A t the end of the 1790s, in rapid suc-
cession, George Washington died, the
federal government moved to Wash-
ington, D.C., and the election of 1800
put Thomas Je
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erson and the Democratic-Republican
Party in charge of the federal government.
Establishing Congress dispels the myths
and misinformation that surround the
federal government’s move to Washington
and demonstrates that the election of 1800
changed American party politics forever,
establishing the success of the American
experiment in government and complet-
ing the founding of the Republic. It also
contends that the lame-duck session of
Congress had far-reaching implications
for the governance of the District of Co-
lumbia. Later chapters examine aspects of
the political iconography of the Capitol—
one chapter illuminating Je
ff
erson’s role in
turning the building into a temple for the
legislature and an instrument for nation-
building, another analyzing the fascinat-
ing decades-long debate over whether to
bury George Washington in the Capitol.
The essays in this collection consider
as well the political implications of social
life in early Washington, examining the
political lobbying by Washington women
within a social context and detailing the
social and political life in the city’s homes,
hotels, boardinghouses, and eating messes.
Establishing Congress is the fourth vol-
ume in the series Perspectives on the His-
tory of Congress, 1789–1801, which origi-
nated in a series of conferences held by
the United States Capitol Historical Society