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

**Series 2: “ You have nothing to fear but fear itself:” FDR
and the New Deal**

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1941 February 24

Message to Congress - Civil Service Improvement

MR. MCREYNOLDS' OFFICE

The attached draft of
message was prepared
jointly by Justices
Reed and Frankfurter



MR

To Congress
9/24/41

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

To the Congress of the United States of America:

Whatever differences there may have been as to details there is no disagreement among thinking men that the great social and technological advances of our national community have made inevitable a large extension of governmental activity. The civil service conception is a postulate of our government. Therefore, the effective administration of the laws by which this new governmental effort has been brought about, no matter how carefully they may have been formed, has demanded extension of the civil service to take care of these new undertakings. Since March 4, 1933, many positions have been placed by executive order within the civil service, but for obvious reasons we have been rather laggard in extending it to those higher positions in the government which are especially dependent on initiative, imagination and flexibility. We ought now to appraise the qualities necessary for those who discharge those highest functions, as well as to achieve for them an independence and security which assure the conditions for the best governmental service. These are after all the underlying elements of the civil service ideals. I have deemed it important to

try to work out ways and means whereby the country would have the advantages that come from a professional and permanent public service even in the most exacting positions of the national administration.

To that end, by Executive Order 8044 of January 31, 1939, I appointed a committee which should give assurances of disinterestedness and represent ample knowledge of the philosophy and practices of civil service and broad experience with the processes of personnel selection in large enterprises both private and governmental. I named such a committee -- the President's Committee on Civil Service Improvement. I asked this committee to make a comprehensive study of civil service procedure in relation to governmental positions, classed as professional, scientific, higher administrative and investigative. The committee was requested to inquire into the needs of these services and to recommend the most effective ways for meeting these needs.

Their report has now reached me and in view of its importance for furthering the betterment of the national public administration, I consider it appropriate to bring it to the attention of the Congress. The report should assist all of us who are concerned with the development of a personnel service which shall measure up to the requirements of the complicated

public business. And that public business is not likely to be less complicated in the future or less demanding in its contact of men and women of enterprise, originality, disinterestedness or devotion. Good laws and practices thereunder are of course indispensable but a government of laws must be through men and these should be chosen with an eye single to their suitability for the great calling of the public service. I am confident that the report which I am herewith transmitting will help in devising effective means for enlarging the scope and extending the area of this type of civil service.

THE WHITE HOUSE, February , 1941.

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