



40 YEARS OF THE SENATE ON C-SPAN2

June 2, 1986, was Day One — the moment the U.S. Senate opened its chamber doors to television cameras for the first time, and C-SPAN2 was there to carry every word, gavel-to-gavel, without commercial interruption.

This June 2nd is the 40th anniversary of that historic broadcast, and C-SPAN is marking the milestone [with a special website featuring highlights and top moments from the Senate floor over four decades](#).

We encourage you to explore C-SPAN's anniversary collection — video, images, and summaries spanning 40 years of history — in the hope it jogs your own memories of consequential, dramatic, or even entertaining Senate floor moments, and sparks potential reporting on this milestone anniversary.

A Record Written in Real Time

What C-SPAN2 has compiled over 40 years is staggering: as of today, 43,830 hours of Senate sessions recorded, over 169,000 speeches captured from across the political spectrum, and 23,493 roll call votes documented. It's a living ledger of American lawmaking. The voices of 359 different Senators — Republicans, Democrats, and Independents — are preserved in that archive.

C-SPAN has remained privately funded throughout its history, supported by America's cable, satellite, and streaming television operators as a public service, without taxpayer dollars or government oversight. Gavel-to-gavel, commercial-free coverage of the U.S. House chamber began on C-SPAN in 1979. The Senate followed seven years later, in 1986 — after years of debate within the chamber about whether cameras belonged there at all.

The Senate's Own Recognition

The Senate's appreciation for that four-decade partnership has been formally expressed. Last year, Sens. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) introduced [S.Res. 259](#) in the 119th Congress, a bipartisan resolution recognizing C-SPAN for serving "as an essential conduit between the United States Senate and the American public" — and

explicitly acknowledging that "C-SPAN operates without public funding or government oversight." On June 18, 2025, the Senate passed it unanimously. The resolution also urged all television providers, including streaming services, to make C-SPAN available to viewers, underscoring the network's role in keeping Americans connected to their democracy in the digital age.

Now, one year later, that connection turns 40.

In addition, a [special two-part episode of C-SPAN's podcast "Extreme Mortman"](#) features audience-chosen favorite moments from the Senate floor over the past 40 years – with reaction to the audience-selected clips from Paul Kane, Carl Hulse, and Chad Pergram.