RAY BLANTON CONGRESSIONAL PAPERS
1967 – 1972

Processed by:

Stewart Southard
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INTRODUCTION

From his election in 1967 until his defeat to Howard Baker in 1972, Leonard Raymond Blanton served as U.S. Representative representing Tennessee’s Seventh Congressional District. As a freshman legislator from a predominantly rural district, Blanton had little influence on national politics, sponsoring few bills of any significance. He served on only two committees; the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee and the District of Columbia Committee, where his attendance records were reportedly poor. Instead, Blanton concentrated his efforts on constituent service, returning often to his district, responding promptly to voter’s concerns, and working to draw federal money to finance projects in Tennessee. This collection of documents mirrors the focus Blanton placed on the needs of his constituency during his six years as U.S. Representative.

More than one half of the documents in this collection consist of correspondence, both with constituents, and with state and federal agencies. During Blanton’s tenure as Representative, a number of divisive issues prompted individuals to write their congressman, by themselves or as part of organized letter writing campaigns. For example, both the war in Vietnam, and the court mandated busing of students to desegregate the schools prompted volumes of mail. Part of the constituent correspondence was filed by date, but the bulk of it is filed by subject. The subjects themselves, and the amount of correspondence in each reflects the concerns of Blanton’s home constituency with specific issues.

The collection also includes a considerable number of files regarding district projects. In many cases, Blanton worked to steer Federal money to help finance Tennessee projects. When an award or grant was secured, Blanton’s office invariably issued a press release. The projects ranged from transporting a gorilla to the Memphis Zoo, to funding some of the first Head Start programs in the state of Tennessee.

Copies of Blanton’s speeches may be the most significant part of the collection. Blanton did a great deal of public speaking, primarily in his home district, and his speeches clearly articulated his stance on the issues that concerned his voters. Reflecting the conservative views of his constituents, Blanton was strongly opposed to forced busing, an extremely hot issue in the South, and criticized the anti-war movement emphatically. A former teacher, he spoke often to students, stressing the importance of education, both for personal success, and as a duty of citizenship. Although, like any politician, Blanton often gave the same speech on numerous occasions, he had a wide repertoire, and spoke on a variety of subjects. Many of the copies of speeches in this collection contain his notes and corrections, making them a valuable resource.

In addition to the types of documents listed above, the collection also includes photographs, an audio tape, a small amount of campaign materials, voting records, and lists of campaign contributors. The material covers only the period of Blanton’s service in the U.S. House of Representatives, from 1967 to 1972. No material from his previous office or from his term as Governor is included. The collection is contained in 35 Hollinger boxes, and contains approximately 17.5 cubic feet of documents. It has been microfilmed, and there are no restrictions on its use.
SCOPE AND CONTENT

During his tenure as U.S. Representative, it is known that Ray Blanton kept two offices in his district as well as his office in Washington. The records in this collection show evidence that they may be a compilation from at least two of these offices. Particularly in the correspondence and the speeches, two different filing systems are present. For example, some correspondence was kept by date, while others were kept by subject. The final arrangement of the collection was an attempt to keep both filing systems essentially intact and to aid potential researchers.

The first box contains correspondence arranged by date. There was very little from the year 1969, but January of 1970 through November of 1972 are intact and arranged in folders by month and year. Boxes 2 through part of 5 contain correspondence which is arranged by subject. The correspondence is arranged chronologically within each subject heading.

The remainder of Box 5 through Box 10 contain correspondence with Federal commissions and departments. Much of this is composed of constituent concerns and questions that Blanton passed along to the appropriate agency, but also includes Blanton’s own questions and responses, as well as efforts to secure funding for district projects.

Boxes 11 through 18 contain correspondence between Blanton and various legislative committees. Almost invariably this involves proposed or pending legislation, or requests for information on issues under the committee’s purview. Blanton himself served on the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee and the District of Columbia Committee.

Boxes 20 through 22 contain copies of legislation, primarily House Resolutions. There are no copies of the bills that Blanton would have had an opportunity to vote on as Representative. Presumably, they were discarded before reaching the archives, possibly because of their bulk. Copies of Blanton’s voting records are available in the subject files placed at the end of the collection.

Box 23 contains photographs, primarily press photographs of Ray Blanton by himself, or posed in groups. The few photographs which were identified were placed in a separate folder. A list of the identified photographs is included in the container list.

Boxes 24 through 29 contain the records of the district projects that Blanton helped to receive funding. They have been arranged by county first, then in alphabetical order by the name of the agency receiving funding. Most of these files contain copies of the original application, related correspondence, and copies of the press release that would have been issued when the funding was granted. At the end of the list are files of grants that were issued by the name of the agency. Most of these are summary documents listing all the grants issued in the district by that agency.

Boxes 30 through 33 contain Blanton’s speeches. Like the correspondence, these were originally filed using more than one system. In an attempt to maintain their original order to the greatest extent possible, the speeches are arranged first by date, then by place, then by subject. Each of these file headings may or may not contain duplicates of the same speech.
At the end of the collection, in Boxes 33 through 35, are subject files, which contain miscellaneous documents which do not fit the previous categories. Blanton’s voting records, documents relating to his trip to Vietnam, and a copy of the booklet on college funding are examples.

Kept in a separate location from the rest of the collection is a short cassette tape with a recording of a campaign song: “Ray Blanton Knows a Better Way.” The tape is undated, so it is unknown for which of Blanton’s campaigns the song was recorded. For preservation purposes, the tape is located in a climate controlled vault.
From his birth in 1930 until his death in 1996, Ray Blanton held a number of important political offices, and became a well known and controversial public figure in Tennessee. This brief biographical sketch is not an attempt to summarize his life and achievements, but only to illuminate the period which led to his election as U.S. Representative for the Seventh Congressional District, and put his service in that office in perspective.

Blanton’s decision in 1966 to run for the U.S. House of Representatives was a politically risky one. His opponent, Democrat Tom Murray, had served in the office for 24 years, and in addition to being an incumbent, was a member of a powerful and influential political family. Blanton’s eventual win was attributed partly to the recent reapportionment of the district to include part of Shelby County, and partly to his travels by bus to speak at small gatherings in out of the way places. Blanton projected himself as a man of the people, and promised hands-on constituent service, a sharp contrast to his predecessor. Blanton won the election by a narrow margin of only 384 votes.

Once in Washington, Blanton, like most freshman legislators, found he had little actual power. His relative inexperience, coupled with the fact that he was a Democrat serving under a popular Republican administration, did not give him much opportunity to influence national issues. Instead, keeping to his campaign promises, Blanton concentrated on service to his constituents at home. He maintained field offices in Jackson and Memphis, and returned to his district often, both for speeches, and to listen to constituent concerns at “open door” town and county meetings. He worked to bring a considerable amount of Federal money to his home district, both for industrial development and job creation, and for civic projects.

In 1972, two events prompted Blanton to relinquish the office he had held for six years. First, Republican Senator Howard Baker’s six year term in the Senate was up, and he faced re-election. Second, a lack of population growth noted in the 1970 census had prompted another reapportionment of the legislative districts in Tennessee. The state was required to lose one Representative, and as the one with the least seniority, Blanton would have likely been the one chosen to lose his office. Instead, he announced that he would run against Baker for the Senate. Although he ran a well coordinated campaign and was endorsed by powerful Alabama Governor George Wallace, Blanton lost the Senate election by a considerable margin, ending his six year career in the U.S. Capital.
# CONTAINER LIST

**Microfilm Roll # 1**

**BOX 1**

**General Correspondence by Date:**

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BOX 2
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Folder 2 Agnew Remarks
Folder 3 Armed Services Retirement Pay
Folder 4 Blanton Staff Employment
Folder 5 Calley, Lt. William (Court Marshal)
Folder 6 Cambodia
Folder 7 Children’s Bureau Funding
Folder 8 Civil Rights
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Folder 14 District of Columbia, Home Rule
Folder 15 District of Columbia, Juvenile Code
Folder 16 Draft – Military Service

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Folder 2 Emergency Education Loan Act
Folder 3 Employment of the Handicapped
Folder 4 Employment- General
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Folder 18 Obscenity and Pornography
Folder 19 Parochial Schools – Federal Funding
Folder 20 Pa Raise – 91st Congress
Folder 21 Pay TV
Folder 22 Pollution
Folder 23 Poverty
Folder 24 Railroad Dispute

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Folder 2 School Desegregation, School Bussing (2)
Folder 3 School Desegregation, School Bussing (3)
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Folder 5 School Prayer
Folder 6 Summer Employment
Folder 7 United Nations
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Folder 2 Voter Education Program
Folder 3 Voting Age
Folder 4 Voting Rights Bill
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Folder 8 Civil Aeronautics Board
Folder 9 Civil Service
Folder 10 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
Folder 11 Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
Folder 12 Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
Folder 13 Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)
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Folder 16 Federal Housing Administration (FHA)
Folder 17 Federal Power Commission

**BOX 6**

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Folder 2 Federal Trade Commission (FTC)
| Folder 3 | Food and Drug Administration (FDA) |
| Folder 4 | General Accounting Office (GAO) |
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| Folder 6 | Health, Education, and Welfare, (HEW) |

**Microfilm Roll # 3**

| Folder 7 | Health, Education, and Welfare, (HEW) – Education |
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| Folder 1 | Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 1969 |
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| Folder 3 | Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 1971 |
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| Folder 5 | Internal Revenue Service (IRS) |
| Folder 6 | Interior, General Correspondence |
| Folder 7 | Interior, National Park Service |
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| Folder 2 | Labor- Green Thumb Program |
| Folder 3 | Merchant Marine and Fisheries Commission |
| Folder 4 | National Aeronautics and Space Administration |
| Folder 5 | Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) |
| Folder 6 | Office of Management and Budget (OMB) |
| Folder 7 | Post Office and Civil Service |
| Folder 8 | Post Office and Civil Service – Employee Pay |
| Folder 9 | Post Office and Civil Service – Postage Increase |
| Folder 10 | Post Office and Civil Service – Postal Strike and Unionization |

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| Folder 2 | Small Business Administration (SBA) A – M |
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| Folder 4 | State Department – General |
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Folder 5  State Department – Foreign Affairs
Folder 6  State Department – Foreign Aid
Folder 7  State Department – Foreign Trade
Folder 8  State Department – Middle East Crisis
Folder 9  State Department – Rhodesia
Folder 10 Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) 1967
Folder 11 Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) 1968
Folder 12 Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) 1969
Folder 13 Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) 1970
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Folder 15 Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) 1972
Folder 16 Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Employment

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Folder 1 Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Rate Increase
Folder 2 Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) Tellico Dam Project
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Folder 4 Transportation – Federal Aviation Commission
Folder 5 Transportation – Federal Highway Administration
Folder 6 Transportation – ICC Regulations
Folder 7 Transportation – Memphis Highway
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Folder 13 Treasury Department – Internal Revenue Service
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Folder 2 Agriculture, 1970
Folder 3 Agriculture, 1971
Folder 4 Agriculture, 1972
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Folder 6 Agriculture, Rural Electrification
Folder 7 Agriculture, Supplemental Food Program
Folder 8 Agriculture, Unionization of Farm Labor
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Folder 15  Interstate and Foreign Commerce, 1972

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Folder 1  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Air Traffic Control
Folder 2  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Alcohol in Confections
Folder 3  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Attorney Fee Recovery
Folder 4  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Aviation
Folder 5  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Business Regulation
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Folder 10  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Consumer Credit
Folder 11  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Daylight Savings Time
Folder 12  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Delta Queen
Folder 13  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Family Planning
Folder 14  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Food Supplements
Folder 15  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Freight Forwarding
Folder 16  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Health Care
Folder 17  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Hill-Burton Act
Folder 18  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Insurance Regulation
Folder 19  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Mutual Funds
Folder 20  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Poison Prevention
Folder 21  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Political Broadcasts
Folder 22  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Pollution

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Folder 2  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Railroad Equipment
Folder 3  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Railroad Labor
Folder 4  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Railroad Retirement, 1969
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Folder 7  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Securities Investment
Folder 8  Interstate and Foreign Commerce – Tennessee Walking Horse Abuse
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Folder 5  Judiciary – Judges
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Folder 8  Standards of Official Conduct
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Folder 6  Ways and Means – Mills Trade Bill
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Folder 3  Conservation
Folder 4  Education
Folder 5  Employment Security
Folder 6  Game and Fish
Folder 7  Industrial Development
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Folder 2  H.C.R. 133  Boy Scouts
Folder 3  H.C.R. 152  Public Health Hospitals
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Folder 25  H.R. 680  Peace in Vietnam
Folder 26  H.R. 849  East – West Trade
Folder 27  H.R. 1040  Railroad Retirement
Folder 28  H.R. 2810  Antonio Plameros
Folder 29  H.R. 3945  Memphis State University
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**BOX 22**

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BOX 23
Photographs

Folder 1  Blanton Family
Folder 2  Blanton- Negatives
Folder 3  Blanton- Portraits
Folder 4  Blanton- Slides
Folder 5  Blanton- Vietnam Trip
Folder 6  Groups- Identified

Barnes Family, Somerville, with Ray Blanton, 7-27-1970
Blanton, Debbie, with Ray Blanton.
Chambers, Raybon, with Sarah Lancaster, Yancey Duren,
   Debbie Blanton, Rickey Copeland, and Ray Blanton
   (Summer interns).
Dick, Mrs. with Mary Pitts, Mary Shewe, and Ray Blanton
Elie, PFC Jerry, with Ray Blanton.
German, Harold, with Ray Blanton, 3-3-1971.
Harbor, Jim (President of Memphis Jaycees) with Ray
Harbor, Jim, (President of Memphis Jaycees) with Wes
   Dodson, Don Tate, Ralph Emerson, Dave Royster,
Holley, SP4 William, with Ray Blanton.
Kincaid, Debbie, with Carl Albert, Ed Jones, and Ray
   Blanton, October, 1971.
Kincaid, Debbie, with Dan Kuykendall, Ed Jones, and Ray
   Blanton, October, 1971.
Kincaid, Debbie, with Dan Kuykendall, Ed Jones, and Ray
   Blanton, October, 1971.
Kincaid, Debbie, with Dan Kuykendall, Wilbur Mills, Ed
Kincaid, Debbie, with Dan Kuykendall, Wilbur Mills, Ed
Kincaid, Debbie, with Ray Blanton.
Kincaid, Debbie, with Wilbur Mills and Ray Blanton,
   October, 1971.
Maney Family with Ray Blanton, 7-27-1970
Papadapoulos, George (Greek Premier) with Rep. Peter
   Kyros (D-Maine) and Ray Blanton.
Rains, Earnest with Ray Blanton, 3-3-1971.
Scott, Susan, with Ray Blanton.
Scott, Susan with Mrs. Thomas E. Scott and Ray Blanton.
Folder 7  Groups- Unidentified
Folder 8  Groups- Unidentified
Folder 9  Groups- Unidentified
Folder 10 Groups- Unidentified
Folder 11 Groups- Unidentified
Folder 12 Vietnam Press Photographs

BOX 24

Special District Projects by County

Folder 1  Benton County—Awards and Grants
Folder 2  Benton County—Water District
Folder 3  Carroll County—Atwood Water and Sewer
Folder 4  Carroll County—Big Sandy Watershed
Folder 5  Carroll County—Bruceton- Hollow Rock/Bruceton School District
Folder 6  Carroll County—Hollow Rock Water
Folder 7  Carroll County—Huntingdon Soil Conservation District
Folder 8  Carroll County—McKenzie- Bethel College
Folder 9  Carroll County—McKenzie- Low Rent Housing
Folder 10 Chester County—Freed-Hardeman Girls Dormitory
Folder 11 Chester County—Henderson, Freed-Hardeman College
Folder 12 Chester County—Henderson-Water/Sewer- Industrial Park
Folder 13 Chester County—Low Rent Housing
Folder 14 Chester County—Schools
Folder 15 Decatur County—Board of Education
Folder 16 Decatur County—General Hospital
Folder 17 Decatur County—Perryville Community Fire Truck
Folder 18 Decatur County—Parsons Radio Station
Folder 19 Decatur County—Surplus Commodity Distribution Program
Folder 20 Fayette County—Awards and Grants
Folder 21 Fayette County—Crop Insurance
Folder 22 Fayette County—Galloway and Rossville EDA Project Grants
Folder 23 Fayette County—Galloway Furniture Factory
Folder 24 Fayette County—Galloway Housing Authority
Folder 25 Fayette County—Galloway Water and Sewer
Folder 26 Fayette County—Hospital
Folder 27 Fayette County—Neighborhood Youth Groups
Folder 28 Fayette County—RICO Containers, Inc.
Folder 29 Fayette County—Oakland Water and Sewer
Folder 30 Fayette County—Rossville FHA Housing
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<td>Fayette County—Somerville HUD Funds</td>
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<td>Fayette County—Somerville National Guard Armory</td>
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<td>Fayette County—Somerville Neighborhood Youth Corps</td>
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<td>Fayette County—Somerville OEO Grants</td>
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<td>Fayette County—Wolf River Bridge</td>
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<td>Giles County—Ardmore Telephone Service Project</td>
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<td>Hardeman County—Fayette Utility District—FCC Licenses</td>
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<td>Hardin County—Awards and Grants</td>
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<td>Hardin County—Bolivar Electric Department, REA</td>
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<td>Hardin County Kinematics, Inc. Contracts</td>
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<td>Hardin County—Office of Economic Opportunity Grants</td>
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Folder 41  Hardin County—Pickwick Dam
Folder 42  Hardin County—Pickwick Park
Folder 43  Hardin County—Retraining Project
Folder 44  Hardin County—Savannah Home Loan Bank
Folder 45  Hardin County—Savannah Industrial Park
Folder 46  Hardin County—Savannah Pickwick Catfish Coop
Folder 47  Hardin County—Savannah Public Library
Folder 48  Hardin County—Savannah Streets, HUD
Folder 49  Hardin County—Savannah Water and Sewer
Folder 50  Hardin County—Savannah Water System, EDA

BOX 26
Folder 1  Hardin County—Shiloh National Park Recreational Facilities
Folder 2  Hardin County—Youth Recreational Program, FHA
Folder 3  Henderson County—County Schools, HEW Funds
Folder 4  Henderson County—Parson- Beech River Watershed
Folder 5  Henderson County—Sardis Industrial Park
Folder 6  Henderson County—Scotts Hill Medical Service
Folder 7  Henderson County—Scotts Hill Post Office and Nursing Home
Folder 8  Hickman County—Awards and Grants’
Folder 9  Hickman County—Centerville Fallout Shelter
Folder 10 Hickman County—County Civic Center
Folder 11 Hickman County—First Development Corporation
Folder 12 Hickman County—Natchez Trace Parkway
Folder 13 Hickman County—School Desegregation
Folder 14 Lawrence County—Awards and Grants
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Folder 16 Lewis County—High Forest Academy
Folder 17 Lewis County—Hohenwald Radio Station, HUD
Folder 18 Lewis County—Hohenwald Low Rent Housing
Folder 19 McNairy County—Adamsville Recreational Facility
Folder 20 McNairy County—Adamsville Special School district
Folder 21 McNairy County—Adamsville Water and Sewer
Folder 22 McNairy County—Awards and Grants
Folder 23 McNairy County—Airport Lights
Folder 24 McNairy County—Bethel Springs Industrial Park
Folder 25 McNairy County—Bethel Springs Water and Sewer
Folder 26 McNairy County—Constituent Service- Turnbow
Folder 27 McNairy County—Cypress Creek Soil Conservation
Folder 28 McNairy County—Cypress Creek Watershed
Folder 29 McNairy County—Eastview City Hall
Folder 30 McNairy County—Finger Water District, FHA
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Folder 11  Shelby County—Memphis- Subsidized Housing
Folder 12  Shelby County—Memphis- Summer Youth Program
Folder 13  Shelby County—Memphis- Temple of Dendur
Folder 14  Shelby County—Memphis- Memphis Theater
Folder 15  Shelby County—Memphis- University of Tennessee Medical School
Folder 16  Shelby County—Memphis- War on Poverty
Folder 17  Shelby County—Memphis- Water and Sewer
Folder 18  Shelby County—Memphis- Whitehaven High School ROTC
Folder 19  Shelby County—Memphis Workshop for the Blind
Folder 20  Shelby County—Memphis- YMCA, Stratton Branch
Folder 21  Shelby County—Richardson Landing
Folder 22  Wayne County—Awards and Grants
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Folder 25  Wayne County—Waynesboro Radio Station
Folder 26  Multiple Counties—Buffalo Scenic River Project
Folder 27  Multiple Counties—Educational Television
Folder 28  Multiple Counties—Elk River Project
Folder 29  Multiple Counties—Farms Disaster
Folder 30  Multiple Counties—Lazy Susan Program

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Folder 2  Multiple Counties—Natchez Trace Parkway
Folder 3  Multiple Counties—Office of Economic Opportunity Grants
Folder 4  Multiple Counties—Partners in Progress Tour
Folder 5  Multiple Counties—Project Headstart
Folder 6  Multiple Counties—Shiloh Area Development Corporation
Folder 7  Multiple Counties—Social Security Office
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Folder 9  Multiple Counties—Tennessee Motor Transportation Authority, Inc.
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Folder 13 Out of District—Brentwood Sewage System
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Folder 17  Out of District—Oakridge AEC Ion Site
Folder 18  Out of District—Tombigbee Waterway Development Authority
Folder 19  Out of District—University of Tennessee Electricity Development
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Grants by Agency

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Folder 22  Economic Development Administration
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Folder 3  1968 Campaign
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Folder 2  91st Congress
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Folder 5  Business Women’s Club
Folder 6  Chattanooga Democratic Party
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Folder 20  Knoxville Kiwanis, 1970
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Folder 26  Millington Civil Air Patrol
Folder 27  Morristown, August, 1971
Folder 28  Morristown Kiwanis Club, 1970
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Folder 31  Rogersville Democratic Rally
Folder 32  Shelby County Democratic Workshop, 1970
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Folder 2  Tennessee Soil Conservation District
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Folder 4  West Tennessee Heart Association, 1970
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Folder 6  Young Democrats
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Folder 9  Agriculture, 1968
Folder 10  Agriculture, American
Folder 11  “The Bill of Rights”
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Folder 13  Conservation, 1970
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Folder 18  Economics of Vietnam, 1969
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Folder 20  Education to Students
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Folder 22  Federal Bureaucracy
Folder 23  Foreign Affairs under Nixon
Folder 24  Foreign Policy
Folder 25  Foreign Policy and Defense, 1968
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Folder 28  Influence of Big Business
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Folder 30  Military-Industrial Complex, 1969
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Folder 6 Politics, 1972
Folder 7 Presidential Primaries, 1972
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Folder 9 Rights, Duties, and Freedom
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Folder 11 State Employees, Patronage, 1970
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Folder 26 Blanton Statement, Federal Pay
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BOX 34
Folder 1  Greece and Israel, 1971
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