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INTRODUCTION
The professional papers of Harold L. Volkmer, member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Missouri’s 9th District, include correspondence, bills and resolutions, press releases, hearings, subcommittee briefs and reports, research and studies, pamphlets, newsletters, newspaper clippings, photographs, speeches, and testimonials. Also included is material on the McClure-Volkmer Bill, also known as the Firearm Owner’s Protection Act, the 1993 flood disaster, dioxin contamination, hazardous and radioactive waste material at Weldon Spring, Missouri, and farmer’s claims resulting from the Cannon Dam Flood in 1982.

DONOR INFORMATION
Harold L. Volkmer donated his papers to the University of Missouri on January 15, 1997 (Accession No. 5692).

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH
Harold Lee Volkmer was born April 4, 1931 in Jefferson City, Missouri. He attended Jefferson City Junior College and Saint Louis University. He received his law degree from the University of Missouri in 1955. That same year he married Shirley Ruth Braskett, and they had three children. Volkmer served in the U.S. Army from 1955 to 1957. He served as assistant Missouri Attorney General while engaged in private law practice in Hannibal from 1960 to 1966, when he was elected as the Marion County prosecuting attorney. He served in the Missouri House of Representatives from 1967 to 1976, and was elected as a Democrat to the U.S. Congress, serving from January 1977 to January 1997.

As chairman of the Missouri House Judiciary Committee, Volkmer sought and obtained approval of the Equal Rights Amendment by the Missouri House of Representatives. In Congress, he served on the House Agriculture Committee and helped shape five major farm bills. While serving on the House Judiciary Committee, he opposed gun control legislation and abortion, developing a reputation as a conservative Democrat. However, he did take more progressive stances on issues involving civil rights, environmental laws, and education policy. Volkmer was the primary sponsor of the 1986 McClure-Volkmer Act that came to be known as the Firearm Owner’s Protection Act. This act amended the Gun Control Act by creating an expanded system of rules and procedures with respect to compliance inspections of gun shops.

He was an unsuccessful candidate for re-election in 1996. After leaving Congress, Volkmer served as chairman of the National Commission on Small Farms and was elected to the Board of the National Rifle Association. He is now retired and living in Hannibal.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE
The Harold L. Volkmer Papers include correspondence, proposals, reports, and other supplemental material regarding legislative bills. The papers also contain news releases, newspaper articles, pamphlets, publications, brochures, speeches, and photographs. Much of the collection is concerned with gun control legislation and hazardous waste disposal. However,
many other topics and issues are addressed. The material is arranged into five series: Bills and Resolutions, Newspaper Articles, News Releases, Reports, and Miscellaneous Material.

The Bills and Resolutions series consists of legislative proposals, many of which Volkmer co-sponsored. They are arranged in alphabetical order, by topic and include farm bills, the Equal Rights Amendment, and food safety. A large amount of material focuses on the McClure-Volkmer Bill, otherwise known as the Firearms Owner’s Protection Act. Also included are correspondence, statements, and remarks related to the various subjects of the bills.

The Newspaper Articles series is arranged by year, and includes material related to Volkmer’s stand on trade and taxes, his participation in town meetings and committees, awards, and announcements of nominations for the U.S. Armed Services Academies. Also covered is his bid for re-election to Congress in 1992 and that year’s Presidential election.

The News Releases series is arranged by year and includes Volkmer’s nominations to the U.S. Armed Services Academies, grant approvals, and the introduction of various legislation. Some examples include a 1992 release urging support of sending F-15 fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia, a 1994 release announcing 26 projects to receive disaster relief funds, and a 1996 release protesting a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) raid. In addition, there are news releases accompanied by photographs of constituents meeting Volkmer in and around his Washington, D.C. office.

The Reports series is arranged by year, and focuses largely on hazardous waste sites under the Federal Superfund program of 1985. The Superfund was created from the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980. Items reviewed include the extent of the hazardous waste cleanup problem, cost estimates associated with cleaning up hazardous waste sites, accomplishments of current cleanup processes, options for addressing the “How clean is clean” issue, and the number of sites included under Federal cleanup responsibilities.

The bulk of this material concerns Weldon Spring, Missouri, formerly a TNT production facility for the U.S. Army during World War II, which contained nuclear waste from the Manhattan Project. In 1956, approximately 200 acres of the Army property was transferred to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) for construction of a chemical plant producing uranium and thorium residues used to produce weapons-grade material up until the mid-1960s. The reports on this site include an examination of the “sludge pits” or “raffinate pits” containing radioactive sludge covered by contaminated water. Buildings and structures on the site were also examined for levels of radioactivity, as well as a large quarry a short distance from the main facility. The findings and proposals to decontaminate the site are noted in various reports. There are also discussions of transferring hazardous material from other sites to Weldon Spring.

Other reports include an examination of dioxin contamination discovered at various sites in Missouri, including Quail Run Mobile Home Park near Gray Summit. Much of the correspondence is from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The reports also focus on the McClure-Volkmer Bill, or the Firearm Owner’s Protection Act. The material includes subcommittee reports on the subject of gun control. Other reports study emergency relief services for victims of the Missouri flood of 1993 and the Cannon Dam flooding on the Salt River in July 1981. In the case of the Cannon Dam Flood, farmers downstream from the Clarence Cannon Dam charged that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers negligently caused the damage on July 27, 1981, when they notched a temporary coffer dam at the site to release floodwaters. The release caused total crop loss on some farms and isolated property damage.
Some correspondence and information on House bills is mixed in with this material. It was not separated in order to preserve continuity.

The **Miscellaneous Material** series is arranged by year and includes intern information sheets with comments from the intern about the experience of working for Volkmer, a full page endorsement by Volkmer for the publication *Space News*, general Congressional correspondence, surveys, a “Congressional Trading Card,” patterned after baseball cards and featuring Volkmer, as well as publications concerning various governmental issues. In addition, there are constituent correspondence and copies of a number of Volkmer’s speeches to various groups and organizations, such as the American Legion, VFW, National Association of Postmasters, Central Missouri Epilepsy Awareness Group, National Association of Retired Federal Employees, Vietnam Veterans of America, and Firefighters Association. These materials date from the late 1980s through the 1990s.
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