

Breaking the Eleventh Commandment: Pete McCloskey's Campaign against the Vietnam War

ABSTRACT A closer look at Representative Paul N. "Pete" McCloskey's decision to challenge Richard Nixon for the 1972 Republican presidential nomination due to Nixon's failure to bring the Vietnam conflict to a conclusion reveals some intriguing aspects of the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy during the U.S. experience in Vietnam. In breaking the GOP's "Eleventh Commandment"—the exhortation to not speak ill of fellow Republicans—McCloskey acted on the courage of his convictions in opposing the war and his party's sitting president. For McCloskey, Vietnam transcended politics; it was a moral issue on which he was willing to sacrifice his political career—unlike most other members of Congress and politicians in successive administrations during the Vietnam era. Moreover, McCloskey's failure to gain traction with voters in the GOP primaries with his antiwar stance presaged George McGovern's struggles against Nixon in the fall campaign in 1972. **KEYWORDS:** Vietnam War, presidency, Congress, politics, Pete McCloskey, Richard Nixon, Eleventh Commandment



FIGURE 1. Pete McCloskey, January 1969.
Courtesy of Congressional Pictorial Directory, 91st U.S. Congress, p. 18, U.S. Government Printing Office

California History, Vol. 98, Number 1, pp. 3–27, ISSN 0162-2897, electronic ISSN 2327-1485. © 2021 by the Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <https://www.ucpress.edu/journals/reprintspermissions>. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1525/ch.2021.98.1.3>.

INSURGENT PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS from within the incumbent president's own party were surprisingly common in the twentieth century. In 1912, for example, William Howard Taft faced two intra-party foes for the GOP nomination, Theodore Roosevelt and Senator Robert LaFollette (R-WI). The same occurred in 1924, when LaFollette and Senator Hiram Johnson (R-CA) attempted to wrest the nomination from Calvin Coolidge. Abortive efforts to replace Herbert Hoover (1932), Franklin Roosevelt (1940), and Harry Truman (1948) fell far short of the necessary support to be considered realistic. But in 1952 with Senator Estes Kefauver (D-TN) and in 1968 with Senator Eugene McCarthy (D-MN), the success of the dissident candidate in the New Hampshire primary contributed significantly to the incumbents' (Truman and Lyndon Johnson, respectively) decision to withdraw from their races. And the near-successful candidacies of Ronald Reagan and Senator Ted Kennedy (D-MA) foreshadowed the general-election defeats of Gerald Ford (1976) and Jimmy Carter (1980).

Such an intra-party challenge appeared unlikely in 1972, as Richard Nixon seemed poised to coast to a second term. Yet in mid-1971, Representative Paul N. "Pete" McCloskey (R-CA) decided to launch an effort to dislodge Nixon as the GOP nominee. The McCloskey challenge came after the congressman's protracted yet unsuccessful effort to convince Nixon to end the U.S. war in Southeast Asia. McCloskey did so not because of any overarching presidential ambitions, but rather because he considered a primary challenge the only way to have a legitimate chance to force Nixon to bring an end to the disastrous conflict in Vietnam. McCloskey explained his decision clearly at the outset of his campaign: "I would not have challenged the President, had it not been for the gradual realization that his plan to *end* the war in Vietnam actually involved a drive to *win* the war, that his true belief was reflected in an off-the-cuff comment: 'I'm not going to be the first President to lose a war.'"¹

This article examines McCloskey's politically courageous decision to stand up not just to Nixon but also to the majority in the Republican Party both in California and nationally on the Vietnam issue. It engages a number of historiographically significant issues. First, McCloskey's tenacious attacks on the administration affected the trajectory of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, demonstrating that understanding U.S. foreign relations depends on grasping the crucial intersection of domestic politics and foreign policy in American political life. It also reveals a glaring example of the abdication of congressional responsibilities vis-à-vis the presidency, a historical problem that dates to the founding and has only been exacerbated over the past five decades.² The inability and unwillingness of Congress to exert its constitutional prerogatives during the Vietnam conflict—one of McCloskey's key criticisms throughout this period—represents one of the legislative branch's most glaring policy failures. In addition, this article analyzes the fractures in the California GOP that emerged not only because of the war in Southeast Asia, but also as a result of the increasing influence of Ronald Reagan as leader of the conservative wing of the California party. Key to this discussion is understanding the strength of the Republican Party's "Eleventh Commandment," a strategy designed to limit intra-party attacks in the late 1960s to early 1970s, in the wake of the disastrous 1964 presidential campaign. Finally, this article assesses the historical and ongoing disconnect between principle and politics in U.S. history.

Pete McCloskey's campaign against Richard Nixon has drifted into obscurity in the historical literature. Aside from a campaign biography written by journalist Lou Cannon and McCloskey's own autobiography, virtually no scholarship exists on the California congressman's career.³ Historical accounts of the 1972 election, or of the administration's and the GOP's engagement in the Vietnam conflict, contain only scattered references to McCloskey and his challenge to the president, if they appear at all.⁴ This article fills a gaping historiographical lacuna by highlighting the words and deeds of one of the most principled politicians of the Vietnam era.

The centrality of the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy in the U.S. context dates to the founding, if not before (indeed, the colonial era teems with such interactions). Countless examples throughout the course of the country's history demonstrate this pivotal interaction in the evolution of U.S. foreign policy. George Washington's "Farewell Address" was both intended to advise against "entangling alliances" and specifically calculated to help John Adams win the White House in the 1796 election. Partisan and intra-party divisions helped propel an unprepared and fractured United States into the War of 1812, trumping virtually all other considerations. Domestic political concerns seriously limited Franklin Delano Roosevelt's efforts to assist the allies prior to Pearl Harbor. And the long U.S. involvement in Vietnam is replete with examples of domestic political considerations influencing decision making and, frequently, determining the course of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia. As Julian Zelizer observes, "it has proven difficult if not impossible to keep national security above the political fray" because U.S. politicians "have been willing to use national security to distinguish themselves from their opponents."⁵

Indeed, as Robert McMahon has argued, the history of U.S. foreign relations is inextricably linked to domestic politics because it is, "intrinsically, a Janus-faced field, one that looks both outward and inward for the wellsprings of America's behavior in the global arena."⁶ Domestic determinants have always factored into the making and implementation of U.S. foreign policy, even if documentary evidence is often limited because of policymakers' reluctance to admit that they are, in fact, cognizant of popular opinion and even influenced by it. While an assessment of any foreign policy decision or international action taken by the United States must be based on a hierarchy of causation, any balanced judgment of history must include consideration of the domestic political scene, along with geostrategic, economic, cultural, ideological, and military perspectives.⁷ The nexus of domestic politics and U.S. foreign policy certainly affected the trajectory of U.S. Vietnam policy, and McCloskey's confrontation with Richard Nixon represents a prime example of that interaction.

McCloskey's campaign against U.S. involvement in Vietnam also intersects with the fracturing of the California Republican Party in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The clash between McCloskey and the increasingly influential conservative wing of the California GOP is a crucial component of this history. The liberal San Mateo congressman frequently found himself at odds with Governor Ronald Reagan (1967–1975) and conservative political donors. Indeed, McCloskey would face consecutive primary challenges for his congressional seat, largely due to his criticisms of the Nixon administration's Vietnam policies. The opposition to McCloskey mirrored that faced by other left-of-center

Republicans throughout California, as the Reagan forces ascended to political dominance at home and nationally.⁸

The war in Vietnam played an important role in the origins of McCloskey's political career. Like most of his generation, McCloskey was a committed anticommunist. He was also a decorated Marine colonel who served during the Korean conflict in 1950–1952 and remained active in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve until 1974. In fact, he applied unsuccessfully for active duty in Vietnam in the fall of 1965, and the U.S. Agency for International Development in Vietnam later invited him to serve as a provincial adviser (he declined under pressure from his wife and friends).⁹ Despite his belief that there were situations in which the United States should use its military might to combat communism, McCloskey came to fervently believe that Vietnam was “a classic question of the wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time.”¹⁰

After his military service in Korea, McCloskey served as a deputy district attorney for Alameda County (1953–1954) and taught legal ethics at the Santa Clara and Stanford law schools (1964–1967). In 1966, he considered running for Congress in California's 11th Congressional District, which represented San Mateo County, located between San Francisco and San Jose. Doing so would have required a primary challenge to the incumbent, Representative J. Arthur Younger (R-CA). McCloskey decided to postpone the launch of his political career when a leading GOP financier, Leland Kaiser, bluntly told him that the party would oppose McCloskey if he sought to wrest the nomination from Younger. Despite the potential Republican antagonism to his candidacy, however, McCloskey decided to run for the seat in 1968, regardless of what Younger or the party did. Fortunately for McCloskey, Younger announced in April 1967 that, because of a serious illness, he would not seek another term. The congressman died of leukemia shortly thereafter, leading to a special election that fall to fill his empty seat.

McCloskey was not the only GOP candidate for the open seat. California state senator Richard Dolwig had designs on the seat, as did Caspar Weinberger, a successful Harvard-trained attorney who had made his mark in the state assembly and worked in Governor Reagan's administration. But McCloskey's real challenge came from former child star Shirley Temple Black. Conventional wisdom held that celebrities were unbeatable in California elections, making Black the leading GOP contender in the special election. All candidates faced each other in an open primary, regardless of political affiliation. Political pundits viewed the 11th Congressional District as safely Republican, in that the GOP had held the seat since 1938, even though a majority of voters were registered Democrats. A closed GOP primary between McCloskey and Black might have been quite a different race, given Black's celebrity status, financial advantages, and conservative views. But McCloskey appealed to voters across partisan lines, including Democratic voters. At the same time, as one observer put it, Black was “a bad candidate from beginning to end.” Her lackluster, predictable campaign failed to resonate with the district's voters, allowing McCloskey to easily defeat Black and eventually win the congressional seat.¹¹

Vietnam dominated the race between McCloskey and Black. Indeed, in many ways, the election offered a referendum on the war at a time when public support for it had begun to falter. Black was a “hawk” on Vietnam, having supported escalation of U.S. involvement from the outset.¹² McCloskey, on the other hand, put his opposition to American

engagement in Southeast Asia at the center of his congressional campaign, calling it the “most urgent issue of the present time.”

McCloskey admitted that he had initially supported the war, despite his misgivings, saying that “a loyal American had no option but to support the President.” But in time, he explained—as he became “fully cognizant of *all* of the facts involved”—he began to question the U.S. role in the fighting. McCloskey’s opposition to the war played a decisive role in his electoral victory. He was not alone: in the midterm elections in 1966, growing antiwar sentiment swept into office Republican candidates such as Mark Hatfield in Oregon and Charles Percy in Illinois. These Republican victories bolstered McCloskey’s electoral appeal against Black and others in the crowded special election.¹³

In a September 1967 campaign statement, McCloskey detailed his stance against the war. His main argument was that the United States was losing the political battle in Vietnam. The primary obstacle to peace, McCloskey wrote, was the administration’s plan to permanently maintain the division of Vietnam. “I am forced to agree” with Hanoi, he explained, that “the U.S.’s policy is to perpetuate South Vietnam as an independent nation,” and that “our negotiating posture thus far has been merely a means to achieve our end”—that is, preventing reunification of Vietnam under, most likely, a Communist-led government. U.S. actions, McCloskey held, “flatly” contradicted “our announced position that the Geneva Accords of 1954 should be used as a basis for peace.”¹⁴ He concluded that “the bitter lesson of Vietnam is that we appear to have made two serious miscalculations: first in the expectancy that the Saigon government, given our aid, would ultimately win the loyalty of a substantial majority of its people, and second, that those Vietnamese opposed to the Saigon government . . . would be unequal to the task of successfully opposing our massive military assistance. We underestimated what now appears to be a deep desire for independence rather than merely an attempt to expand communism in Southeast Asia.”

In addition, McCloskey urged the Johnson administration to immediately begin negotiations with Hanoi and “agree to the reunification of Viet Nam under a single government as soon as an orderly process for such re-unification can be determined.” To demonstrate U.S. sincerity, McCloskey also called on the Johnson administration to immediately begin a phased de-escalation of the U.S. military presence. If Johnson refused to follow his advice, McCloskey vowed to bring the matter before Congress, pressing the legislative branch to overcome its institutional lethargy and take a more active role in shaping U.S. policy. Although McCloskey urged de-escalation and termination of the U.S. commitment “as soon as possible,” he cautioned the United States not to “precipitously withdraw.” Instead, he supported a gradual disengagement from Vietnam over a two-year period. Black responded with a predictable, anodyne statement, declaring that McCloskey’s position on the war would lead to the abandonment of South Vietnam and the “butchery” of a million-and-a-half people.¹⁵

McCloskey continued to focus on Vietnam throughout the campaign, emboldened by the success of his antiwar declaration in drawing more volunteers and donors to his campaign. He made it clear that even an escalation that produced a military victory “would determine nothing except that we would thereafter be committed to years of continuing guerilla warfare” in Southeast Asia. Moreover, he reminded voters that self-determination

was a basic element of American foreign policy. The United States therefore had “no business fighting in Viet Nam for the benefit of a government which has no chance of becoming the choice of a majority of the Vietnamese people.” Successive administrations, he concluded, had “backed the wrong horse in our selection of the Saigon government as a means of withstanding the advancement of . . . Communism in Asia.” Black had no satisfactory response to the antiwar rhetoric that clearly resonated with the 11th District. She refused to debate McCloskey, reportedly in “the interest of party unity,” despite repeated requests that she do so. Lou Cannon correctly concludes that “Pete McCloskey’s outspoken opposition to the war won the election for him.”¹⁶

In the aftermath of his victory, McCloskey warned that “those in charge of the foreign policy of the United States should pay careful attention to the results of this election.”¹⁷ The congressman-elect clearly intended to use his congressional seat to challenge presidential policies regarding Vietnam. Upon his arrival in Washington, McCloskey almost immediately became known as an iconoclast, not only for his attacks on the Johnson (and later Nixon) administration for the failures of U.S. foreign policy in Southeast Asia. At the same time, he chastised Congress for forsaking its constitutional responsibilities to shape and oversee U.S. foreign policy. His criticism of the congressional tenure system, the secrecy and deceit of the executive branch, and the usurpation of Congress’s foreign policy role by successive presidents made him an antiestablishment hero. In one of his first reports from Washington, McCloskey told his California constituents that “by passively enacting supplemental appropriations for increased assistance to Vietnam,” Congress had effectively ceded its foreign-policy-making influence to the president.¹⁸ Both at home and in Washington, D.C., the newly minted congressman’s critique of U.S. Vietnam policy quickly became impossible to ignore.

That criticism began early in McCloskey’s first term. In his first speech on the House floor on March 13, 1968, McCloskey objected to any further buildup of U.S. military forces in Vietnam. He further insisted that Congress shared equally with the president responsibility for foreign policy commitments, including any decision to further expand military involvement. McCloskey urged Congress and the president to recognize the goals of the 1954 Geneva Accords and to abandon U.S. insistence on permanent division of Vietnam. Five days later, McCloskey declared that the Johnson administration had not faced facts: “It seems that every loyal member of the administration desperately clings to the accuracy of those original beliefs which started us upon our present course. The time has come to call a halt. This country is big enough and great enough to recognize and admit mistaken beliefs upon which we predicated our present policy in Vietnam.” Of course, the political calculus changed dramatically when President Johnson withdrew from the presidential race on March 31, 1968. Nevertheless, as Johnson focused on trying to end the war and as Democratic candidates jockeyed for their party’s nomination through that spring and summer, McCloskey continued to criticize U.S. policy on Vietnam. Indeed, McCloskey’s singular focus nearly cost him his seat. He took too lightly a primary challenge by conservative real estate developer Robert Barry, only narrowly managing in early June to secure the GOP nomination for a second term.¹⁹

McCloskey’s antiwar stance was also central to his role in the Republican presidential nomination. At the 1968 GOP convention, McCloskey supported New York governor

Nelson Rockefeller's bid for the White House. The congressman was not a fan of the front-runner, California's Richard M. Nixon, in the first place, and he believed that Rockefeller would bring the war to a quick resolution. Ironically, his effort to deny Nixon the nomination in 1968 put McCloskey on the same side as Governor Reagan, with whom he had clashed repeatedly since McCloskey's 1967 campaign. McCloskey noted that "right up until the vote I had the hope we could defeat him on the first ballot. But as I went around the convention I had a growing sense that if we had stopped Nixon the convention would have turned to Reagan, not Rockefeller. When Nixon was nominated, I kind of breathed a sigh of relief." That relief would be short lived after Nixon won the presidency, although McCloskey recalled being "hopeful" throughout the fall of 1968 that Nixon did, in fact, have a plan for ending the Vietnam conflict.²⁰

Despite his near fumble in the primaries, McCloskey easily won reelection in 1968, based largely on the strength of his attacks on the Johnson administration's Vietnam policies. Nixon's November 1968 victory over Democratic presidential hopeful Hubert H. Humphrey paused most Republican criticism of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, even though, since 1966, opposition to the war had steadily increased within the GOP. This was true in Congress as well, both in the House of Representatives and among key senators, particularly John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) and others serving on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Although Republican "doves" grew in number and influence, leadership of the party largely remained with such hawks as Reagan and former president Dwight D. Eisenhower. Fissures over the war within the GOP help explain Nixon's refusal to commit to a specific course of action in Southeast Asia throughout the 1968 GOP primaries and into the presidential campaign in the fall.²¹

Even with the rise of antiwar sentiment within the GOP, McCloskey stood out among Republican opponents of the war because of his willingness to be more confrontational toward LBJ and Nixon on the Vietnam issue. Whatever their stance, many Republicans hoped that, once Nixon assumed the presidency, his "secret plan" to "win the peace" would be revealed; meanwhile, Republicans promised to give their party's new president time to implement his strategy. House minority leader Gerald Ford (R-MI), a strong supporter of the war during the 1960s, urged the country to "set no Vietnam deadlines for the Nixon Administration. To do so would be unrealistic. Impatience will not win the peace." Similarly, Senator George Aiken (R-VT), an outspoken opponent of the conflict during the Johnson administration from his seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, agreed with the hawkish House minority leader and expressed optimism that a settlement could be reached during Nixon's first year in office.²²

Not so McCloskey, who displayed no such patience. Even as antiwar sentiment increased within the GOP, McCloskey stood out for his willingness to confront first Johnson and then Nixon over Vietnam. He stood virtually alone within the party in publicly opposing U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, almost from the beginning of Nixon's presidency. Indeed, only maverick Republicans like McCloskey and Representative Donald Riegle (R-MI) in the House were willing to openly challenge Nixon on the war during his first months in office. Yet even McCloskey wanted Nixon to succeed. While his critique of U.S. policy was unabated, he nonetheless expressed hope that Nixon would end the war quickly, and he did all he could to accelerate the process. Beginning in late March

1969, McCloskey wrote the first in a series of letters to Nixon in which he urged the president to act on his ambiguous campaign promises to bring a swift end to the conflict. The congressman realized that the only way that U.S. policy on Vietnam would change was to convince Nixon that it was in his best political interests to do so. In the letter, McCloskey flatly stated: "In Viet Nam, we are wrong. We were wrong to seek to contain communism through massive victory force. . . . We were wrong in thinking we could win, or that we can yet win." If Nixon began withdrawing troops, McCloskey asserted, he could restore the credibility of the U.S. government in the eyes of the American people.²³

Attached to the letter was a more detailed memorandum explaining the congressman's rationale. McCloskey argued that "our policy has been predicated upon the expectancy that with *enough* assistance, over a *reasonable* period of time, the Saigon government could achieve a sufficient degree of national cohesion to maintain its independence." For McCloskey, those assumptions were false. No level of U.S. support for "Vietnamization," or shifting military responsibility for the fighting to Vietnamese troops, would change the fact that the conflict was "essentially a civil war." He urged Nixon to begin withdrawing U.S. troops within ninety days, suggesting that the "success or failure of the Nixon administration will be determined by its ability to extricate the U.S. from its massive military commitment in Viet Nam . . . by the 1970 congressional elections."²⁴ By appealing to domestic political considerations, McCloskey hoped to exploit Nixon's overriding fixation on electoral success, both in the upcoming midterms and in Nixon's certain bid in 1972 for a second term.

McCloskey later recalled that he "hand-carried" the letter to John Ehrlichman, Nixon's chief domestic adviser and McCloskey's former Stanford Law School classmate. Hoping to avoid an intra-party breach, Ehrlichman arranged for McCloskey and several other congressmen, including Riegle, to meet with national security adviser Henry Kissinger to discuss the war. McCloskey and Riegle pressed Kissinger for details of Nixon's strategy to wind down the war. Kissinger asked them to "be patient" for sixty days. Despite these assurances, McCloskey left the meeting "unconvinced that Nixon had any real plan to end the war." McCloskey's hopes for a quick settlement to the conflict faded rapidly.²⁵ By the middle of 1969, the California congressman was questioning both the administration's announced rate of withdrawals and the ultimate goals of Nixon's foreign policy, taking the president and his advisers to task on the war at every conceivable opportunity.

The administration essentially ignored McCloskey's attacks, much as the Johnson administration had disregarded such antiwar critics as Senators Ernest Gruening (D-AK) and Wayne Morse (D-OR) within the Democratic Party. Even so, the administration monitored the congressman's remarks and the public response they received, even making a token effort to placate McCloskey. For instance, when the congressman met again with Kissinger in September 1969, McCloskey pointed out the failure of Nixon's purported plan over the preceding six months. Kissinger admitted that the original plan had not worked but assured McCloskey that the administration was "now working on another plan."²⁶ McCloskey was not impressed.

McCloskey's dissatisfaction with the slow pace of troop withdrawal gained national attention in the fall of 1969. On September 16, a *Los Angeles Times* column by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak noted that a group of GOP congressmen, including McCloskey,

had circulated a letter in the House of Representatives soliciting cosponsors for a resolution to repeal the Tonkin Gulf Resolution by December 31, 1970. Evans and Novak were skeptical of the likelihood of the measure's success, but they noted that it represented "a clear, public message" of the "discontent with the pace of disengagement from the war" expressed by McCloskey, Riegle, and others. The intent of this approach, the columnists suggested, was to avoid an "overt provocation" that might make their fellow Republicans "feel guilty about disloyalty" for cosponsoring the initiative and "to prod Congress to assert its constitutional prerogatives." The columnists concluded that this effort could be "intensely embarrassing to the President" and that the Vietnam issue could become "as divisive an issue for the Republicans" in upcoming elections as it had been for the Democrats in 1968.²⁷ Indeed, this was precisely what McCloskey had hoped.

Skeptical that Nixon would respond to the resolution, McCloskey continued his drumbeat of public censure against U.S. military involvement in Southeast Asia. While the congressman expressed support for the Nixon administration's efforts to disengage, he had "grave reservations over the chances of ultimate success of your program to terminate American combat involvement by the policy of 'Vietnamization.'" In the wake of March 1969 revelations about the My Lai massacre, McCloskey lamented "the fact that we have come to accept war by gunships, destruction of villages, the Phoenix program and other harsh anti-insurgency efforts as a necessary aspect of our involvement in Viet Nam."²⁸ This would become a common refrain for McCloskey, who focused on the military means of prosecuting the war as much as the rapidity and permanence of the troop withdrawals.

One of the reasons McCloskey's critique resonated so strongly among Americans was the knowledge he gained by visiting Southeast Asia between 1968 and 1972. He was able to infuse his speeches with anecdotes and evidence from official sources and soldiers in the field, and no one could challenge either his evidence or his military credentials. Just before his February 1970 trip to Vietnam with several other young GOP congressmen, McCloskey said that "the error we made during the escalation was to take the word of the military leaders that with just a little more effort, we can win. We can't afford to make such an error again."²⁹ What McCloskey saw during that visit demolished his last remaining hopes for Nixon's Vietnamization policy. Upon his return, he told Lou Cannon that "I have real reservations that this policy is anything but a war crime. . . . To me what we are doing in Vietnam is an immoral thing." Before this trip, McCloskey had focused his critique on the failures of U.S. policy from a political, military, and diplomatic perspective. Although he did not completely abandon that critique, from 1970 forward his messaging took a decidedly moralistic tone. McCloskey renewed his commitment to do "everything in his power to end" the conflict in Vietnam, whatever the personal or political consequences for him.³⁰

The joint U.S.-South Vietnamese incursion into Cambodia in April 1970 disturbed McCloskey greatly. He questioned its military value and regarded the whole operation "as a betrayal of the administration's commitment to withdraw from Vietnam." He wrote Nixon again to suggest that the president admit that the war had been, and continued to be, a mistake. According to McCloskey, a "national war policy requires three things: military strength, the willingness of our people to pay the cost, and the willingness of our young men to fight. Is it not apparent to you that we have lost the latter two?" The antiwar

movement had “a legitimate complaint” about U.S. policy, he asserted, and “nothing you or the government can do is going to convince our young people that American purposes in this war are justified.” The policy of “‘no defeat, no humiliation’ may have been justified in the 1950’s and 1960’s, but it is counterproductive today. . . . I plead with you to abandon your intransigent attitude on Viet Nam.”³¹ As with his earlier correspondence, McCloskey received no direct response from the president, a fact that he obviously resented and referred to relentlessly thereafter.

McCloskey believed that Nixon was isolated from opponents of the war within the GOP, but he faced a different kind of isolation within the party due to his antiwar stance. For years, the Republican Party—especially, although not exclusively, in California—had committed itself to the Eleventh Commandment: “Thou shalt not speak ill of any fellow Republican.” This doctrine was derived from Barry Goldwater’s unsuccessful 1964 presidential campaign, when McCloskey and many other liberal Republicans denied the conservative Goldwater their support. The phrase originated with Gaylord Parkinson, chair of the California Republican Party, and was later popularized by Ronald Reagan. In 1966 and 1968, Republicans made a concerted effort to restrict their campaign criticisms to Democrats, in an effort to rebuild party unity and to present a united front to the electorate. This strategy had helped the party make significant gains in the midterm elections and to win the White House in 1968.³²

According to one source, Reagan and California’s conservative GOP had nonetheless “distrusted Pete McCloskey from the first.” For example, in response to McCloskey’s 1968 statement that he would not support Max Rafferty’s senatorial campaign against the Democratic candidate Alan Cranston, Governor Reagan declared that McCloskey was violating the Eleventh Commandment and suggested that the “young congressman has a little more to learn about party loyalty.”³³ McCloskey tried to mend fences with the governor, but his continuing opposition to the war in Vietnam and his attacks on the Nixon administration stoked resentment among Republicans across the state. For a time, Reagan’s devotion to the GOP and desire for party unity prevented him from doing more than rhetorically castigating McCloskey. By 1971, however, the governor considered supporting a Republican challenger to McCloskey. “I won’t rule this out at all,” he told Lou Cannon, referring to the upcoming 1972 elections, “because I think there are times when a man removes himself from the umbrella of the Eleventh Commandment by his own actions. And I just consider that he has been very disloyal.”³⁴

Conservative California Republicans had already set their sights on McCloskey’s San Mateo congressional seat. As the 1970 primaries approached, McCloskey admitted to reporters that his anti-administration rhetoric had resulted in an attempted “Salvatori purge,” a reference to Henry Salvatori, the wealthy Sherman Oaks oilman whose financial contributions helped Reagan win the gubernatorial election in 1966. Salvatori was then supporting conservative challenger Forden Athearn’s campaign for McCloskey’s seat. McCloskey described an encounter with Salvatori in Los Angeles earlier in the year, when Salvatori “looked me right in the eye and said, ‘You’re not our kind of Republican and we’ll try to beat you.’” Salvatori believed that “Nixon is doing a terrific job trying to achieve peace with honor in Vietnam.” He accused McCloskey of trying “to pull the rug out from under him,” which was a betrayal of U.S. troops and doing “tremendous damage to the

interest and security of our nation.” Salvatori asserted that he was “indignant, aroused and dismayed” by McCloskey’s efforts to “undermine the President,” which led him to support Athearn.³⁵ McCloskey managed to defeat Athearn, but his relationship with the California GOP remained tenuous at best.

With his nomination secured, McCloskey spent the next several months repeating his persistent attacks on U.S. Vietnam policy. Troop withdrawals under Vietnamization proceeded, but the war continued, as the Nixon administration selectively escalated the conflict in an effort to secure some measure of victory in Southeast Asia. Frustrated with the lack of progress, on Thanksgiving Day 1970, McCloskey began writing notes on a legal pad that would form the basis for his fifth and final Vietnam letter to Nixon. He pleaded with the president to at least scale back the U.S. military actions. “If we cannot end the conflict,” he wrote, “we can at least end American participation in a type of warfare which is inconsistent with our national goals, and our leadership in the cause of peace.”³⁶ Of most concern to the congressman was the administration’s use of “unlimited air power” in Southeast Asia, which he suggested “violates the Hague Convention, let alone the Nuremberg principles.” As he would assert on CBS’s *Face the Nation* in April 1971, if Nixon refused to stop the bombing, “no matter what his rate of withdrawal is, I think I would want to run against him.”³⁷ The only response McCloskey received was a two-sentence reply from White House legislative liaison William Timmons. As before, Nixon refused to respond directly to McCloskey.³⁸

Why did McCloskey continue to lobby the president so unrelentingly? As the *Washington Post* cogently observed in February 1971, McCloskey knew that the “one thing Mr. Nixon understands is political pressure.” Moreover, the congressman understood that Nixon would not change course in Vietnam unless forced into the decision. That helps explain why McCloskey broached the idea of impeaching Nixon as a potential strategy to end the war in a speech to Stanford University students. McCloskey said, “The threat of impeachment or at least the discussion of impeachment, the threat of a Republican primary challenger—those two things might cause the President to rethink his position.” To McCloskey, it was clear that a national debate about the possibility of removing Nixon from office could “result in new policies to end the war quickly.” McCloskey also attacked Nixon’s use of air power in Laos, asserting that the president had “exceeded his constitutional powers” because it followed Congress’s December 1970 repeal of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution. Nixon “was doing something which the Constitution gives only to the Congress: the power to declare war. We’re doing just what we executed Germans for doing at Nuremberg.”³⁹

More realistic than impeachment, however, was finding a Republican challenger to defeat Nixon’s reelection bid in the 1972 primaries, on the grounds that Nixon had not fulfilled his pledge to bring the war in Vietnam to an end. In early April, McCloskey returned to Vietnam “to get the facts” about the progress being made on withdrawal. He wanted to get more ammunition for his charges that Nixon’s Vietnamization policy was “founded upon public misunderstanding” and that “facts are needed to penetrate the confusion.”⁴⁰ McCloskey continued to hammer away at the administration, asserting on April 21 that the Department of State had “deliberately concealed the extent to which American planes had bombed villages in northern Laos.” Such actions, he noted, were contributing to a “bloodbath” and “agony” among civilians in Vietnam, Laos, and

Cambodia.⁴¹ Describing a meeting with McCloskey at a hotel in Hong Kong at the end of his 1971 trip to Laos and Vietnam, Lou Cannon quoted McCloskey as saying that “the way we change policy in the United States is when the voters choose between two alternatives. I want to focus this issue and fight it through and get a decision by the voters of the United States as quickly as we can.” If the only way to do that was through a presidential bid, then, McCloskey asserted, “I’m going to do it. And I’m starting now.”⁴²

The *Wall Street Journal* later reported that McCloskey was simply articulating “a theoretical possibility” in his February 1971 Stanford statement that the only way to end the immoral war was to impeach Nixon, and that the war did not justify impeachment. In any event, reporters theorized, Congress would not take such a drastic step. While McCloskey may not have been serious about impeachment, they judged his presidential bid “completely earnest.” The article cited McCloskey’s hope that one of three things would occur by the end of 1971: Congress would force an end to the war using its appropriations power to cut off funding for the conflict; Nixon would manage to bring the war to a conclusion; or a better-known Republican would become the peace candidate in the primaries. “I think one of those things will almost certainly happen by November, and then I wouldn’t have to run,” McCloskey commented. But if none of the three options happened, McCloskey promised to run: “I wouldn’t expect to win,” he said, “but if the effort forces the President to end the war one day earlier it would be a victory to me.”⁴³

Meanwhile, McCloskey faced increasing political pressure from the GOP and the Nixon administration. The nature of that pressure was encapsulated in an Evans and Novak column in late April 1971, which addressed McCloskey’s recent trip to Laos and his nascent presidential candidacy. They wrote that the trip had been “financed and arranged by liberal Democrats,” which should be a signal that McCloskey lacked “genuine Republican backing for his challenge against President Nixon.” They noted that McCloskey claimed that the funds were “strictly limited to his antiwar activities” and not related to his presidential bid, but Evans and Novak clearly did not accept the explanation. Instead, they focused on McCloskey’s relationship with former representative Allard Lowenstein (D-NY) and McCloskey’s failure to generate support among liberal Republicans for his campaign, which they characterized as “demagoguery on the war.” In an interesting note, the column cited a statement by Senator Robert Dole (R-KS), the GOP national chairman, who “balked at suggestions from Nixon political operatives that he cut McCloskey down to size before next year’s primaries.” According to Evans and Novak, Dole “feels it is not the role of the party’s chairman to hatchet a fellow Republican in Congress, no matter what his transgressions.” Given Dole’s reluctance to attack McCloskey, they concluded, “anti-McCloskey hatcheting will be divided between Gov. Ronald Reagan of California and a selected group of McCloskey’s colleagues in the House.”⁴⁴

Such reluctance did not extend to the administration, however. The documentary evidence makes clear that leading members of the Nixon administration “never regarded the candidacy as a ‘joke,’ partly because the White House is haunted by the specter of Eugene McCarthy and partly because the Nixon administration takes its politics . . . very seriously.”⁴⁵ In an April 14 telephone conversation, Nixon told Special Counsel Charles Colson that the “tide is running our way,” but indicated some concern about McCloskey. Colson responded that he would be “meeting with liberal [R]epublicans to help us against

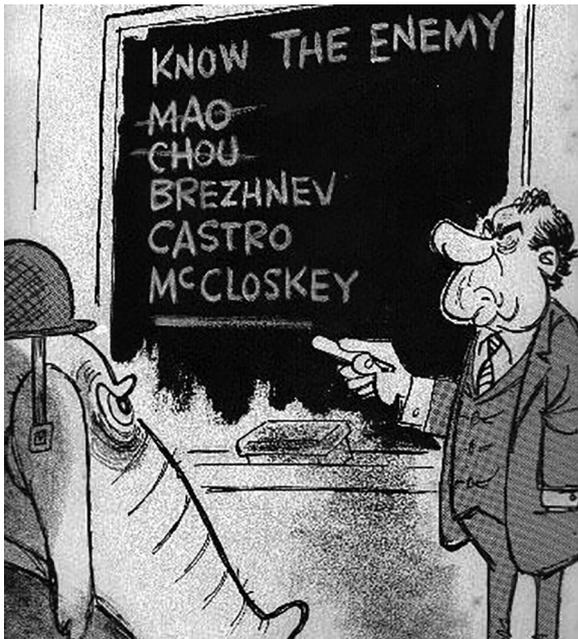


FIGURE 2. “Know the Enemy,” Lou Grant editorial cartoon, 1972.
Courtesy of Florenzi Grant

McCloskey.”⁴⁶ In addition, just before McCloskey returned from his visit to Southeast Asia, J. Roy Goodearle—a national affairs aide to Vice President Spiro Agnew—wrote an “eyes only” memorandum to Colson, informing him that McCloskey was serious about launching a presidential bid based on his antiwar views. He warned that McCloskey was “bright, articulate, and ambitious” and had “an excellent relationship with a number of people on the affluent left.” Should he run, Goodearle noted, “McCloskey will have the support of Norton Simon and other ‘liberal’ Republicans in California” and he would pursue a speaking schedule that was “heavily campus oriented.”

Given these facts, Goodearle made several suggestions on how the administration “might consider going after him.” First, granting McCloskey’s popularity on campuses, Goodearle suggested that McCloskey be forced to move left on a whole range of issues beyond the Vietnam conflict. That fact “could make him easy game,” as a “well organized effort to ask tough and embarrassing questions at each campus appearance could help discredit him or drive him so far to the left that he will lose his off-campus credibility.” Second, Goodearle noted that McCloskey “does appear to be concerned about his future” in politics and “may not wish to trade his safe seat in Congress for a few months of national publicity” as a presidential contender. Thus, Goodearle argued, the administration should find a “first-rate young moderate Republican candidate and provide him with ample funding” in order to “keep the Congressman close to home.” This would be especially helpful with the looming redistricting that might make the seat more conservative. Goodearle concluded that the administration should give serious consideration to these steps in order to “limit his maneuvering room or even force him to change course to save his own political skin.”⁴⁷

As the chatter regarding an insurgent McCloskey presidential campaign escalated, administration efforts to preemptively undermine his candidacy increased. On April 19,

Patrick Buchanan, then a Nixon speechwriter and political strategist, told White House chief of staff H. R. Haldeman that McCloskey was traveling with Charles Daly, an associate of John and Bobby Kennedy and a close friend of Democratic National Committee chair Larry O'Brien. For Buchanan, that "raises up interesting possibilities. Is the Democratic Party providing staff assistance and/or financial assistance" to McCloskey's campaign? If so, he argued, "we can discredit McCloskey as not a man of principle, but as a party traitor, who is trafficking with New Frontiersmen to defeat a Republican President. Good stuff can be made out of this—damaging to McCloskey's budding effort." Buchanan believed that the administration could "build a case that he is simply a pawn" if they could establish the financial connection, but that in any event, "we should have some of our political people looking out for this sort of thing."⁴⁸

McCloskey understood that his campaign against Nixon would create repercussions for him with the party and the administration, and that it threatened his political future in his home district. In early May, he said that "there's no question large numbers of Republicans in my constituency would rather go with the President," but he estimated that he had the backing of more than half of the Republicans in his district, despite the "significant split" on Nixon's war policy. According to McCloskey, "to repress such debate on the grounds of party loyalty is to repress dissent—and this nation thrives on dissent."⁴⁹ Of course, that did not prevent many of his constituents from lashing out at his challenge to the president. One told a reporter, "I despise him and I voted for the rat last time. . . . He's trying to get all the hippies and rioters and demonstrators on his side, he thinks there's more of them." As one columnist noted, McCloskey's problem would "not be with the general election but the Republican primary. A Republican against the war is one thing; but a Republican openly opposed to the President and willing, even, to talk in terms of impeachment, is too much for some to swallow."⁵⁰

Yet none of this pressure was enough to dissuade the congressman from continuing his quest to end the war in Vietnam. In a May 23, 1971, profile in the *Los Angeles Times*, McCloskey noted that "it's awfully important that somebody speak out and debate these issues." The article cited the GOP chairman of San Mateo County, Robert R. Wood, as saying, "I'm sad about this. I think Nixon's policy deserves a chance. I think McCloskey is helping to frustrate Nixon's policy." The article noted McCloskey's "haunting fear" that his challenge might push the GOP convention in 1972 to turn to Reagan, who, in McCloskey's mind, would be even worse than Nixon. McCloskey, however, doubled down on his critique, suggesting: "This whole idea that somehow Republicans have to march together in lockstep is going to kill the Republican Party. . . . I don't think I'm hurting the party at all by speaking out for a different policy on the war."⁵¹

In assessing a potential McCloskey presidential campaign, columnists Robert Allen and John Goldsmith noted that McCloskey "faces the strong likelihood of being dumped himself. He is under foreboding double-barreled attack" from local, state, and congressional Republican leaders who are "angrily gunning for him, and admittedly canvassing the field for a potent candidate to run against him." Newly created congressional districts were another danger McCloskey might face in 1972. Allen and Goldsmith concluded that McCloskey's "coy politicking is strictly utilitarian"; while his odds of defeating Nixon were not good, "it will be infinitely more satisfying to McCloskey's far-from-modest ego to be

licked doing that than being defeated for re-election to the House. So while devoutly professing lofty idealism and principles, actually McCloskey is being strictly pragmatic.” They also shed light on his strengthening ties to such Democrats as Representative Phillip Burton (D-CA), implying that McCloskey was little more than “their ‘dump Nixon’ standard-bearer.”⁵² But as McCloskey wrote, “I would rather give up my seat in Congress than stand by in acquiescence” to Republican political pressure.⁵³

McCloskey realized that his vociferous opposition to administration war policies would cost him support from members of his party, even those who took a firmly antiwar stance. But, appearances to the contrary, while McCloskey seemed as isolated from most Republicans as any religious heretic from his church, the congressman was not completely alone. As previously mentioned, Donald Riegle was outspoken in his support of McCloskey. While not ready to announce support for McCloskey’s presidential bid, on June 7, 1971, Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY) said that McCloskey was “acting constructively” and gave McCloskey’s challenge “his blessing,” calling the idea of a GOP insurgency “helpful” since “any ferment within the party, making it lively and provocative, is desirable.”⁵⁴ Indeed, the congressman likely had a number of secret supporters in the GOP, but even McCloskey recognized that asking any Republican to support him publicly would surely bring down upon them the wrath of the White House.⁵⁵

McCloskey later argued that he would not have challenged Nixon “had it not been for the gradual realization that his plan to *end* the war in Vietnam actually involved a drive to *win* the war.” As his correspondence reveals, McCloskey believed that the president had become isolated from the antiwar members of his own party.⁵⁶ McCloskey frequently quoted John F. Kennedy’s dictum that “party loyalty sometimes demands too much.”⁵⁷ By 1971, it was clear that patience for Nixon’s war strategy was waning among GOP doves, and antiwar politicians such as Mayor John Lindsay (R-NY) and Mark Hatfield were breaking their silence and pushing the administration to increase the pace of withdrawals and negotiations. Of course, Nixon and Kissinger pursued their own agenda and timetable in moving toward “peace with honor,” irrespective of opposition from within the Republican Party, the media, or the public at large.⁵⁸

McCloskey’s friends in the GOP tried to convince him not to run, for the sake of party unity and to protect his own political career. One member of California’s Republican congressional delegation, Alphonzo Bell—who faced his own conservative challengers within the party—called McCloskey’s presidential candidacy “needlessly divisive” and “hopeless.”⁵⁹ Charles Wiggins, a Republican congressman from an adjoining district, told McCloskey that “neither the Republicans nor the Democrats are going to turn to McCloskey as their presidential candidate. . . . Although you personally may be excused for believing in the viability of your own candidacy, those around you are not so naive.” Wiggins suggested McCloskey was being “used.” “Your enormous talents and potential for our party are being perverted and misdirected,” argued Wiggins, “by those who are not pro-McCloskey, but are anti-Nixon.” He admitted that McCloskey’s differences with the administration were not unique, but that other Republicans had “not permitted that opposition to be used as a vehicle for replacing the entire Republican Administration with a whole new team of Democrats. This is the road you are following and it leads in many directions apart from our policy in Vietnam. . . . Please reconsider the practical consequences of your efforts.”⁶⁰

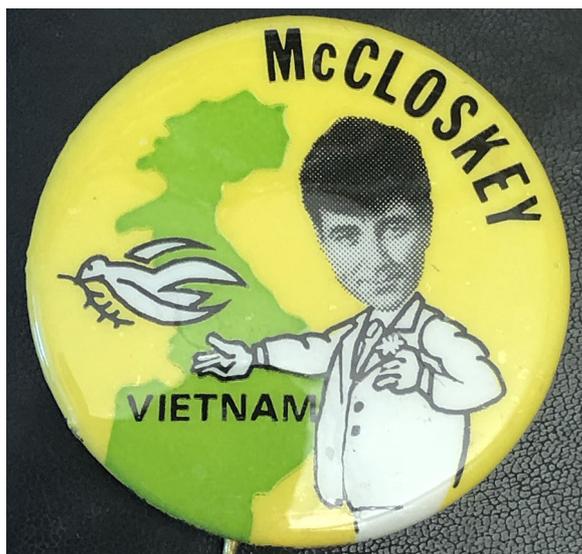


FIGURE 3. McCloskey campaign button, 1972.
Photo by author

In fact, breaking the Eleventh Commandment did not sit well with many in the party. As Robert S. Allen wrote in his syndicated column in May 1971, “local, state and congressional GOP leaders are angrily gunning for him, and admittedly canvassing the field for a potent candidate to run against him” for the Republican nomination for his House seat.⁶¹ As Adam Clymer wrote in the *Baltimore Sun*, “the prevailing belief is that Republicans are less tolerant of insurgencies and dissent than are Democrats, and that there is little future for a Republican Eugene McCarthy. The thesis is probably right.” But, Clymer continued, “many Republicans who view [McCloskey’s] anti-war efforts with horror concede that they like him personally. . . . They see him as sincere, if wrong.” If he made a strong showing in New Hampshire, McCloskey “might cause the President to speed up disengagement.”⁶² In the face of party pressure and the likely prospect of losing to Nixon, McCloskey nonetheless remained steadfast: he would follow through on his promise to run.

McCloskey officially announced his candidacy for the GOP nomination on July 9, 1971, asserting: “This will not be a single-issue campaign. We seek, in addition to ending the war, to restore truth in government, to achieve a return to the historic Republican moral commitment on social issues rather than the present ‘southern strategy,’ and a restoration of judicial excellence and independence.” McCloskey also proclaimed that he would “seek to end CIA involvement in the internal affairs of other nations, and to limit that agency’s operations to the field of intelligence gathering. Above all,” he concluded, “we will hope to try to restore the faith of people in government and to stimulate their participation in the electoral process.”⁶³

It appeared to some observers that McCloskey could do well enough in New Hampshire to cause Nixon consternation, much as Eugene McCarthy had caused Johnson in 1968. John Topping argued that McCloskey’s personality “should be well-suited to the small meeting, question-and-answer session campaigning of New Hampshire” because “his candor and his ready command of the facts stand out under such close examination.”

In addition, his record in Korea would “insulate McCloskey from many of the innuendoes” that those on the right would use to undermine his campaign.⁶⁴

In the wake of his presidential announcement, the national Republican leadership urged McCloskey to dial back his harsh criticisms of the Nixon administration. The effort failed. In response to a letter from Gerald Ford pleading with him to blunt his attacks, McCloskey reiterated his case against Nixon. “I appreciate the concern many of my Republican colleagues have expressed about my intention to challenge President Nixon’s Southeast Asia policies in next spring’s primaries,” he stated. Nevertheless, he reminded Ford that his opposition to the war dated to his 1967 campaign for Congress, and that he was dismayed over the “transition of the Republican Party into its position of apparent support for winning the war in Viet Nam.” McCloskey expressed a reluctance to challenge Nixon himself, claiming he “would have preferred this program to have been presented by someone more experienced and knowledgeable than myself, but, as you know, no one has yet indicated a willingness to do this.” Saying he had no alternative, McCloskey vowed to run unless Nixon ended the unlimited use of bombing and rejected the notion of leaving a residual U.S. force in Vietnam indefinitely.⁶⁵

Similarly, in an August 4, 1971, letter to his House colleague Louis Wyman (R-NH), McCloskey focused on the danger the Nixon administration posed to the GOP’s future. Part of McCloskey’s rationale for running, he explained, was to “revitalize the GOP and to make it the majority party.” He made it clear that he was running to “encourage open and honest debate and to express positive Republican alternatives to the policies of the present Administration on such issues as truth in government . . . the war in Vietnam . . . and the proper and best national political strategy for the Republican Party.”⁶⁶ While many Republicans dismissed McCloskey as either a self-aggrandizing publicity hound or a nuisance to the president, leading members of Nixon’s staff refused to do so. The Nixon administration took its politics quite seriously, and after Nixon’s 1960 and 1962 electoral defeats, he never again left anything to chance—which was, of course, what led to the Watergate scandal and the end of Nixon’s presidency.⁶⁷

Nixon was nothing if not an opportunist. Six days after McCloskey formally declared his candidacy in July 1971, Nixon announced his historic trip to China.⁶⁸ Not only was he able to captivate the public’s imagination and to set in motion his strategy of triangular diplomacy with the Chinese and the Soviets, but, as one observer put it, Nixon “captured the political initiative” from McCloskey and his potential Democratic challengers in the run-up to the 1972 primaries.⁶⁹ As one California newspaper wryly noted, “Pete’s not going anywhere. President Nixon cut him off at the knees with that planned trip to Communist China . . . poor old Pete. He and his pumpkin-eaters may get their jollies from stumping against President Nixon but they are on a dead-end road.”⁷⁰

Tad Szulc of the *New York Times* noted that Nixon “significantly defused criticism of the Indochina war and outflanked his potential Presidential challengers” with the announcement of his China trip.⁷¹ McCloskey told reporters that he suspected that Nixon’s trip to China was “calculated” to divert U.S. public attention away from the ongoing conflict in Vietnam and the recent North Vietnamese peace offer.⁷² In an interesting coincidence of timing, Nixon’s trip to China in February 1972 also helped draw attention away from the

looming New Hampshire primary, burnishing Nixon's reputation while making it more difficult for McCloskey's message to gain traction with Republican voters.

Indeed, over the next six months, McCloskey failed to attract support to his campaign, despite the fact that he moved beyond the single issue of Vietnam and challenged the president on a broader range of issues. A poll taken in November 1971 demonstrated two important facts about McCloskey's challenge. First, Republicans did not see him as a viable alternative to the current administration, favoring Nixon 73 percent to 13 percent. Even independents supported Nixon 54 percent to 23 percent, and the eighteen- to thirty-year-old demographic—the most likely antiwar voters—chose Nixon 46 percent to 33 percent. Yet McCloskey's support among non-Republican groups, according to a *New York Times* analysis of the poll results, “may be an indication that the President's troop withdrawals have not eliminated peace as an issue for 1972.”⁷³ McCloskey almost certainly would not win, but he would force Nixon to confront domestic opposition to U.S. involvement in Vietnam more directly and in more detail than he might have preferred during the 1972 campaign season.

To many observers, McCloskey's challenge to Nixon seemed a threat to his own congressional seat. In a July 15, 1971, column entitled “McCloskey in Trouble,” Roscoe Drummond suggested that McCloskey's candidacy “may well end up derailing himself right out of Congress.” According to Drummond, McCloskey's attacks on Nixon's Vietnam policies might play well nationally with the antiwar movement, but they could hurt McCloskey in his home district, where “he appears like somebody they wish they hadn't elected and aim to defeat in next year's GOP primary.” Drummond noted that there was a strong “Dump McCloskey” movement in the district that was “gaining strength.” This opposition in his own district, combined with the California Republican Assembly's censure of McCloskey and its demand that he remove himself from the party, indicated that the candidate's political future was shaky. Drummond pointed to McCloskey's stark turn against the war during his campaign against Shirley Temple Black as the key factor in the opposition to McCloskey in the district.⁷⁴

In addition, as many had feared, the congressional redistricting that followed the 1970 census posed political problems for McCloskey. The 17th Congressional District was to be carved out of San Mateo County's 11th Congressional District. The new district in northern San Mateo would become a reliably Democratic seat, while the southern portion, what remained of McCloskey's 11th District, would remain safely Republican. The problem for McCloskey was that most of his district's remaining Republicans tended to be more conservative than his previous constituents, more in line with the Nixon-Reagan wing than with liberal Republicans. Many of them disliked McCloskey's attacks on Nixon and Reagan. Even more troubling was that the heart of the new district included thousands of Lockheed employees who were likely to mistrust McCloskey's anti-defense industry rhetoric and fear his opposition to the SST and ABM Treaty. Redistricting placed McCloskey's political future in doubt.⁷⁵

On November 5, 1971, Gordon Strachan—who served as Haldeman's liaison to the Committee to Re-elect the President—told Haldeman that Lyn Nofziger, a Republican National Committee deputy chairman and the executive director of the California Committee to Re-elect the President, was monitoring McCloskey's situation in California. Strachan informed his boss that, “in addition to the work with possible challengers, he

has met with some success in disadvantageously redistricting McCloskey's seat."⁷⁶ Nofziger's correspondence with anti-McCloskey operatives in California revealed that, since his district had all but disappeared following the 1970 census, McCloskey would be forced to run in a new district in 1972. One of these operatives, Ronald Conway, wrote to Nofziger in late October, letting him know that "a committee has come into existence to defeat" McCloskey in the primary the following June. The committee was organizing financing, had begun vetting candidates, and was planning by the end of October to rally Republican support behind a candidate to challenge McCloskey for his seat.⁷⁷

Potentially negative consequences to his own career in the House notwithstanding, McCloskey held to his course of doing whatever was necessary to end the war in Vietnam. He was so incensed at Nixon's policy in Vietnam that he publicly asserted that he might endorse Senator Edmund Muskie (D-ME) if Muskie won the 1972 Democratic nomination. In the same December 1971 speech at the University of Maine, McCloskey accused the Nixon administration of "continuing an unconscionable [*sic*] war in Southeast Asia and of 'deliberately concealing and distorting facts from the American people' on a wide range of issues." McCloskey told the audience, "We need politicians who will stand up and tell the people the truth without wondering whether it will hurt them politically." He accused the administration of having "an almost paranoid desire for secrecy."⁷⁸

McCloskey continued this line of attack in a series of speeches and media engagements leading up to the New Hampshire balloting. Appearing on ABC's *Issues and Answers*, McCloskey upbraided Nixon for using American military technology to protect his pride. According to the congressman, villages in North Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were being bombed so that Nixon would not be the first president to lose a war. "You certainly can't say [your goal] is preserving the liberty of the South Vietnamese anymore." The only thing worth fighting for at this juncture, McCloskey argued, was the return of U.S. prisoners of war; supporting the South Vietnamese government led by Nguyen Van Thieu "seems to me to be not a necessary part of our policy." He concluded by suggesting that even a communist-dominated, reunified Vietnam would be less harmful to the Vietnamese people than continued American bombing.⁷⁹ On February 21, 1972, McCloskey insisted that "what this country needs is politicians who are ready to lose to support their beliefs." He berated Nixon for providing massive air support to South Vietnam and attacked the president's lack of candor, all while Nixon met with the Chinese leadership in Beijing.⁸⁰

Although realistic about his chances of upsetting Nixon in New Hampshire—and admitting that it might be "political suicide" to oppose the president—McCloskey continued to insist that "it's worth doing if we can end this war." McCloskey remained convinced that his candidacy was having the effect he hoped.⁸¹ In a March 1972 appearance on *Face the Nation*, he argued that his candidacy "may have played some part in causing him [Nixon] to disclose the peace plans that he announced." Nevertheless, he refused to drop out of the race. "You can't believe the President anymore," he asserted. "I can't even begin to support the President in November if he's continuing this bombing policy in Laos and Cambodia." Fighting Nixon for the nomination "could end this bombing. It could force an American President to review and to change a policy that I can't live with."⁸²

On the eve of the primary, most observers recognized the futility of McCloskey's campaign. Famed Las Vegas bookmaker and sports commentator Jimmy "The Greek"

Snyder put McCloskey's odds of winning the GOP nomination at 200 to 1, which in retrospect seems low.⁸³ More problematic for his candidacy was the fact that, as the New Hampshire balloting approached, the war issue seemed to be fading in significance among voters. Yet he believed that "makes it even more important to keep the issue alive. What I'm doing may be even more important now than it was six months ago."⁸⁴ Say what you will about Pete McCloskey's quixotic effort to upset Richard Nixon, it was a campaign of conviction, principle, and personal disinterest.

Despite his dogged determination and constant criticism, McCloskey's effort to upset the president failed. Nixon easily won the Republican primary in New Hampshire, receiving 67.6 percent of the vote to McCloskey's 19.8 percent. To be sure, the ongoing troop withdrawals and Nixon's announcement of Kissinger's secret talks with Le Duc Tho certainly undermined McCloskey's appeal to voters. Yet, as the *New York Times* editorialized on May 9, 1972, McCloskey "achieved a highly creditable performance in obtaining one-fifth of the vote," demonstrating "courage and political leadership" in his crusade on points where Nixon was vulnerable—most notably the Vietnam War and the administration's "mania for secrecy." The *Times* recognized that McCloskey, unlike other Republicans, refused to take "refuge in silence" or to accommodate himself to a policy of which he disapproved.⁸⁵

On March 10, 1972, McCloskey announced the end of his presidential campaign and filed for his candidacy for the GOP nomination in California's newly created 17th Congressional District. He said he would "make no apology to my constituents" and that he would "not support President Nixon so long as he continues his bombing policies. I think the policy of continued killing in Southeast Asia transcends any concept of loyalty or partisan politics."⁸⁶ McCloskey announced that he would stop actively campaigning for the White House, but he would stay on the ballot in ten states to serve as a "symbolic protest" against the Vietnam War. Given his lack of financial resources, McCloskey's decision should not be shocking. But he was adamant in declaring that he would not support Nixon's reelection unless the president changed his Vietnam policies. According to McCloskey, "this question transcends any consideration of partisan politics. . . . [P]eace in Vietnam is the most crucial issue of our time."⁸⁷

Not surprisingly, McCloskey faced a daunting political task when he returned to California to campaign for Congress. Nixon and his staff planned to punish McCloskey for his temerity in challenging the president for the nomination. After the New Hampshire primary, Gordon Strachan informed Haldeman that McCloskey would run for Congress in 1972 in the newly created 17th District. Strachan suggested that the White House throw its support behind Royce Cole, a young, conservative physician whose candidacy was being promoted by Lyn Nofziger. The concern, Nofziger explained, was that despite his promise to focus his energies on winning a congressional seat, McCloskey might be "just unpredictable enough to file" for the California presidential primary, just to cause problems for Nixon in his home state.⁸⁸

Meanwhile, Governor Reagan told reporters in a news conference that McCloskey should leave the GOP and join the Democrats. "It would seem that when a man finds he can no longer accept the philosophy and principles of a political party and he is unable to persuade that party to accept his, he should affiliate with a party more attuned to his own thinking."⁸⁹ Similar comments came from Republican challengers for McCloskey's

congressional seat. Although he was not actively campaigning for the White House, because McCloskey continued to rhetorically bash the administration on Vietnam, they accused him of disloyalty to the president and the party. McCloskey, of course, realized this. “There’s tremendous hostility about my position on the war,” he said. “Reagan, Agnew, and other Republicans say ‘McCloskey is really a Democrat.’ I’m the issue in this campaign. . . . But if support of the President on bombing North Vietnam is a condition of being reelected, I’d just as soon not represent the Republican Party in Congress.” Fortunately for the congressman, his opponents split the “anti-McCloskey” vote, which left him in a good position to claim the GOP nomination. In the general election that fall, McCloskey received over 60 percent of the vote in the new 17th Congressional District, despite the fact that 53 percent of voters were registered Democrats.⁹⁰

Even among those Republicans who doubted the wisdom of the war, domestic political calculations softened their opposition in most instances. The desire for reelection overrode their concerns and made them more sensitive to the political dangers associated with dissent. It is clear that most members of Congress during the U.S. involvement in Vietnam failed in their constitutional, political, and moral obligations. In the final analysis, the demons of domestic politics shouted down the better angels of Congress’s nature.⁹¹ For all of the rhetorical opposition to the war that arose during the Johnson and Nixon administrations, Congress delayed many years before taking an action to force the president to disengage from Southeast Asia. McCloskey’s willingness to mount such a direct challenge, regardless of political fallout, distinguishes him from the vast majority of his congressional peers in the Vietnam War era.

McCloskey’s last notable attempt to force Nixon to confront his steadfast critique of the president’s war policies occurred that August at the GOP convention in Miami Beach. McCloskey tried to get the single delegate he won during the primaries seated at the convention, hoping that, by placing the congressman’s name in nomination, his antiwar dissent would be aired during the nominating speech. McCloskey urged the GOP convention rules subcommittee to support his efforts, asking, “Are we not disenfranchising the position of a minority?”⁹² The Republican National Committee unanimously decided against McCloskey’s plea, and the convention’s rules committee voted to require that any candidate must have a majority of three state delegations before being allowed to be nominated for president. This struck a final death blow to McCloskey’s hopes for a prime-time airing of his criticism of Nixon’s war policies.⁹³

Nixon, of course, went on to crush Democrat George McGovern in 1972’s fall election and, shortly thereafter, the United States signed the Paris Peace Accords. As in 1968, Nixon managed the Vietnam issue brilliantly during the campaign, focusing the public’s attention on his administration’s successes during his first term and on other issues. As before, Nixon worked feverishly behind the scenes to ensure that Vietnam did not derail his candidacy. Indeed, throughout 1972, Nixon and Kissinger diligently strived to bring the Vietnam conflict to a conclusion, largely in response to domestic political calculations associated with the November election. No “smoking gun” conclusively proves that McCloskey’s challenge directly influenced Nixon’s Vietnam policies. But the evidence strongly suggests that, just as the doves in the Republican Party had done during Johnson’s administration, McCloskey’s presence in the GOP presidential primaries and his

constant attacks on Nixon's war policies forced the administration to move cautiously in Southeast Asia and, simultaneously, kept demands to end the war in the public and media spotlight. As the *Washington Post's* Don Oberdorfer wrote in September 1971, "the very existence of the McCloskey challenge is a warning to the President of the consequences of any sudden zigzag or crisis in the war zone."⁹⁴ At the same time, as McCloskey's crusade impressed upon Nixon the importance of bringing the war to a rapid conclusion, McCloskey's failure in the New Hampshire primary predicted McGovern's own ultimate inability to defeat the president and win the election on the basis of opposition to the war in Vietnam.

Although his primary challenge failed to unseat the incumbent Richard Nixon, Pete McCloskey acted on the courage of his convictions in opposing the Vietnam War. For McCloskey, Vietnam transcended politics: it was a moral issue for which he was willing to sacrifice his political career, if necessary, to bring the war to an end. Much like the soldier he had once been, McCloskey threw himself on the grenade to save his comrades. Because of that, he had more in common with William Jennings Bryan and Cyrus Vance—both of whom resigned as secretary of state (in 1915 and 1980, respectively), placing principle over policy, politics, or party loyalty—than most antiwar politicians of the late 1960s and early 1970s, in either the Republican or the Democratic Party.⁹⁵ Ironically, it was Nixon, not McCloskey, whose political career would be sacrificed over Vietnam-related political actions. The congressman's California constituents returned him to the House for the next ten years.

NOTES

1. [A]. Paul N. McCloskey Jr., *Truth and Untruth: Political Deceit in America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 13.
2. On Congress's abdication of its constitutional responsibilities, see, e.g., Andrew L. Johns, "Declining the 'Invitation to Struggle': Congressional Complicity in the Rise of the Imperial Presidency," *Pacific Historical Review* 89, no. 1 (Winter 2020), 97–130.
3. See Lou Cannon, *The McCloskey Challenge* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972); and McCloskey, *Truth and Untruth*.
4. In Theodore White's *The Making of the President 1972* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), McCloskey rates only two very brief mentions; and in Jeffrey Kimball's *Nixon's Vietnam War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), McCloskey is conspicuously absent. Even in Nixon's memoirs, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Touchstone, 1990), McCloskey is mentioned only as one of the Republican challengers for the 1972 nomination (p. 541). On the Republican Party's engagement with the war in Vietnam, see, e.g., Andrew L. Johns, *Vietnam's Second Front: Domestic Politics, the Republican Party, and the War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010); Colin Dueck, *Hard Line: The Republican Party and U.S. Foreign Policy since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), especially chaps. 3–5; and Sandra Scanlon, *The Pro-War Movement: Domestic Support for the Vietnam War and the Making of Modern American Conservatism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013).
5. Julian E. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security—from World War II to the War on Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 505.
6. Robert J. McMahon, "Diplomatic History and Policy History: Finding Common Ground," *Journal of Policy History* 17, no. 1 (January 2005), 97.
7. On the importance of domestic politics as a methodological approach in the history of U.S. foreign relations, see, e.g., Ralph B. Levering, "Is Domestic Politics Being Slighted as an Interpretive Framework?," *SHAHR Newsletter* 25, no. 1 (March 1994), 17–35; Jason Parker, "'On Such a Full Sea Are We Now Afloat': Politics and U.S. Foreign Relations across the Water's Edge," *Perspectives*, May 2011, <https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/may-2011/political-history-today/on-such-a-full-sea-are-we-now-afloat>; Fredrik Logevall, "Domestic Politics," in Frank Costigliola and Michael J. Hogan (eds.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 151–167; and Thomas A. Schwartz, "'Henry, . . . Winning an Election Is Terribly Important': Partisan

- Politics in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 2 (April 2009), 173–190.
- Representative scholarship on the nexus of domestic politics and foreign policy includes Melvin Small, *Democracy and Diplomacy: The Impact of Domestic Politics on U.S. Foreign Policy, 1789–1994* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Campbell Craig and Fredrik Logevall, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2020); Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Andrew L. Johns and Mitchell B. Lerner (eds.), *The Cold War at Home and Abroad: Domestic Politics and U.S. Foreign Policy since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2018); Johns, *Vietnam’s Second Front*; and Andrew Johnstone and Andrew Priest (eds.), *U.S. Presidential Elections and Foreign Policy: Candidates, Campaigns, and Global Politics from FDR to Bill Clinton* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017).
8. On the evolution of California politics during this period, see, e.g., Jules Tygiel, “Ronald Reagan and the Triumph of Conservatism,” in Marcia Eymann and Charles M. Wollenberg (eds.), *What’s Going On? California and the Vietnam Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 43–57.
 9. McCloskey served in Korea, where he won a Navy Cross, a Silver Star, and two Purple Hearts for his actions, and was an expert in counterinsurgency tactics. He wrote about his experience in Korea in *The Taking of Hill 610* (self-published, 1992). His application for duty in Vietnam was denied because the Marines did not have any combat slots available for lieutenant colonels at the time.
 10. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 127. Interestingly, despite McCloskey’s criticism of U.S. Vietnam policy, he declined an offer from Daniel Ellsberg to participate in making the Pentagon Papers public in early 1971. See Robert Mann, *A Grand Delusion: America’s Descent into Vietnam* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 686. McCloskey also made it clear as late as 1971 that he would be willing to use U.S. ground troops to invade North Vietnam in order to rescue prisoners of war. He said, “I’m a marine, and marines don’t leave their own behind.” Quoted in *New York Times*, April 18, 1971.
 11. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 82–106 (quote from 91); and *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1967. Weinberger, of course, would go on to serve in both the Nixon and Reagan administrations in a variety of capacities, ultimately serving as secretary of defense from 1981–1987. Although he defeated Black easily, McCloskey was forced to run against the highest-finishing Democrat, Roy A. Archibald, for the seat the following month because he did not receive the requisite 50 percent of the total vote. The race was anticlimactic. The two candidates shared many political positions, but on Vietnam, Archibald advocated support for the Johnson administration’s current policies (although he did support a bombing halt). That put McCloskey to Archibald’s left, which allowed McCloskey to coast to victory in the runoff.
 12. *New York Times*, November 12, 1967.
 13. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 101–102.
 14. The Geneva Accords in 1954 ended the Franco–Viet Minh conflict, divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel, and created a three-mile-wide demilitarized zone on either side of the demarcation line. In addition, the Accords established an International Control Commission comprised of Canada, Poland, and India to monitor the ceasefire, and called for elections for reunification of Vietnam in two years. The agreement was signed by France, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the People’s Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom—although, notably, neither the United States nor the State of Vietnam was a signatory. On the Accords, see, e.g., Kathryn C. Statler, *Replacing France: The Origins of American Intervention in Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), esp. chap. 3.
 15. Statement, September 12, 1967, Robert Hartmann Files, Ford Congressional Papers, box R25, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library (hereafter GRFL).
 16. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 101–104.
 17. *New York Times*, November 15, 1967.
 18. Newsletter, March 13, 1968, box 652, Paul Norton “Pete” McCloskey, Jr., Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA (hereafter cited as “McCloskey papers”).
 19. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 128–130. See also *Congressional Record*, March 13, 1968, H-1914-1915.
 20. Quoted in Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 117. On Reagan’s efforts to win the nomination at the GOP convention, see, e.g., Aram Goudsouzian, *The Men and the Moment: The Election of 1968 and the Rise of Partisan Politics in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 74–87.
 21. On GOP divisions on the war, see Johns, *Vietnam’s Second Front*.
 22. Speech, January 15, 1969, GRF Congressional Papers, Press Secretary File, box D25, GRFL; and Transcript, interview with *Vermont Catholic Tribune*, January 8, 1969, 38/8/1, George D. Aiken Papers, Special Collections, Bailey/Howe Library, University of Vermont, Burlington. Aiken stated, “There is a good chance the Viet Nam War will be de-escalated or ended in 1969, since both North Viet Nam and the U.S. genuinely want peace.”
 23. Letter, Pete McCloskey to Richard Nixon, March 20, 1969, box 652, McCloskey papers.
 24. Memorandum, Pete McCloskey to Richard Nixon, March 20, 1969, Robert Hartmann Files, Ford Congressional Papers, box R25, GRFL (emphasis in original).
 25. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 131.

26. McCloskey, *Truth and Untruth*, 14.
27. *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1969. The draft letter read, in part, “We do seek to restore the constitutional obligation and responsibility of the Congress—and only the Congress—to determine when this country is to engage in war.”
28. Letter, Pete McCloskey to Richard Nixon, December 23, 1969, box 652, McCloskey papers. On the My Lai massacre, see, e.g., Howard Jones, *My Lai: Vietnam, 1968, and the Descent into Darkness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017). On the Phoenix Program, see, e.g., Dale Andrade, *Ashes to Ashes: The Phoenix Program and the Vietnam War* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 1990). On Vietnamization, see, e.g., David L. Anderson, *Vietnamization: Politics, Strategy, Legacy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).
29. *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1970.
30. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 138–143.
31. Letter, Pete McCloskey to Richard Nixon, May 7, 1970, box 652, McCloskey papers.
32. Johns, *Vietnam’s Second Front*, 191–192.
33. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 209.
34. Quoted in *ibid.*, 215.
35. *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1970.
36. Letter, Pete McCloskey to Richard Nixon, November 30, 1970, box 652, McCloskey papers.
37. Transcript, “Face the Nation,” April 18, 1971, box 652, McCloskey papers. The next day, McCloskey went even further, equating U.S. bombing to the war crimes of Nazi Germany and obliquely threatening Nixon—“We executed German officers for doing this [forced relocation of civilian populations and the ‘wanton destruction’ of villages].” See Transcript, “The Today Show,” April 19, 1971, box 652, McCloskey papers.
38. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 2–5. Cannon notes that Ehrlichman resented McCloskey’s claim that his letters to Nixon had gone unanswered. “This is a half-truth, given the context of the presidency and how the White House works—and Pete knows how it works,” Ehrlichman stated. “Here is a clean-limbed congressman who has been writing letters to the President, and McCloskey gives people the impression that nobody answers him, that they just tear these letters up and throw them in the wastebasket.” See Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 222.
39. *Washington Post*, February 22, 1971; and *New York Times*, February 17, 1971. See also Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 161–172. McCloskey gave a speech in the House four days previously in which he sounded similar themes, arguing that “the President’s recent decision to employ American airpower in support of South Vietnamese and Cambodian forces in the neutral countries of Laos and Cambodia exceeds his constitutional powers, and is, at best, a deliberate flouting of the will of Congress.” See *Congressional Record* vol. 117, no. 18, February 18, 1971.
40. *New York Times*, April 6, 1971.
41. *New York Times*, April 22, 1971.
42. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 9, 255.
43. *Wall Street Journal*, April 16, 1971.
44. Column, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, “McCloskey and the Democrats,” undated (ca. April 1971), Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, Richard M. Nixon Presidential Library, Yorba Linda, CA (hereafter RNPL). In a memo to Haldeman, Gordon Strachan noted that Lyn Nofziger “reports that Dole will not attack McCloskey. Therefore Nofziger seeks authority for a ‘long term go-ahead on engineering attacks on McCloskey.’” See Memorandum, Gordon Strachan to H. R. Haldeman, April 19, 1971, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL.
45. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 220.
46. Telephone conversation, Richard Nixon and Charles W. Colson, April 14, 1971, conversation no. 1-81, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/secret-white-house-tapes/1-81> (accessed August 30, 2019).
47. Memorandum, J. Roy Goodearle to Charles Colson, April 13, 1971, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL.
48. Memorandum, Patrick J. Buchanan to H. R. Haldeman, April 19, 1971, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL.
49. *Long Beach Press-Telegram*, May 3, 1971.
50. *San Francisco Examiner-Chronicle*, May 9, 1971.
51. *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1971.
52. Column, Robert S. Allen and John A. Goldsmith, May 15, 1971, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL.
53. McCloskey, *Truth and Untruth*, 21.
54. *New York Times*, June 8, 1971.
55. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 223.
56. McCloskey, *Truth and Untruth*, 13 (emphasis in original).
57. Quoted in *New York Times*, April 18, 1971.

58. On the idea of “peace with honor,” see, e.g., Larry Berman, *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger, and Betrayal in Vietnam* (New York: Free Press, 2001).
59. *Washington Post*, July 10, 1971.
60. Letter, Charles E. Wiggins to Pete McCloskey, May 13, 1971, Robert Hartmann Files, Ford Congressional Papers, box R25, GRFL. Wiggins copied the letter to Ford and other GOP members of Congress.
61. Syndicated column, May 15, 1971, Robert Hartmann Files, Ford Congressional Papers, box R25, GRFL.
62. *Baltimore Sun*, May 2, 1971.
63. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 233.
64. Topping, “New Hampshire Primary Preview,” 16.
65. Letter, Pete McCloskey to Gerald Ford, June 11, 1971, Robert Hartmann Files, Ford Congressional Papers, box R25, GRFL.
66. Letter, Pete McCloskey to Louis Wyman, August 4, 1971, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL.
67. On the Watergate scandal, see, e.g., Fred Emery, *Watergate: The Corruption of American Politics and the Fall of Richard Nixon* (New York: Times Books, 1994); and Keith W. Olson, *Watergate: The Presidential Scandal That Shook America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003).
68. On Nixon’s visit to China and its role in his grand strategy for U.S. foreign relations, see, e.g., Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961–1974: From “Red Menace” to “Tacit Ally”* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
69. Cannon, *McCloskey Challenge*, 234.
70. *Independent Journal*, August 6, 1971.
71. *New York Times*, July 17, 1971.
72. *Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 1971.
73. *New York Times*, November 21, 1971.
74. Roscoe Drummond, “McCloskey in Trouble,” July 15, 1971, *San Mateo Times*.
75. *Independent Journal*, August 6, 1971.
76. Memorandum, Gordon Strachman to H. R. Haldeman, November 5, 1971, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL.
77. Letter, Ronald Conway to Lyn Nofziger, October 22, 1971, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL. Conway included press clippings from the *San Jose News* and other local papers detailing the committee’s work and identifying potential candidates for the new congressional seat.
78. *Portland Press Herald*, December 16, 1971. McCloskey also claimed that Nixon was “trying to build a winning coalition by preying ‘on the fears of whites in the suburbs that Negroes are going to move in and by trying to develop a Southern strategy that is racist in tone.’ ”
79. Transcript, “Issues and Answers,” January 9, 1972, box 652, McCloskey papers.
80. *Los Angeles Times*, February 21, 1972.
81. Transcript, “The Today Show,” April 19, 1971, box 652, McCloskey papers.
82. Transcript, “Face the Nation,” March 5, 1972, box 652, McCloskey papers.
83. Crouse, “Stalking the Campaigners in New Hampshire.”
84. *New York Times*, March 5, 1972.
85. Editorial, *New York Times*, May 9, 1972.
86. *New York Times*, March 11, 1972.
87. UPI news report, March 10, 1972, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL.
88. Memorandum, Gordon Strachan to H. R. Haldeman, March 10, 1972, Contested Materials Collection, box 23, folder 2, RNPL; and *New York Times*, March 28, 2006.
89. *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 1972.
90. *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 1972.
91. Johns, *Vietnam’s Second Front*, 333–334.
92. *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1972. Both the GOP convention leadership and the New Mexico Republican Central Committee argued that McCloskey’s delegate (who was from New Mexico) should not be seated since McCloskey had withdrawn from the race. McCloskey insisted that he had simply stopped campaigning because of a lack of funding and that he had never officially withdrawn.
93. *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1972.
94. *Washington Post*, September 19, 1971.
95. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of this phenomenon was Vice President Hubert Humphrey in 1964–1968. See Andrew L. Johns, *The Price of Loyalty: Hubert Humphrey’s Vietnam Conflict* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).