

Activities in the United States Congress

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During the week of November 30 through December 6, 1864, many important events occurred. The Battle of Springfield occurred where a very frustrated General Hood missed a prime opportunity to capture a large part of the Union Army. After this missed opportunity, Hood launched an attack upon the Federals in Franklin, Tennessee, which did not work out well in his favor, either. Politically, Salmon Chase, the former U.S. Secretary of State, replaced the deceased Roger Taney, as Supreme Court Chief Justice. This helped to secure the 1864 presidential election for candidate Abraham Lincoln. These events proved to have a major impact on the Civil War.

On November 30, the battle of Spring Hill occurred along the Duck River in Tennessee. While the Union forces were retreating from Columbia, John Bell Hood and his Army of Tennessee made plans to cut the Union off at Springfield. Skirmishes took place at Springfield, but ultimately Hood missed a great opportunity to capture a large part of the Union Army under the command of General John M. Schofield. Schofield and his men were able to sneak around Hood and the Army of Tennessee, in the cover of night, which prevented a major Union calamity. Outraged at the missed opportunity, Hood launched a series of enraged and overly aggressive attacks on Schofield at the Battle of Franklin.

As a direct result of the Battle of Spring Hill, the Battle of Franklin took place. This ultimately resulted in a disaster for the Confederacy, who lost many men of which they could not afford to lose. Under the command of John Bell Hood, the Confederacy

launched several frontal attacks onto fortified Union positions in Franklin, Tennessee. The Federal forces were able to fend off the attacks by the Confederates, under the command of General John M. Schofield. Both sides were evenly matched during the engagement with about 20,000 men on each side. However, the Confederates lost nearly five times the amount of troops that the Union did. Included in these deaths were six Confederate generals, one being the famous Patrick Cleburne. This massive assault upon Franklin was launched in lieu of Hood's previous missed opportunity at the Battle of Springfield. The Battle of Franklin severely damaged Hood's Army of Tennessee, which weakened the army during the Battle of Nashville, where they were effectively destroyed as a fighting force.

Another very important political event that occurred during the week of November 30 through December 6, 1864, was the appointment of former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon Chase, to Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Chase and Lincoln had difficulties throughout the course of Lincoln's presidency, and in turn, some saw this as a ploy to eliminate Chase as a candidate of the 1864 elections. With Chase eradicated as a potential threat to the presidency, Abraham Lincoln was able to win, with ease, another presidential election in 1864.

Following the custom of the day, President Lincoln sent his annual message to Congress, where it was read to the highly interested members, for all were aware of the momentous questions of war and reconstruction facing the Union. Opening the message without emphasis on the war, Mr. Lincoln noted that the state of foreign affairs was reasonably satisfactory. He mentioned some previously closed ports now open and hoped foreign merchants would trade there rather than resort to blockade-running. "I

regard our emigrants as one of the principal replenishing streams which are appointed by Providence to repair the ravages of internal war, and its wastes of national strength and health," he wrote. Financial conditions were satisfactory and, despite the war, the Treasury showed a balance for the year ending July 1, 1863. The War and Navy departments had spent \$776,525,135.74 out of expenditures of \$865,234,087.86. He did call for increased taxation. The public debt was \$1,740,690,489.49. Westward expansion was continuing, the new Agricultural Department was developing. Still, "The war continues." However, the armies had steadily advanced. He reported favorably on the reconstruction efforts in Louisiana, Maryland and elsewhere. The President asked for reconsideration of the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery, which he said the people approved in their election decision. The people are united on "the distinct issue of Union or no Union," for "The public purpose to re-establish and maintain the national authority is unchanged, and, as we believe, unchangeable." As to peace, the insurgents "cannot voluntarily reaccept the Union; we cannot voluntarily yield it." The issue can only be decided by war. But if the insurgent government cannot accept peace and reunion, the people can, and some desire it. The President admitted readmission of members of Congress was not in presidential hands. "I mean simply to say that the war will cease on the part of the government, whenever it shall have ceased on the part of those who began it."