The Relationship between the American Government and Society: Congressman John O’Connor and New York’s 16th District during the Great Depression

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The Relationship between the American Government and Society: Congressman John O’Connor and New York’s 16th District during the Great Depression

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Introduction & Historical Background
- Time Period: 1931 to 1951
- Location: New York’s 16th District in America
- Key Events:
  - Post-World War I era
  - Post-Roaring Twenties era
  - Great Depression
  - New Deal programs implementation
- Key Characters:
  - President Franklin Delano Roosevelt
  - Congressman John O’Connor
  - New York constituents

Image 1. U.S. Congressional District: New York 16th District (Since 2013)

Research Objective
- Determine the role of responses of political players and effectiveness of public policies during Great Depression on the individuals in New York’s 16th District between 1931 and 1951

Historical Sources
- Primary Sources:
  - Majority of research focuses on “John J. O’Connor Collection” from the Frank Mt. Pleasant Library of Special Collections at Chapman University
  - Collection consists of five scrapbooks containing political memoranda, newspaper clippings, and constituent correspondence
  - Library of Congress’ sources in Washington D.C.
  - Its archives of photographs, magazines, newspapers, films, prints, and drawings pertaining to John O’Connor and New York during the Great Depression reveal an objective viewpoint
  - National Archives Census records
- Secondary Sources:
  - “Franklin Roosevelt and the Purge of John O’Connor: The Impact of Urban Change on Political Parties” by Richard Polenberg

Image 2. Crowds outside Wall Street when stock market crashed in October 29, 1929.

Image 3 (left). Congressman John O’Connor.
Image 4 (right). Newspaper clipping sources from the John J. O’Connor Collection Scrapbooks.

Research Results
- Discover the varying conditions New Yorkers faced during the 1930’s and 1940’s through their concerns and requests to their U.S. House Representative
- Analyze how urban areas were similar and how they were different from rural areas during the depression — through socio-economic, geographical, and political elements

Research Conclusions & Implications
- Connect these relationships and interactions with the urban culture at that time to discover the true status of urban societies during the Great Depression
- Understand the impact the government might have had in relation to the public in the United States

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References
- National Archives Branch Depository, Suitland, MD, Index to Selected City Streets and Enumeration Districts, 1930 Census, RG 29.