. Understand, I am not trying to say that President Roosevelt is not a master politician. He is the master of them all, including the most astute the nation has had since Andrew Jackson. Take, for instance, his request of a National Service Act which, in every day language, means a bill to give the government power to draft everybody, if need be, and tell them where
to serve. There have been reports that the President was considering making this kind of a recommendation, but few thought that he would actually call for a draft of labor, which is what it amounts to, in an election year. Nevertheless, he did it and in no uncertain terms. Such a bill should have been enacted when was declared or perhaps even when the draft bill was passed. If it is fair and right and necessary to draft men and send them to the battle fronts around the world, then it is just as fair, just as right, and just as necessary for the government to require a man on the home front to work in war plants. But such a law is not now and never will be necessary to make the overwhelming majority of our people work where they are needed. But there have been several times, and I fear there will be many times in the future, when it will be well for the government to have this power. For instance, if we had had such a law, there might not have been any coal mine strikes, and a great many of the strikes in our war plants could have been avoided. Such legislation is needed also for another group - the group who all their lives have lived a life of ease, with the traditional silver spoon in their mouths, and are even now not engaging in useful production.

This National Service Bill, recommended by the President, would give the government the power to put them to work, too. The bill ought to be enacted into law.

There were many other recommendations in the President's message. When the reading of the message was concluded, all the Democrats stood up and applauded,
but all the Republicans kept still in their seats except one man who got about half way up and then sat back down when he noticed he was rising alone.

This illustrates the sharp division between the parties on political matters, and it also is a clear reminder that this is an election year. There are no party lines, though, on measures which are unquestionably necessary for winning the war. There is no difference between a Republican and a Democrat when it comes to that. And this is a thing which our enemies do not properly evaluate.

The propagandists of Germany and Japan seem to get some comfort out of our political division and party strife. It's incomprehensible to them that the country could be sharply divided over domestic political issues and over a presidential election, and, at the same time, be united in war measures.

Nevertheless, that is America. And the fact that in the midst of a great war we can go through a national election of officialdom from the President down is one of the finest proofs of the efficacy of our system, one of the most powerful testimonies that free men are capable of self-government.

The reaction to the President's message here was divided. Some members of both the House and the Senate denounced the National Service proposal, while others indorsed it. Generally, Democrats praised the President's message, while Republicans generally branded it as a fourth-term campaign document.

And, then, there came the President's budget message, requesting one hundred billion dollars of appropriations. It made full allowance for continuation of the war through June 30, 1945. The President said that in our military planning,
we can not rely with safety on hopes of an earlier victory. The President did say that in the event there is an earlier victory in Europe, war production and war expenditures would be promptly adjusted to the changed requirements.

Also, the President looked beyond the war and gave his recommendation on post-war measures more explicitly than heretofore. He spoke of the problem of termination of war contracts, reconversion of war plants into civilian production, the problem of demobilization of men as well as the national economy, and then the problem of re-employment, aids and opportunities for veterans and an expanded social security program. Again, there was divided partisan reaction. Some democratic leaders said the budget message was a careful analysis and estimate of national needs. Republican leaders said the budget was padded in a lot of places. Now, I am not attempting to criticize either the Republicans or Democrats. What I am saying is that this is an election year, and no matter how much we may deplore the fact that it must come in the midst of a war, nevertheless, under the Constitution, a President will be elected in 1944, 435 members of the House of Representatives and one-third of the United Senate, as well as a lot of governors and other state officials will be elected in November, 1944. Washington officials, as well as the country, had a preview of events to come when the Republican National Committee met in Chicago during the week, making preparations for the Republican National Convention. The Republican Chairman met with the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, who was also in Chicago making preparations
for the Democratic National Convention. They were trying to work out

agreements on sharing the expense of preparing the convention hall.

And, again, politics flared in Congress over the soldier vote bill.

by

A House committee voted down a bill which the Federal government would conduct

the voting of soldiers, and by a vote of 7 to 5 reported to the House a

revised version of the Senate Bill, which recommends that each State enact its

own legislation, facilitating service men's voting. There is a strong

possibility, however, that once this measure reaches the floor, the

House may enact a bill providing Federal machinery for soldier voting which,

in my opinion, is the only practical way to handle the problem. I will discuss

this question more fully when the bill reaches the House for action.

The railroad wage dispute and the threat of a strike seemed much nearer

settlement as three holdout unions - the firemen, conductors, and switchmen

- had agreed to accept the President's award of a 9¢ per hour wage boost.

All in all, Washington is off to a stormy start in the crucial year of 1944.

Stormy, that is, in the political arena, but I am happy to say that there is

unity here for winning the war and serene confidence that in the end victory

will be ours.

After having broadcast to you each Sunday morning, for three years, I had

expected to make my concluding broadcast this morning. Having voted for the

war and to draft the other man into it, I felt honor bound to waive the

exemption provided a member of Congress and go into the armed forces of my
During the more than three years that I have made these Sunday morning broadcasts, I have studiously refrained from discussing a personal matter. Perhaps I could be pardoned this morning for saying that I had expected this to be my concluding broadcast in this series, having been duly inducted into the army with orders to report for active duty at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, next Wednesday. But, because of an unusual set of circumstances resulting in a direction from the Commander-in-Chief that I stay in Congress, I will do so. And for those who desire to listen, I will continue to interpret the events in Washington as I see them.