
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 375

1930 April 12

Albany, NY - Report on 1930 Legislative Session

p. 728

At the Tenth Regiment Armory, Albany, April 12, 1930

Accomplishments and Failures of 1930 Legislative Session

Much has been accomplished for the people of the State of New York during the past two weeks. It is true that nearly a thousand bills have passed the Legislature, many of them at the rate of two a minute, during the confused final sessions.

Nevertheless, in this stampede, more definitely important subjects have been dealt with, many of them resulting in legislative action, than in any average year of the Legislature.

I am particularly happy that in this final drive, action has been taken on the great majority of the proposals which I have made to the Legislature

in my two annual messages. I would not have been deeply disappointed, if a mere majority of my recommendations had been acted on, but, so far as I can figure in this preliminary survey, eighty per cent of the major proposals made by me have received definite consideration, most of it of a favorable character. In my annual message on January first I asked for action at this session on a number of great subjects. Here is the record:

1. We have taken definite steps to improve the care of the prisoners and prisons of the State. A Parole Board with far-reaching powers has been created and a prison building program adopted.

2. The State Banking Laws have been amended in accordance with the report of two special commissions.

3. An Old Age Security Law, the first step in this direction, has been passed.

4. The Legislature has agreed to my proposal for a commission, with laymen on it, to study the fundamentals of judicial reform.

5. Deserved increases in pay have been given to the State Police.

6. The State Park program, with one marked exception, has been continued.

7. The recommendations of the Governor's Agricultural Advisory Commission have extended many benefits to the agricultural population of the State.

8. The principle of spending on our highways all the money received in gas and license taxes from the motorists has received definite recognition.

9. Action has been taken on abolishing the State Census.

10. Certain rather grudging concessions have been given in line with my liberal labor policy.

11. The twenty-year struggle for the development of the St. Lawrence, with the objective of cheap electricity for our homes, resulted in a complete victory for this great fundamental principle.

12. The Legislature promptly acceded to my suggestion that the Congress be asked to do away with appeals by telephone and other utility companies to the Federal Courts before they had exhausted all their remedies in State Courts.

13. At the eleventh hour, and only after I had sent a special message, a splendid appropriation has been given for the development of Saratoga Springs as a great health center for our citizens.

14. The submission of a bond issue for State hospitals and prisons has been approved, and six thousand patient beds have been appropriated for and construction work is under way.

To paint a true picture we must give the fact that on the other side of the ledger there are some grave failures for which the leaders of the legislative majority must stand forever responsible. The more important are:

1. The failure of the legislative leaders, at the outset of the session, to abide by the opinion of the Court of Appeals on the Executive Budget. Much time was wasted before the simple principles laid down by the court were understood and recognized by the finance chairmen.

2. Under the leadership of the President pro tem of the Senate, the Legislature has failed wholly to go to the root of the grave public utility situation. A series of emasculated bills still leave this as one of the burning questions before the State. When the principal bills were introduced they were futile. After open pressure by the utility companies they were made mere paper. A better illustration of the weak leadership of the majority could not be found.

3. All efforts to modernize local government were turned down by the Legislature, and we must suffer extravagance and waste for another year.

4. All efforts to create non-partisan election boards throughout the State, to facilitate quick election returns, to obtain campaign expenditure publicity before election, and to submit the question of a four-year term for Governor to the people, were turned down flatly.

I am giving this brief survey of the accomplishments and lack of accomplishments of the Legislature, not with any purpose of obtaining any personal credit for what has been done, but in order to give to the people of the State a plain record. The record speaks for itself, and credit should be given where it is due.