

## Senate Resolution 301: Censure of Senator Joseph McCarthy (1954)

The early years of the Cold War saw the United States facing a hostile Soviet Union, the "loss" of China to communism, and war in Korea. In this politically charged atmosphere, fears of Communist influence over American institutions spread easily. On February 9, 1950, Joseph McCarthy, a Republican Senator from Wisconsin, claimed that he had a list of 205 State Department employees who were Communists. While he offered little proof, the claims gained the Senator great notoriety. In June, Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine and six fellow Republicans issued a "Declaration of Conscience" asserting that because of McCarthy's tactics, the Senate had been "debased to the level of a forum for hate and character assassination." However, McCarthy took advantage of the Cold War atmosphere of fear and suspicion and with strong support in the opinion polls, McCarthy's attacks and interventions in senatorial elections brought defeat to some of his party's Democratic opponents.

After Republicans took control of the White House and Congress in 1953, McCarthy was named chairman of the Committee on Government Operations and its Subcommittee on Investigations. From these posts he continued to accuse Government agencies of being "soft" on communism, but he was now attacking a Republican administration. In 1954 McCarthy's investigation of security threats in the U.S. Army was televised. McCarthy's bullying of witnesses turned public opinion against the Senator. On December 2, 1954, the Senate voted to censure him, describing his behavior as "contrary to senatorial traditions."

Republican Senators Ralph Flanders of Vermont, Arthur Watkins of Utah, and Margaret Chase Smith of Maine led the efforts to discipline McCarthy. Flanders introduced two separate resolutions against McCarthy, one removing McCarthy from his chairmanships and the other calling for his censure. The censure resolution moved forward with debate beginning July 30, 1954. The full Senate took up the resolution on November 5. This copy of the resolution catches the debate on November 9 as the Senate refined the wording of its resolution. The substance of the first count, charging McCarthy with failure to cooperate with a Senate subcommittee, remained unchanged in the final resolution. The second count was dropped for a condemnation of McCarthy's attacks on the very members of the committee that considered his censure.

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*McCarthy*

LEGISLATIVE NO. 2-540

# S. RES. 301

Report No. 2502

## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

June 10 (legislative day June 11), 1954

Mr. FAYALL submitted the following resolution, which was read twice

Reported by Mr. WALKER from the Select Committee created pursuant to order of the Senate of August 7, 1954, with amendments.  
[With the yeas 49 and nays 47, the yeas being 10.]

### RESOLUTION

- Resolved, That the conduct of the Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. McCarthy, in submitting a Member of the United States Senate, in contrary to senatorial traditions, and in order to bring the Senate into disrepute, and such conduct is hereby condemned.

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YEAS 49

The Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. McCarthy, failed to cooperate with the Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration in clearing up matters referred to that committee which concerned his conduct as a Senator and affected the honor of the Senate and, instead, repeatedly abused the committee and its members who were trying to carry out assigned duties, thereby obstructing the constitutional processes of the Senate, and that this conduct of the Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. McCarthy, in failing to cooperate with a Senate committee in clearing up matters affecting the honor of the Senate is contrary to senatorial traditions and

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YEAS 49

The Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. McCarthy, in conducting a senatorial inquiry independently conducted, not released executive hearings in which he demanded, a witness representing the executive branch of the Government, General Ralph V. Heiser, an officer of the United States Army, for refusing to criticize his superior officers and for respecting official orders and executive directives, thereby tending to destroy the good faith which must be maintained between the executive and legislative branches in our system of government; and the Senate disavows the denunciation of General Heiser by Senator McCarthy as chairman of a Senate subcommittee and censures him for that action.

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