

WHY MISSOURI? WHY 1861? WHY NOW?

Why Missouri? Because it is where the American constitutional system, under the weight of human nature, first cracked during a modern mobilization crisis, showing how quickly government fails when personal gain is allowed to trump duty to the nation.

Why 1861? Because Missouri became the earliest and clearest test of whether the Union could survive when its leaders, career-minded West Pointers, contract-hungry businessmen, ambitious politicians, and President Lincoln himself, put political rivalries and self-interest ahead of the nation.

Why now? Because in 2026 the United States faces a moment when its global economic leadership and wellbeing are threatened by unprecedented national debt, collapsing infrastructure, and a military budget that can no longer escape fiscal reality, making the lessons of Missouri not only relevant, but indispensable.

What makes understanding Missouri's Civil War history essential today is not only that it was the first breakdown of constitutional authority, but that the state's Civil War story was rewritten so thoroughly that Americans never learned what actually went wrong, and some modern writers aggressively propagate that false narrative. After the war, powerful Confederate veterans' groups, politicians, business interests, and sympathetic newspapers reshaped the public memory of Missouri's crisis. They turned a Union state into a place where many people came to believe the Confederates had been the real heroes, where conspirators were recast as patriots, and where decisive Union action was portrayed as tyranny. This wasn't an accident; it was a deliberate effort to hide the ambition, greed, and political maneuvering that caused the collapse in the first place.

This matters now because the same pattern has recurred in every major American conflict since World War II. Wars in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan were prolonged by political rivalry, military careerism, defense-industry interests, and a media establishment that shaped public consent for wars unrelated to national defense. The result is a nation burdened by staggering debt, generations of young men sacrificed or permanently disabled in wars that served no genuine national interest, and a public conditioned by the press to accept them.

To understand how the United States reached its present moment of economic peril, it is necessary to return to the place where this destructive pattern first took root and where the rapid mobilization demands of modern warfare began to shape political behavior. The seventy-plus volumes of the *Missouri Speaks Collection* reveal this pattern with unmistakable clarity: the same mix of ambition, rivalry, and institutional weakness that drove Missouri's collapse in 1861 has reappeared in later conflicts, each time with higher costs and broader consequences.

The pressures facing the United States in 2026, including unprecedented national debt, deteriorating infrastructure, and a military budget that strains the nation's economic capacity, make it essential to understand how self-serving greed shapes the outcome of modern warfare. The lesson of Missouri is not simply that history repeats itself, but when the management failures of a war go unexamined, they will be repeated. Recognizing that pattern is the first step toward ensuring that future decisions reflect the national interest rather than the ambitions of political leaders, military professionals, defense contractors, and an unaccountable media.