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This Week In Congress Radio Address: The Authority of the Executive Branch, 1957 February 6
Speaker: Senator J. Allen Frear
Transcribed by: David Cardillo

[00:00]

Announcer: The Week in Congress, recorded on February 6th, 1957.

Mr. Kelly: From Washington, DC, transcribed, United States Senator J. Allen Frear reports again to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Ladies and gentlemen, Senator Frear.

Senator Frear: Thank you, Mr. Kelly. One of the significant questions which more and more confronts members of Congress in these days of expanding governmental activity, both at home and abroad, is the relationship of the legislative branch to the executive arm of our national government. Under the Federal Constitution, Congress has the power to make laws. The President has authority to recommend the enactment of statute, and of course, is also charged with many other varying responsibilities. However, in fairly recent times, a tendency prevalent in both major political parties is to grant more and more authority to the executive branch of government. The result has been a sizeable increase in the scope of presidential responsibility, and I fear a lessening of congressional influence and judgment on matters of singular importance. It must be stated in all frankness, however, that Congress itself has passed its authority to the executive branch in many instances without realizing, perhaps, the full significance of its actions. While many people express the view that in these days of international uncertainty, the ability of Congress to act swiftly is somewhat doubtful, yet the conviction remains with many that the Congress debates legislative matters over an extended period of time. Its membership is, in fact, merely affording the people a real opportunity to express themselves before reaching a decision. Congress can act with great speed when circumstances require to do so. As a consequence of greater executive powers, there has been a growing public tendency among some groups to place more and more reliance on the President and look to that office for whatever decisions may be necessary, especially in matters of foreign policy. This, to me, is not in keeping with our fundamental concept of Constitutional government. While it is true that the President is elected by the people and in turn endeavors to represent the entire nation, yet the individual members of the Congress, chosen specifically from states and districts, are inherently closer to, and in a better position to understand, the needs and problems of their own constituents. When we bring together the views of the Congress as a body, its judgment, as I see it, is most truly representative of the

American people. I have been glad to observe in the recent past that a representative number of American civilians alert to this situation are endeavoring to focus more widespread attention on the Constitutional responsibility of the Congress and are seeking to cultivate in the minds of other citizens a greater degree of interest in the role which Congress should properly exercise under our democratic system. We hear it said frequently that the office of the President is overburdened with tasks that should probably be delegated either to departmental heads or someone else responsible to the Chief Executive. Instead of granting additional powers to the President or his delegated representatives, it seems to me that Congress should not only endeavor to halt the growing tendency toward a bigger and bigger federal government, but should keep within its own sphere of responsibility matters which it can properly and efficiently supervise and control. And in this connection, there should be a more sustained effort to preserve the Constitutional authority of the servile state which are the real basis and source of this republic. Our representative form of government, conceived by our Founding Fathers, with its powers distributed among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, has proven sound and wise. They should and must be preserved in proportionate degree to ensure our future welfare.

Mr. Kelly:

Thank you, Senator Frear. From the nation's capital, you have heard United States Senator J. Allen Frear in his regular report to the people of Delaware on current congressional affairs. Senator Frear will be heard again next week at this same time, speaking from the Senate Office Building in Washington.

[04:50]