Congressman Jack Brooks- "Taking Care of Business"

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On the afternoon of August 21, 1970, Congressman Jack Brooks and his wife Charlotte traveled to Port Arthur, Texas, to participate in the grand opening of the new $8.8 million Gulfgate Bridge over the Sabine-Neches ship channel. Completion of the bridge marked the culmination of a large maritime transportation project sponsored by Brooks in 1962, when he won a $20.8 million Federal appropriation for various improvements for the Sabine-Neches Waterway that ran from the Gulf of Mexico up to Beaumont. The waterway improvements and new bridge were critical for the industrial development of the Beaumont-Port Arthur region, where Brooks resided and which formed the heart of his congressional district.1

Staged near the west entrance of the towering new bridge, the dedication ceremonies began at 5:30 PM with posting of the colors by the U. S. Coast Guard from Sabine Pass and a concert by the U. S. Army band from Fort Polk, Louisiana. Before a crowd of 600-700 persons, Rev. James R. Wright of the Port Arthur Ministerial Alliance offered an invocation, after which Dow Wynn, Director of the Port of Port Arthur, opened the program and introduced various public officials, including Bernis Sadler, Mayor of Port Arthur, Lamar Lawson, Jefferson County Commissioner, John Stevens, President of Groves Chamber of Commerce, and Lloyd Hayes, former Port Arthur mayor who introduced various state officials and labor union leaders.2

Lee Moore, president of the Port Arthur Chamber of Commerce, introduced Brooks, the forty-seven year-old Congressman, the honored guest and principal speaker.

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Displaying good rhetorical skills, Brooks celebrated the completion of the new bridge that would speed the navigation of new supertankers on the Sabine-Neches Waterway, and also allow further development of Pleasure Pier Island as a recreational and tourist center. Brooks praised County Commissioner T. B. Ellison, who had died recently, and congratulated city and county officials, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the contractors, and many public-spirited citizens, all working together for economic development of the region. 3

Brooks discussed other projects for which he had obtained Federal funds -- "a modern port facility, a comprehensive hurricane protection system, [and] a massive urban renewal project to revitalize downtown Port Arthur." He presented the big picture, saying, "What we have achieved is simply a prologue to an even more successful future. We must continue to work together, to plan carefully, to exploit all opportunities, to broaden the industrial base and commercial base of the Port Arthur area. We must devote our energies and talents to improving the environment and protecting the resources which God has so abundantly given us. We must work for better education, more adequate health services, and a better and fuller life for all our citizens." 4

After completing his remarks, Brooks and the crowd proceeded to the top of the bridge for the ribbon-cutting ceremonies. There, assisted by Mrs. Brooks and Brig. Gen. Harold R. Parfitt of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the congressman wielded a pair of giant scissors to cut the ribbon and complete the dedication. Then they got into automobiles, crossed the bridge, and took a brief tour of Pleasure Pier Island, viewing the yacht club, golf course, and vacation homes. While driving along the island road and then crossing back over the high bridge, they had excellent views of the Sabine-Neches ship channel, the waterway that was so important to Jefferson County. Later, Brooks and his wife Charlotte attended a reception for dignitaries at the Driftwood Motor Hotel in Port Arthur. 5

The events of August 21, 1970, offer a snapshot of Congressman Jack Brooks, the liberal, pro-labor Democrat who represented the people of Southeast Texas for forty-two years. In 1970 he was completing his eighteenth year of service, first winning election in 1952, representing the Second Congressional District, and later, after redistricting, the Ninth District. As envisioned by James Madison in The Federalist papers (Nos. 56-57), Brooks became the quintessential representative. He knew and represented the "interests" of his district, working and voting
for the "interests" of his constituents, winning their votes for repeated re-elections, earning seniority and power in Congress and his party, and using that power to serve the "interests" of his district and his constituents. In the most basic terms, Jack Brooks won power and used power. In his district, he won power, teaming with labor unions and working class citizens, white and black, representing their interests in Congress, winning their support for repeated re-elections, gaining seniority and power in the House and the Democratic Party. He used power, advancing the interests of unions and working class citizens, improving civil rights for African-American citizens, supporting the Democratic administrations of presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and promoting the economic and industrial development of his district, winning Federal appropriations for various development projects including improvements for the Sabine-Neches Waterway.6

Brooks first represented the Second Congressional District, an eleven county region anchored by Jefferson County on the Gulf of Mexico and extending northward up the Louisiana border into "Deep East Texas," a region long associated with the Old South, slavery, and Jim Crow segregation. In 1962, when he won the Federal funds for the Sabine-Neches project, the Second District counted a population of approximately 480,000, including 103,000 African-Americans. It was a largely rural, agricultural area, except for Jefferson and Orange counties that were heavily industrialized and where over 62 percent of the population resided. The largest cities were Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange, often called "the Golden Triangle."7

Congressman Brooks resided in Beaumont, county seat of Jefferson County. In 1960 the county had a population of 245,659 with 57,171 African-Americans. His constituents were a diverse group with varied interests -- black and white, Protestant and Catholic, upper class and working class, corporate managers and union workers, and with various ethnicities including English, Irish, Italian, Greek, Jewish, Mexican, and Cajun French. Likewise, the economy of the Beaumont-Port Arthur region was diverse with rice farming, ranching, lumbering, shipping, railroading, banking, electrical generation, shipbuilding, and most importantly, oil refining and petrochemical manufacturing, with huge refineries including Mobil, Texaco, and Gulf. Also noteworthy in Jefferson County were Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers unions, OCAW, that thrived in the oil refineries and had large memberships and substantial political power.8
In 1967, Texas legislators carried out congressional redistricting, and removed Jefferson County from the Second District, and moved it to the new Ninth District that included Jefferson, Chambers, and Galveston counties. Brooks, thus, lost his representation of Orange County and the other East Texas counties, and wound up with three counties that bordered on the Gulf of Mexico. The new Ninth District counted a population of approximately 401,000, including about 89,000 African-Americans. Chambers County was a largely rural county with a population of only 10,379, while Galveston County, with a population of 140,364, was heavily urbanized and industrialized. The city of Galveston counted a total of 67,175 persons, and the next largest city, Texas City, had a population of 32,065.9

Like Jefferson County, Galveston County boasted a varied population with diverse interests. In addition to African-Americans, the population included significant numbers of citizens reflecting earlier immigrations from England, Ireland, Germany, Italy, Russia, and Mexico. Galveston County was much influenced by organized labor, having unions representing painters, carpenters, electrical workers, pipefitters, sheet metal workers, and longshoremen. Galveston, an island long famous as an international seaport and beach resort, thrived with a rich and diverse economy that included tourism, fishing, higher education, insurance, and medical care, as well as shipping, shipbuilding, and grain elevators. Nearby on the mainland portion, Texas City was the site of major oil refineries, including American Oil Co., Plymouth Oil Co., and Texas City Refining, Inc., plants in which the OCAW union had significant memberships and substantial power and influence.10

Both Galveston and Texas City bordered on Galveston Bay and were connected by shipping lanes to the Intracoastal Canal, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Houston Ship Channel, a waterway that provided easy access to the large Houston refinery complex located in adjacent Harris County. With its oil refineries and maritime shipping, Harris County was associated closely with Galveston and Jefferson counties, thus comprising an area described by business historian Joseph A. Pratt as “the upper Texas Gulf Coast” and an important “refining region.” Oil refineries in Beaumont, Port Arthur, Port Neches, Nederland, Texas City, Pasadena, Baytown, Deer Park, and Houston had capacities of more than two million barrels per day and produced twenty percent of the nation’s supply of refined products.11
Jack Brooks first entered congressional politics in 1952, when Jesse M. Combs retired as representative of the Second District. Brooks filed in the Democratic primary, finished second in a nine-man race, and won the runoff, edging out Joe Tonahill of Jasper by a mere 440 votes out of a total of 57,594. In the general election, Brooks defeated Beaumont Republican Randolph Reed, winning by a large margin, about 68,000 to 22,000. In Jefferson County, which counted more than 50,000 votes, Brooks won all but seven precincts, winning by wide margins in many "blue collar" and "black" boxes, precincts where residents favored the interests of working-class and African-American citizens, persons who tended to favor liberal Democrats and oppose conservative Republicans. Brooks lost only four boxes in Beaumont and one in Port Arthur. The four in Beaumont—Beaumont High, St. Anne, Longfellow and Averill—were described by the *Beaumont Enterprise* as "west end" boxes, neighborhoods occupied by "white collar" persons, such as doctors, lawyers, businessmen, and plant managers, persons tending to favor conservative Republicans and oppose liberal Democrats. Likewise in Port Arthur, he lost the Griffing Park box, a suburban precinct occupied by business, professional, and managerial classes, "white collar" persons who tended to favor corporate interests and the Republican Party.

Congressman Brooks won re-election repeatedly in the Second District until 1968 when, after the 1967 redistricting, he won election in the newly configured Ninth District. All election victories were important, of course, as they meant continuation of service and increase of seniority and power. But two elections, 1960 and 1968, were especially significant in this phase of his career. They marked the beginning and end of the Kennedy-Johnson era, when for eight years the Democrat Brooks had special access to the White House, when he helped advance various programs of Kennedy’s New Frontier and Johnson’s Great Society, and when he used his power to sponsor programs for the economic and industrial development of his district.

In the 1960 election, Democrats John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson won the presidency and vice-presidency, and in the 1968 contest, Republicans Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew won the White House. In both these elections, Jack Brooks himself won re-election easily, enjoying broad support all across his district, and winning victory in most boxes except a handful of "white collar" precincts. Thus, beginning with his first election in 1952 and up to and including his re-election
in 1968, Congressman Brooks received strong support from working class citizens, both white and black, and was often opposed by "white collar" persons commonly associated with the Chamber of Commerce and the Republican Party. These patterns of support and opposition were confirmed by rankings assigned by various interest groups during the 1960s, when Brooks received high ratings from COPE, the Committee on Political Education of the AFL-CIO, and low ratings from the national Chamber of Commerce. But low ratings from the national Chamber do not tell the whole story. In Beaumont Joe Broussard II (Beaumont Rice Mills), John Green (Beaumont Lumber Company), Walter Crawford (oil properties), D. Pat Wheat (Transit Mix Concrete Company), and other prominent businessmen shared friendships with Brooks, supported him politically, and applauded his efforts for economic development of the Beaumont-Port Arthur region.  

As Jack Brooks teamed with the labor unions, he became a participant in the age-old struggles between capital and labor, between corporations and unions, struggles about money and power, when corporations wanted to make more money and control their workers, and when unions wanted higher wages, shorter hours, and better working conditions for their members. During the early and mid-twentieth century, these struggles often resulted in strikes, and sometimes bitter disputes and even violence. Such confrontations were widespread, occurring in many states including Texas. In Baytown, a bitter labor dispute occurred during 1934-1936, when the Oil Workers Union Local No. 333 (CIO) tried to organize the workers in the Humble Oil refinery. Humble Oil officials refused to recognize the CIO as the bargaining agent for the workers, and when the union threatened to strike. Company officials denounced the union officers. They accused the union leaders of class warfare, racial radicalism, and communism, charges that were repeated locally by anti-union businessmen, their trade associations, and newspaper editors. In the face of growing controversy in the Baytown community and within the refinery itself, the workers voted not to strike, thus ending that unionization campaign by the CIO.  

Before Brooks began his service, Congress intervened from time to time in the struggles between the corporations and the labor unions. In 1935, during the Democratic administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Congress passed the Wagner Act that gave government sanction to collective bargaining and greatly enhanced labor union power. But later, in 1947, a Republican-controlled Congress reversed course and
passed the Taft-Hartley Act that outlawed the closed shop, secondary boycotts, and significantly reduced union power. In 1959 Brooks himself became a player in the legislative battles over corporate power versus union power, when Congress passed the Landrum-Griffin Act, a law that reinforced the intentions of the Taft-Hartley Act, authorized government intervention into union affairs, and tightened restrictions on secondary boycotts and picketing. Sponsored by the Republican administration of President Dwight Eisenhower, this bill passed the House by a vote of 352-52. All twenty-two Texas congressmen voted in favor of the measure, except four—Albert Thomas, Clark W. Thompson, Wright Patman, and Jack Brooks. For Brooks, probably the decision was easy. As an avid Democrat he voted against the Republican bill, and as representative from the Second District, he voted to support the labor unions and their leaders who supported him.15

During the 1950s and 1960s, when Brooks was winning re-elections and building his seniority and power, the struggles between the oil and petrochemical companies and the labor unions were ongoing in the Beaumont-Port Arthur region. The OCAW was a powerful group in Jefferson County with locals in Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Port Neches, and more than 13,000 workers in the local refineries and petrochemical plants. The Port Neches union, Local 4-228, had 2,200 members and was, according to historian Donna Sue Beasley Dixon, "one of OCAW's more militant and efficient unions." The union carried out strikes and other campaigns in refineries and plants to improve wages, benefits, and rights for employees who worked in the plants, offices, and cafeterias; for example, in January 1969, union members walked off their jobs and to participate in a large OCAW strike against plants in Jefferson and Orange counties, an action that was not completely resolved until March. Local 4-228 championed various liberal causes, supporting corporate profit taxes, pay and tenure for teachers, national health insurance, and civil rights for all Americans. Working through COPE, Committee on Political Education, Local 4-228 exerted considerable influence in regional, state, and national elections, often campaigning for liberal Democratic candidates, including Jack Brooks. In 1954, when the union dedicated a new meeting hall in Port Neches, they invited Congressman Brooks to be one of the guest speakers.16

In Jefferson County, sometimes labor disputes spread to other parts of the community. During late 1964, sanitation workers went on strike against the City of Port Arthur in a dispute about wages and
other issues. City Manager George Dibrell, acting with the approval of Mayor Lloyd Hayes, fired the workers, declaring that a strike by city employees against the municipality violated the law. The workers were members of the AFL-CIO City Employees Union, Local 934, which set up pickets at city facilities and ordered a boycott against the Driftwood Motor Hotel, which was owned by Mayor Hayes. The dispute, which spread hard feelings in the community, lasted fourteen months until January 1966, when city officials and union leaders resolved their differences. The city offered to rehire the workers who had been dismissed and the union called off its boycott against the Driftwood Motel. 17

Jack Brooks was a Democrat. Beginning service in January 1953, he became a protege of Democrat Sam Rayburn, the longtime Speaker of the House, attending Wednesday luncheons for Texas congressmen and enjoying drinks at the “Board of Education” gatherings, both hosted by the Speaker. With Rayburn’s assistance, he was appointed to the Government Operations and Judiciary committees, where over the years he gained seniority and power. Brooks also became friends with Senator Lyndon Johnson, the powerful Texas Democrat who served as Senate Majority leader during the Eisenhower administration. These were days of great opportunity for Brooks and other Texas Democrats when, according to historian Michael Collins, Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson “reigned like lords on Capitol Hill during the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower.” 18

During the early 1960s, Brooks became closer to Johnson when he served as Vice President under John Kennedy. In November 1963, Brooks made the trip to Dallas with President Kennedy and Vice President Johnson, was in the motorcade when President Kennedy was assassinated, and was on Air Force One when Johnson took the oath of office as president. Later his relationship with Johnson became even stronger, both politically and socially. He supported many of Johnson’s Great Society programs, and he and wife Charlotte often dined with President and Mrs. Johnson at the White House. 19

As a member of the Judiciary Committee and friend of Lyndon Johnson, Brooks became an important player in the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. This was especially significant because of the culture and demographics of his Southeast Texas district, where Jim Crow segregation ruled the lives of his 480,000 constituents, 377,000 white and 103,000 black. Earlier Brooks, the highly partisan Democrat, had voted against the civil rights acts of 1957 and 1960, two voting rights
bills which were proposed and passed under Republican administration of Dwight Eisenhower. But when the Democrats Kennedy and Johnson won the White House, Brooks reversed course, became an advocate for civil rights, and voted for the civil rights laws of 1964, 1965, and 1968, laws which transformed race relations in his district and all across the South.\(^{20}\)

The first, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, was proposed by President Kennedy in June 1963 and sent to the House Judiciary Committee, where Brooks served on Subcommittee No 5 and worked with Chairman Emanuel Celler to win approval for the bill. After Kennedy’s assassination and Johnson’s elevation to the presidency, Brooks voted for the measure in the House and celebrated victory when the bill passed the Senate and President Johnson signed it on July 2, 1964. A broad law which prohibited racial discrimination in voting, public education, and employment, it also outlawed segregation in public accommodations and facilities, thus effectively ending Jim Crow segregation in hotels, restaurants, and movie theatres, as well as libraries, hospitals, and public parks.\(^{21}\)

With respect to this law, Brooks voted with President Johnson and the Democratic Party, and apparently against the wishes of most of his white constituents, as evidenced by a flood of constituent mail that ran seventeen to one against the proposition. Of course, all or most of his African-American constituents favored the bill, approved his affirmative vote, and benefitted greatly by the end of Jim Crow segregation. In the end Jack Brooks and fellow Texans Albert Thomas, Henry Gonzales, and Jake Pickle were among only eleven Southern Democrats who voted “yes” for this landmark legislation.\(^{22}\)

Brooks voted in favor of other Great Society programs sponsored by President Johnson, thus embracing a liberal, activist government as personified by the President. Johnson favored the use of federal power, expertise, and money to solve the nation’s problems — economic, health, racial, and social. The President won passage of dozens of federal programs, and Jack Brooks voted for many of them, including the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and the Social Security Act of 1965 that implemented Medicare and Medicaid.\(^{23}\)

When Brooks worked for the 1962 Sabine-Neches project, he embraced an old American tradition for Federal development of “internal improvements” — roads and canals — to promote economic and indus-
trial development. During the early nineteenth century, Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, and other leaders of the Whig Party favored an “American system” which included protective tariffs to favor American industry, a national bank to facilitate commerce, and Federal development of “internal improvements,” a network of roads and canals to improve transportation, promote commerce, and unify the nation. Often funded jointly by the Federal government with local and state authorities, the “internal improvements” sometimes included “river and harbor” programs for clearing of rivers and improvement of harbor facilities. As early as 1824, the “river and harbor” projects were carried out by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the same organization that directed the Sabine-Neches project promoted by Congressman Brooks.24

In Beaumont, the importance of “internal improvements,” that is, transportation to build and develop the city, was well known. As early as 1860, A. N. Vaughn, publisher of the Beaumont Banner, praised the town and its transportation facilities, sighting its location “at the junction of the Texas & New Orleans Rail Road and the Eastern Texas Railroad, and at the head of the permanent navigation of the Neches River.” Here, before the Civil War, Beaumont enjoyed the benefits of “year round” navigation on the Neches, when steamboats from Galveston and Sabine Pass provided regular service for passengers and freight to and from Beaumont, and when this marine transportation connected with two railroads, one going east and west, and one going north and south. Later, this transportation network of “internal improvements” was expanded and transformed. Highways were built, railroads expanded, the Port of Beaumont constructed, and the Sabine-Neches Waterway improved multiple times, the more recent projects coming in 1922, 1935, and 1945 when the Corps of Engineers deepened the ship channel to 30, 34, and 36 feet, respectively.25

For the 1962 project, Cyrus Vance, United States Secretary of the Army, issued an official report outlining and recommending plans for “The Sabine-Neches Waterway, Texas.” Endorsed by various Federal and state officials, the plan provided for widening, deepening, and other improvements in the waterway, which began at Sabine Pass on the Gulf of Mexico and extended northward up the Sabine ship channel, past Port Arthur and up the Neches River to Beaumont, a distance of about 42 miles. The plan included improvements in the Sabine River channel up to the town of Echo in Orange County, and replacement
of an "obstructive bridge" in Port Arthur, an old bascule bridge that crossed the ship channel and provided access to Pleasure Pier Island. But the most important provision was that the main waterway would be deepened from 36 to 40 feet from the Gulf of Mexico up to Beaumont. This additional depth would allow new oil tankers to provide more efficient service to the ports and to business and industry along the Sabine-Neches Waterway.26

As outlined in the report of the Corps of Engineers, the Beaumont-Port Arthur-Orange area was rich in business and industry, and its need for improved maritime transportation was great. Business activity included rice mills, shipbuilding, repair yards, steel fabricators, brass and iron foundries, and most importantly, petroleum, chemical, and petrochemical industries. Five major oil refineries—Atlantic, Gulf Oil, Texaco, Pure Oil, and Mobil—had a daily refining capacity of over 950,000 barrels, which represented 10 percent of the total capacity of the nation. In addition, Sun Oil Company operated a large tank farm and marine terminal at Smith's Bluff on the Neches River. In 1960 transportation on seagoing vessels on the waterway amounted to about 68 million tons, of which about 41 million tons were petroleum and petroleum products. In the Beaumont-Port Arthur region, the relationships between the waterway, the refineries, and the local economy were profound. Two Spindletop oil booms at Beaumont, one in 1901 and another in 1925, produced huge quantities of petroleum, but it was the close proximity of the ship channel that determined where the oil refineries would be located. As noted by historian John Lewis Bean, there is no doubt that the Sabine-Neches waterway played a major role in the industrial development of Beaumont and Port Arthur.27

With estimated construction costs of $20.8 million, and annual maintenance costs of $620,000, the Sabine-Neches project would be carried out under the direction of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. The plan required local entities to make various contributions including land and money. Port authorities, other governmental entities, and private corporations would furnish land for easements and rights-of-way, pay for relocation of pipelines and power lines, and contribute cash for replacement of the old, obstructive bridge at Port Arthur. These non-Federal construction costs of approximately $1.3 million were readily accepted by appropriate local entities, as the whole project was enthusiastically endorsed by local groups in Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange, including oil companies, chambers of commerce,
city governments, as well as the Port of Beaumont, Port of Port Arthur, and the Jefferson County Navigation District.  

To support the proposed project, local civic leaders formed the Southeast Texas Citizens Committee for Sabine-Neches Waterways Improvements, a group of one hundred business and political people from Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange. Organized in 1961, the group was headed by Beaumont banker John Gray and included L. E. Cranston (Mobil Oil), John Newton (Beaumont Navigation District), D. B. Campbell (E. I. DuPont), Howard Peterson (Orange National Bank), Munger T. Ball (Sabine Towing Company), A. W. Kusch (Atlantic Refining), and Harvie Parker (mayor of Port Arthur). Gray, Beaumont’s most prominent civic leader, wrote in a 1962 issue of American Banker magazine about the ongoing industrial and maritime development in the region, pointing to new petrochemical plants such Koppers, Jefferson Chemical, Goodrich-Gulf, E. I. Dupont de Nemours, Texas Gulf Sulfur, Houston Chemical, and Mobil Chemical. He described recent improvements in the ports of Beaumont, Port Arthur, and Orange, and explained the importance of maritime shipping on the Sabine-Neches Waterway, noting that in terms of tonnage volume the local waterway ranked ahead of the Houston Waterway and second only to the port of New York in the nation.

John Gray and the other business and industrial leaders wanted Federal funds for the Sabine-Neches project. To obtain these funds they needed the cooperation of Congressman Brooks, the man that “chamber of commerce” people often criticized and voted against because of his “liberal” politics and his affiliation with the labor unions. This may have presented a dilemma for some, but not Jack Brooks. He had no problem using power derived from the votes of working class citizens to promote the development of business and industry. As suggested by James Madison in the Federalist papers, Brooks was taking care of the “interests” of his district. The Sabine-Neches project and others he sponsored would support the expansion of industry, which in turn would create more business, more jobs, and more tax revenue for local governments. As President John Kennedy often said about other matters, the Sabine-Neches project was “a rising tide that lifts all boats.”

On August 23, 1962, Congressman Brooks introduced House Resolution 12955, a bill requesting a $20.8 million appropriation for the Sabine-Neches waterway project. In the same session, he also introduced House Resolution 12669, a bill requesting $23.3 million for
construction of a levee to protect the city of Port Arthur from hurricane flooding. The two proposals, which totaled $44.1 million, were referred to the Committee on Public Works and became a part of a River, Harbor, and Flood Control bill which was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Kennedy on October 24, 1962. Bills of this type were common, as eight such laws had been enacted previously during the administrations of FDR, Truman, and Eisenhower.31

The new law signed by President Kennedy provided Federal appropriations of $2.2 billion for 200 projects spread all across the United States. This included $378 million for 79 “navigation projects.” Among these 79 projects, the Sabine-Neches waterway with its $20.8 million budget ranked high in terms of appropriation dollars, ranking fourth behind $58.2 million for the Kaskaskia River, Illinois, $40 million for the Illinois Waterway, and $39 million for the James River, Virginia. No doubt the relatively large size of the Sabine-Neches appropriation reflected the scale and the national importance of the project, but perhaps also reflected credit on Congressman Brooks, his political power, and his good relations with Vice President Johnson.32

As Congressman Brooks won the $44.1 million appropriation for the Sabine-Neches project and for Port Arthur hurricane flood protection, some might refer to the Federal dollars as “pork,” or “ear marks,” money that he won playing the game of “pork barrel politics,” money that he won because of his seniority and power in the Democratic Party. Others might refer to the appropriations as “development” funds or “Federal outlays.” But in any case, the Federal dollars would be spent in his district and serve the interests of his constituents.33

But the $20.8 million Sabine-Neches project was more than “pork” and more important than a “development” project for his district. With this project, Congressman Brooks also served national interests. The primary beneficiaries were the six major oil companies—Mobil, Texaco, Gulf, Atlantic-Richfield, Pure-Union, and Sun Oil—that had refining and shipping operations in Jefferson County. These were large national corporations that were headquartered in other states, such as Mobil in Virginia, Texaco in New York, and Gulf Oil in Pennsylvania, and did business throughout the United States and around the world. For their Jefferson County refineries, these national companies imported crude oil and other raw materials from Mexico and other foreign countries, and sold most of their products—gasoline, lubricants, and other petroleum derivatives -- on the East Coast. Clearly, the Sabine-
Neches project promoted economic and industrial development for the nation, creating more profits, more jobs, more tax revenues, and more economic power for America.34

For Jack Brooks and other congressmen, winning "Federal outlays" was a means to evaluate their own performance and to estimate the political and economic power of their state. According to The Almanac of American Politics, 1972, for the year 1970, the State of Texas received Federal outlays of about $11.1 billion, the third highest in the United States. Also for Texas, the Almanac reported a "Federal tax burden" of $9.3 billion, the 7th largest in the nation, thus providing a comparison of Federal funds received and Federal taxes paid. The numbers also demonstrate that when compared to other states, that Texas was a large and powerful player, and that its congressional delegation rendered good service to the state. In Texas the Federal outlays were distributed among more than a dozen governmental entities, including the Defense, Transportation, Health, Education, and Welfare, Agriculture, and Post Office departments, Veterans Administration, and the Civil Service Commission. The largest recipient in Texas was the Defense Department, which received more than $5 billion for various military bases and large companies that carried out defense contracts.35

For 1970 the Almanac also divided the $11.1 billion in Federal outlays for Texas among the state's twenty-three congressional districts, thus demonstrating how much each congressman “won” for his district. However, this division of Federal funds among the districts sometimes only amounted to rough estimations, because district lines often cut through multiple recipients such as military bases and post office districts, and because in some cases such funding may have been largely independent of the efforts of the local congressman. Jim Wright of Ft. Worth and the Twelfth District ranked first with $1.6 billion in outlays, while Olin Teague of College Station and the Sixth District was in twenty-third place with $197 million. Others were Jim Collins, Irving, Third District, $648 million; Bill Archer, Houston, Seventh District, $394 million, and Jack Brooks, Beaumont, Ninth District, $327 million. Thus, for 1970, Congressman Brooks ranked near “the middle of the pack” in terms of “winning” Federal outlays for his district. Major recipients in the Ninth District (Jefferson, Chambers, and Galveston counties) included the Defense, Agriculture, Transportation, and Health, Education, and Welfare departments. The Almanac did not list the names of specific recipients or projects, except for the Mobil
Oil refinery in Beaumont, which received a Defense Department outlay of $82.9 million for production of petroleum products.\textsuperscript{36}

Earlier, before 1970, Congressman Brooks obtained Federal outlays for numerous other development projects in his district. These included Galveston Harbor and Channel, Port of Galveston, Jefferson County Day Care Center, Houston-Galveston Area Council, City of Groves Water and Sewers, Intracoastal Waterway Navigation, High Island Bridge, Hitchcock-Highland Flood Control, Orange Armory, Rockland Dam, Galveston Oceanographic Center, Salt Water Barrier, Lamar State College, and as discussed above, the 1962 Sabine-Neches Waterway project, the completion of which was celebrated on Friday, August 21, 1970.\textsuperscript{37}

That Friday evening, after the bridge-opening ceremonies in Port Arthur, Congressman and Mrs. Brooks attended a reception at the Driftwood, a motor hotel owned by Lloyd Hayes, former mayor of the city. There Jack and Charlotte enjoyed the food and drink, and the company of friends and supporters. As shown in the newspaper photographs from that day, they were a handsome, well-dressed couple; they had been married ten years and had two children, Jeb and Kate, and before long would have a third, Kim. Brooks probably felt especially good that evening, reflecting on the day's events and a job well done. The new bridge was open and the Sabine-Neches Waterway project would be completed before long. Soon the new supertankers would have clear sailing, serving the ports of Beaumont and Port Arthur as well as the oil companies, including Sun Oil, Texaco, Gulf, and Mobil.\textsuperscript{38}

So, as they said in a 1974 British rock song, Brooks was "taking care of business" – helping the big oil companies make more profits and build their business, nationally and internationally. But also, he was "taking care of business" in a congressional sense, representing the "interests" of his district, winning re-elections, earning and using power in the Democratic Party, supporting the cause of union workers and their families, improving the lives of African-American citizens, and promoting broad economic development in his district, development that would lead to more business, more jobs, and more tax revenues for governmental entities.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Postscript}

After serving his district for forty-two years, Congressman Brooks retired from office in 1995. He lost his position in the historic elections of 1994, when the Republican Party won control of the House, and
when Brooks and thirty-three other Democrats were turned out of office. Among senior Democrats losing their positions were Tom Foley, Speaker of the House, Dan Rostenkowski, Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee, and Jack Brooks, Chairman of the Judicial Committee. Jack and Charlotte moved back to Beaumont, where they enjoyed family and friends, and began assisting journalist Timothy J. McNulty with compilation of an official biography of the congressman. But, in December 2012 a sudden illness struck the former congressman and he passed away on the 4th of that month. He was just shy of his ninetieth birthday. 40

ENDNOTES

1 Beaumont Enterprise, August 22, 1970; Port Arthur News, August 22, 1970; see also, 2007-Boxes 230-255, Gulfgate Bridge File, Jack Brooks Papers, Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas. (For research assistance at the Briscoe Center, the author is greatly indebted to Evan Hocker and Margaret Schlankey. For editorial assistance, the author is greatly indebted to John Boles, Rice University, and Ralph Wooster, Lamar University).

2 Beaumont Enterprise, August 22, 1970; Port Arthur News, August 22, 1970. As shown in these local newspapers, the bridge dedication was also attended by two groups of demonstrators, one, a group of well-dressed white parents from Beaumont waving signs and demanding protection of a "Freedom of Choice" plan in local schools, and the other, a group of black students, beating drums, chanting, and complaining about traffic noise that disturbed their classes at nearby Carver Elementary School. Police monitored the demonstrators and newspaper photographers took their pictures, but apparently their presence did not seriously interfere with the ceremonies.


5 Beaumont Enterprise, August 22, 1970; Port Arthur News, August 22, 1970. As of August 21, 1970, the waterway deepening project itself would not be complete until 1972. See 1970 Annual Report of the Chief of Engineers on Civil Works Activities, Volume II, As of June 30, 1970, the Sabine-Neches project was 77% complete with total expenditures,
including annual maintenance, amounting to $87.3 million. For final completion of the deepening project, see *Report of the Secretary of the Army on Civil Works Activities for FY 2008*, 40-12. (For research assistance at John Gray Library, Lamar University, the author is also greatly indebted to Theresa Storey Hefner-Babb.)

Jack Brooks was born December 18, 1922 in Crowley, Louisiana, and reared in Beaumont, Texas. He attended Lamar Junior College and later earned a B. A. in journalism at the University of Texas. During World War II, he served in the Marine Corps in the South Pacific. After the war, he returned to Beaumont, where he won election to the Texas House of Representatives, serving from 1946 to 1950, and while in Austin he earned a law degree from the University of Texas. In 1952, running as a Democrat, he won election to the U. S. Congress, commencing 42 years of service to the people of Southeast Texas, representing the Second Congressional District from 1953 to 1967 and the Ninth Congressional District from 1967 through 1995. He held important leadership roles including chairmanship of the House Committee on Government Operations from 1975 through 1988 and chairmanship of the House Committee on the Judiciary between 1989 and 1995. He served as dean of the Texas Congressional delegation from 1979 until he left office in 1995, after being defeated for re-election in 1994. He and his wife Charlotte live in Beaumont where he is active in the Democratic Party. See *Collections, Congressional & Political, Jack Brooks Biography*, 2009, Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas. For the role and responsibilities of a congressman, especially about the congressman's basic responsibility to know and represent the "interests" of his district, as envisioned by James Madison in *The Federalist*, see Jacob E. Cooke (ed.), *The Federalist*, Numbers 56-57 (Middleton Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 378-390.

In addition to Jefferson and Orange counties, the Second Congressional District included Angelina, Hardin, Jasper, Liberty, Newton, Sabine, San Augustine, Shelby, and Tyler counties. See *Texas Almanac 1961-1962* (Dallas: Belo Corporation, 1961), for congressional districts, 374-378, and population, 193-222.


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21 For 1964 Civil Rights Act, see Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, 542-547; also, for summary impact of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, see Bernard Grofman, *Legacies of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Charlottesville, Virginia*: University of Virginia, 2000), 1-5; and Robertson, “Congressman


28 “Sabine-Neches Waterway, Texas,” Letter from the Secretary of the Army, 1962, 10-11, 22. Currently, 2011, the Sabine-Neches Navigation District (formerly Jefferson County Navigation District), the ports of Beaumont and Port Arthur, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other entities are proposing a new project to deepen the ship channel from 40 feet to 48 feet.


34 See Pratt, *Growth of a Refining Region,* 3-11, for discussion of the national implications of the development of the oil refining industries on the upper Texas Gulf Coast.


37 Inventory, Jack Brooks Collection, Special Collections, Mary and John
Gray Library, Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, Boxes 46, 128, and 232. See also Congressman Jack Brooks Collection, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas, Austin, Texas.

38 *Beaumont Enterprise*, August 22, 1970; *Port Arthur News*, August 22, 1970. The bridge portion of the 1962 Sabine-Neches project was completed in 1970, but, as shown in endnote #5, the deepening portion was not completed until 1972.

39 The rock song “Taking Care of Business,” which used the phrase ironically, was popularized in 1974 by the British rock group Bachman Turner Overdrive.