

In November 1994 the Republicans won control of both Houses of Congress for the first time in 40 years in a victory they immediately dubbed the Republican Revolution. Swept into office in that election were 73 Republican freshmen, the storm troopers in Newt Gingrich's army. The Freshmen is the inside story of those men and women and of the tumultuous 104th Congress, one of the most historic and eventful congresses in recent history. The freshmen were at the heart of the Republican revolution. Journalist Linda Killian presents a revealing portrait of their maneuvering and intrigues, their successes and failures. Were they committed idealists or wild-eyed zealots? Killian reveals how Congress really works through amazingly candid conversations with the freshmen. She offers a probing and intimate character study of the colorful and always unpredictable freshmen who shared their private thoughts with her. In early 1995 the Republicans were riding high but they were sent crashing by the government shutdown. Killian explains how they rebounded from that disastrous political maneuver to maintain control of Congress despite Bill Clinton's re-election to the presidency, and also explains how the Republican revolution never really existed. Despite being labeled Gingrich clones when they arrived in Washington, in 1997 the freshmen attempted to overthrow Newt Gingrich as speaker of the House. Killian tells the real story of that failed coup. This book is the first detailed, behind the scenes account of the entire 104th Congress and is based on two years of extensive reporting and hundreds of interviews. Killian goes beyond the headlines to show us the power struggles through the eyes of the freshmen. She takes us to the House floor, the committee rooms and private offices of Congress and follows the freshmen back to their districts in small town America in places like Crossville, Tennessee; Wamego, Kansas and Janesville, Wisconsin. We meet class everyman Van Hilleary of Tennessee; firebrand and troublemaker Mark Neumann; former entertainer Sonny Bono; Enid Greene Waldholtz who is forced to leave Congress in disgrace and Sam Brownback who uses his freshman notoriety to win Bob Dole's seat in the U.S. Senate. The Freshmen is a fascinating look at who the freshmen are and why they are different from other politicians. What did they actually accomplish and how did they change American politics? Much more than just the story of the Republican freshmen, this is the story of power and democracy, a vivid portrait of our times and of the issues facing our nation as we head into the 21st century.

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