

JAMES O. EASTLAND
FILE SERIES 4: LEGISLATIVE FILES
SUBSERIES 18: LEGISLATIVE AIDE/SAM THOMPSON

Born in Attala County, Mississippi, Sam Thompson grew up on farms in Tallahatchie, Quitman, and Sunflower counties. He began farming in U.S. Senator James O. Eastland's hometown of Ruleville in 1934 and bought a farm in Leflore County in 1938 producing cotton, soybean, grain, and cattle. Thompson organized the Leflore County Soil Conservation District in 1946 and served on its board for twenty-two years. He was Southeastern Area Vice President of the National Association of Soil Conservation Districts for 1952-1953.

For fourteen years, Thompson served as a Delta field man for the Mississippi Farm Bureau. In 1953, the Bureau assigned him to assist Eastland on the subject of acreage disputes in the West. Thompson joined the senator's staff a year later as a legislative aide. His responsibilities focused on agriculture and natural resources that involved the Department of Agriculture, the Department of the Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the public works of the Corps of Engineers. At various times, Thompson would serve as an employee of the Senate's Agricultural and Forestry Committee.

In 1952, Thompson initiated the first water rights legislation in the state, chairing the Mississippi Interorganizational Committee for Water Resources. He served continuously on the Mississippi Board of Water Commissioners from 1956 to 1978. In 1957, he called a meeting in Jackson of water officials from twelve southern states, leading to the organization of the Southern Water Resources Conference which he chaired for five years. Thompson was also one of the organizers of the Interstate Conference on Water Problems of the Council of State Governments, and he chaired the Water Resources Council during the year it began to coordinate Federal Water Agency activities.

Recognized as one of the nation's leading water and soil conservation authorities, Thompson addressed numerous local, state, regional, and national groups interested in water resources and water rights. He also appeared before congressional committees on these matters representing the state of Mississippi, the Delta Council, the Farm Bureau, and State Legislative Councils. He initiated the idea that led to the establishment of loans for rural water associations and small communities to provide potable water and sewage systems. Thompson also helped to develop disaster legislation that would provide financing for farmers with crop losses due to floods, droughts, tornadoes, and other natural disasters.

The one box in this subseries contains personal papers and professional correspondence dating from 1955 to 1978 that expands beyond Thompson's work in the congressional office to include his broad activism in water and agriculture organizations. Researchers will find more of his correspondence in the Agriculture Committee and State/Local Files subseries.

For more information on the man, see *In Honor of Sam Thompson: A Lifetime of Dedicated Service to Mississippi Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural America* [1978]. Call Number: [S484 I54 1978](#).

BOX 1

Folder 1-1: Correspondence 1955

Folder 1-2: Correspondence 1956

Folder 1-3: Miscellaneous 1956

Folder 1-4: Correspondence 1957

Folder 1-5: Correspondence 1958

Folder 1-6: Correspondence 1959

Folder 1-7: Correspondence 1960

Folder 1-8: Speeches 1960

Folder 1-9: Correspondence 1961

Folder 1-10: Miscellaneous 1961

Folder 1-11: Correspondence 1962

Folder 1-12: Speeches 1962

Folder 1-13: Correspondence 1963

Folder 1-14: Speeches 1963

Folder 1-15: Correspondence 1964

Folder 1-16: Speeches 1964

Folder 1-17: Correspondence 1965

Folder 1-18: Correspondence 1966

Folder 1-19: Miscellaneous 1966

Folder 1-20: Correspondence 1967

Folder 1-21: Correspondence 1968

Folder 1-22: Correspondence 1969

Folder 1-23: Miscellaneous 1969

Folder 1-24: Correspondence 1970

Folder 1-25: Correspondence 1973

Folder 1-26: Miscellaneous 1973

Folder 1-27: Correspondence 1975

Folder 1-28: Miscellaneous 1975

Folder 1-29: Correspondence 1976

Folder 1-30: Miscellaneous 1976

Folder 1-31: Correspondence 1977

Folder 1-32: Miscellaneous 1977

Folder 1-33: Correspondence 1978

Folder 1-34: Miscellaneous 1978

Folder 1-35: Miscellaneous Undated