

# WU?@therep

## ALL THE WAY

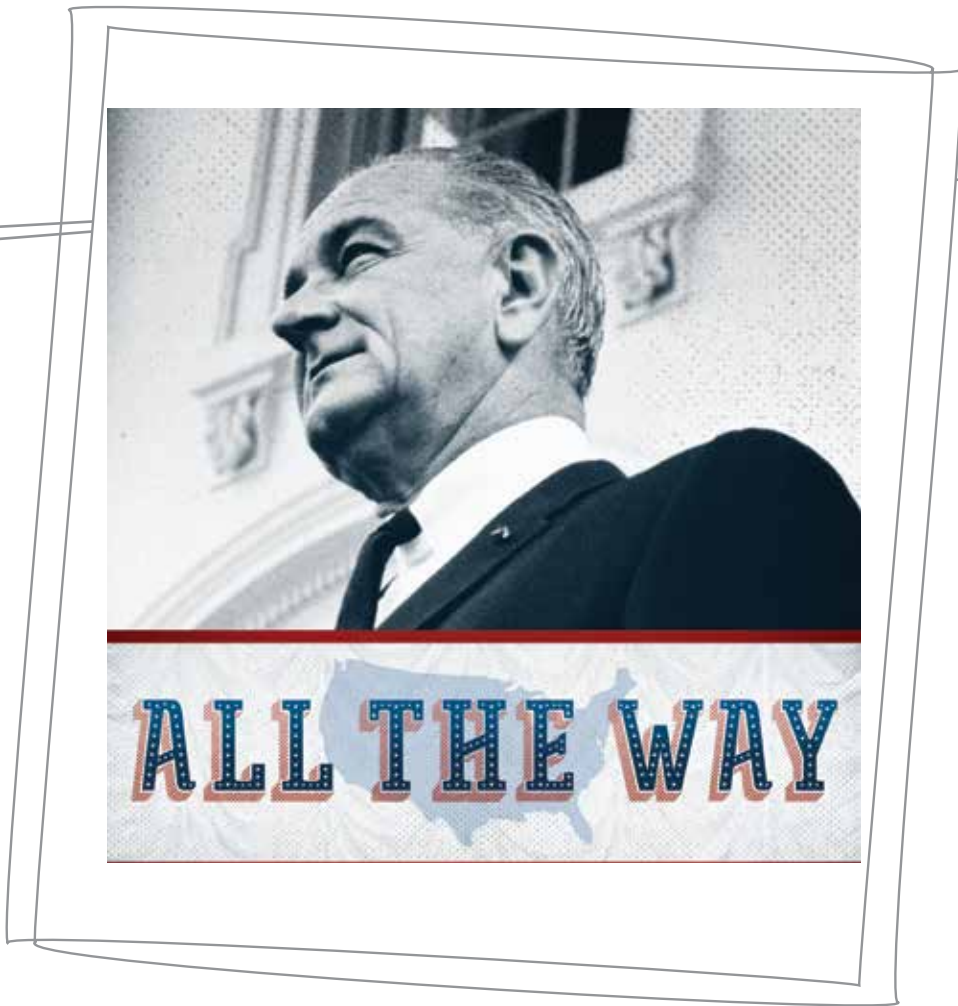
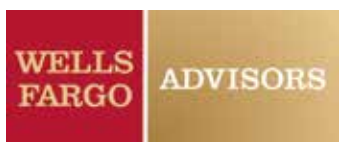
by Robert Schenkkan  
Directed by Steven Woolf

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At The Rep, we know that life moves fast—okay, really fast. But we also know that some things are worth

slowing down for. We believe that live theatre is one of those pit stops worth making and are excited that you are going to stop by for a show. To help you get the most bang for your buck, we have put together **WU? @ THE REP**—an IM guide that will give you everything you need to know to get at the top of your theatergoing game—fast. You'll find character descriptions (**A/S/L**), a plot summary (**FYI**), biographical information (**F2F**), historical context (**B4U**), and other bits and pieces (**HTH**). Most importantly, we'll have some ideas about what this all means **IRL**, anyway.

## CU@therep!



### The Teacher's Lounge

In an effort to make our educational materials accessible to students and easy for educators to incorporate into the classroom, our study guide is written in a student-oriented format. We hope that you will circulate this guide among your students in the weeks preceding your visit to The Rep, encouraging them to browse it before and after class and as time allows, using it as a launch point for both pre- and post-performance discussions. You may also want to visit our website, [www.repstl.org](http://www.repstl.org), for additional information including activity suggestions and behind-the-scenes information. Any materials, either from this guide or from our website may be reproduced for use in the classroom.

**NEATO!**

As always, we appreciate your making live theatre a part of your classroom experience and welcome your feedback and questions.

## WELCOME!

The desire to learn, insatiable when awakened, can sometimes lie dormant until touched by the right teacher or the right experience. We at The Rep are grateful to have the opportunity to play a role supporting you as you awaken the desire for learning in your students.

Whether we have memories of the time or we think of it as period of history from way back when, the 11 months between Kennedy's assassination and LBJ being officially elected were a time when big changes happened. Were those changes positive or negative? Altruistic or politically motivated? A bright beginning or a first step down a slippery slope? One thing is sure—It was a time that is still impacting all of our lives. *All the Way* gives us an opportunity to revisit the time and learn things we might not have known about the people involved in bringing about that change.

It would be a good idea to take a minute to give your students these quick theatre etiquette reminders:

- This show has one intermission; there will be time for bathroom breaks before the show and halfway through.
- The actors can hear the audience and appreciate the laughter, gasps and quiet attention to action. However, talking, moving around and eating is very distracting to others and can dampen the energy on stage.
- Pictures, phone calls and texting are not allowed at any time during the performance.

Live theatre won't allow your students to take a passive role—they must work with us to create the experience which takes the learning deeper. Our unique ability to fuse words and images onstage allows your students to explore new ideas as well as excites their imaginations. We will do our part so your students will be stirred to understandings and self-awareness while delving into new and familiar worlds. You are doing your part by using The Rep to extend your intellectual and aesthetic curriculum. Thank you!

*Marsha*

Marsha Coplon, *Director of Education*

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LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON (LBJ):  
36th President of the United States

## LBJ'S ADMINISTRATION

*On his side...for the most part. These were the people that LBJ could count on.*

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: First Lady

WALTER JENKINS: longtime aide to LBJ, the President and first lady often thought of him as the son they never had

HUBERT HUMPHREY: Democratic Senator from Minnesota, strong supporter of the Civil Rights Act and candidate for LBJ's vice president

MURIEL HUMPHREY: Hubert's wife

ROBERT MCNAMARA: Secretary of Defense

J. EDGAR HOOVER: FBI director, sometimes supported the President but had an agenda all his own

CARTHA "DEKE" DELOACH: FBI deputy director

## OPPOSITION

*Looking for a fight? Look no further than these gentlemen.*

RICHARD RUSSELL: Democratic Senator from Georgia, once a friend of LBJ, but became an enemy when the President pushed for civil rights legislation

HOWARD "JUDGE" SMITH: Democratic House Representative from Virginia

STROM THURMOND: Democratic Senator from South Carolina

JAMES EASTLAND: Democratic Senator from Mississippi

GEORGE WALLACE: Democratic Governor of Alabama, challenged LBJ for the Presidential nomination

## CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS

*These folks might disagree with LBJ about some political maneuvers, but they agree 100% when it comes to Civil Rights.*

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.: powerful, nationally known civil rights leader and president/founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

CORETTA SCOTT KING: wife of Martin Luther King Jr.

REV. RALPH ABERNATHY: SCLC vice president

STANLEY LEVISON: SCLC advisor, close friend to King, but with a questionable past

JAMES HARRISON: SCLC accountant

BOB MOSES: head of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), leader in the "Freedom Summer" movement

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: SNCC organizer

ROY WILKINS: NAACP executive director

FANNIE LOU HAMER: SNCC organizer and activist, a leader in the push for Mississippi Freedom Party delegates at the Democratic National Convention

REV. EDWIN KING: Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) organizer

DAVID DENNIS: Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) leader, Mississippi

## POLITICIANS / OTHERS

Whether for or against the President's goals, these people all had a part to play.

Democrats

ROBERT BYRD, JOHN MCCORMACK, WILLIAM COLMER, EMANUEL CELLER, KATHARINE ST. GEORGE, PAUL JOHNSON, CARL SANDERS

Republicans

SEYMORE TRAMMELL, EVERETT DIRKSEN, WILLIAM MOORE MCCULLOCH

WALTER REUTHER: president of United Automobile Workers (UAW)

# EY

## SPOILER ALERT!

IT'S NOVEMBER 22, 1963, and President John F. Kennedy has just been assassinated. Shortly after, his Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson is sworn in as President. LBJ's first order of business is to give a speech expressing his grief over the loss of the President, but announcing that he intends to get Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill passed to ensure equal rights for all races.

ELEVEN MONTHS AWAY from the next election, Johnson knows that as an "accidental president," he has a tough year ahead of him. The nation is divided over civil rights, and Johnson is trying to appease liberals and conservatives so he can win reelection. He tells Hubert Humphrey, the Democratic Senator from Minnesota, and

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., both strong proponents of the Civil Rights Bill, that he will do everything he can to get it passed, but he downplays his enthusiasm to Richard Russell, Democratic Senator from Georgia, who thinks a Civil Rights Bill is the last thing the country needs during such a vulnerable time.

IN THE MEANTIME, Johnson is also having conversations with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, who's spying on several individuals he suspects of being communists; Kennedy's Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, who isn't sure he still has a job in the new administration; and Katharine Graham from the *Washington Post*, who agrees to exchange favors with Johnson for his political and her professional gain. No one seems to truly trust Johnson, but they continue to

work with him for the time being as he's their best hope for making their objectives realities.

MEANWHILE, GOVERNOR WALLACE is proving to be a formidable opponent in the Democratic nomination race. As a result of Wallace's growing influence, Russell pressures Johnson even more to lay off the bill. Although he promised he wouldn't, Johnson cuts out the voting rights section of the bill to throw a bone to Republican Southern politicians, who feel the bill is changing too much of the Constitution and giving too much power to the federal government.

HUMPHREY AND KING are furious when they find out, and King is especially caught in a difficult position. He's been calling for reform through non-violent means, but other civil rights leaders in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a partnering organization of King's own Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), want to take stronger action. Johnson promises King the voting rights will go into the next bill, and even though King doesn't completely trust the President, he has to convince his fellow leaders to take the leap of faith because if they don't appear unified, the civil rights movement will lose all momentum. King agrees to help in lobbying votes to get the bill to the House floor.

JOHNSON ALSO ASKS Humphrey for his help by being the floor manager of the bill in exchange for being the Vice Presidential nominee in the next election. Humphrey knows it's bait for him to help with Johnson's agenda, but he can't turn down the incredible opportunity.

RUSSELL SENSES Johnson's efforts to get the bill passed, and many leaders in the Southern states are unnerved, but don't withdraw their support yet because they're desperate for a Southern President.





**FILIBUSTER:** a procedure where debate over a proposed piece of legislation is extended by irregular or obstructive tactics, especially by making long speeches, allowing one or more members to delay or entirely prevent a vote on the proposal

MEANWHILE, SNCC LEADERS have organized a campaign called "Freedom Summer," in which they're sending hundreds of volunteers to Mississippi to protest and to register black voters. Tension over civil rights is higher in Mississippi than anywhere else in the country, and King and some of his colleagues are concerned about violence erupting, but other leaders feel they need to take the stand.

LATER ON, JOHNSON IS angry when he finds out Wallace is publicly blaming him about race riots that are happening in Maryland. He doesn't understand why King is failing to "control his people."

THE BILL FINALLY makes it to the Senate but is stuck in filibuster, and Johnson is trying everything he can to get it passed. He makes veiled threats and subtle bribes until finally the bill passes Senate. Humphrey congratulates Johnson on his victory, but Johnson is hesitant to count it as one because he knows the Democrats have lost the South for the rest of his lifetime.

ADDING TO THE upheaval is the disappearance of three young men who are volunteers for Freedom Summer, two of whom are white. Their disappearance gains an incredible amount of press coverage. Johnson tells Hoover to investigate the matter. Although he doesn't trust Johnson, as the two had exchanged blackmail threats before the bill passed, Hoover agrees to do so. Meanwhile, SNCC leadership is furious that while countless young black lives have been lost in the civil rights fight, it takes the potential deaths of white men for the press coverage to truly explode.

JOHNSON IS FACED with another major challenge when members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), a political party created during the movement to challenge the all-white Mississippi

Democratic Party, is asking for delegate seats at the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, which is happening a little over two months before the election. Johnson is again faced with pressure from liberals, conservatives and the press. He tries to compromise by giving MFDP some seats but allowing only two delegates to vote. King and his colleagues are wondering how much more they'll have to compromise.

ELECTION DAY FINALLY ARRIVES, and Johnson wins by a landslide. It's a major victory, but Johnson is all too aware of how difficult of a road it was to get there. He'll celebrate the victory tonight but tomorrow he knows he'll have to be ready to fight all over again.

*Costume renderings by  
Costume Designer  
Dorothy Marshall Englis*





## LBJ: THE ACCIDENTAL PRESIDENT

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON was born in 1908 in Stonewall, Texas, the first of five children of Rebekah Baines Johnson and Sam Ealy Johnson, Jr. In addition to being a farmer and a businessman, LBJ's father was also a state legislator, and became a Texas representative at age 27. Although Lyndon eventually followed in his father's footsteps with a political career, he tried something else first. In 1927, Johnson entered Southwest Texas State Teachers College, and eventually taught at a school for disadvantaged Mexican-American students in southern Texas. After graduation, in 1931, he left teaching and became an aide to a congressman. Three years later, he met Claudia Alta Taylor, "Lady Bird," and the two were married after only three months.

IN 1937, JOHNSON won election to Congress, representing his home district as an ally of President Franklin Roosevelt, but in 1941, he lost his first bid for the U.S. Senate. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he entered the Naval Reserve, but eventually returned to Washington after President Roosevelt required all members of Congress to leave active service. In 1948, he was finally elected to the Senate, where he assumed multiple leadership positions from Democratic whip to minority leader to majority leader in 1955.

AS A POWERFUL political presence who carried a lot of weight in the Southern states, Johnson was asked by the Democratic Presidential nominee John F. Kennedy to run on his ticket as Vice President. Together, they defeated the Republican nominee Richard Nixon in one of the closest elections of the 20th century.

AS VICE PRESIDENT, Johnson focused the space program, a nuclear test ban treaty and civil rights. He also supported Kennedy's decision to send military advisers

to Vietnam, whose government they believed was being threatened by a Communist takeover.

ON NOVEMBER 22, 1963, Johnson was only two cars behind Kennedy in the presidential motorcade in Dallas when the President was shot and killed by Lee Harvey Oswald. Johnson was sworn in as President aboard Air Force One later that afternoon.

AS PRESIDENT, Johnson pushed for the passage of Kennedy's Civil Rights Bill and declared a "War on Poverty." In 1964, he ran for reelection and won by the biggest popular vote margin in history.

IN 1965, as part of his War on Poverty, Johnson successfully pushed Congress to enact the Great Society program, the objectives of which included aid to education, attack on disease, urban renewal, conservation and crime reduction, among many others. One of the most influential outcomes of the program was the Medicare Amendment to the Social Security Act, which provided healthcare to millions of U.S. senior citizens.

ALTHOUGH HIS domestic reform policies were lauded, Johnson's legacy was greatly tainted by his policies toward South Vietnam, which had a U.S.-supported government threatened by North Vietnam Communist authority. Like multiple administrations before him, Johnson considered Communism a strong threat to U.S. national security. Citing this belief, he escalated U.S. military involvement in the Vietnam War over his presidency, the number of American troops soaring from 16,000 in 1963 when he first took office to more than 500,000 in 1968.

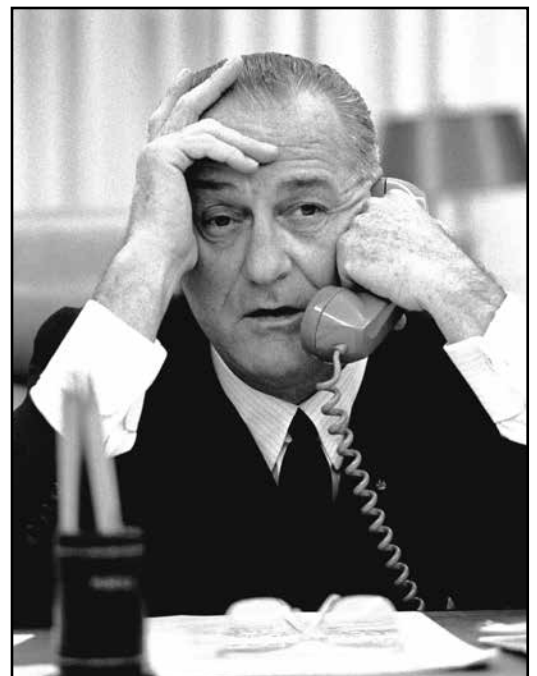
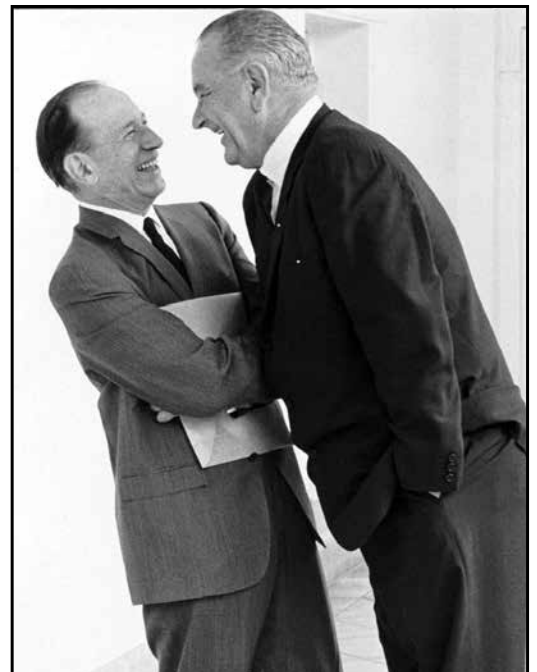
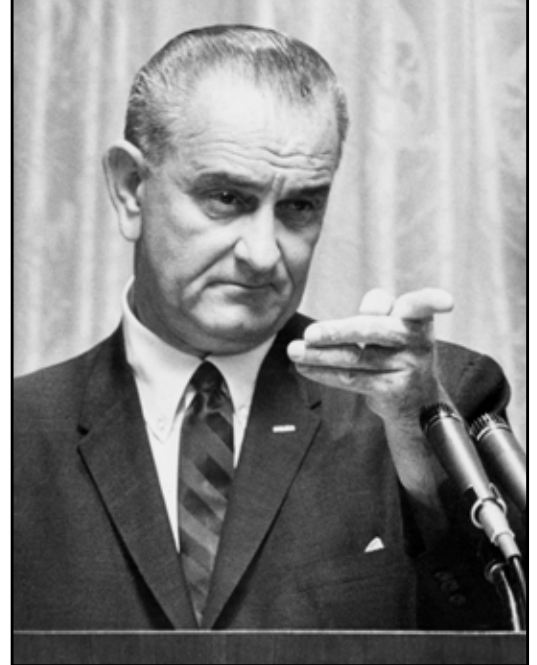
AS THE DRAFT CONTINUED and more and more American and Vietnamese soldiers were killed with no end in sight, protests erupted



all over the country with one of the more memorable chants being "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?!"

**JOHNSON'S POPULARITY PLUMMETED.** His approval ratings dipped below 30 percent, which lead him to announce in March 1968 that he would not seek a nomination for a second Presidential run. He stated he'd rather focus on the peace process and domestic issues without the distraction of campaign.

**AFTER PRESIDENT NIXON** was inaugurated in 1969, Johnson retired back to Texas where he spent most his time establishing his presidential library and writing his memoirs. Only five years after he left office, Johnson died of a heart attack at the age of 64 on January 22, 1973, at his ranch.



## BTW

- In 1967, Thurgood Marshall, a civil rights lawyer and great-grandson of a slave, became the first African American to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court. He was nominated by President Johnson, who called it "the right thing to do, the right time to do it, the right man and the right place."
- President Johnson presided over the first manned flight to the Moon with the Apollo 8 program. At the beginning of their flight, LBJ sent them a message: "CONGRATULATIONS on the magnificent beginning of the Apollo 8 adventure. The visions of the past are coming closer and closer to becoming the amazing achievements of the present."

## TIMELINE: CIVIL RIGHTS

*ALL THE WAY* plows audience members right in the thick of political tension and upheaval. President Kennedy has just been shot, and conflict over civil rights is at an all-time high. But the politics and social consequences existed long before President Johnson's unexpected term. The timeline below will help you learn the history of the civil rights movement in the U.S. and get a better grasp of the chronology of events presented in *All the Way*.



1857 – Supreme Court case *Dred Scott v. Sanford* declares that all African Americans, slave or free, are not citizens of the U.S.

1861 – With the secession of several Southern states over the issues of slavery and federal authority, the Civil War begins with the Battle of Fort Sumter.

1863 – The Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln frees slaves in the Confederacy.

1865 – The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolishes slavery.

1866 – The Civil Rights Act of 1866 guarantees equal rights for all people who live within the jurisdiction of the U.S.

1870 – The 15th Amendment grants African Americans the right to vote, including former slaves.

1875 – Congress passes a third Civil Rights Act in response to business owners who refuse equal service or service at all to African Americans; the Act is meant to guarantee equal access to public accommodations regardless of race.

1896 – In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court upholds that racial segregation is lawful so long as accommodations are “separate but equal.”

1913 – *Guinn v. United States* ruled that state laws permitting “grandfather clauses” for passing literacy tests as a voting requirement are unconstitutional.

1954 – The U.S. Supreme Court unanimously rules in *Brown v. Board of Education* that public school segregation is unconstitutional.

1957 – The Civil Rights Act of 1957 establishes the Civil Rights Commission (CRC) to provide equal protection to all individuals’ right to vote, regardless of race; although it protects some civil and voting rights, it lacks substantial enforcement methods.

JUNE 1963 – President Kennedy submits H.R. 7152, the Civil Rights Bill, to the House of Representatives.

NOVEMBER 22, 1963 – Lee Harvey Oswald assassinates President John F. Kennedy.

NOVEMBER 27, 1963 – President Lyndon B. Johnson, speaking before a joint session of Congress, says, “No memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy’s memory than the earliest possible passage of the Civil Rights Bill for which he fought so long.”

FEBRUARY 1964 – The Civil Rights Bill passes the House.

MARCH 30 – JUNE 10, 1964 – The Senate debates the bill for 60 working days, including seven Saturdays with many attempts to filibuster the bill.

JUNE 9-10, 1964 – Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia filibusters the bill for 14 hours and 13 minutes before the Senate votes 71 to 29 to cloture the bill; the two-thirds vote ends the debate.

**CLOTURE:** the official procedure by which the Senate can vote to place a time limit on consideration of a bill or other matter, and thereby overcome a filibuster





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JUNE 19, 1964 – In a 73 to 27 vote, the Senate adopts an amended bill, which is sent back to the House.

JULY 2, 1964 – The House of Representatives adopts the Senate version of the bill.

JULY 2, 1964 – President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the bill into law.

AUGUST 1965 – Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 helps protect voter rights on a national level, especially for African Americans who were barred from voting by local governments.



*President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Bill*

**RBTL**

## INTEGRITY AND COMPROMISE

There is a lot of talk about morality in *All the Way*; the Civil Rights Bill isn't seen as only political reform but a moral imperative for equality of the races. Many politicians in the play had to sacrifice their principles in order to make effective change. For example, Senator Humphrey compromises much on the Civil Rights Act because he knows it's better for most of the legislation to pass rather than none of it. He disagrees with Johnson on many levels, but he negotiates for him because he knows Johnson is his only way to get to the White House through the Vice Presidency. The question that keeps popping up subconsciously for several characters is—when does the compromise become too much?

## POWER

There is a lot of power that's shifted and exchanged in Washington on a daily basis. Johnson wields his power when he has it, but when he doesn't, he has to flatter and cajole to get people and votes in his favor. He may be President of the United States, but he describes himself more than once as an "accidental president." He's president essentially by default because Kennedy was assassinated, and he knows he has to win public favor and support in Washington to earn a term on his own. It doesn't matter who you are, power is fleeting because someone can always gain more than you at any given time based on a number of factors.

## THE INSPIRATION BEHIND *ALL THE WAY*

There's no question that Johnson's presidency was polarizing and steeped in controversy, and because truth is often stranger than fiction, writer Robert Schenkkan felt it would make for a fascinating story for the stage.

"Johnson was such an extraordinary figure, so complicated and ultimately tragic," said Schenkkan in a 2013 interview with *American Theatre* magazine. "He was a man who did an incredible amount of good for this country—and then came Vietnam. Then the lying started, and it never stopped."

This wasn't Schenkkan's first success with historical drama. He won a Pulitzer Prize in 1992 for *The Kentucky Cycle*, a nine-part collection of one-act plays that spans 200 years of American history, told through the stories of three families.



Robert Schenkkan

In *All the Way*, winner of the 2014 Tony Award for Best Play, Schenkkan prominently features the Shakespearean cycle of power that exists in all politics.

"You live with the anxiety that while you may have the hammer today, it's possible that tomorrow you could be a nail," he explained in a 2014 interview with the *Los Angeles Review of Books*.

"LBJ was certainly aware of the vagaries of power. He believed that it was important to do everything you could and to use everyone around you in order to further your goals. But at the end of the day there would come a reckoning, and power would recede, and you would lose your effectiveness. And it didn't matter how good a politician you were, it was just impossible to control the game all the time. I think he was keenly aware of that."

Because of this constant tug-of-war, Johnson is portrayed in *All the Way* as both the hero and the anti-hero as described in the *New York Observer's* 2014 review:

"It's a fascinating, and surprisingly emotionally resonant, portrait of a complicated man, and it makes a strong argument that his great triumphs are as worthy of attention, if not more so, than the tragic failures for which he is most remembered ...The pressures of all of this began the mental unraveling that would turn him from a generous-minded liberal hero to a bunkered, paranoid object of liberal scorn and hatred."



- \* What do you think of President Lyndon Johnson's characterization in *All the Way*? Do you think he was a good president?
- \* What are some of the ethical dilemmas he faced? What did you like and dislike about him?



## CREATING A LAW

### **FOOT THE BILL**

All laws in the U.S. start out as bills, which are ideas developed by a Representative from the House, another political figure, or even a regular citizen who contacts their state Rep with an idea. The Representative then performs research and writes the bill.

### **DRUM UP SOME SUPPORT**

The Representative tries to gather support from other Representatives, which includes finding a sponsor.

### **MAKE THE INTRODUCTION**

The bill is introduced by being placed in the hopper, a special box beside the House Clerk's desk. The Clerk assigns the bill a number that begins with H.R. and reads the bill to all Representatives. The Speaker of the House then sends the bill to one of the House's standing committees, which are groups that specialize in topics such as education, agriculture or budget.

### **GO TO COMMITTEE**

The committee researches and revises the bill before voting on whether or not to send it back to the House floor. If they would like more information first, they send the bill to a subcommittee, where additional experts examine it more closely.

### **REPORT, DEBATE AND REVISE**

After committee approval, the bill goes to the House floor, where it is debated by Representatives. Then, a reading clerk reads the bill section by section and the Representatives recommend changes. After all the changes have been made, the bill is ready to be voted on.

### **GET OUT THE VOTE**

The House votes on the bill through one of three methods:

1. *Viva Voce* (voice vote): the Speaker of the House asks Representatives to vote by either saying "aye" to support the bill or "no" to oppose it.

2. *Division*: The Speaker of the House asks Representatives to show their vote by standing up at a designated time.
3. *Recorded*: Representatives record their vote using an electronic voting system.

If a majority of the Representatives vote to support the bill, it passes in the U.S. House of Representatives, is certified by the House Clerk, and then delivered to the U.S. Senate.

### **SEND TO THE SENATE**

Once the bill reaches the U.S. Senate, it goes through many of the same steps it went through in the House. It's discussed in a Senate committee and then reported to the Senate floor to be voted on. Senators vote through the voice method—"yea" to support the bill; "nay" to oppose it. If a majority of the votes are "yea," the bill passes in the U.S. Senate and is sent to the President.

### **PRESIDENTIAL SEAL OF APPROVAL**

The President has three options when presented with the bill:

1. Sign the bill—the bill becomes a law.
2. Refuse to sign, or veto the bill—the bill is sent back to the House with the President's reasons for the veto. If the House and Senate still believe the bill should become law, they can hold another vote. If two-thirds of the Representatives and Senators support the bill, the President's veto is overridden, and the bill becomes a law.
3. Do nothing, otherwise known as a "pocket veto." If Congress is in session, the bill automatically becomes law after 10 days. If Congress is not in session, the bill does not become a law.

As you saw in *All the Way*, getting a law passed is a complex and extensive process. It's a process that was intentionally developed by our nation's founders to prevent any one branch of government from having absolute power. Although designed to be diplomatic, the procedure is considered by some to be so complicated that it takes too long to get a law passed. However, others feel it's critical to our democratic process. Read through all the steps and see what you think.





## THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE

There are many distinctions between the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate, but here are the most basic similarities and differences to help you understand the roles they individually play in law-making:

### BOTH

Members in both are chosen through direct election in individual states.

Both have representation from the Republican and Democratic parties (as well as a small number of Independents), determined by the direct election.

### HOUSE

Representatives serve two-year terms.

The number of Representatives for each state is directly proportional to that state's population (i.e. as of 2015, Missouri has eight representatives, while the less populous Rhode Island has two representatives).

### SENATE

Senators serve six-year terms, which are staggered among the Senate; i.e., every two years, one third of the Senate is up for reelection.

Each state has two Senators regardless of population.

*\*You probably noticed in All the Way that in addition to Representatives and Senators, there were also state Governors involved in the political conversation. A Governor is the chief executive of his or her individual state, and focuses on state matters, while Representatives and Senators make sure their states are represented while focusing on federal matters. Make sense?*

## HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

One of the most powerful things you can do as a citizen is to cast your vote in government elections, from your township and city to your state and the country. Helping decide who will make decisions for you regarding civic matters is every U.S. citizen's right, but you aren't legally allowed to vote until you are considered an adult at age 18. However, that doesn't mean you can't get involved before you turn 18! In fact, getting involved in your community will help you learn about important processes that guide our society and make you an informed, educated voter once you come of age, which is the best kind and what our country needs most! Here are some ideas of how to get involved:

**Speak to your teacher** about incorporating current issues in class: It's important to learn about the political history of our country and community, but what about current events? If it's not already a part of your curriculum, ask your teacher if you can spend a couple classes researching and discussing recent issues in the country so that you can learn about political theory and social policies of present-day.

**Attend local debates and forums:** So much can be learned away from the Internet. Check with your local municipality to see when debates and forums on issues will be held and attend them with friends to hear live arguments from all sides. Or if there's an issue you feel especially passionate about and there's not a forum already scheduled, organize one yourself!

**Make your opinion heard:** Just because you're not old enough to vote doesn't mean you're not old enough to have an opinion. Participate in dialogue over issues either through social media, blogging or writing to your local newspaper or Representatives. Keep in mind that the best dialogue happens when each participant uses courteous tones and language. Just because you may disagree with someone, it is important to respect their right to their own opinion, and it will increase the likelihood they will respect yours.

*To find your elected Representatives and the best way to contact them, visit: <http://www.house.gov/representatives/find/>.*