NEW REFERENCE ON CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATIONS PUBLISHED
BY ROBERT C. BYRD CENTER FOR LEGISLATIVE STUDIES

The Robert C. Byrd Center for Legislative Studies at Shepherd University, Shepherdstown, WV, announces the publication of Congress Investigates: A Critical and Documentary History, published by Facts On File, Inc., an Infobase Learning Company, as part of their Library of American History series. This landmark, 2-volume work, complete with illustrations and documents (1,200 pages) traces the story of the most significant congressional investigations in American history, beginning with the first in 1792 up to the Hurricane Katrina Inquiry in 2005-06. Executive editor of Facts On File Dr. Andrew Gyory, who oversaw production of Congress Investigates, says, “This unique reference is intended to be an indispensable tool for all those, beginners and experts alike, who are students of the history of Congress.”

This is the first in a series of Congressional Research Projects that will be conducted by the Robert C. Byrd Center for Legislative Studies. Its publication coincides with the first anniversary of the death of Senator Robert C. Byrd, whose vision for the Byrd Center was that it would provide a forum for the study of Congress, the U.S. Constitution, and the meaning of Representative Democracy. Members of Senator Byrd’s family and the governing board of the Byrd Center, the Congressional Education Foundation, attended a dinner at the Bavarian Inn in Shepherdstown, on June 24, where they were presented with copies of the volumes. According to Ray Smock, “It is amazing how congressional investigations have influenced American history and culture in profound ways.”

Congress Investigates was co-edited by Dr. Ray Smock, director of the Byrd Center and Dr. David Hostetter, director of programs and research at the Center, along with Dr. Roger Bruns, the former director of publications for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The power of Congress to investigate has a long history of great successes and equally great failures. Some investigations led to major new legislation or to political reforms, while others were little more than venues for partisanship, self-aggrandizement, or propaganda. But all are significant chapters in American political and constitutional history. Co-editor Roger Bruns notes that, “The story of these investigations shapes our understanding of American history through the work of Congress.”
The twenty-nine investigations in these volumes include among others the John Brown Raid inquiry in 1859, those conducted on the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, the Pecora Committee on the Stock Market Crash in 1933, the Truman Committee on War Mobilization, the Pearl Harbor investigation, the Army-McCarthy Hearings in 1954, the Watergate Committee, which forced President Nixon’s resignation, The Iran-Contra Hearings in 1987, the Whitewater Investigation and the Impeachment of President Clinton, the longest and most expensive investigation of a U.S. president in history, and the 9/11 Commission, which delved into the details of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that left thousands dead. “Congress Investigates,” says David Hostetter, “links the hearings that are in living memory with the precedents set by investigations of the past.”

The Robert C. Byrd Center for Legislative Studies is a private, nonpartisan, and nonprofit educational organization on the campus of Shepherd University in Shepherdstown, WV. The mission of the Center is to promote a better understanding of the U.S. Congress, the U.S. Constitution, and the meaning of Representative Democracy. To fulfill its mission the Center conducts public programs, seminars, lectures, and does research on the history of Congress. The Center is also the repository of the Papers and Congressional Records of Senator Robert C. Byrd and other political collections related to the U.S. Congress.

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