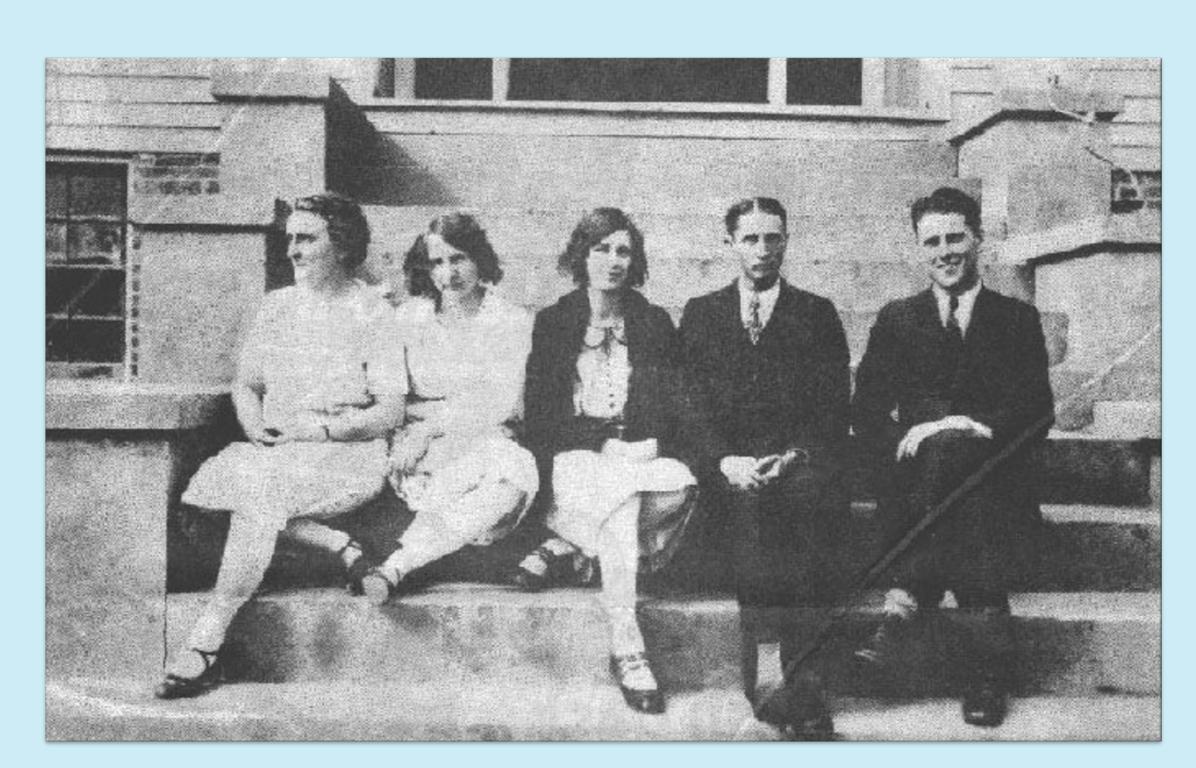
## THE SOUTHERN STATESMAN

Albert Gore, Sr. in Congress, 1939-1971

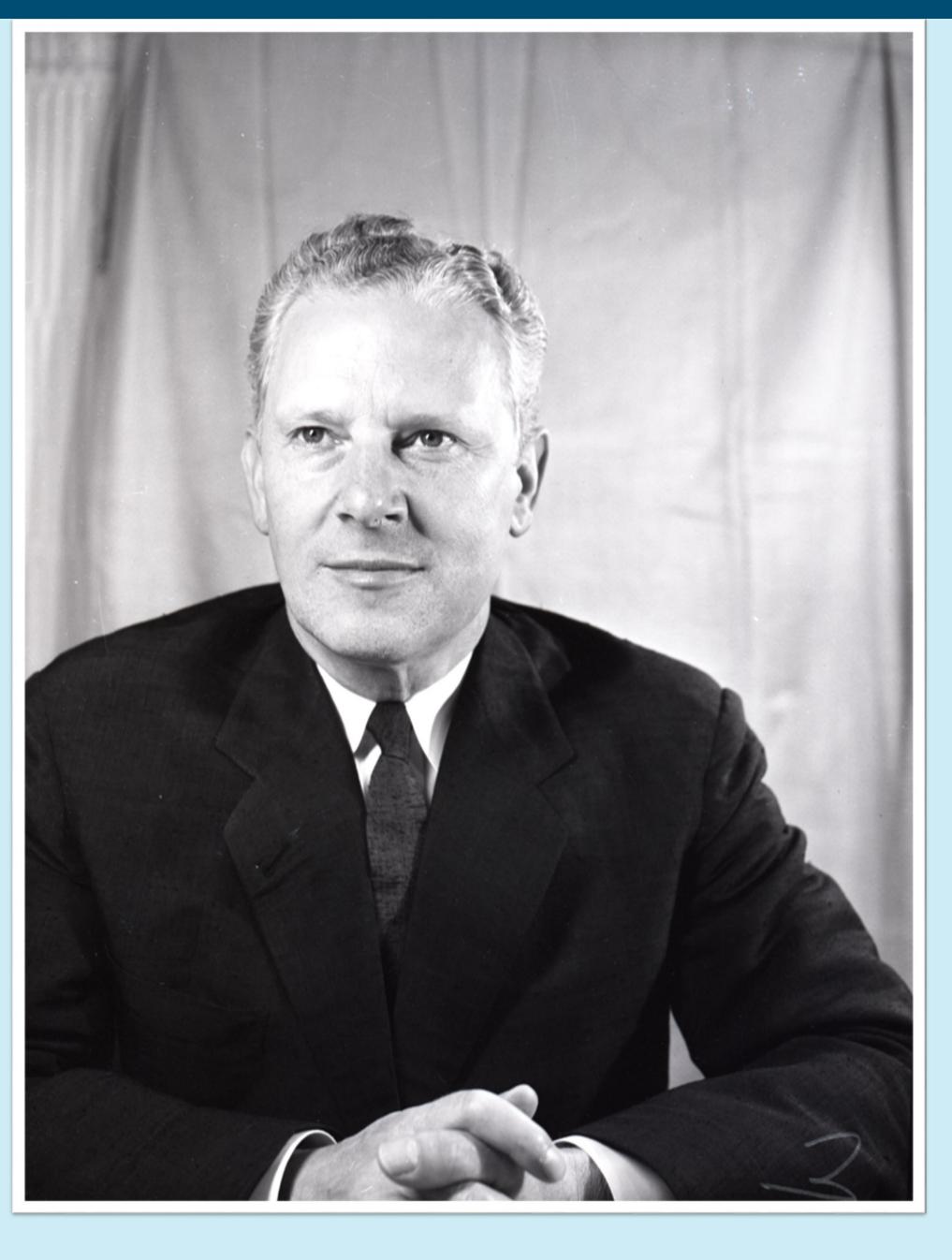
When Senator Albert Gore, Sr. lost his re-election campaign in 1970, fellow Senator George McGovern consoled him, saying Gore should be proud of his 32 years in Congress because he was "a statesman at a time when this country desperately needed statesmanship."



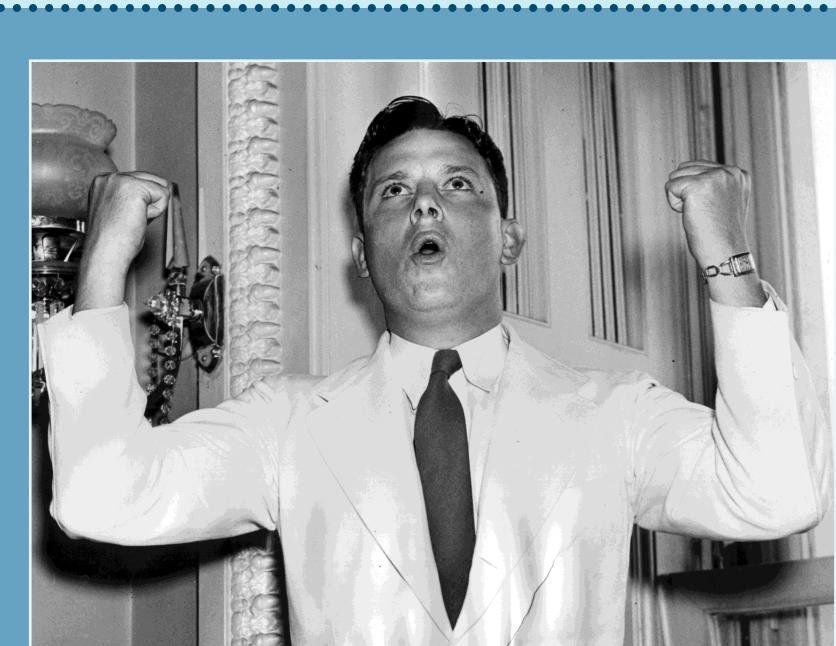
Teachers of Pleasant Shade School in 1929. Left to right: Odie McDuffee Thomas, Agnes Beasley Kemp, Mamie Key Nesbitt, Oval C. Sloan (principal of grade school), and **Albert Gore** (principal of 2-year high school). *Courtesy of Sue Sloan Grisham and the Carthage Courier* 

Born in Granville, Tennessee in 1907, Albert Arnold Gore grew up on a farm in Smith County. He spent his young adult years

farming and working odd jobs while earning an education degree from Middle Tennessee State Teachers College (Class of 1932), and a degree from the Nashville School of Law (Class of 1936). He put his education degree to work serving as Smith County's superintendent of schools, and later became Tennessee's commissioner of labor before running for the U.S. Congress.







Above: Gore exhibits his fighting pose after giving his maiden speech on the House floor against a housing bill, 1939. Courtesy of Albert Gore, Sr. Papers

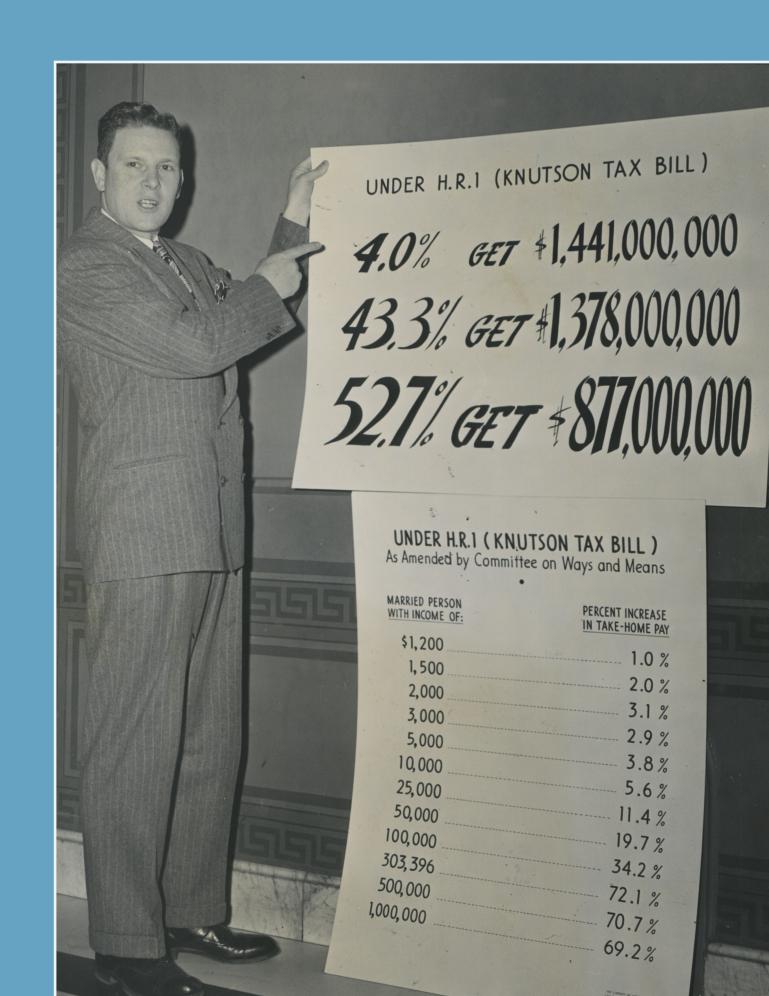
Left: Gore plays fiddle with fellow Tennessee representative Percy Priest during a USO show, circa 1940s. *Courtesy of the Johnny Hayes Political Memorabilia Collection* 

Right: Gore gesturing to charts he used in his argument against cutting taxes, March 1947.

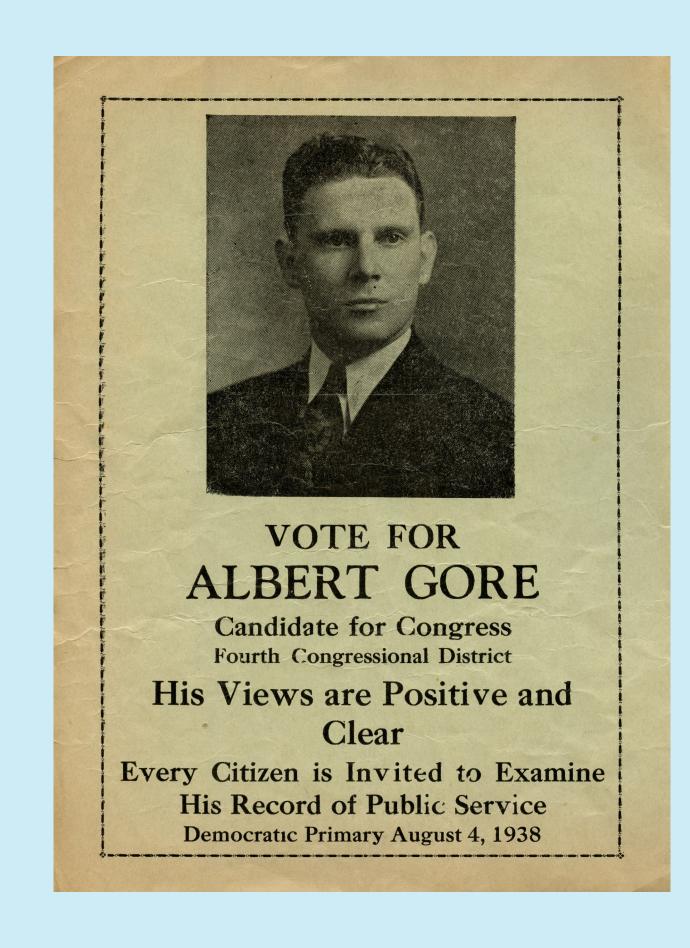
Courtesy of Albert Gore, Sr. Papers

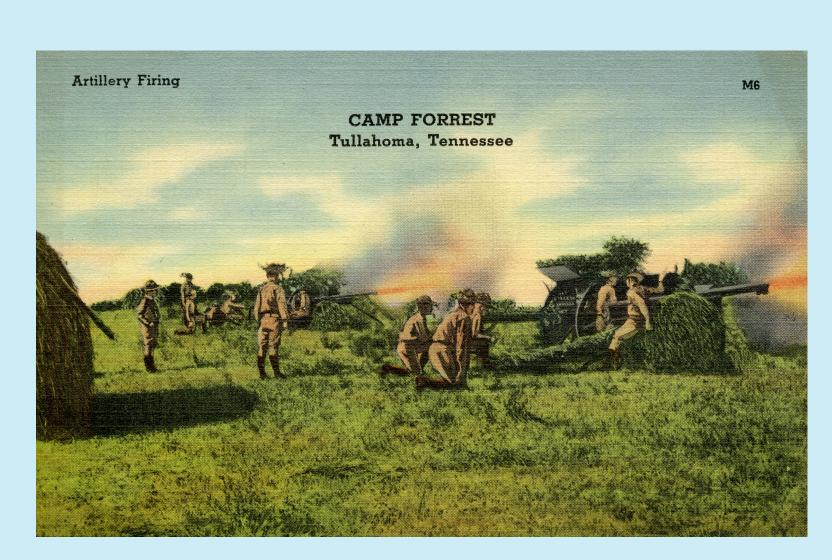
Below: Gore prepares his wife, Pauline, to takeover his office when he volunteered to serve in the military during World War II, before President Roosevelt ordered legislators to remain in office. Courtesy of Albert Gore, Sr. Papers





After making a name for himself on the campaign trail with fiery speeches from tree stumps and playing fiddle in his own road show, Gore won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1938. At the age of 31, he began his three-decade career in Congress, where he built a respected legacy as an independent thinker set on modernizing the South and improving the lives of those who had been underserved by their government.

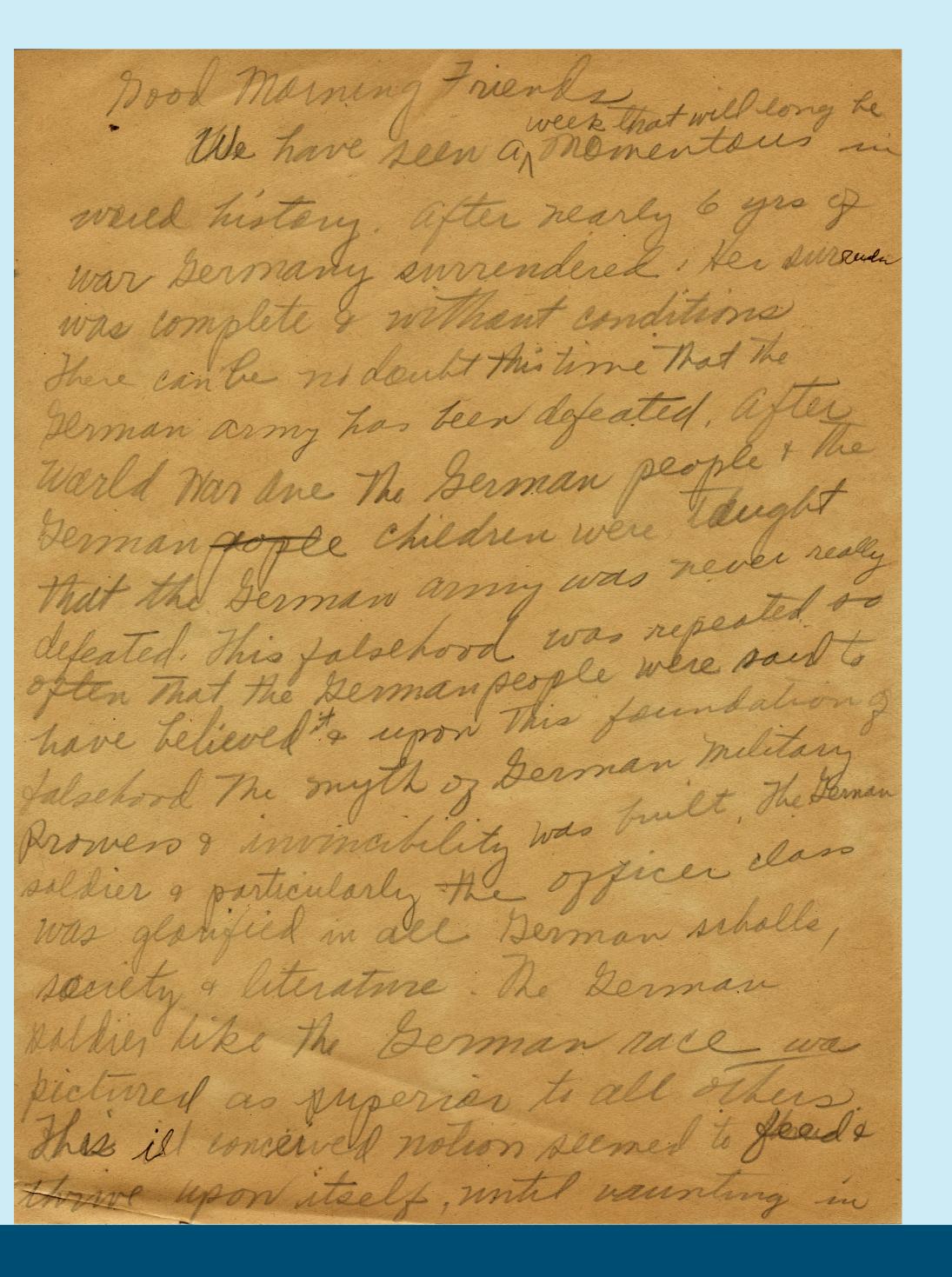




Postcard of soldiers during an artillery fire training exercise at Camp Forrest in Tullahoma, 1940s. *Courtesy of the Tennessee Maneuvers Collection* 

Page one of Albert Gore's handwritten script on the German surrender during World War II for his weekly broadcast on WSM, an AM radio station located in Nashville, Tennessee.

\*Courtesy of Albert Gore, Sr. Papers\*



World War II dominated the early years of Gore's career. He followed in the footsteps of his role model, fellow Tennessee politician and Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of State Cordell Hull, by firmly planting himself as a staunch interventionist. Wartime mobilization and New Deal policies influenced Gore's support of using the federal government to regulate the economy and develop the South's infrastructure. He was especially fond of utilizing the **Tennessee Valley Authority** to modernize agriculture, create cheap power, and improve the region's industry.

"The vast operations of the T.V.A. cannot be compared...it has meant a great deal to my region."

—Albert Gore speaking on the House floor, June 1, 1944



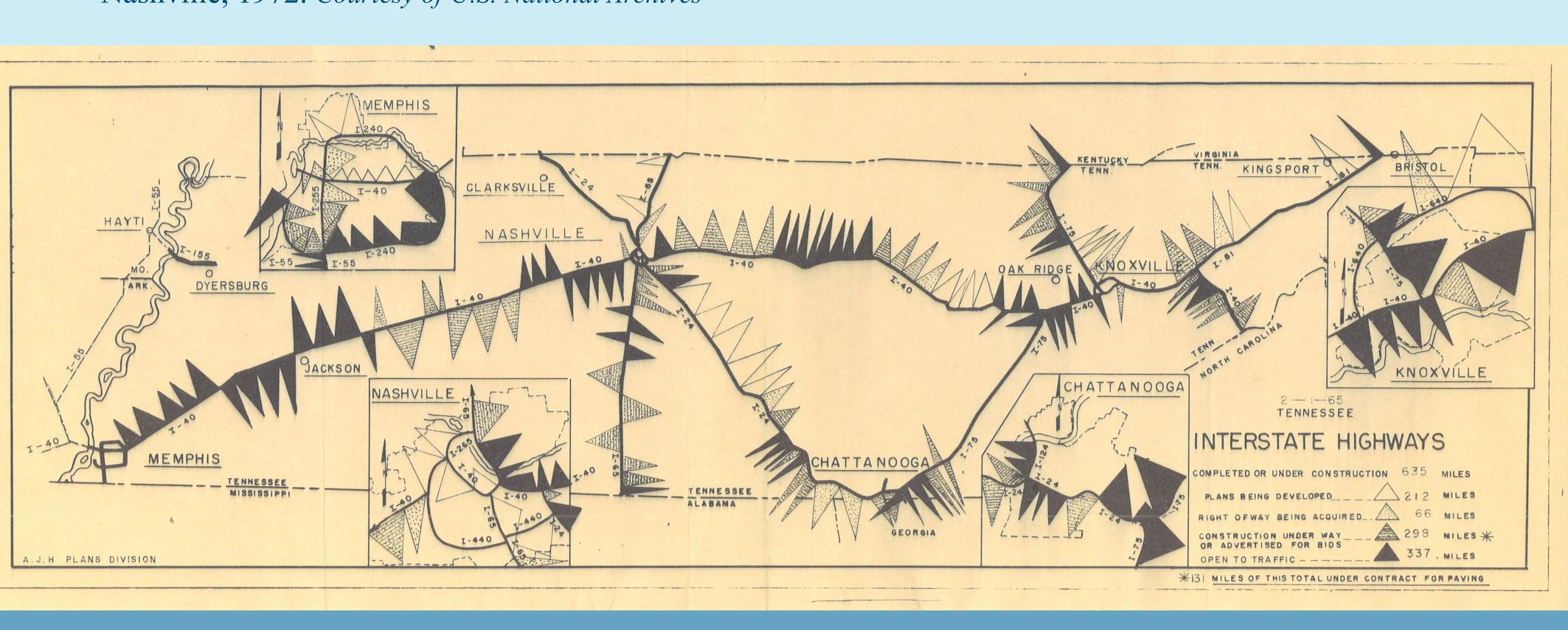
## THE SOUTHERN STATESMAN

Albert Gore, Sr. in Congress, 1939-1971



Traffic on Highway 25 exit off of Interstate 65 north of Nashville, 1972. Courtesy of U.S. National Archives

Gore was elected to the Senate in 1952, entering with fellow freshman Senator John F. Kennedy. Senate Democratic Leader Lyndon B. Johnson appointed Gore to the Public Works Committee, which ultimately led to his most important legislative achievement—the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956. The act funded the construction of over 41,000 miles of interstate highways. Gore knew such a highway system would be critical infrastructure for the development of the South's industry and economic investment.

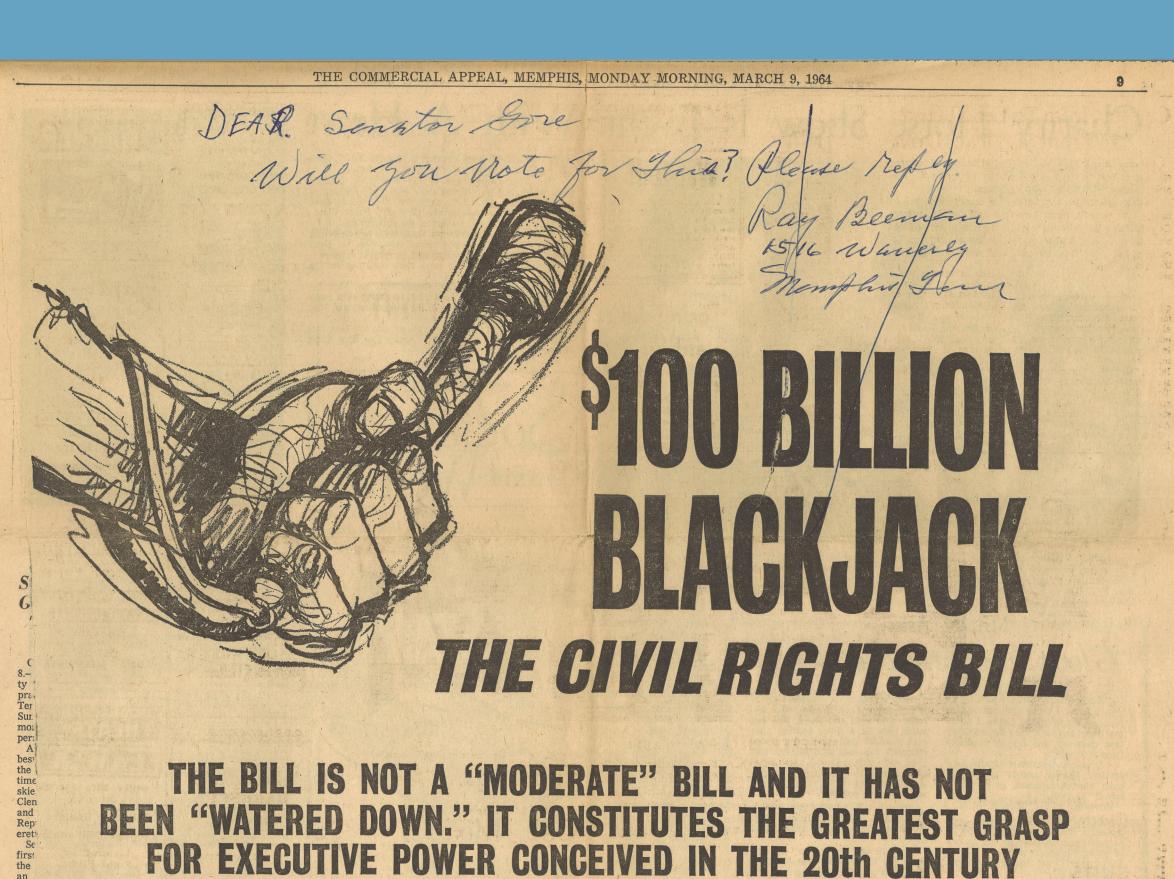


Map showing the construction stages of Tennessee's interstate highway system, 1960s. Courtesy of the Albert Gore, Sr. Papers



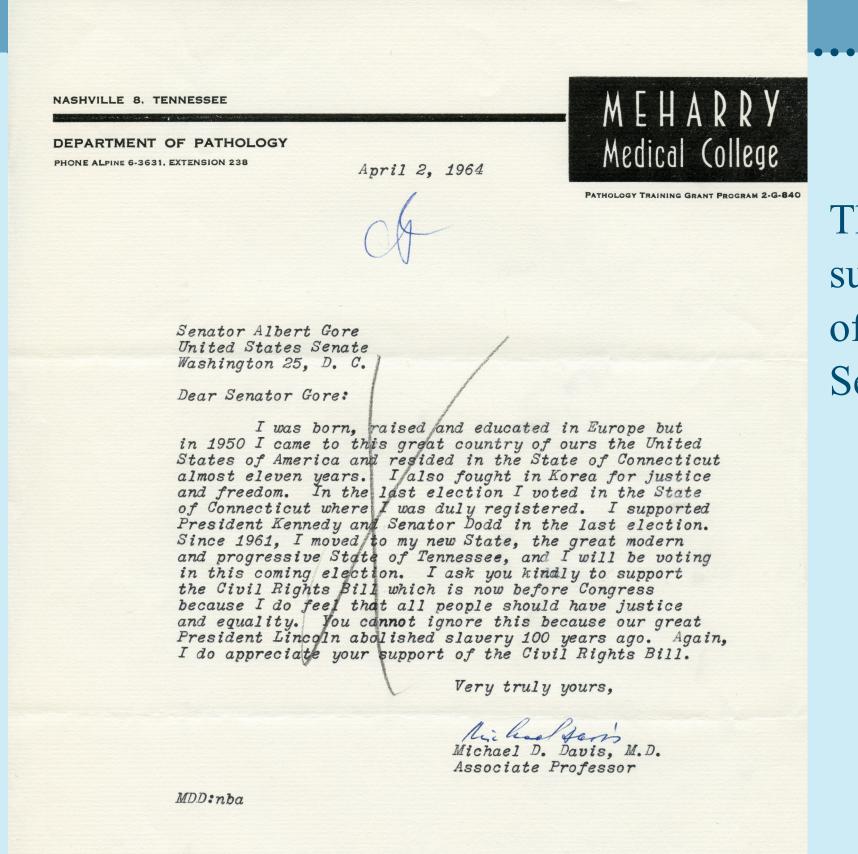
The passage of civil rights bills was another major issue for the nation during Gore's tenure. Civil rights activists pushed President John F. Kennedy and Congress to address the need for progressive legislation that enacted education, employment, housing, voting, and public accommodation rights for African Americans. Senator Gore voted for nearly all civil rights legislation during his time in office. However, his vote against the groundbreaking Civil Rights Act of 1964 remains a negative mark on his record.

Senator Gore received thousands of pieces of constituent mail against the Civil Rights Act of 1964, including this note written on a newspaper clipping from The Commercial Appeal in Memphis. Courtesy of Albert Gore, Sr. Papers



African American students walk to Clinton High School in Anderson County, Tennessee, 1956. Courtesy of the LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images

Clinton High School was one of the first public schools to undergo court-ordered desegregation. Above, a member of the National Guard watches students gathered outside the school. Courtesy of the Library of Congress



This constituent letter in support of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a rare document in Senator Gore's Papers.

"This war must end. It must end because it is immoral and because it is wrong...it threatens to destroy us."

—Albert Gore on the Vietnam War in August 1969

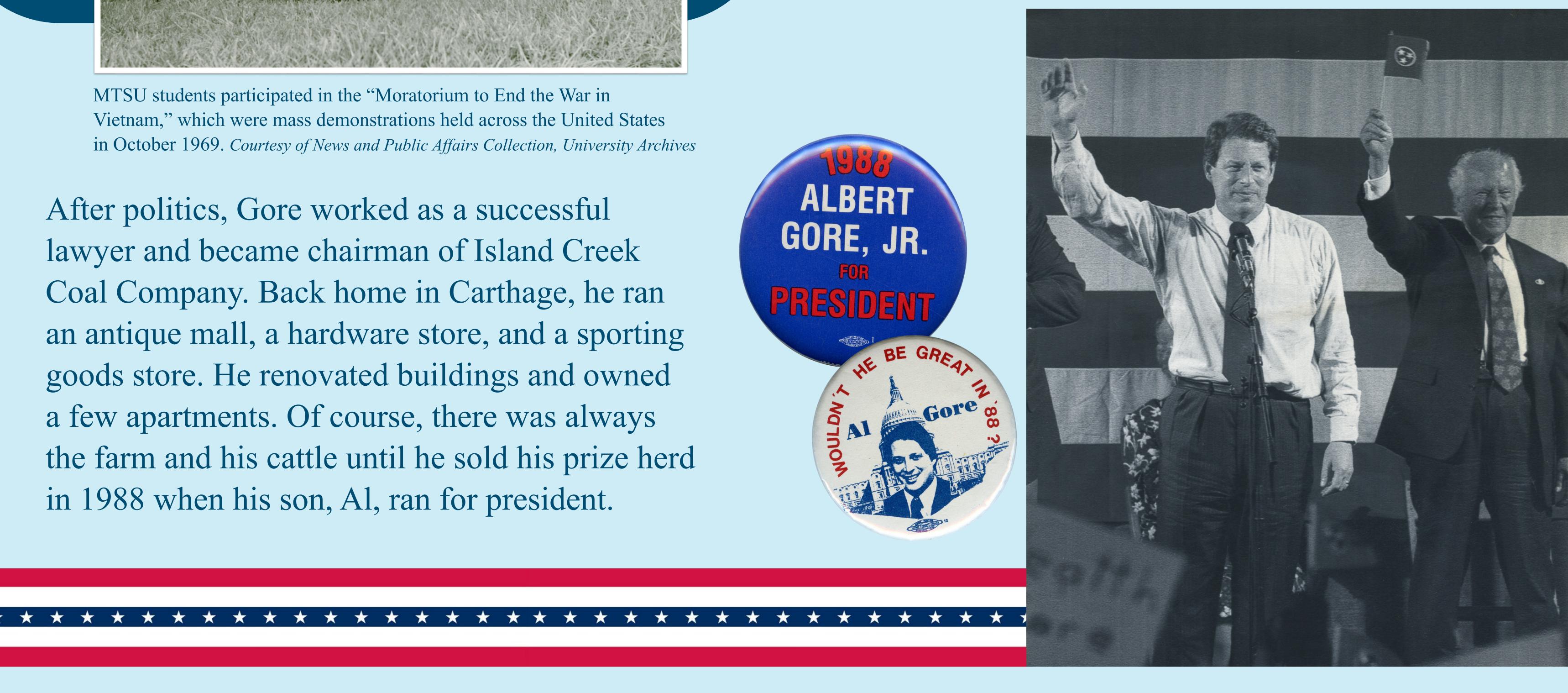


MTSU students participated in the "Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam," which were mass demonstrations held across the United States in October 1969. Courtesy of News and Public Affairs Collection, University Archives

After politics, Gore worked as a successful lawyer and became chairman of Island Creek Coal Company. Back home in Carthage, he ran an antique mall, a hardware store, and a sporting goods store. He renovated buildings and owned a few apartments. Of course, there was always the farm and his cattle until he sold his prize herd in 1988 when his son, Al, ran for president.

Gore spent his final term in Congress bumping heads with President Lyndon B. Johnson and, more notably, with many of his constituents. He managed to work with Johnson to establish Medicare in 1965, but Gore's vocal opposition to United States involvement in Vietnam drove a wedge between the men. The senator's stance on the Vietnam War also deeply angered citizens of the Volunteer State and became one of the main issues that cost him re-election. Gore's politics had become too liberal for increasingly conservative Tennessee voters.





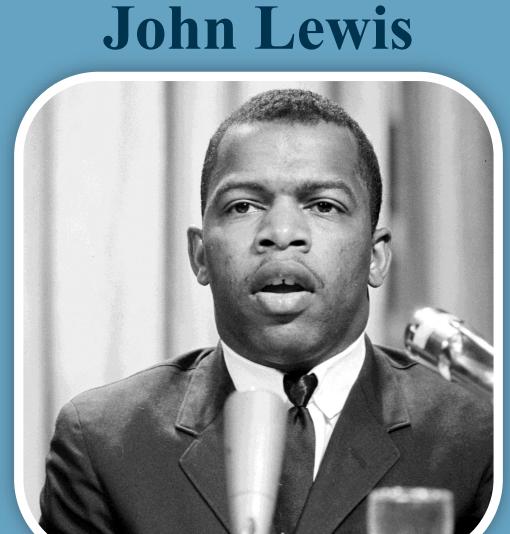
## THE SOUTHERN STATESMAN

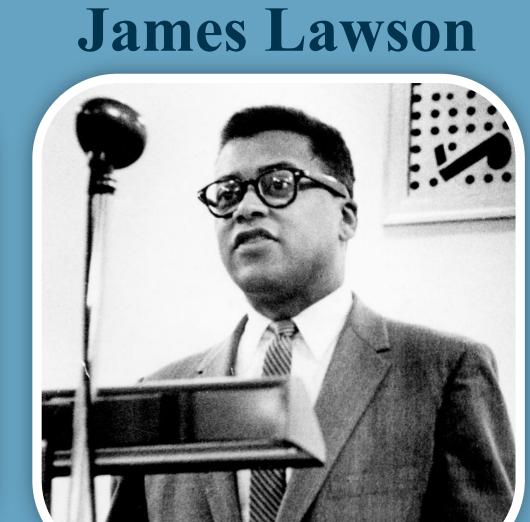
Civil Rights Legislation, 1950s–1960s

In the 1950s and 1960s, Tennessee fostered an energetic and youthful civil rights movement, especially in Nashville. College students Diane Nash, John Lewis, and Rev. James Lawson, Jr. practiced nonviolence and were leaders in the **Nashville Student Movement.** These activists and others across the country forced congressional debates on civil rights legislation.



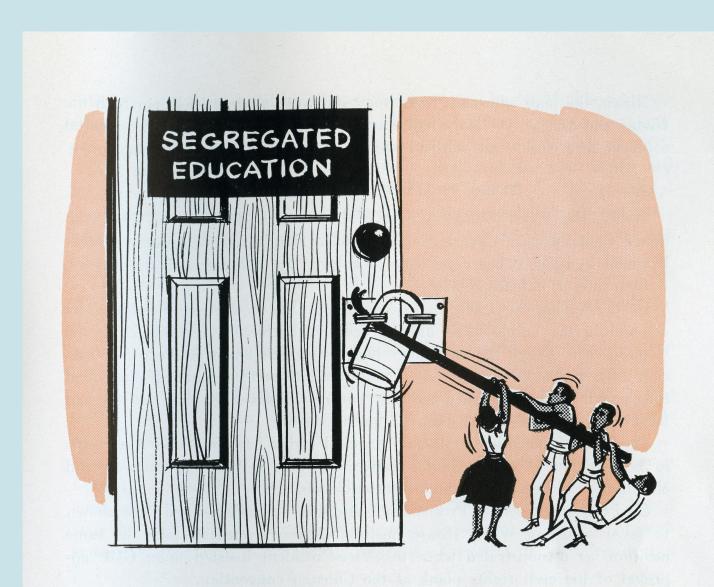




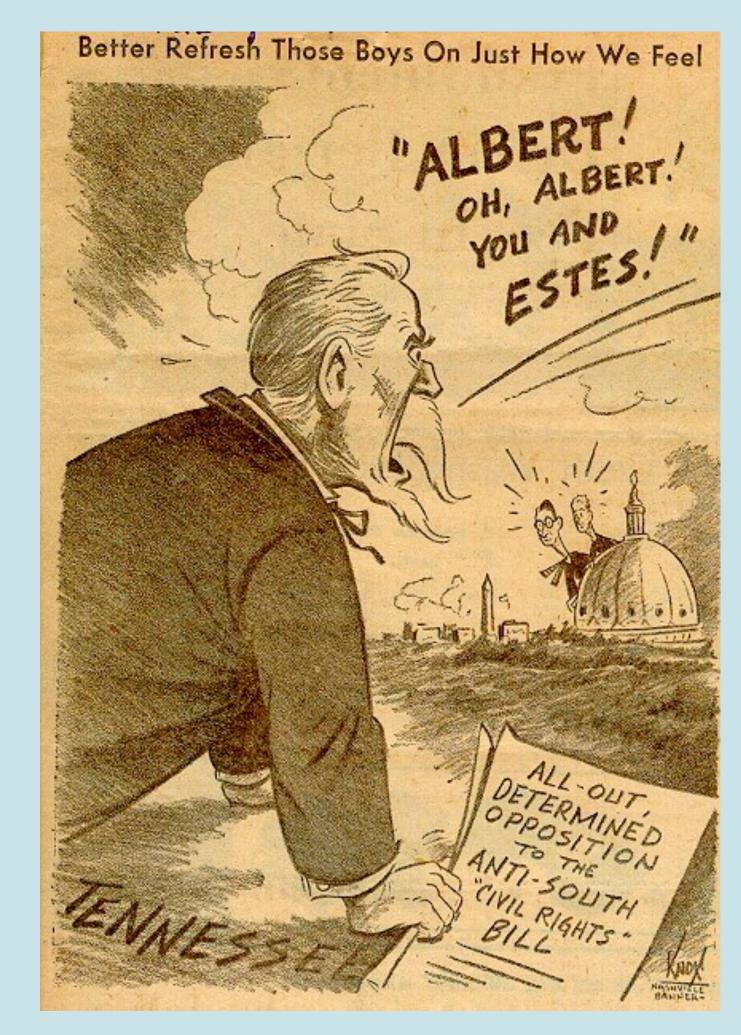




Rev. C.T. Vivian, Diane Nash, and Bernard Lafayette lead a march of 3,000 demonstrators down Jefferson Street in Nashville on April 19, 1960—the day white supremacists bombed the home of civil rights activist and lawyer Z. Alexander Looby. *Courtesy of The Tennessean* 



Cartoon drawing published in a booklet called *The Civil Rights Fight* distributed by American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). *Courtesy of Albert Gore, Sr. Papers* 

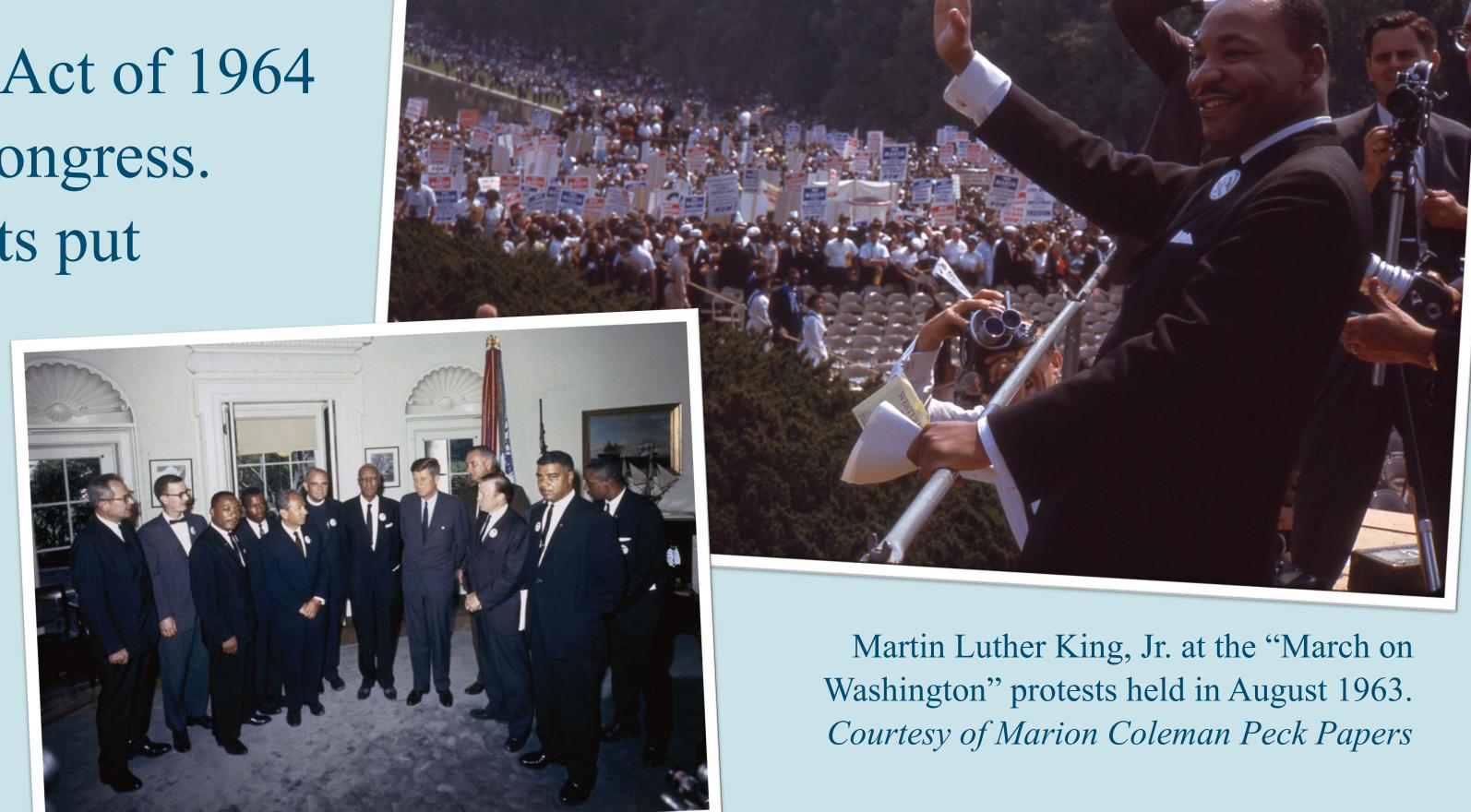


Political cartoon drawn by Jack Knox for *The Nashville Banner* that criticizes the moderate civil rights record of Gore and Kefauver.

Senator Gore was a moderate on racial issues and opposed the segregationist stand of his southern colleagues in the U.S. Senate. Gore, Estes Kefauver, and Lyndon B. Johnson were the only southern Democratic senators who refused to sign the "Southern Manifesto" in 1956. Gore voted for the Civil Rights Act of 1957—the first of its kind to pass since the Reconstruction era. He also supported the Civil Rights Act of 1960, which provided a limited mechanism for federal protection of voting rights for African Americans.

Senator Gore's vote against the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 is one of the most discussed decisions of his time in Congress. A few factors led to his opposition. Civil rights activists put

pressure on the timeline for progress, but Gore was most comfortable with the gradualist approach. Thousands of constituent letters from Tennesseans requested he vote against the bill and threatened to not re-elect him. He was also wary about Title VI, which required nondiscrimination compliance for activities that received federal funds.



President John F. Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson meet with the organizers of the "March on Washington."

Courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

## "The FREEDOM of the ballot box is the very essence of DEMOCRACY."

—Albert Gore in his Washington Report, 1965



Following re-election, Gore supported the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which aligned with his past record. He always believed in the equality of the vote, often writing to his constituents that "the freedom of the ballot box is the very essence of democracy." He also voted for the Fair Housing Act of 1968, and supported many of the Great Society programs that sought to end poverty and racial injustice.

Gore with MTSU's Young Democrats in 1968, including Paulette Fox to his left and civil rights activist Sylvester Brooks in the front passenger seat.

Courtesy of Paulette Fox