

Civil Rights

Consequences of Support

Robert Kimball, Legislative Assistant, Representative John V. Lindsay of New York

Robert Kimball recounts the political price of the Civil Rights Act for Republican Leader Charles Halleck of Indiana.

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When it was over and the 89th Congress was prepared to convene, the Republicans forced Charlie Halleck out, in a close vote. I think it was 83–79 or maybe 73–69. I think it was the latter, 73–69. Republicans asked Gerald Ford to take over as leader, and Halleck, largely because of his support of the legislation, lost his job as the Republican Leader. And I liked Gerald Ford a lot, he's a very decent man, and he, he was supportive of Halleck all the way through this process. And finally, basically the party just decided they wanted someone who would be partisan across the board. And Halleck occasionally was a statesman, which surprised everybody.

And that was my kind of last recollection I think, to see that happen, because it was, it was wrong. Halleck had been tough in places and, and not always supporting people, but his philosophy was good. He worked with the committees. If a majority of the Republican Members of the committee favored something, he would then support it. He did not impose his will on that group and say, "No, it's going to be my way." So, when the Judiciary Committee opposes the Moore motion eight to six, that gave Halleck his impetus to go to the White House and tell Kennedy that we were on board with the legislation, and that was crucial for the outcome of the fight. And, you know, Halleck is one of the heroes. I mean, he didn't speak much on the floor during the debate, but in terms of his leadership and his style of leadership, I know Lindsay and others supported him all the way to the end, and ideologically they differed with him on many issues. But when it came to matter of principle, he stayed with us, he supported where we were, and he was a, a good leader for the party and a loss to the party, although Gerald Ford later went on to, to great things.