

Guide to the Frank L. Nikolay Papers, 1959-1978

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Summary Information

Title: Frank L. Nikolay Papers

Inclusive Dates: 1959-1978

Creator: Nikolay, Frank L. 1922-

Call Number: Eau Claire Mss AZ

Quantity: 2 c.f. (2 record center cartons)

Repository: Housed at the Area Research Center, William D. McIntyre Library, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire; owned by the Wisconsin Historical Society, Library-Archives Division

Archival Locations: UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library / Eau Claire Area Research Ctr.

Abstract: Papers of an assemblyman from Clark County (1958-1966; 1968-1970) who served in a leadership capacity both on the floor of the Legislature and within the Democratic Party. Alphabetical subject files contain correspondence, memoranda, reports, clippings, speeches, press releases, committee records, and printed matter. Best are the files on various committee memberships including the Building Commission, Interstate Cooperation Committee, Judiciary Committee, Special Committee on Town Government Incorporation, Legislative Campaign Committee of the Democratic Party, and the 1960 Humphrey delegation to the national convention. For 1965-1966 there is a chronological file of constituent correspondence regarding proposed or pending legislation.

Language: English

Search Terms/Subject Terms

- Democratic Party—Wisconsin
- Legislators—Wisconsin
- Wisconsin—Politics and government

Biography/History

Assemblyman and Democratic party leader Frank Nikolay was born in the town of Day, Marathon County, Wisconsin, on September 1, 1922. After attending the Abbotsford public schools he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin in 1939. His education was first interrupted by a call to service in the Wisconsin National Guard and the Army from 1940 to 1941. He then returned to the University in 1942 and in 1943 transferred to the law school under the Regular War Plan. During that term he again interrupted his education for service in World War II in the Air Force and Navy. In 1946 he returned to law school and graduated in 1948. In addition to his private practice, Nikolay has served as Abbotsford village and city attorney, Colby city attorney, Clark County assistant district attorney, and U.S. attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin. Other offices which he has held include memberships on the Clark County Board and the Clark County Welfare Board.

Nikolay ran successfully for the Assembly in 1958 and served continuously until his defeat in 1966. Although re-elected in 1968 he declined to run for another term in 1970 in order to campaign for the lieutenant governorship. He was defeated in this effort by Martin Schreiber. Nikolay was a powerful figure in the Legislature, being selected as assistant minority floor leader in 1963, majority leader in 1965, and assistant minority leader again in 1969. Committee posts which he held included chairmanships of the Judiciary and Rules committees and vice-chairmanships of the Education and the Revision, Repeals, and Uniform Laws committees.

In addition to his position as a leader among party members in the Legislature, Nikolay also served the state-wide party in several important ways. In 1960 he was chairman of the Humphrey delegation to the national party convention. Together with Patrick J. Lucey he was co-chairman of the state's McGovern slate to the national convention in 1972. From 1964 to 1976 he was vice-chairman of the state organization. During the 1960's he directed the Legislative Campaign Committee. Despite his busy political career, Nikolay was also an active member of the Wisconsin Civil Liberties Union, Wisconsin National Guard (Col., Ret.), American Legion, Lions, Knights of Columbus, and Catholic Foresters. In 1983 he was appointed to a seven year term as regent of the University of Wisconsin System.

Scope and Content Note

This collection is the first accession of the Frank Nikolay Papers. It relates both to his career in the Wisconsin Legislature and the Democratic Party and is comprised of correspondence, memoranda, reports, speeches, press releases, clippings, committee files, and printed matter.

It may help the researcher to know that these papers were reviewed and prepared for shipment by the donor, not by Society staff. Thus, it is not clear the degree to which the files received by the Society reflected their original arrangement and contents. At the time the collection was processed additional materials were still being reviewed by Nikolay for presentation to the Society. Appreciation of the collection's provenance will help the researcher to understand the miscellaneous nature of the files and the somewhat fragmentary documentation they provide of Nikolay's career. It is anticipated that this will not be the case after all materials are received.

Among the best files are those pertaining to various committees on which Nikolay served: the Building Commission, the Interstate Cooperation Committee, the Judiciary Committee, and the Special Committee on Town Government Incorporation. Such files include agendas, summary proceedings, memoranda, and correspondence. Pertaining to committee work for the Democratic Party are good

files on the Legislative Campaign Committee during the 1960's and the 1960 Humphrey delegation to the national convention.

For the years 1965-1966 there is a chronological file of constituent correspondence primarily regarding proposed or pending legislation.

Administrative/Restriction Information

Acquisition Information

Presented by Frank L Nikolay, Abbotsford, Wisconsin, January 25, 1980. Accession Number: M80-184

Processing Information

Processed by Carolyn J. Mattern, March 1984.

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