

Spending Uncle Sam's Money

This scene, painted in the late 1890s, depicts the U.S. Senate Chamber as it appeared at the opening of a session of Congress. Senators have just introduced the various bills to be considered during the session, and the large number of papers indicates that a heavy workload lies before them. New York illustrator T. Dart Walker captured the scene from the press gallery located on the north side of the Chamber. Below this gallery, but not illustrated, is the rostrum where the presiding officer of the Senate sits. Until recent years the vice president of the United States, as president of the Senate, presided regularly over Senate debates from this vantage point.

In the center of the painting three Senate staff members sit in front of the presiding officer's desk. Most likely these men are, from left to right, the secretary of the Senate, the legislative clerk, and the reading clerk. Immediately in front, at two smaller tables below the rostrum, sit official reporters and press reporters. Meanwhile, in the background, senators talk with one another in the "well" of the Chamber or at their desks, which are arranged in a semi-circle with Republicans on the left and Democrats on the right.

Two Senate pages appear in the scene: One is seated below the clerks' desk, and another crosses the Senate floor. The position of Senate page was first created in 1829. By the turn of the century the Senate employed at least 17 young boys as pages. Dressed in blue knickers and jackets, the pages spent their days running errands for the senators, announcing impending votes, placing papers and pens on the senators' desks, and delivering messages throughout the city.

The engraving *Spending Uncle Sam's Money* by T. Dart Walker was published on the front cover of *Leslie's Weekly* on December 23, 1899.

This view of the Senate Chamber was painted by T. Dart Walker in the late 1890s after observing a busy congressional work day. The scene was then engraved for the front cover of the December 23, 1899, issue of *Leslie's Weekly* and titled *Spending Uncle Sam's Money: Senators Introducing the Customary Batch of Miscellaneous Bills at the Opening of the Session of Congress*. Walker was born in Indiana, studied in Paris, and was known as an illustrator and marine artist. His work appeared in popular magazines of the period, such as *Harper's Weekly*, the *Graphic*, and the *Illustrated London News*, and included scenes of political life, national events, and everyday activities.



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T. Dart Walker (1869-1914)

Watercolor on board, ca. 1899

23 x 18½ inches (58.4 x 47 cm)

Signed (lower left corner): T. DART. / WALKER / WASHINGTON

Purchased by the U.S. Senate Commission on Art, 1999

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