

## The Marshall Plan

ANNCR: The Marshall Plan — on Today's Congressional Moment.

Europe lay devastated at the end of World War Two. Its major cities were damaged or destroyed. Its infrastructure—roads and bridges, power plants, communications—was ruined. Many of its people were destitute and hungry.

Secretary of State George Marshall was convinced the United States needed to intervene to stave off “hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos.” In a speech at Harvard, he outlined a massive effort to rebuild Europe's economy.

His proposal that day is known to history as the “Marshall Plan,” but at the time it was little more than an idea. What gave it shape was its passage through Congress.

Marshall served President Harry S Truman, a Democrat. The House and the Senate, however, were controlled by Republicans, and the congressional majority was dubious about spending billions of dollars to help other countries, especially countries like Germany, that had been our enemy. “We are through being 'Uncle Sap,'” one senator declared.

Marshall found one indispensable ally, Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, chair of the foreign relations committee and a Republican leader. Talking daily, they shaped the Marshall Plan into a business-like, 13 billion dollar operation that got the congressional approval it needed.

Today, their work is remembered for helping lift Europe from its knees and helping create the post-war economic prosperity that followed.

*CLOSING: This is Lee Hamilton. Congressional decisions impact all our lives. To find out more about how Congress works, or to get involved in your government, visit the Center on Congress website at [congress.indiana.edu](http://congress.indiana.edu).*