

US History

The Kennedy & Johnson Years

Learning Target:

I can analyze the process of establishing continuity between Kennedy and Johnson by examining Johnson becoming president. I can also examine LBJ's Great Society and reasons for its decline.

3. The New Frontier to the Great Society

The New Frontier

-Domestic agenda became known as the New Frontier after a campaign speech

Helping the Poor –

- Michael Harrington's *The Other America* –
 - Greatly influenced JFK
 - Documented study of poverty in America
 - Shattered notion that all Americans benefited from 1950's prosperity
 - Nation needed to face the problem of poverty; don't pretend it's not there

Area Redevelopment Act –

- Helped by JFK to pass
- Provided financial assistance to economically distressed regions
- Had been vetoed by Eisenhower

Conservative Congress –

- Due to a conservative congress JFK was unable to –
 - Expand protected federal wilderness lands
 - Expand funding for schools
 - Establish medicare

Establishing Continuity

-Johnson's experience in politics allowed him to manage the transition with skill and tact

-Promised the nation continuity between his administration and Kennedy's

“I felt from the first day in office that I had to carry on for President Kennedy. I considered myself the caretaker of both his people and his policies.” – LBJ

Examples of this continuity –

1. Asked Kennedy's cabinet and advisers to serve under him
2. Focused on the passage of Kennedy's tax cut bill

The War on Poverty

- Johnson was briefed on Kennedy's antipoverty initiative on his first full day in office
- After receiving an outline of the plan Johnson responded:
 - "I'm sympathetic. Go ahead. Give it the highest priority. Push ahead full tilt."

Office of Economic Opportunity –

- The bill that launched Johnson's war on poverty
- Had a budget of over \$1 billion
- OEO Programs –
 - Job Corps* –
 - Work training program for young people between 16 and 21
 - Head Start* –
 - Preschool education program for low-income families
 - Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)* –
 - Domestic version of the Peace Corps

1964 Presidential Election –

The Candidates –

- Democrats – Lyndon Johnson
 - Americans seemed impressed with Johnson's achievements following the death of JFK
 - LBJ easily won the Democratic nomination
- Republicans – Barry Goldwater
 - Very conservative candidate
 - Seen as too extreme by many Americans

The Result –

- Johnson won the election by a landslide
- Seen as a mandate to institute his liberal domestic policy

The Great Society –

Medical Programs –

- Medicare –
 - National health insurance program for people over 65
- Medicaid –
 - Government program that provides free health care to the needy

Educational Programs –

Elementary and Secondary Education Act –

- Passed in 1965
- Provided \$1.3 billion in aid to schools in poor areas

Corporation for Public Broadcasting –

- Nonprofit organization dedicated to offering educational TV programs

Housing Programs –

Omnibus Housing Act –

- Authorized billions of dollars to be spent on urban renewal and housing assistance to low-income families

Environmental Programs –

-Very impressive environment record

- Water Quality Act of 1965
- Air Quality Act of 1967

The Decline of the Great Society –

Two Main Reasons for the Decline:

1. Foreign Policy

- Affairs in the Dominican Republic caused US intervention against communists
- Vietnam began taking the attention of Johnson in the spring of 1965
- Martin Luther King Jr. said the Great Society had been “shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam.”

2. Domestic Opposition

- 1966 midterm elections weakened the Democrats power in Congress
- Limited Johnson’s ability to pass legislation
- Many thought Vietnam should take precedent over the Great Societ