

JAMES O. EASTLAND
FILE SERIES 4: LEGISLATIVE FILES
SUBSERIES 19: PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

In 1972, the Senate elected Eastland as president pro tempore to fill the vacancy left by the death of Allen J. Ellender. In the absence of the vice president, the Constitution provides for a president pro tempore to preside over the Senate. Since World War II, tradition has dictated that the senior member of the majority party assumes the position.

The president pro tempore is third in the line of succession to the presidency, following the vice-president and the Speaker of the House. Twice, Eastland ascended a notch in the succession -- in 1973 when Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned and again in 1974 after President Richard M. Nixon's resignation.

When the Democrats are in the majority, the president pro tempore is an ex officio member of that party's leadership, attending its conference, policy committee, and steering committee meetings. As president pro tempore, Eastland directed enforcement of rules governing the use of the Capitol and Senate office buildings and made appointments to an assortment of national commissions (usually acting upon the advice of the majority and minority leaders). During joint sessions of Congress, the president pro tempore shares presiding duties with the Speaker of the House. Eastland retained the title of president pro tempore until his retirement.

The single box in this subseries contains two large files of congratulatory letters Eastland received upon his election to the post, followed by a chronological arrangement by year. Many of the documents concern appointments to national commissions.

BOX 1:

Folder1-1. Congratulations on President Pro Tempore (1 of 2)

Folder 1-2. Congratulations on President Pro Tempore (2 of 2)

Folder 1-3. 1972

Folder 1-4. 1973

Folder 1-5. 1974

Folder 1-6. 1975

Folder 1-7. 1976

Folder 1-8. 1977

Folder 1-9. 1978

Folder 1-10. Undated