

PART TWO

## Current Members



## INTRODUCTION TO

# Profiles of Current Members

More than 150 years ago, on December 12, 1870, Joseph H. Rainey of South Carolina took the Oath of Office and became the first African American to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives, less than a year after Hiram R. Revels of Mississippi was sworn in as a Member of the U.S. Senate in February 1870. To date, another 173 Black Americans have followed Rainey and Revels to serve as Members of Congress.\* The history of Black Americans in Congress contains many themes that resonate in the larger chronicle of American democracy: struggle and perseverance, the gradual attainment of power, advancement through unity, and remarkable legislative achievements.

The 61 African Americans (56 Representatives, two Territorial Delegates, and three Senators) who serve in the 117th Congress (2021–2023) have inherited the historical legacy that extends to the Reconstruction era after the Civil War. As the largest group of Black legislators to serve simultaneously in the history of the institution, these lawmakers account for more than one-third of all the African Americans who have held seats in Congress.

The biographical profiles of these current Members, like those of their predecessors, contain information on precongressional careers, first House or Senate campaigns, committee and leadership positions, and legislative achievements. Because these Members are incumbent, comprehensive accounts of their congressional careers must await a later date. Their profiles are arranged in two distinct groups. First, the 49 individuals who have served in two or more Congresses are ordered alphabetically and profiled in 800-word entries. Second, the 12 first-term Black Americans of the 117th Congress are profiled in résumé format entries at the end of this section. All Members were given the opportunity to review their profiles before the book was published.

Among the individuals profiled in this section are Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton of Washington, DC, and Representative Maxine Waters of California, whose 31 years of congressional service make them the current deans of African Americans in Congress. They are also the longest-serving Black women in the history of the U.S. House of Representatives.

As these Members leave Congress, their profiles will be updated in the online version of this volume—available at <https://history.house.gov>—to reflect a more complete account of their congressional careers and their contributions to the rich history of African Americans in Congress.

\*The closing date for this volume was June 1, 2022.

## Alma S. Adams

1946–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2014–

Democrat from North Carolina



Image courtesy of the Member

Drawing upon a career in state and local office that stretched back to the mid-1980s, Alma S. Adams won a special election to the U.S. House of Representatives on November 4, 2014, to succeed a longtime incumbent. In the House, she has advocated for increasing wages, expanding educational opportunities, and reducing disparities in health care. “When I took office in 2014 I made it a priority to fight for students, small businesses, women, and veterans,” Adams declared. “I am eager to continue our progress.”<sup>1</sup>

Alma Adams was born Alma Jean Shealey on May 27, 1946, to Benjamin and Mattie Shealey in High Point, North Carolina. Her family moved to Baltimore, Maryland, when she was an infant, before relocating to Newark, New Jersey, where she attended West Side High School, from which she graduated in 1964. Adams grew up in a single-parent family with her siblings and her mother, who made a living as a domestic worker. After high school, she returned to her home state to attend North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, earning her bachelor’s degree in 1968. During her sophomore year of college, she married Billy Adams. The couple had two children, Billy and Linda, but later divorced. In 1972, Adams earned a

master’s degree in art education and joined the faculty of Bennett College, a historically Black women’s college in Greensboro, where she taught art for 40 years. She also developed a career as a professional artist. In 1981, she earned a Ph.D. in art education from The Ohio State University in Columbus. She made her initial foray into politics as the first African-American woman elected to the Greensboro school board, serving from 1984 to 1986. She then served on the Greensboro city council until 1994, when she was appointed to the North Carolina state house of representatives, where she served for 20 years. As a state representative, she sponsored legislation that led to the first increase in North Carolina’s minimum wage in nine years.<sup>2</sup>

In 2014, President Barack Obama nominated longtime Representative Melvin L. Watt to direct the Federal Housing Finance Agency, creating a vacancy in the House from North Carolina’s Twelfth District, centered on one of the nation’s largest banking sectors in Charlotte. Adams joined the crowded race for the Democratic nomination to fill Watt’s seat. Backed by interest groups representing women’s rights and organized labor, among other causes, Adams won 44 percent of the vote, leading her closest opponent, a state senator, by more than 20 percent.<sup>3</sup>

On the day of the general election, Adams easily pulled ahead of Republican challenger Vince Coakley with 75 percent of the vote, simultaneously winning the remainder of Watt's term in the 113th Congress (2013–2015), as well as a full term in the next Congress.<sup>4</sup> Despite redistricting challenges that forced her to move to Charlotte to maintain residency, Adams consistently won re-election with at least 67 percent of the vote and ran unopposed in 2020.<sup>5</sup>

Adams was sworn in at the end of the 113th Congress, giving her a boost in seniority over the rest of the 2014 class. She received her first committee assignments during the 114th Congress (2015–2017), obtaining spots on three committees: Agriculture; Education and the Workforce; and Small Business. In 2019, she swapped her seat on Small Business for one on the Financial Services Committee. When Democrats took the majority in the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Adams became vice chair of the Agriculture Committee and chair of the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections of the renamed Education and Labor Committee.

As a former college professor, Adams has made inroads into education reform. In 2015, she cofounded the Congressional Bipartisan Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Caucus to bring attention to the challenges facing these institutions, which often provide higher education opportunities to underserved and low-income communities.<sup>6</sup> In 2019, Adams introduced successful legislation through the Education and Labor Committee to support HBCUs, to increase funding for Pell Grants, and to simplify the process for student loan repayment recertifications.<sup>7</sup>

Having grown up without health insurance, Adams has worked to reduce disparities in health care provided to low-income Americans. In one of her first speeches on the House Floor, Adams expressed her support of the Affordable Care Act and her commitment to expand access to health insurance. In 2019, she introduced the Maternal CARE Act, which would create federal grant programs designed to reduce infant mortality and protect maternal health.<sup>8</sup>

## Notes

- 1 "Congresswoman Alma Adams Sworn into the 115th Congress and Joins House Democratic Leadership," official website of Representative Alma Adams, press release, 3 January 2017, <https://adams.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/congresswoman-alma-adams-sworn-115th-congress-and-joins-house-democratic>; Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Lawmaking Is Art Professor's Unfinished Work," 24 February 2015, *New York Times*: A15; *Congressional Record*, House, 113th Cong., 2nd sess. (12 November 2014): 15490.
- 2 "Marriage Licenses," 17 December 1965, *Greensboro Record* (NC): 4; Thomas A. Barsto, "Alma Adams Gets Gist's Seat," 31 March 1994, *News & Record* (Greensboro, NC): n.p.; Stolberg, "Lawmaking Is Art Professor's Unfinished Work"; "Jesse Shealey," 28 December 2013, *High Point Enterprise* (NC): A4; Alma Adams, oral history interview by William Link, *Civil Rights Greensboro*, University of North Carolina Greensboro, 15 February 1989, <http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/CivilRights/id/790/rec/1>.
- 3 Jim Morrill, "U.S. House 12: Alma Adams Wins Without Runoff," 6 May 2014, *Charlotte Observer* (NC): n.p.; *Almanac of American Politics, 2020* (Arlington, VA: Columbia Books & Information Services, 2019): 1344; North Carolina state board of elections, "05/06/2014 Official Primary Election Results," accessed 25 September 2019, <https://www.ncsbe.gov/Election-Results>.
- 4 Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <https://history.house.gov/Institution/Election-Statistics/>.
- 5 Doug Clark, "Straddling Two Districts Challenges Adams," 2 June 2016, *News & Record*: n.p.; "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present."
- 6 "Bipartisan Members Of Congress Launch Bipartisan Congressional HBCU Caucus," official website of Representative Alma Adams, press release, 28 April 2015, <https://adams.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/bipartisan-members-congress-launch-bipartisan-congressional-hbcu-caucus>.
- 7 FUTURE Act, Public Law 116-91, 133 Stat. 1189 (2019).
- 8 Ashley Mahoney, "Rep. Adams, Lawmakers Push for Legislation to Cut Maternal Mortality Gaps," 23 April 2020, *Charlotte Post* (NC): A3; *Congressional Record*, House, 113th Cong., 2nd sess. (3 December 2014): 16462–16463; Maternal CARE Act, H.R. 2902, 116th Cong (2019).

## Colin Allred

1983–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2019–

Democrat from Texas

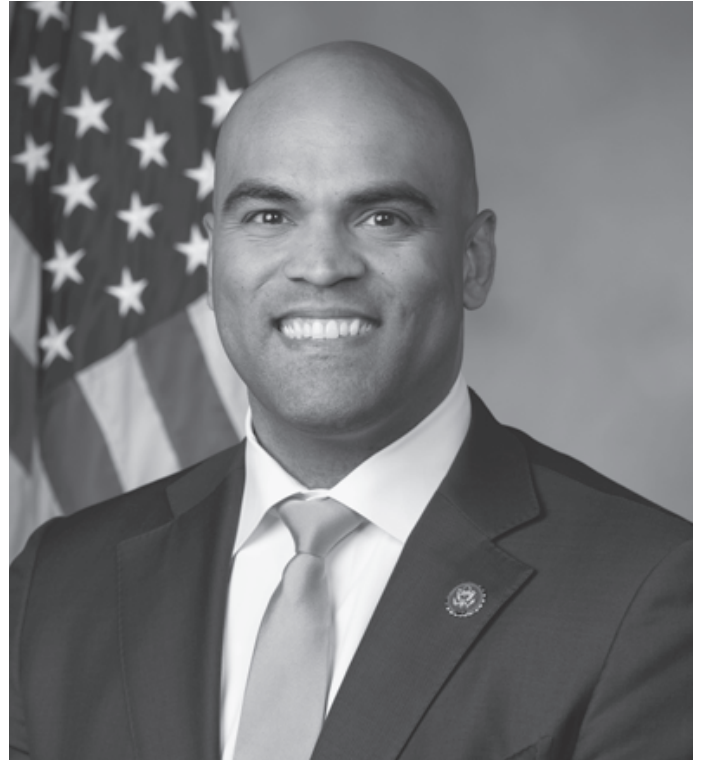


Image courtesy of the Member

A former professional football player and attorney, Colin Allred won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018 by championing the Affordable Care Act and ousting a veteran Republican incumbent committee chair. Representing a swing district in the wealthy northern suburbs of Dallas, Texas, Allred has dedicated his legislative efforts to veteran care, assisting working families, and election reform.

Colin Allred was born in Dallas on April 15, 1983. Allred was raised by his mother, public school teacher Judith Allred, and her family in North Dallas. Allred attended public schools and graduated from Hillcrest High School in 2001. Allred's football talents in high school earned him a scholarship to Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He played as a linebacker for the Baylor Bears before graduating with a bachelor's degree in 2005. Though he was accepted to law school at the University of California's Berkeley campus, Allred deferred when he was picked up by the National Football League's Tennessee Titans where he played until a season-ending injury in 2010. Allred left professional sports following his injury. He re-applied to UC Berkeley and earned his law degree there in 2014.<sup>1</sup> Allred turned his attention to politics after law school, working first as a

voting rights attorney before joining the Office of General Counsel in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Allred is married to attorney Alexandra Eber, and the couple has two children.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after President Donald J. Trump took office, Allred announced his intention to challenge veteran incumbent U.S. Representative Pete Sessions for his home district in increasingly suburban and affluent north Dallas. Allred picked up several prominent endorsements and won more than a third of all votes in the seven-candidate March 2018 Democratic primary—more than twice the total of his nearest competitor. Allred then commandingly won the May runoff.<sup>4</sup> Running as a hometown candidate in a district where Democrats had offered little opposition to Sessions, who was then chair of the powerful Rules Committee, Allred framed the race in generational terms. He claimed that after more than two decades in office, Sessions had lost touch with the diversifying population. Allred also focused on health care policy, criticizing Sessions for his votes to repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with alternatives that weakened protections for preexisting conditions.<sup>5</sup> Allred won with 52 percent of the vote and was re-elected in 2020 by the same margin.<sup>6</sup>

Allred's fellow Democratic freshmen selected him as one of two co-presidents of the 116th Congress (2019–2021) class of lawmakers.<sup>7</sup> Allred was assigned to three committees: Foreign Affairs; Transportation and Infrastructure; and Veterans' Affairs. He retained all three assignments in the 117th Congress (2021–2023). Allred introduced several bills through the latter committee to improve the lives of veterans and provide support during the COVID-19 pandemic. He sponsored the Aid and Attendance Support Act which would have increased benefits for veterans and their families who required at-home or nursing home medical assistance during the pandemic. Allred also aimed to address a flawed medical claims system at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs by providing a review period for veterans or their representatives before claim determinations are finalized.<sup>8</sup>

Allred has passionately advocated for paternity leave and increasing support for working families. He made headlines when he took parental leave shortly after taking office in 2019, following the birth of his first child. Though individual congressional offices have varying policies in place, Allred's decision to take time off was uncommon. Allred's personal experience proved formative, and he again took leave with the birth of his second son in early 2021. "This experience makes it clearer than ever to me that we need to provide basic paid sick leave and paid parental leave so that no matter who you are or where you live," he said, "hardworking people can have financial security and peace of mind while spending time with their families."<sup>9</sup> To that end, Allred introduced the House version of the Advancing Support for Working Families Act. His proposal gave new parents the option of advancing \$5,000 of the child tax credit to assist with costs related to newborns and adoptions. The bill attracted support from the Trump administration but was not signed into law.<sup>10</sup>

Allred has made voting rights a priority during his two terms in office. He joined his Democratic colleagues in backing the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021, designed to revise the procedures for federal election oversight following the Supreme Court's 2013 decision declaring parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 unconstitutional. He also cosponsored the For the People Act, a sweeping election reform bill, and twice introduced the Know Your Polling Place Act to require election officials to notify voters of any change to their polling place.<sup>11</sup>

## Notes

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2. Dan Frosch, "Texas Rep. Pete Sessions, Long Dominant, Faces One of Nation's Toughest House Races," 1 October 2018, *Wall Street Journal*: n.p.
3. Elizabeth Thompson, "Dallas Rep. Colin Allred Taking Short Paternity Leave to Take Care of Newborn Son," 29 March 2021, *Dallas Morning News*: B1.
4. Abby Livingston, "Democrats Have Their Eye on Pete Sessions' Seat. Who Will They Pick to Challenge Him?" 15 May 2018, *Texas Tribune* (Austin): n.p.; Texas secretary of state, "2018 Democratic Party Primary Election," 6 March 2018, [https://elections.sos.state.tx.us/elchist324\\_state.htm](https://elections.sos.state.tx.us/elchist324_state.htm); Texas secretary of state, "2018 Democratic Party Primary Runoff," 22 May 2018, [https://elections.sos.state.tx.us/elchist327\\_state.htm](https://elections.sos.state.tx.us/elchist327_state.htm); *Almanac of American Politics, 2020*: 1748–1749.
5. Frosch, "Texas Rep. Pete Sessions, Long Dominant, Faces One of Nation's Toughest House Races"; Gromer Jeffers Jr., "Allred, the Newcomer With 'An Unlikely Story.'"
6. Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives, "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <https://history.house.gov/Institution/Election-Statistics/>.
7. Todd J. Gilman, "Allred to Co-lead Freshman Democrats," 29 November 2018, *Dallas Morning News*: A6.
8. Aid and Attendance Support Act, H.R. 6860, 116th Cong. (2020); Aid and Attendance Support Act, H.R. 789, 117th Cong. (2021); Veterans Claim Transparency Act of 2020, H.R. 7443, 116th Cong. (2020); Veterans Claim Transparency Act of 2021, H.R. 2753, 117th Cong. (2021).
9. Several publications declared Colin Allred the first Member of Congress to take paternity leave. See Katherine Tully-McManus, "Texas Democrat Takes Paternity Leave Ahead of Son's Birth," 13 February 2019, *Roll Call*: n.p.; Farah Eltohamy, "Colin Allred is the First Known Member of Congress to Take Paid Paternity Leave. Now He's Pushing for it Nationally," 13 August 2021, *Texas Tribune*: n.p.
10. Advancing Support for Working Families Act, H.R. 5296, 116th Cong. (2019); Tom Benning, "Trump Talks Up Allred, Cruz Bills," 6 February 2020, *Dallas Morning News*: A7.
11. Abby Livingston, "New Texas Voting Laws, Political Maps Could Once Again Require Federal Approval Under U.S. House Bill Named After John Lewis," 24 August 2021, *Texas Tribune*: n.p.; John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act of 2021, H.R. 4, 117th Cong. (2021); For the People Act, H.R. 1, 117th Cong. (2021); Know Your Polling Place Act, H.R. 1504, 116th Cong. (2019); Know Your Polling Place Act, H.R. 1278, 117th Cong. (2021).



# Karen Bass

1953–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2011–

Democrat from California



Image courtesy of the Member

Karen Bass worked as a physician assistant, community activist, educator, and nonprofit executive for three decades before she won a seat in the California state assembly in 2004. During three terms in the assembly, Bass served as majority whip and majority leader before becoming the first Black woman in U.S. history to serve as a speaker of any state legislative body in 2008. In 2010, she was elected as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives. On Capitol Hill, she has embraced leadership roles within her party and worked on health care, economic development, child welfare, and U.S. policy on Africa.

Karen Bass was born in Los Angeles, California, on October 3, 1953. Her father, Dewitt Bass, was a mail carrier, and her mother, Wilhelmina, was a former beauty salon owner and homemaker. Bass completed her bachelor's degree at California State University, Dominguez Hills, and earned a physician's assistant certificate and a masters of social work degree from the University of Southern California (USC). She worked at USC as a nurse, a physician assistant, and a clinical instructor.<sup>1</sup>

Bass has long been an activist tackling injustice and poverty at home and abroad since her middle school years. "My life has been defined by the fight for social justice,"

she recalled in 2005. She was active in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa as the co-chair of the Los Angeles-based Southern Africa Support Committee. In 1990, she founded Community Coalition, a nonprofit that addressed poverty, crime, gang violence, and addiction. As executive director, "I stopped doing international work and just focused on domestic work," she recalled. "One of the reasons I was excited about coming to Congress is I could do both."<sup>2</sup> In the state assembly, Bass worked on foster care, economic development, health care, and criminal justice reform. As assembly speaker in 2009 during the economic crisis of the Great Recession, she negotiated a state budget deal to preserve programs in the face of a \$40 billion deficit, for which she received a John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award.<sup>3</sup>

When Representative Diane E. Watson of California retired in 2010, she endorsed Bass for the vacant seat in the Thirty-Third District. Bass won 85 percent of the vote in the Democratic primary and defeated her opponent in November with 86 percent of the vote. She easily won re-election six times. After redistricting in 2012, Bass represented the Thirty-Seventh District. Largely comprised of neighborhoods west and south of downtown Los Angeles,



it also includes West L.A., Culver City and South L.A. The district has a diverse population and is one of the most Democratic in the nation.<sup>4</sup>

In the 112th Congress (2011–2013), Bass was assigned to the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Budget Committee. She was named to the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee and co-chaired the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee's Women LEAD project, which recruits women to run for office.<sup>5</sup>

In her second term, Bass earned a seat on the Judiciary Committee, where she served on the Over-criminalization Task Force and explored criminal justice reforms such as reevaluating the U.S. Code and revising mandatory sentencing laws.<sup>6</sup> She also backed legislation to reduce recidivism by providing financial, educational, and employment assistance for prisoners and parolees upon their release. She was instrumental in including provisions addressing women in prison in the First Step Act and supported its passage in 2018.<sup>7</sup> Bass was named interim chair of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security in 2019.<sup>8</sup> Two weeks after the murder of George Floyd, a Black man in police custody in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Bass led the effort to institute nationwide policing reforms by introducing the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. The bill passed the House later that month. Bass reintroduced the bill in the 117th Congress (2021–2023); this version passed the House in March 2021.<sup>9</sup>

Bass served as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus during the 116th Congress (2019–2021), during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and worked to assure that federal relief efforts addressed the disproportionate health and economic impact on communities of color.<sup>10</sup>

As Ranking Member on the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Bass supported economic development and human rights throughout the African continent. She was an original co-sponsor of the African Growth and Opportunity Act to promote trade across sub-Saharan Africa, and she mobilized support to combat the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014. Bass also introduced a bill to advance democratic reforms in Zimbabwe in return for U.S. trade and investment, as well as international debt relief programs. The bill became law in 2018.<sup>11</sup> Bass chaired the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights in the 116th and 117th Congresses (2019–2023).

Bass has been a committed advocate for the poor and marginalized. She founded the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth to improve foster care resources, promote kinship care, and improve educational outcomes for foster children.<sup>12</sup> Her bill to prevent child trafficking and aid victims of sex trafficking in the foster care system passed the House in 2015.<sup>13</sup> She also championed the Affordable Care Act as a way to increase access to health insurance and create jobs.<sup>14</sup>

Bass announced her campaign for mayor of Los Angeles on September 27, 2021.<sup>15</sup>

## Notes

- 1 Nancy Vogel, "Speaker-Elect Gets Broad Support," 2 March 2008, *Los Angeles Times*: B1; Jim Sanders and Shane Goldmacher, "L.A.'s Bass to Become New Assembly Leader," 28 February 2008, *Sacramento Bee*: A1; Jim Sanders, "Activist Takes Office, Comes Out Swinging," 14 March 2005, *Sacramento Bee*: A3; Rep. Karen Bass, "The Boss: Rep. Karen Bass Started Fighting for Social Justice in Middle School," 31 January 2018, *Time*: n.p.
- 2 Francis Taylor, "Bass Fights for Jobs for Ex-Offenders," 24 November 2005, *Los Angeles Sentinel*: A20; Sarah D. Wire, "A Los Angeles Voice for Africa: Rep. Karen Bass Explains Why the Continent Is Important to Her and to the City," 25 February 2016, *Los Angeles Times*: B2.
- 3 Francis Taylor, "It's Official: Karen Bass for Congress," 25 February 2010, *Los Angeles Sentinel*: A1; Nancy Vogel, "L.A. Woman to Follow Nunez: Karen Bass is Expected to Win Election Today as the Next Speaker of the State Assembly," 28 February 2008, *Los Angeles Times*: B1; John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, "Profiles in Courage Award, 2010," accessed 20 May 2022, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/events-and-awards/profile-in-courage-award/award-recipients/karen-bass-david-cogdill-darrell-steinberg-and-michael-villines-2010>.
- 4 Jean Merl, "In Race for Watson's Seat, Bass is Sitting Pretty," 5 June 2010, *Los Angeles Times*: AA7; Jean Merl, "California Elections: Fall Victory Likely for Two House Candidates," 10 June 2010, *Los Angeles Times*: AA6; *Almanac of American Politics, 2020* (Arlington, VA: Columbia Books & Information Services, 2019): 278.
- 5 David Fahrenthold, "Democratic Freshmen Go to the End of Line," 4 January 2011, *Washington Post*: A1; Daniel Newhauser and Jessica Brady, "CBC Grouses but Will Back Obama," 30 September 2011, *Roll Call*: n.p.
- 6 Hearing before the House Committee on the Judiciary, Over-Criminalization Task Force of 2013, *Defining the Problem and Scope of Over-Criminalization and Over-Federalization*, 113th Cong., 1st sess. (2013): 2, 74–76.
- 7 H.R. 4004, 114th Cong. (2015); Public Law 115-391, 132 Stat. 5194 (2018).
- 8 Elise Viebeck, "House Democrat Gives Up Leadership Roles in Flap Over Lawsuit," 24 January 2019, *Washington Post*: A4.
- 9 H.R. 7120, 116th Cong. (2020); H.R. 1280, 117th Congress (2021).
- 10 Scott Wong and Mike Lillis, "Black Caucus Leader Karen Bass Finds Herself in High Demand," 9 May 2019, *The Hill*: 6.
- 11 H.R. 3445, 115th Cong. (2017); Public Law 115-167, 132 Stat. 1276 (2018); H. Res. 701, 113th Cong. (2014); Public Law 115-231, 132 Stat. 1632 (2018).
- 12 Bridget Bowman, "Foster Youth Shadow Day Shows Power of Personal Stories," 21 May 2015, *Roll Call*: n.p.; H.R. 5871, 112th Cong. (2012); Public Law 112-278, 126 Stat. 2480 (2013); Jordan Blum, "Landrieu Bill Expected to Help Foster Children," 16 January 2013, *Advocate* (Baton Rouge, LA): A7.
- 13 H.R. 469, 114th Cong. (2015).
- 14 Ed O'Keefe, "House Democrats Retake the House?," 28 January 2015, *Washington Post*: n.p.
- 15 Dakota Smith, "Bass is Officially Running for L.A. Mayor," 28 September 2021, *Los Angeles Times*: B3.

# Joyce Beatty

1950–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2013–

Democrat from Ohio



Image courtesy of the Member

Joyce Beatty has used her seat on the influential House Committee on Financial Services to expand opportunities for her constituents through banking reforms, housing, and diversity and inclusion. Upon entering Congress in 2013, she emphasized aiding the underprivileged, saying, “I am not willing to be in a position where we only cut funding to hurt those who can’t help themselves. I want to realize fairness and equality for all.”<sup>1</sup>

Joyce Beatty was born on March 12, 1950, in Dayton, Ohio. During the civil rights movement, her father Herman Reeder, a brick mason, and her mother, Annie, a civil servant, moved the family to integrate a predominantly White neighborhood. Beatty graduated from Nettie Lee Roth High School in Dayton with honors. She earned a bachelor’s degree in speech and theater from Central State University in 1972 and a master’s degree in counseling from Wright State University in 1975. Beatty also enrolled and completed her doctoral coursework at the University of Cincinnati. She married Otto Beatty Jr. and has two stepchildren and two grandchildren.<sup>2</sup>

From 1975 to 1983, Beatty was a professor at Sinclair Community College in Dayton. She also served as the administrator for the human services levy in Ohio’s

Montgomery County. A small business entrepreneur, Beatty owned a clothing boutique and headed her own consulting firm. From 2008 to 2012, she was senior vice president of outreach and engagement—the first African American to serve as senior vice president—at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio’s flagship institution of higher education.<sup>3</sup>

In the 1980s, Beatty became active in the Democratic Party, serving as a delegate to the 2004, 2012, and 2016 Democratic National Conventions, and delivering speeches during the 2012 and 2016 conventions. In 1999, she succeeded her husband in the Ohio house of representatives, representing a Columbus-area district. Beatty served five terms in the state house and was its first woman Democratic leader.<sup>4</sup>

In 2012, Beatty ran for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. The district consisted of the state capital, Columbus, was wholly contained in Franklin County, and included a diverse mix of professional and working-class Ohioans.<sup>5</sup> Beatty defeated three candidates in the Democratic primary. In the general election, she won with 68 percent of the vote, becoming the first African American to win election to Congress in Ohio outside of the Cleveland area. In her subsequent re-elections, Beatty has won comfortably.<sup>6</sup>

Since entering the House in the 113th Congress (2013–2015), Beatty has served on the Committee on Financial Services. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), when Democrats regained the House majority, she became the inaugural chair of the new Financial Services Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion, joined the Joint Economic Committee, was appointed to the Kennedy Center Board of Trustees, and elected vice chair of the influential Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Beatty was elected chair of the CBC.<sup>7</sup>

On Financial Services, Beatty has worked to improve diversity and inclusion, empower people through financial literacy, and direct federal money to affordable housing, homeless veterans, and aging-out foster youth. As co-chair of the House Financial and Economic Literacy Caucus, Beatty introduced the Housing Financial Literacy Act, which would provide a discount on Federal Housing Administration-backed mortgage insurance premiums once prospective buyers complete a certified housing counseling course. She also proposed a bill to launch mentorship programs for financial institutions where 51 percent of stock is owned by minority individuals.<sup>8</sup> Her signature piece of legislation, known as the “Beatty Rule,” would require at least one racially diverse candidate and one gender diverse candidate be interviewed for a vacancy among the Federal Reserve Regional Bank presidents.<sup>9</sup> The House passed all three bills during the 116th Congress.

In the House, Beatty has sought bipartisan solutions on public health and education issues. In the 114th Congress (2015–2017), Beatty introduced a bill to improve the response to victims of child sex trafficking by creating an internet tip line to report cases of exploitation or abuse. The bill passed the House, and the measure became law via the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, which President Barack Obama signed May 29, 2015. In 2015, she sought tax deductions for elementary and secondary school teachers’ out-of-pocket expenses through the REPAY Supplies Act. The bill was added to the Consolidated Appropriations Act, which became law in 2015.<sup>10</sup> Finally, she was a cosponsor for a bipartisan bill to increase access to telemedicine for stroke survivors and another measure to designate the National Veterans Memorial and Museum in Columbus.<sup>11</sup>

- 2 *Almanac of American Politics*, 2020 (Arlington, VA: Columbia Books & Information Services, 2019): 1384–1385; “Making A Career of Beginnings,” *Alumnews: Magazine of Wright State University*, Spring 1991, <https://corescholar.libraries.wright.edu/alumnews/>; Ohio department of health, office of vital statistics, *Marriage Abstracts, 1970, 1972–2007*: <http://ancestrylibrary.com>; Alan Johnson, “Beatty Ready For Next Challenge,” 30 December 2012, *Columbus Dispatch*: 3B; Bob Mihalek, “A Voice for the People,” 12 April 2019, Wright State University, <https://webapp2.wright.edu/web1/newsroom/2019/04/12/a-voice-for-the-people/>.
- 3 *Almanac of American Politics*, 2020: 1384.
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## Sanford D. Bishop Jr.

1947–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1993–

Democrat from Georgia



Image courtesy of the Member

Sanford D. Bishop Jr. served 16 years in the Georgia state legislature before winning election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992. A longtime member of the Appropriations Committee, Bishop has championed federal fiscal responsibility. Representative Bishop focuses on military and veterans' issues, as well as on agricultural legislation important to his middle and southwest Georgia district.

Sanford D. Bishop Jr. was born on February 4, 1947, in Mobile, Alabama, to Sanford D. Bishop Sr. and Minnie S. Bishop. His father served as the first president of Bishop State Community College; his mother was the college librarian. Bishop was student body president at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, graduating in 1968 with a bachelor's degree in political science. He joined the ROTC and served in the U.S. Army until 1971, when he earned a law degree at Emory University in Atlanta. Bishop initially worked as a private practice lawyer who specialized in civil rights cases. In 1976, he won election to the Georgia house of representatives, representing a district that covered Columbus. He served there for 14 years before winning election to the Georgia senate in 1990. In the state legislature, Bishop helped establish the Georgia commission on equal opportunity and the state's office of child support

receiver.<sup>1</sup> He is married to Vivian Creighton Bishop, and they have a daughter, Aayesha J. Reese.<sup>2</sup>

Backed by Black leaders and the Columbus business community in 1992, Bishop was one of five primary challengers to enter the race for a U.S. House seat after the six-term incumbent, Representative Charles Floyd Hatcher, was part of the House "bank" scandal. The district encompassed much of southwestern Georgia, including large stretches of farmland and Fort Benning, the state's largest military installation. Redistricting under the Voting Rights Act made the district the state's third majority-Black district in 1992.<sup>3</sup> Bishop forced Hatcher into a runoff before defeating the incumbent with 53 percent of the vote in a head-to-head contest.<sup>4</sup> Touting assurances from Democratic leadership that he would receive Hatcher's seat on the Agriculture Committee crucial to his district, Bishop defeated Republican Jim Dudley in the general election with 64 percent of the vote. Though Bishop faced difficult races in 2000 and 2010, he has typically carried large majorities, most recently winning 59 percent of the vote in 2020.<sup>5</sup>

In the 103rd Congress (1993–1995), Bishop received assignments to three committees: Agriculture; Post Office and Civil Service; and Veterans' Affairs. In the 104th



Congress (1995–1997), the Post Office and Civil Service panel was subsumed under the new Government Reform Committee, and Bishop left that assignment. In the 105th Congress (1997–1999), Bishop swapped Veterans’ Affairs for an assignment to the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. In the 108th Congress (2003–2005), he relinquished all his committee assignments to serve on the exclusive Appropriations Committee. Since the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Bishop has chaired the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Related Agencies. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Bishop returned to the Agriculture Committee while maintaining his seat on Appropriations.

Bishop’s primary legislative focus has been providing for a better quality of life for residents across the urban, suburban, and rural areas of middle and southwest Georgia—highlighting that the well-being of one affects the others. Bishop shaped major farm bills through the Agriculture Committee, crafting revised price support programs for peanut production, a major agriculture industry in his district.<sup>6</sup> He negotiated provisions of the 2008 farm bill that instituted the peanut-rotation program, a compromise between conservation and agricultural economic assistance.<sup>7</sup> During the Donald J. Trump administration, Bishop leveraged a working relationship with Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, with whom Bishop had previously served in the Georgia senate.<sup>8</sup> Since becoming an Appropriations subcommittee chair, Bishop has led the crafting of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s spending bills.<sup>9</sup>

Bishop also has used his position on the Appropriations Committee to direct funding to the large military facilities throughout his district.<sup>10</sup> Since 2011, Bishop has pursued passage of the Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act to guarantee simultaneous payment of retirement and disability compensation to eligible disabled veterans.<sup>11</sup> Following an initial effort in 2009, Bishop secured full passage of a bill establishing the Jimmy Carter National Historic Site within his district as a National Historical Park in 2021.<sup>12</sup>

Bishop is a member of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus. He has joined Republican efforts to pass a balanced budget constitutional amendment, to ban flag desecration, and to allow school prayer.<sup>13</sup> Bishop has distanced himself from the rest of his caucus on the subject of gun control.

In the 115th Congress (2017–2019), Bishop was one of only six Democrats who voted for a bill to institute federal protections for concealed-carry handgun owners.<sup>14</sup>

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# Lisa Blunt Rochester

1962–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2017–

Democrat from Delaware



Image courtesy of the Member

The first African-American woman from Delaware to win election to a federal office, Lisa Blunt Rochester broke multiple barriers on her path to Congress. As the only Representative for the state of Delaware, she represents a complex constituency that prioritizes negotiation and bipartisanship. At a reception after she was sworn in as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Blunt Rochester held up a scarf bearing a print of the “X” her formerly enslaved great-great-great-grandfather had made in order to vote in Georgia during Reconstruction. “This represents where we’ve come from,” she said. “We have the right to stand up; we have the right to serve.”<sup>1</sup>

Lisa Blunt Rochester was born Lisa Blunt on February 10, 1962, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Ted Blunt and Alice LaTrelle. At age seven, her family moved to Wilmington, Delaware, where she graduated from Padua Academy in 1980. Blunt Rochester started college at Villanova University in Pennsylvania, where she met and married basketball player Alex Bradley. Together they had two children, Alex and Alyssa, before divorcing in 2003. After a period abroad for Bradley’s professional basketball career, Blunt Rochester resumed her studies stateside and earned a bachelor’s degree from Fairleigh Dickinson University in Rutherford, New

Jersey, in 1985. She later earned a master’s degree from the University of Delaware in Newark, Delaware, in 2003.<sup>2</sup>

Blunt Rochester joined then Representative Thomas Richard Carper’s Delaware congressional office as a constituent relations caseworker in 1988. She followed Carper into the Delaware governor’s office in 1993, serving first as a special assistant before being named deputy secretary of health and social services and then state secretary of labor in 1998. Blunt Rochester was appointed state personnel director in 2001. Three years later, she was named chief executive officer of the Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, a nonprofit community organization with the goal of empowering minority communities. In 2006, she married businessman Charles Rochester and moved to Shanghai, China, where she coauthored a book about expatriate women who reinvented themselves in Shanghai. Blunt Rochester returned to Delaware following her husband’s death in 2014. From 2012 through 2015, she also served as a senior fellow at the Institute for Community Inclusion at the University of Massachusetts Boston.<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after Representative John C. Carney Jr. announced his campaign for governor of Delaware in late



2015, Blunt Rochester entered the Democratic primary as an early frontrunner for the state's lone At-Large district. In late summer 2016, she captured the nomination with 44 percent of the vote against five other candidates.<sup>4</sup> During the campaign, Blunt Rochester called for a higher minimum wage, stricter gun control measures by closing purchasing loopholes, and criminal justice reform. She faced Air Force veteran Hans Reigle in the general election.<sup>5</sup> Blunt Rochester won with 56 percent of the vote, becoming both the first woman and the first person of color elected to Congress from Delaware.<sup>6</sup>

Blunt Rochester took office in the 115th Congress (2017–2019) with assignments to the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Education and the Workforce. In keeping with Delaware tradition, she pursued bipartisan solutions, looking for ways to work with congressional Republicans. Her bill to lower prescription drug costs passed the House with a scattering of Republican votes in May 2019, and her bill to address financial fraud targeting senior citizens received widespread bipartisan support in the House.<sup>7</sup> Blunt Rochester joined Republicans in votes to reopen the government in February 2018 and was the only Democratic cosponsor on the Strengthening Coastal Communities Act of 2018, which provided coastal homeowners easier access to disaster relief grants.<sup>8</sup> In November 2018, she coauthored an op-ed with Pennsylvania Republican Glenn Thompson urging the Senate to vote on reauthorization and improvements to the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act.<sup>9</sup>

Blunt Rochester introduced the Clean Slate Act in each of her three terms in office. The bill would seal arrest records for certain nonviolent offenses, including marijuana possession, with the goal of eliminating barriers to employment. “We want to allow people a clean slate and to move forward with their lives after they’ve done what they were supposed to do,” Blunt Rochester said of the bill.<sup>10</sup> She also voted for the broad bipartisan criminal justice reform bill signed by President Donald J. Trump in December 2018.<sup>11</sup>

Blunt Rochester won re-election in 2018 and 2020 with at least 57 percent of the vote. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), she left her previous committee assignments to take a seat on the exclusive Committee on Energy and Commerce.<sup>12</sup>

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# Cory A. Booker

1969–

UNITED STATES SENATOR

2013–

Democrat from New Jersey



Image courtesy of the Member

Cory A. Booker leveraged national renown and powerful connections to catapult from mayor of Newark to the U.S. Senate, becoming the first Black American to represent New Jersey in that chamber. Booker has emphasized bipartisanship in his efforts to pass criminal justice reform, environmental assistance, and infrastructure legislation, though he made headlines for his vocal opposition to several major nominations during the Donald J. Trump presidency.

Cory Anthony Booker was born in Washington, DC, on April 27, 1969, to Cary and Carolyn Booker, executives at the technology company IBM. The family moved to Harrington Park, New Jersey, where Booker grew up and played football at Northern Valley Regional High School in neighboring Old Tappan. After graduating in 1987, Booker earned a football scholarship to Stanford University in California.<sup>1</sup> He graduated with a bachelor's degree in political science in 1991 and a master's degree in sociology and urban affairs a year later. Awarded a Rhodes Scholarship, Booker attended Queen's College at London's Oxford University for two years before returning to study law at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Booker earned his law degree in 1997 and practiced public interest law in Newark, New Jersey, as part of a sponsored fellowship.<sup>2</sup>

One year later, Booker gave up the fellowship to run for Newark's city council. Booker served on the council from 1998 to 2002, when he launched a mayoral bid against longtime incumbent Sharpe James. Booker lost the race but immediately announced his intention to run again in 2006.<sup>3</sup> In between campaigns, he opened a new law firm, studied public policy, and went door-to-door throughout the city. In March 2006, Mayor James announced his retirement; Booker easily outpaced state senator Ronald L. Rice and cruised to victory.<sup>4</sup> As mayor of Newark, Booker cultivated an influential network of prominent supporters and pursued a high-profile revitalization of city schools. Booker also presided over a balanced budget, an expansion of affordable housing, and improvements to the city's mass transit.<sup>5</sup>

In early 2013, Booker began preparing to run for the Senate seat being vacated the next year by New Jersey Senator Frank Raleigh Lautenberg. When Lautenberg died in June 2013, Governor Chris Christie appointed state attorney general Jeffrey Scott Chiesa, who declined to run in an October special election for the remainder of Lautenberg's term. Booker accelerated his plans to run in the August Democratic primary.<sup>6</sup> Benefiting from a national profile, he bested three other candidates, including

Representatives Frank Pallone Jr. and Rush Holt, with 60 percent of the vote.<sup>7</sup> In the special election, Booker defeated former Bogota, New Jersey, mayor Steve Lonegan with 55 percent of the vote.<sup>8</sup> He won a full term in 2014 with 56 percent of the vote and was re-elected in 2020 with 57 percent.<sup>9</sup>

Booker was sworn in to the 113th Congress (2013–2015) on October 31, 2013. He was assigned to the following Senate committees: Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Environment and Public Works; and Small Business and Entrepreneurship. In the 114th Congress (2015–2017), Booker joined the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee; he left the following Congress. Booker also left the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee during the 115th Congress (2017–2019) and joined the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Judiciary Committee. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Booker exchanged his seat on Environment and Public Works for a spot on the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry.

Booker has emphasized reaching across the aisle to pass legislation. He worked with Texas Senator Ted Cruz to pass the Emergency Information Improvement Act of 2015, providing emergency relief to broadcasters in the wake of storms and disasters.<sup>10</sup> Booker also partnered with Senator Rand Paul to pursue marijuana decriminalization and passing a law making lynching a federal crime.<sup>11</sup> In 2018, Booker helped negotiate passage of the First Step Act, a significant criminal justice reform bill that aimed to reduce recidivism and help released felons find homes and employment.<sup>12</sup>

In the 113th Congress, Booker was named chair of the Environment and Public Works Oversight Subcommittee. In 2019, following reports of a drinking water crisis in parts of New Jersey, Booker shepherded a bill to passage that allowed states to reallocate funds to repair municipal piping and lower lead levels.<sup>13</sup> Democrats elevated Booker to chief deputy whip during the 115th Congress; in the 117th Congress, he was appointed vice chair of the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee.<sup>14</sup>

From his seat on the Judiciary Committee, Booker drew national attention for his opposition to several of President Trump's Cabinet and judicial nominations, particularly Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh and later for his defense of President Joseph R. Biden Jr.'s nominations, especially Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson. Booker announced his candidacy for the

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## Anthony G. Brown

1961–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2017–

Democrat from Maryland



Image courtesy of the Member

A former U.S. Army attorney, state representative, and lieutenant governor, Anthony G. Brown brought significant governing experience when he won election to the U.S. House in 2016. Representing the Maryland suburbs outside Washington, DC, Brown has focused on transportation and climate issues in his district while building partnerships between the executive branch and local defense contractors.

Anthony Gregory Brown was born in Huntington, New York, on November 21, 1961, to Dr. Roy and Lilly Brown, immigrants from Jamaica and Switzerland, respectively. Brown, one of five children, grew up and attended public schools in Huntington, New York. He graduated from Huntington High School in 1979 after serving as the school's first Black student body president. Brown attended the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, New York, in the summer of 1979 before applying to Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. After obtaining a bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1984, he was commissioned in the Regular Army through the Reserve Officer Training Corps at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts; attended Army flight school at Fort Rucker, Alabama, graduating first in his class; and served as an Army helicopter pilot with the 3rd Infantry Division in Germany.

In 1989, Brown joined the Army Reserve and returned to Harvard, where he completed a law degree in 1992. Brown was a law clerk for the chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces for two years and practiced law privately in the Washington, DC, area for twelve years. Brown transferred to the Army Judge Advocate General's Corps in 1995 and retired at the rank of colonel in 2014. Brown married Karmen Bailey Walker in 2012; they have three children.<sup>1</sup>

Brown launched his political career in 1998 by winning election to the Maryland house of delegates representing a district in Prince George's County. Brown was appointed majority whip before he was deployed to Iraq with the 353rd Civil Affairs Command for 10 months in 2004, where he assisted in the effort to rebuild the Iraqi government while continuing to serve in the legislature. In the 2006 Maryland gubernatorial race, Baltimore mayor Martin O'Malley selected Brown as his running mate.<sup>2</sup> Brown's legislative connections assisted the O'Malley–Brown administration in implementing the Affordable Care Act and coordinating military base realignment within Maryland. Brown touted these efforts in his own unsuccessful 2014 gubernatorial campaign against Republican Larry Hogan.<sup>3</sup>



When Senator Barbara Ann Mikulski announced her intention to retire, Representative Donna F. Edwards declared her candidacy to replace Mikulski in 2016, leaving a vacancy in the Fourth District. The wealthy majority-Black district included large sections of Prince George's and Anne Arundel counties.<sup>4</sup> Brown received key endorsements to pull ahead of former state's attorney Glenn Ivey, winning the six-candidate primary with 42 percent of the vote.<sup>5</sup> In the general election, Brown campaigned on a pledge to deliver effective constituent services and economic opportunities for working families. Running against Republican candidate George McDermott in a solidly Democratic district, Brown won a commanding 74 percent of the vote. Brown defeated McDermott by similar margins in 2018 and 2020.<sup>6</sup>

Brown has served on the Armed Services Committee since the 115th Congress (2017–2019). During his first term, he was also assigned to the Natural Resources Committee and the Ethics Committee, though he was reassigned after the 116th Congress (2019–2021), when he was selected to serve as vice chairman of the Armed Services Committee. Brown was also assigned to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee during his second term, where he worked to stop Governor Hogan's proposal to widen highways around Maryland's DC-area suburbs by adding toll lanes. Brown unsuccessfully attempted to submit amendments to the annual appropriations bill barring the use of federal funds to implement the plan. However, Hogan's proposal was ultimately scaled back.<sup>7</sup> In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Brown joined the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

Much of Brown's early legislative work leveraged his military experience and relationships. Brown successfully attached an amendment to the defense appropriations bill in 2018 protecting the functions of the Defense Information Systems Agency, part of the U.S. Department of Defense and located in Fort Meade, Maryland.<sup>8</sup> As an Armed Services Committee member, Brown organized a group of defense firms and academic institutions to address issues including the aging workforce and supply chain weaknesses.<sup>9</sup> In 2019, the annual defense authorization law included his proposal providing financial incentives for contractors to establish training programs that meet the needs of the Department of Defense.<sup>10</sup>

In 2020, Brown partnered with Republicans to introduce the Diversity in Defense Act to include more diversity-related requirements in the armed forces. The bill was included in the House-passed version of the fiscal year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act.<sup>11</sup>

In October 2021, Brown announced that he would not seek re-election for a fourth term in the House but would instead campaign for the Democratic nomination for Maryland attorney general in 2022.<sup>12</sup>

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## G.K. Butterfield

1947–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2004–

Democrat from North Carolina

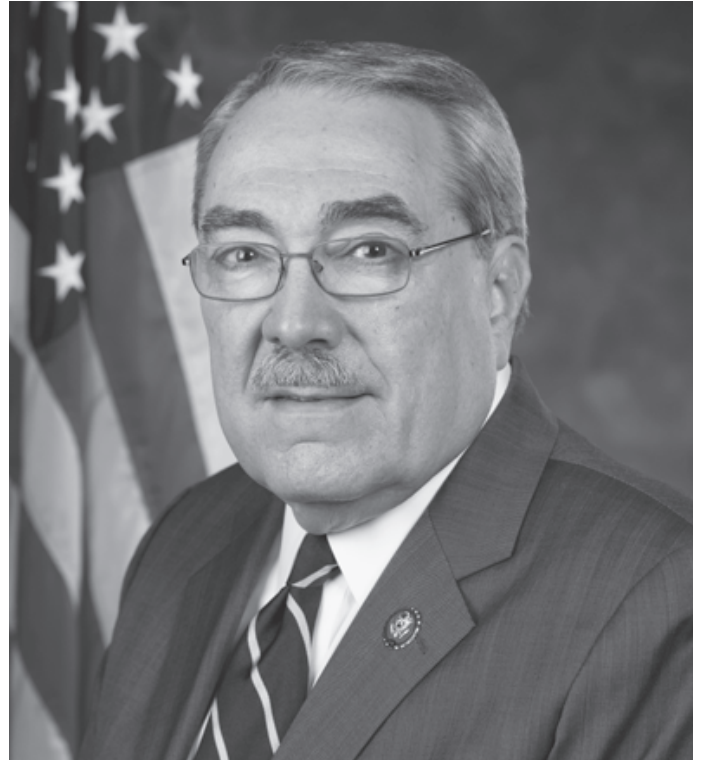


Image courtesy of the Member

After serving for more than 15 years as a North Carolina judge, including a term on the state supreme court, G.K. Butterfield won a 2004 special election to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. Re-elected to the 109th Congress (2005–2007) less than four months later, Representative Butterfield has prioritized addressing health care disparities and racial discrimination during nearly two decades in the House.

George Kenneth “G.K.” Butterfield Jr. was born on April 27, 1947, in Wilson, North Carolina. His father, Dr. George Kenneth Butterfield Sr., was a dentist who won a seat on the Wilson city council in 1953—making him one of a handful of African Americans to hold political office in the state since Reconstruction.<sup>1</sup> Town officials later changed the election format to deprive the senior Butterfield and all Black candidates of a chance to win further elections. “I saw how the political system was manipulated to obtain an unfair result,” the younger Butterfield recalled. “Having seen that injustice has made me want to be involved politically.”<sup>2</sup> Butterfield served two years in the U.S. Army as a personnel specialist from 1968 to 1970 before graduating in 1971 from North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina, with a bachelor’s degree in sociology and political

science. Three years later, he earned a law degree from North Carolina Central University and commenced private law practice. Butterfield is married to Dr. Sylvia James and has three daughters.<sup>3</sup>

Butterfield later served as president of the North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers and filed several successful voting rights lawsuits. In November 1988, he won election to the North Carolina superior court, where he served for 12 years. In 2001, North Carolina Governor Mike Easley appointed Judge Butterfield to the North Carolina supreme court, where he served for two years. In 2002, Butterfield lost his re-election bid and was subsequently appointed special superior court judge.

In 2004, when incumbent Representative Frank W. Ballance Jr. announced his retirement from the U.S. House, Butterfield won the nomination to run in the special election.<sup>4</sup> The heavily Democratic district, which covered large swaths of eastern North Carolina, was largely rural and poor and was one of two majority-Black congressional districts in the state. Butterfield ran on a platform that promised more federal dollars to help small business development revitalize the local economy.<sup>5</sup> On July 20,



2004, Butterfield easily won both the special election to serve the remainder of the term in the 108th Congress (2003–2005) and the Democratic primary for the full term in the 109th Congress. In November 2004, Butterfield prevailed with 64 percent of the vote. He was not seriously challenged at the polls until 2020 when his share of the vote fell to 54 percent.<sup>6</sup>

Representative Butterfield was sworn in on July 21, 2004.<sup>7</sup> He received assignments on the Agriculture and Small Business committees. He left the Small Business panel to accept a seat on the Armed Services Committee in the 109th Congress. In the 110th Congress (2007–2009), Butterfield gave up other assignments for a seat on the influential Energy and Commerce Committee. Butterfield also served on the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct during the 111th Congress (2009–2011) and joined the Committee on House Administration in the 116th Congress (2019–2021), where he chaired the Subcommittee on Elections beginning in 2021. Since 2007, Butterfield has served as a chief deputy whip, making him the first Democrat from North Carolina to serve in this position.<sup>8</sup>

From his seat on the Energy and Commerce Committee, Butterfield has taken particular interest in health care costs, the pharmaceutical industry, and interstate commerce. In 2012, Butterfield worked with Representative Michael T. McCaul of Texas to provide drug companies with faster federal regulatory reviews in exchange for prioritizing research to treat rare pediatric diseases. The bill became law in 2012.<sup>9</sup> When the law expired in 2020, he drafted a bill to reauthorize the provisions which passed the House.<sup>10</sup> Butterfield also authored and guided a bipartisan bill through the committee that combated coin counterfeiting; it became law in 2014.<sup>11</sup>

Butterfield has pushed for honest reflections on historic racial discrimination. During development of the Capitol Visitor Center, he lobbied to include exhibits dedicated to nineteenth-century Black representation in Congress.<sup>12</sup> In 2014, he sponsored a resolution establishing a memorial for enslaved people and Black soldiers who fought in the American Revolution.<sup>13</sup> The following year, Butterfield was elected chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) during the 114th Congress (2015–2017). He led a CBC delegation to Ferguson, Missouri, in early 2015 to address

the unrest precipitated by the killing of an unarmed Black man by police.<sup>14</sup> Later that year, Butterfield led discussion on the House Floor regarding use of the Confederate battle flag and the rise of racially motivated hate groups.<sup>15</sup>

On November 18, 2021, Butterfield announced his intention to retire at the end of the 117th Congress (2021–2023).<sup>16</sup>

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## André Carson

1974–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2008–

Democrat from Indiana



Image courtesy of the Member

In March 2008, André Carson won a special election as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives to fill the vacant seat left by the death of his grandmother Julia May Carson. Carson became the second person of Islamic faith elected to Congress. As a former law enforcement officer, Carson has urged transparency in national security and racial and faith equality. He is the Dean of Indiana's congressional delegation and the most senior Muslim Member of Congress currently serving.

André D. Carson was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, on October 16, 1974.<sup>1</sup> Carson's grandmother was Julia Carson, a political trailblazer who served 18 years in the Indiana state legislature before winning election to the U.S. House in 1996. Introduced to national politics at an early age, Carson accompanied his grandmother to the 1984 Democratic National Convention. Carson graduated from Arsenal Technical High School in Indianapolis.<sup>2</sup> He graduated with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Concordia University Wisconsin in Mequon, Wisconsin, in 2003. Two years later, he earned a master's degree in business management from Indiana Wesleyan University in Marion, Indiana.<sup>3</sup>

Carson worked as an Indiana state excise officer for nearly a decade. He also worked in intelligence and counterterrorism

for the Indiana Department of Homeland Security and served at the Indiana Intelligence Fusion Center. There he worked in an anti-terrorism unit to protect Indianapolis and the United States from terrorist threats at home and abroad. In 2007, Carson served on the Indianapolis and Marion County city-county council, while working for Cripe Architectural and Engineering Firm.<sup>4</sup>

After the untimely death of his grandmother, Julia Carson, a vacancy opened in the Seventh Congressional District.<sup>5</sup> After securing the Democratic nomination, Carson emphasized his opposition to the war in Iraq and endorsed tax cuts for working families.<sup>6</sup> Carson ultimately won the March special election with 54 percent of the vote, but just two months later, he faced seven challengers in the primary for a full term. Carson captured a plurality and went on to win the general election.<sup>7</sup>

Carson was sworn in on March 13, 2008, and accepted assignments to the Financial Services Committee and the Science and Technology Committee.<sup>8</sup> Carson left the latter committee after the 110th Congress (2007–2009). In the 113th Congress (2013–2015), he exchanged his seat on the Financial Services Committee for seats on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Armed Services

Committee; he left the Armed Services Committee after one term. In the 114th Congress (2015–2017), he joined the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

As a Muslim with law enforcement experience, Carson brought a unique perspective to the House Intelligence Committee.<sup>9</sup> In the 116th and 117th Congresses (2019–2023), Carson chaired the Intelligence Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Counterintelligence, and Counterproliferation. As committee chair, Carson has urged intelligence agencies to address the threat posed by White supremacist organizations.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Carson strongly objected to President Donald J. Trump's travel ban placed on Muslim-majority countries and compared the decision to segregation and Japanese internment. He coauthored the NO BAN Act, which would repeal these travel bans and prevent similar bans in the future.<sup>11</sup>

Alongside the Indiana state delegation, Carson spearheaded legislation in 2018 designating the Landmark for Peace Memorial in downtown Indianapolis as the Kennedy–King National Commemorative Site. The bill incorporated the memorial, which honors Senator Robert Francis Kennedy's impromptu Indianapolis speech on the night of Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, into the African American Civil Rights Network managed by the National Park Service.<sup>12</sup>

Carson voted for the Affordable Care Act and continues to support efforts to lower the cost of health care and prescription drugs. He supports abortion rights, criminal justice reform, LGBTQ equality, greater rights for immigrants and refugees, restoring the Voting Rights Act, and other progressive policies aimed at creating a more inclusive society. He has served as part of the Democratic leadership's whip team and the Congressional Black Caucus's leadership team.<sup>13</sup>

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# Yvette D. Clarke

1964–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2007–

Democrat from New York



Image courtesy of the Member

In November 2006, Yvette D. Clarke won election as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives. From attending neighborhood meetings as a small child to working in local and state government, Clarke has served her Brooklyn constituents, immigrant communities, and small business owners throughout her life. “I think we have an obligation to look at the dynamics within our most impoverished communities,” she once said, “and look for ways in which we can provide pathways to opportunity.”<sup>1</sup>

Yvette Diane Clarke was born in Brooklyn, New York, on November 21, 1964, to Leslie and Una S. T. Clarke, who emigrated to the United States from Jamaica. Leslie, an engineer and architect, and Una, a community activist, raised Yvette and her brother, Leslie Jr., in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn. Clarke was exposed to public service at a young age when she attended community meetings with her mother. She graduated from Edward R. Murrow High School in 1982 and attended Oberlin College in Oberlin, Ohio, from 1982 to 1986.<sup>2</sup>

Returning to New York, Clarke worked as a child care specialist and then became a legislative aide to New York state senator Velmanette Montgomery and New York assemblywoman Barbara Clark. She also worked

as an executive assistant for the New York state workers’ compensation board and as director of the Bronx Overall Development Corporation. In 2001, Clarke won a New York city council seat which had been occupied by her mother since 1991. Consequently, Clarke became the first daughter to succeed her mother in the council’s history. She served on the council from 2002 to 2007.<sup>3</sup>

Clarke then set her sights on running for a congressional district that cut across the heart of Brooklyn and included her Flatbush neighborhood. The district included sections of Crown Heights, Brownsville, and Sheepshead Bay—an economically diverse area with a large minority population and a deep base of Democratic support. In 2004, Clarke ran against 12-term incumbent Major R. Owens but lost in the primary with 28 percent of the vote. When Owens announced that he would retire from the House in 2006, Clarke ran for the seat again. She beat three opponents in the Democratic primary with 31 percent of the vote. In the November general election, she defeated four opponents, garnering 77 percent of the vote. In her seven re-election campaigns, Clarke has earned no less than 73 percent of the vote, most recently winning a seat in the 117th Congress (2021–2023) with 83 percent of the vote.<sup>4</sup>



In the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011), Clarke served on three House committees: Education and Labor; Homeland Security; and Small Business. In the 111th Congress, Clarke chaired the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology. In 2011, she left Education and Labor but remained on the other committees through the 112th and 113th Congresses (2011–2015). Clarke also joined the Ethics Committee in the 113th Congress (2013–2015). In the 114th and 115th Congresses (2015–2019), Clarke left Homeland Security and joined the Energy and Commerce Committee. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), when Democrats regained the House majority, Clarke left Ethics and Small Business and rejoined the Homeland Security Committee. Additionally, she served as vice chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee. In the 117th Congress, Clarke is a senior member of both Energy and Commerce and Homeland Security, where she chairs the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, & Innovation. Clarke has been a member of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) since coming to Congress in 2007. Today Clarke chairs the CBC's Immigration Task Force.

Throughout her congressional career, Clarke has focused on protecting and promoting the rights and opportunities of immigrant communities. Upon entering Congress, Clarke sponsored a bill that directed the U.S. Attorney General and the Homeland Security Secretary to provide to Congress a plan to clear the backlog of name check requests from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. More recently, Clarke introduced the Protect Our Sanctuary Cities Act, which would nullify an executive order that compelled law enforcement officials to deport certain immigrants. Clarke has also been a prominent advocate of the DREAM Act to grant residency to undocumented immigrants who entered the country as minors.<sup>5</sup>

Clarke championed small businesses from her positions on the Small Business and Energy and Commerce Committees. She submitted a bill that directed the Small Business Administration to establish a pilot program to help small businesses started by entrepreneurs in poverty-stricken areas. She has also been critical of the lack of support for minority-owned small businesses within the Federal Communications Commission.<sup>6</sup>

On the Homeland Security Committee, Clarke has focused on cybersecurity threats. As chair of the

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technology in the 111th Congress, she introduced legislation that authorized funding for the Homeland Security Secretary to prepare a strategic plan that included development of nuclear detection technology, critical infrastructure protections, and border security enhancements. In July 2021, Clarke's bill to establish a cybersecurity grant and training program to assist state and local governments passed the House.<sup>7</sup>

## Notes

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# Emanuel Cleaver II

1944–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2005–

Democrat from Missouri

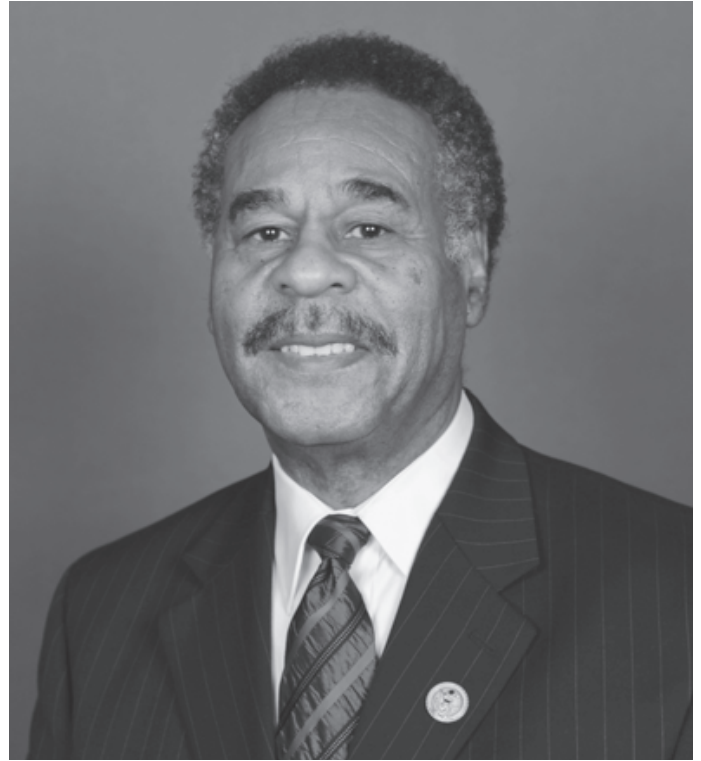


Image courtesy of the Member

Emanuel Cleaver II won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2004. As a former Kansas City mayor and city councilman, he entered Congress in 2005 with extensive local government experience. From his seat on the Financial Services Committee, Representative Cleaver promoted college tuition savings plans, affordable housing, and home ownership. He also championed legislation to commemorate Missouri's Black history.

Emanuel Cleaver II was born in Waxahachie, Texas, on October 26, 1944. His family's religious roots—his great-grandfather, grandfather, and an uncle were preachers—inspired him to a life of ministry.<sup>1</sup> He graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in Wichita Falls, Texas, in 1963 and earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Prairie View A&M University in Prairie View, Texas, in 1972. Two years later, Cleaver graduated with a master's degree in divinity from the St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri. Cleaver served as an ordained Methodist minister for a central Kansas City congregation. Cleaver and his wife, Dianne, a psychologist, have four children and three grandchildren.

Cleaver was active in the 1960s civil rights movement and entered elective politics in 1979, successfully campaigning

for a city council seat in Kansas City. He served there until 1991, acting as mayor pro tempore and chairing the council's planning and zoning committee.<sup>2</sup> He won election as Kansas City mayor in 1991, becoming the first African American to do so.<sup>3</sup> Cleaver served as mayor for eight years, focusing on job growth and economic development. He worked as a radio talk show host after leaving office in 1999.<sup>4</sup>

In December 2003, five-term Democratic Representative Karen McCarthy announced she would not run for re-election. Cleaver pursued the nomination for the vacant seat representing the middle class, largely Democratic district that covered portions of Kansas City and some of its eastern suburbs.<sup>5</sup> African Americans accounted for 24 percent of the population and Democratic Representatives had held the seat since before the New Deal.<sup>6</sup> Cleaver won the August 3, 2004, primary with 60 percent of the vote against Jamie Metzl, a former White House Fellow and National Security Council aide.<sup>7</sup> In November, he faced Republican Jeanne Patterson, a businesswoman and political newcomer, and prevailed with 55 percent of the vote. In his eight re-elections, Cleaver won with margins between 52 and 64 percent of the vote.<sup>8</sup>



When Cleaver joined the 109th Congress (2005–2007), he was assigned to the Financial Services Committee, where he has served throughout his House tenure. In the 110th Congress (2007–2009), Cleaver joined the newly created Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, remaining on the panel until it was eliminated in 2011. In the 111th Congress (2009–2011), he served on the Homeland Security Committee for one term. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), he returned to the Homeland Security panel and joined the Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress. He also chaired the Financial Services Committee's Subcommittee on National Security, International Development, and Monetary Policy. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), he chaired the Housing, Community Development, and Insurance Subcommittee.

In 2010, the House passed Cleaver's bill to create Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation-insured college savings accounts to provide an additional option for families planning for college.<sup>9</sup> During debate on the House Floor, Cleaver told his colleagues that customers suffered losses of up to 50 percent in their existing stock-based college investment accounts following the 2008 recession.<sup>10</sup> The Senate did not act on the bill.

As ranking member of the Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Insurance, Cleaver worked closely with the panel's chair, Missouri Representative Blaine Luetkemeyer, to introduce the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act. When signed into law in 2016, the measure amended the review process for federally subsidized Section 8 housing, expanded foster care aid, and revised Federal Housing Administration guidelines making it easier for first-time home buyers to purchase condominiums.<sup>11</sup>

Cleaver continued to focus on housing during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2021, he introduced the Stabilizing Rural Homeowners During COVID Act to expand the Department of Agriculture's rural housing loan programs. As chair of the Financial Services Committee's Housing, Community Development, and Insurance Subcommittee, Cleaver held a hearing to examine safety and health in public housing during the pandemic.<sup>12</sup>

In the 112th Congress (2011–2013), Representative Cleaver served as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus. Under his leadership, the caucus organized a national job fair tour to increase employment, especially in Black

communities. The tour visited Detroit, Michigan; Miami, Florida; Atlanta, Georgia; and Los Angeles, California in August 2011.<sup>13</sup> In 2020, Cleaver's Negro Leagues Baseball Centennial Commemorative Coin Act was signed into law. The measure instructed the U.S. Department of the Treasury to design and produce commemorative coins to celebrate the founding of the Negro National League.<sup>14</sup> The law dedicates the proceeds of coin purchases made by private citizens to the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City—a museum Cleaver advocated for during his time as mayor.<sup>15</sup>

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# James E. Clyburn

1940–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1993–

Democrat from South Carolina

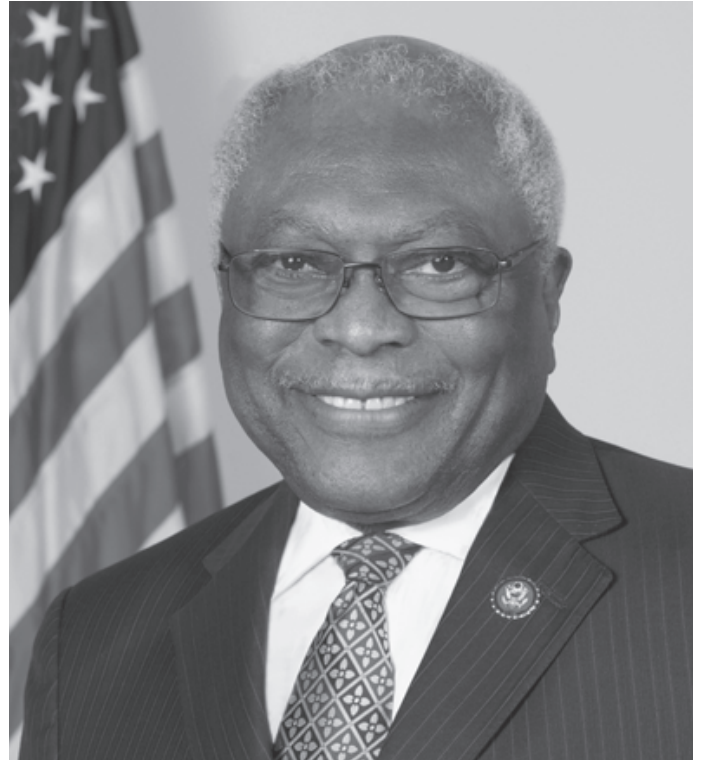


Image courtesy of the Member

James E. Clyburn's 1992 election made him the first African American from South Carolina to serve in Congress since 1897. He has been part of the top tier of congressional leadership since his 2006 election as Majority Whip and is only the second Black Representative to ascend to the third-ranking position in the U.S. House of Representatives. An influential voice in the Democratic Party, Clyburn has crafted policies to support rural and low-income residents of his South Carolina district and across the nation.

James Enos Clyburn was born in Sumter, South Carolina, on July 21, 1940, the eldest of three sons of Enos L. Clyburn, a minister, and Almeta Clyburn, a beauty shop operator. Clyburn grew up in the segregated South and took an early interest in civil rights activism. At age 12, he was elected president of the Sumter youth chapter of the NAACP. He attended Mather Academy, a private high school of all Black students, and continued his studies at South Carolina State College, in Orangeburg, South Carolina, where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1961. During the early 1960s, he organized student civil rights protests, which resulted in several arrests. After one such arrest, he was taken to an Orangeburg courthouse where he met his future wife, Emily England, a fellow South

Carolina State student who brought the detained students food. They raised three daughters—Mignon, Angela, and Jennifer—and were married for 58 years until Emily Clyburn's death in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

After college, Clyburn taught high school history before working as an employment counselor at the South Carolina Employment Security Commission and directing Charleston's neighborhood youth corps.<sup>2</sup> Starting in 1968, he led the South Carolina state commission for farm workers. In 1971, he was appointed to the staff of South Carolina Governor John West. In 1974, he was appointed head of the state commission for human affairs, which investigated cases of employment discrimination. He held this post for 18 years.<sup>3</sup>

In 1992, a federal court drew a majority-Black congressional district in eastern South Carolina in compliance with the Voting Rights Act. It was a sprawling district encompassing all or part of 16 counties and parts of Charleston, Columbia, and Florence.<sup>4</sup> As a statewide appointee, Clyburn enjoyed widespread name recognition and secured an early fundraising advantage. He captured the Democratic primary over four other candidates with 56 percent of the vote. In the general election, Clyburn

easily won a seat in the 103rd Congress (1993–1995) with 65 percent of the vote. In his subsequent 14 re-elections, Clyburn has won with comfortable margins between 63 and 94 percent of the vote.<sup>5</sup>

During his first three terms in the House, Representative Clyburn served on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (formerly the Public Works and Transportation Committee) and the Veterans' Affairs Committee. He also landed a seat on the Small Business Committee during the 104th Congress (1995–1997). In the 106th Congress (1999–2001), Clyburn won a seat on the Appropriations Committee, on which he served exclusively until his election as Majority Whip. Since 2020, Clyburn has chaired the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.

Clyburn's rise into the ranks of Democratic leadership began in his first term, when he was elected freshman class president. In the 106th Congress he chaired the Congressional Black Caucus. After the 2002 election, Clyburn won a three-way contest for vice chair of the Democratic Caucus. His colleagues elected him Democratic Caucus chair in 2005 and then Majority Whip for the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011). Clyburn served as Assistant Democratic Leader from 2011 to 2019, when Republicans held the House majority. After Democrats regained control of the chamber in 2018, Clyburn was re-elected Majority Whip.<sup>6</sup>

As Majority Whip, Clyburn worked with Ways and Means Committee Chair Charles B. Rangel of New York to amend the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—Congress's stimulus package developed in response to the Great Recession—to ensure that relief funds were distributed equitably. Clyburn devised the 10-20-30 formula that allocated at least 10 percent of federal funding from certain rural relief programs to counties that have had a 20 percent poverty rate for the past 30 years.<sup>7</sup> He was a major supporter of the 2010 Affordable Care Act and has fought to maintain funding for community health centers, which provide basic health care to underserved communities.<sup>8</sup> Clyburn created a House task force to promote rural broadband access and helped craft provisions of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which allocated \$65 billion for broadband infrastructure and became law in late 2021.<sup>9</sup>

Clyburn's bill to establish Congaree National Park—South Carolina's first national park—was signed into law

in 2003.<sup>10</sup> In 2006, Clyburn's Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Act became law as part of the National Heritage Areas Act, which funded cultural preservation efforts and provided for federal recognition of the Gullah people, descendants of enslaved Africans who lived along the southeastern Atlantic coast.<sup>11</sup> His focus on preserving the history of his home state can also be seen in his creation of the South Carolina National Heritage Corridor as part of the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996 and the Reconstruction Era National Historical Park included in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act of 2019.<sup>12</sup>

## Notes

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## Danny K. Davis

1941–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1997–

Democrat from Illinois

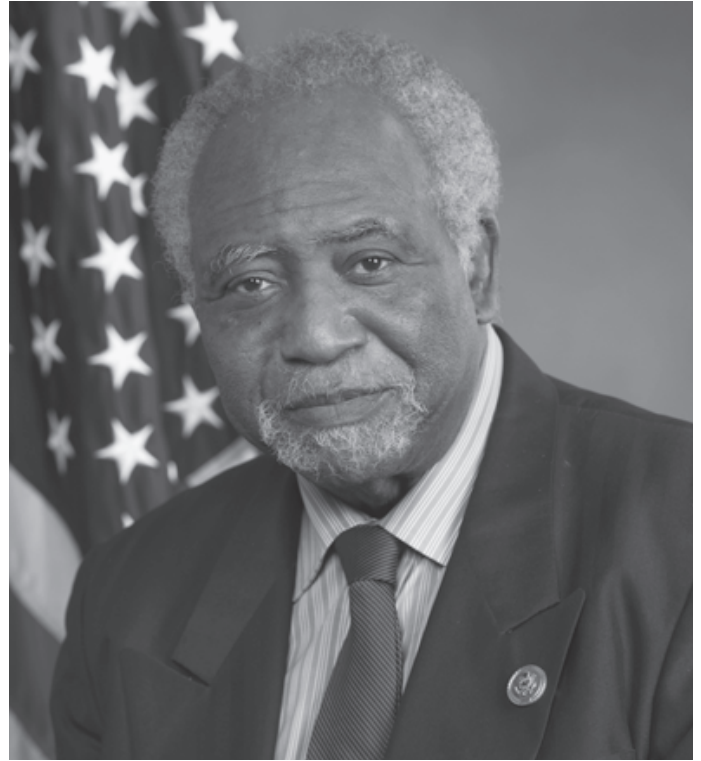


Image courtesy of the Member

After 18 years as a Chicago alderman and county commissioner, Danny K. Davis won election to a U.S. House of Representatives seat representing the city's West Side in 1996. In Congress, Davis has created legislation to bring social services, improved health care, and economic opportunities to his district. "The best way to evaluate the effectiveness and greatness of a society is by how well it treats its old, how well it treats its young, and what it does for those who have difficulty caring for themselves," he said.<sup>1</sup>

Danny Davis was born on September 6, 1941, to Mazzie Glass and Hezekiah Davis, cotton farmers in Parkdale, Arkansas.<sup>2</sup> He graduated from Savage High School in Parkdale in 1957 and four years later earned a bachelor's degree from Arkansas Agricultural, Mechanical, and Normal College in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. After college, Davis moved to Chicago, where he took a job as a post office clerk and later became a teacher in the Chicago public school system. He earned a master's degree from Chicago State University in 1968 and, in 1977, completed a Ph.D. in public administration at the Union Graduate School in Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>3</sup> Davis is married to Vera G. Davis and has two sons: Jonathan and Stacey.<sup>4</sup>

After teaching, Davis embarked on a career as a community organizer for public health. He served in leadership positions at several federally funded community health centers in Chicago that were opened as part of the Lyndon B. Johnson administration's War on Poverty, and he ultimately became president of the National Association of Community Health Centers.<sup>5</sup> In 1979, Davis was elected to the Chicago city council, where he served as alderman for West Chicago's 29th ward. In 1990, he was elected as Cook County board commissioner, a post he held until 1996. He was among the first wave of Black aldermen who were not part of the Democratic political machine constructed by Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley, who died in 1976.<sup>6</sup>

In 1984 and 1986, Davis unsuccessfully challenged incumbent Representative Cardiss Collins for a seat representing much of Chicago's West Side—a majority-Black district encompassing neighborhoods from the downtown Loop to the city's western suburbs.<sup>7</sup> He also ran in Chicago's 1991 mayoral primary but lost to incumbent Richard M. Daley, the son of the former mayor.<sup>8</sup>

When Cardiss Collins announced her decision to retire at the end of the 104th Congress (1995–1997), Davis entered the Democratic primary to succeed her in 1996.



With widespread name recognition from his long tenure in local government, Davis emerged from a crowded field of 10 and won with 32 percent of the vote in the heavily Democratic district.<sup>9</sup> In the general election, he won with 83 percent of the vote and has achieved similar margins in each of his 12 subsequent re-elections.<sup>10</sup>

When Davis was sworn in to the 105th Congress (1997–1999) he received assignments on the Government Reform Committee and the Small Business Committee. He also picked up a seat on the Education and the Workforce Committee in the 108th Congress (2003–2005). He has since left the latter two panels to serve on the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee, which he first joined in the 111th Congress (2009–2011). Davis has chaired the Subcommittee on Worker and Family Support since the 116th Congress (2019–2021). In the 110th Congress (2007–2009), he chaired the renamed Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Subcommittee on the Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and District of Columbia.

From his seat on the Ways and Means Committee, Davis has sponsored legislation designed to assist working families and children, including strengthening family partnerships through financial assistance, expanding access to child and dependent care tax credits, and funding social programs.<sup>11</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, Davis introduced a bill that boosted funding for existing support programs that provide housing and employment assistance to foster youth and temporarily prevented children from aging out of the foster care system. The measure was incorporated into an omnibus appropriations bill that became law in 2020.<sup>12</sup>

Representative Davis's legislative agenda has also focused on economic development, job training, health care, and criminal justice reform. As a freshman, Davis authored an amendment to the 1998 surface transportation authorization bill that significantly increased funding for a public transportation program for welfare recipients.<sup>13</sup> Davis's amendments to the Healthcare Research and Quality Act of 1999 directed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to allocate grants for health research to historically Black colleges and Hispanic-serving institutions and to submit an annual report documenting racial disparities in health care availability.<sup>14</sup> In 2008, President George W. Bush signed into law Davis's Second Chance Act, which was designed to prepare ex-offenders for re-entry into society and prevent recidivism. The

program provided grants and aid to states and nonprofits to initiate and augment rehabilitation programs, including mentorship, drug treatment, and vocational training.<sup>15</sup>

Davis has also proposed a measure that would expunge the criminal record of first-time nonviolent offenders after the completion of their sentence.<sup>16</sup>

## Notes

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## Val Butler Demings

1957–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2017–

Democrat from Florida

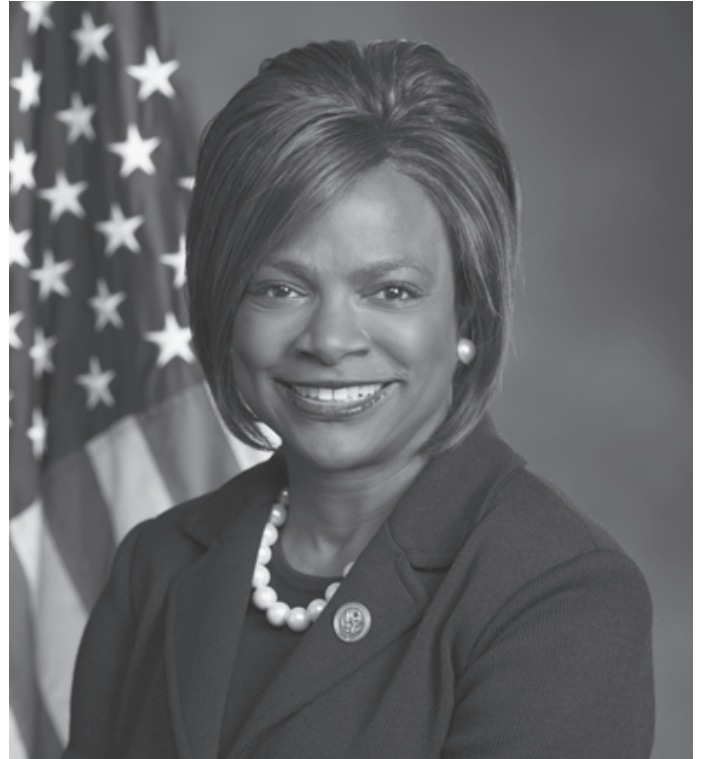


Image courtesy of the Member

In November 2016, Val Butler Demings won election to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Democrat from Orlando, Florida. A former law enforcement officer and chief of police, Demings served in the Orlando Police Department for nearly 30 years and brought her security credentials to the House, earning seats on the Committee on Homeland Security, the Committee on the Judiciary, and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

Val Demings was born Valdez Venita Butler on March 12, 1957, and grew up in Jacksonville, Florida, the youngest of seven children. Demings's father, James, worked as a janitor and her mother, Elouise, as a domestic worker. After graduating from Wolfson High School in Jacksonville, Demings became the first in her family to graduate from college, earning a bachelor's degree in criminology from Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida, in 1979. After a brief stint in social work, Demings joined the Orlando Police Department, beginning what would become a three-decade career in law enforcement. Demings worked her way up the ranks and later earned a master's degree in public administration from Webster University in Orlando, Florida, in 1996. Demings became commander of police operations in 2003 and chief of police

four years later, making her the first woman to hold the top law enforcement job in Orlando. Demings and her husband Jerry, the current mayor of Orange County, Florida, have three sons and five grandchildren.<sup>1</sup>

When Demings retired from the Orlando police department in 2011, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee approached her about running for the Tenth District stretching along the Gulf Coast.<sup>2</sup> Although Demings lost the close House race in 2012, she ran again in 2016 in the new Tenth District centered on Orlando following Florida's redistricting process. In recent years, Orlando, alongside its booming tourism sector, home to several amusement parks, has experienced a surge in growth driven by new technology companies and education.<sup>3</sup> In 2016, Demings secured the Democratic nomination with 57 percent of the vote before winning the general election with 65 percent of the vote. Demings has consistently won re-election with more than 63 percent of the vote and ran unopposed in 2018.<sup>4</sup>

Demings received a rare opportunity for a new lawmaker when party leadership named her to the Democratic whip team.<sup>5</sup> She was also assigned to the influential Homeland Security Committee. In December 2017, Demings won



a seat on the House Judiciary Committee, which had oversight of the Special Counsel investigation led by Robert Mueller into foreign interference in the 2016 presidential election.<sup>6</sup> Her seats on Judiciary, Homeland Security, and the Permanent Select Intelligence Committee placed her at the forefront of congressional oversight of the Donald J. Trump administration.

In June 2016, a gunman killed 49 people and wounded 53 others inside the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida. At the time, it was the single deadliest mass shooting in American history. The assault on her home city, combined with her career in law enforcement, led Demings to champion a number of gun safety and anti-terror policies in the House.<sup>7</sup> From her seat on the Homeland Security Committee, Demings also worked to secure a renewal of Urban Area Security Initiative funding for Orlando.<sup>8</sup>

Several of Demings's bills have passed the House, with some becoming law. These include bills to increase accessibility of anti-terror training programs for local law enforcement agencies, strengthen the Urban Area Security Initiative program, to investigate Russian President Vladimir Putin's financial resources and associates, to require accreditation for U.S. Department of Homeland Security officer training programs, to invest in U.S.-made solar components and crack down on Chinese forced labor, and to support diversity in the media industry. Demings has also introduced legislation to fund the hiring of homicide detectives, prevent oil and gas price gouging, discourage evictions during natural disasters, and protect the right to vote.<sup>9</sup>

As a member of the Intelligence and Judiciary Committees, Demings participated in the House's impeachment inquiry into whether President Trump abused his office by asking a foreign government to investigate a political opponent. In January 2019, following the House's impeachment of Trump, Demings was named one of the House's impeachment managers and prosecuted the House's case in the Senate. This appointment made her, along with fellow managers Zoe Lofgren of California and Sylvia R. Garcia of Texas, one of the first women in U.S. history to serve in that role for a presidential impeachment.<sup>10</sup>

In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Demings was named chair of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. The subcommittee oversees the Federal Emergency

Management Agency, the agency responsible for mass disaster response, most crucially hurricanes in Demings's Florida district.<sup>11</sup> In June 2021, Demings announced her intention to challenge Florida Senator Marco Rubio in the 2022 midterm election.<sup>12</sup>

## Notes

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# Dwight Evans

1954–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2016–

Democrat from Pennsylvania



Image courtesy of the Member

After more than three decades as a state legislator, Dwight Evans challenged an incumbent and won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2016. In the House, Evans has focused on improving the economies of impoverished urban areas like those found in his Philadelphia district, particularly through the development of small businesses. “I have been dedicated to trying to find ways to build stronger neighborhoods block by block,” he said.<sup>1</sup>

Dwight Evans was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on May 16, 1954, the second of five children born to Henry and Jean Evans. His mother worked as a waitress and secretary, and his father worked for a moving and storage company. Evans grew up in the Germantown neighborhood and ultimately settled in West Oak Lane in northwest Philadelphia with his mother after his parents’ divorce. Evans graduated from Germantown High School in 1971 and earned an associate degree from the Community College of Philadelphia in 1973. He then transferred to La Salle University, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in 1975. After college, Evans briefly worked as a substitute teacher before landing a job at the Philadelphia Urban League, where he assisted and later directed a federally funded program to help city residents find employment.<sup>2</sup>

Evans was drawn to politics in 1978, when he volunteered for a state senate campaign and witnessed Philadelphia Mayor Frank Rizzo’s divisive attempt to amend the city’s charter so he could run for a third term. In 1980, Evans won election to the Pennsylvania state house of representatives from a legislative district that included his West Oak Lane neighborhood.<sup>3</sup> In 36 years in the state house, Evans helped develop the state’s charter school system, secured funding for a statewide nutrition program, and served as the top Democrat on the appropriations committee from 1990 to 2010. He also made four unsuccessful bids for higher office: lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania in 1986, governor in 1994, and Philadelphia mayor in 1999 and 2007.<sup>4</sup> In 2013, Evans wrote a book, *Making Ideas Matter: My Life as a Policy Entrepreneur*, with coauthor William Ecenbarger.

In late 2015, Evans challenged Chaka Fattah for his seat in the U.S. House after the incumbent was charged with fraud and bribery for his participation in a racketeering scheme.<sup>5</sup> Among the several candidates who joined the race for the Democratic nomination, Fattah and Evans were considered the most high-profile contenders for the seat representing northwest Philadelphia and portions of

suburban Montgomery County. Fattah highlighted his work on the House Appropriations Committee, which allowed him to steer federal dollars towards projects to improve education, housing, and health care in the city. Evans avoided discussing Fattah's legal troubles and focused his campaign on issues facing urban residents. He cited his successes in improving the neighborhoods in his legislative district and committed to rebuilding American cities across the country.<sup>6</sup> On primary day, Evans prevailed with 42 percent of the vote to Fattah's 34 percent.<sup>7</sup> Fattah resigned from the House on June 23, 2016, just days after a federal jury found him guilty of 22 fraud-related charges. A special election to fill the vacant seat was scheduled for November 8, 2016, the same day as the general election.<sup>8</sup> Evans simultaneously won election to the remainder of Fattah's term and to a full two-year term with 90 percent of the vote. In 2018, the Pennsylvania supreme court ordered the state's congressional districts be redrawn, citing partisan gerrymandering. The boundaries of Evans's new district were only slightly altered, and he comfortably won re-election in 2018 and 2020.<sup>9</sup>

Evans took his seat in the House on November 14, 2016, and was assigned to the Agriculture Committee and the Small Business Committee at the beginning of the 115th Congress (2017–2019).<sup>10</sup> In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Evans remained on Small Business but left the Agriculture Committee for a coveted spot on the tax-writing Ways and Means Committee.

Evans has dedicated his legislative efforts towards expanding the resources available to small businesses across the country. During his first full term, President Donald J. Trump signed into law his bill to reduce real estate appraisal costs for small businesses applying for Small Business Administration loans.<sup>11</sup> Evans also authored the Small Business Innovation Protection Act, which provides small businesses with training opportunities on how to protect their patents and intellectual property. The House passed his bill in 2018, and a Senate companion bill became law later that year.<sup>12</sup>

Since the 115th Congress, Evans introduced the Rehabilitation of Historic Schools Act three times. The bill was designed to partially offset the repair costs for school buildings through a tax credit typically used for the upkeep of historic structures. Ultimately, these provisions were included in a House-passed omnibus infrastructure bill in 2020.<sup>13</sup>

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# Al Green

1947–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2005–

Democrat from Texas



Image courtesy of the Member

In 2004, Al Green won election to the U.S. House of Representatives from the Houston area Ninth District. Green—a son of the segregated South, born in New Orleans, Louisiana, on September 1, 1947—has devoted his life to the elimination of all forms of invidious discrimination and the rectification of America’s seminal sin: slavery. His mother, a maid, and father, a mechanic’s helper, emphasized the importance of an education. Without acquiring an undergraduate degree, he earned his law degree from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University in 1974.

Upon graduating from law school, Green cofounded the law firm, Green, Wilson, Dewberry, and Fitch. In 1977, he was appointed justice of the peace in Harris County, Texas, and served until retiring in 2004. For nearly 10 years, Green served as president of the Houston branch of the NAACP. Under his leadership, the organization grew from 500 members to 3,500, expanded its budget, and acquired property to serve as its headquarters.<sup>1</sup> He stepped down as president in 1995.<sup>2</sup>

In 2004, Green, who considers himself a liberated democrat, “unbought, unbossed and unafraid,” entered the congressional race for the newly configured Ninth District.

Green ran on his long record of public service in Houston, emerging as the winner in the March Democratic primary with 66 percent of the vote.<sup>3</sup> He prevailed in the general election with 72 percent of the vote.<sup>4</sup>

In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Green serves as the chair of the Oversight Subcommittee of the Financial Services Committee and on the Homeland Security Committee. In his first term, Green introduced the Homes for Heroes Act.<sup>5</sup> The bill created a veterans’ affairs position in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to help veterans experiencing homelessness find affordable housing. “I am sorry to report, Mr. Speaker,” Green said on the House Floor when the bill came up for debate, “that as many are sleeping in the suites of life, too many are sleeping on the streets of life.”<sup>6</sup> The measure was passed in 2016 when it was included in the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act and was signed into law.<sup>7</sup>

Green became the first lawmaker to introduce and force a vote on three articles of impeachment against President Donald J. Trump in the 115th and 116th Congresses (2017–2021). When the House finally passed articles of impeachment in 2019 and 2021, Green voted for all of them.<sup>8</sup>



Supported by his Texas Democratic congressional colleagues and both U.S. Senators from Texas, Green recommended Attorney Gregg Costa in 2011 as well as Federal Magistrate George Hanks and Harris County District Court Judge Al Bennett in 2014 for Federal District Court Judgeships. Additionally, in 2014, Green recommended Judge Costa be elevated to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. All three were nominated by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the Senate to their respective benches.

In December 2020, Green's legislation establishing an Emergency Capital Investment Program became law as part of the 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act.<sup>9</sup> The legislation established a \$9 billion Emergency Capital Investment Program for minority depository institutions and Community Development Financial Institutions serving low- and moderate-income communities.

In March 2021, Green's legislation reauthorizing and funding the State Small Business Credit Initiative was included in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021; it funded the State Small Business Credit Initiative at \$10 billion.<sup>10</sup> The funds expanded access to capital for small businesses adapting to the pandemic and seeking to create high-quality jobs across the nation. The funding is expected to catalyze \$100 billion in private investment for small businesses.

In November 2021, Green's legislation, the Minority Business Resiliency Act (H.R. 2689), was signed into law as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.<sup>11</sup> The Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) is the only federal agency dedicated solely to the growth of minority businesses. H.R. 2689 permanently codified the MBDA in federal law to promote and administer programs to assist the development and resiliency of minority business enterprises.

During the 117th Congress, Representative Green introduced three resolutions to start healing the chasm of racial animus within America. The first of these was the Slavery Remembrance Day resolution, which would create a commemorative day to remember the victims of slavery. The second was a resolution to remove the name of Richard B. Russell, a self-proclaimed White supremacist, from the Russell Senate Office Building. The third was a resolution to create a Cabinet-level Department of Reconciliation which would be tasked with eliminating racism and discrimination in the United States.<sup>12</sup>

During his tenure as a U.S. Representative, Green has been successful in securing more than \$100 million worth of funding for community projects for Texas's Ninth Congressional District.

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# Jahana Hayes

1973–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2019–

Democrat from Connecticut



Image courtesy of the Member

In November 2018, Jahana Hayes won election as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives. Hayes became the first Black woman elected to Congress from Connecticut. A former National Teacher of the Year who taught social studies for more than a decade, Jahana Hayes has made education her primary focus during her two terms in the House. Hayes relies on her experiences growing up under difficult circumstances to shape policy initiatives to aid struggling communities.

Jahana Hayes was born Jahana Flemming on March 8, 1973, in Waterbury, Connecticut. Hayes became pregnant at 17 and was forced from her honors courses to a program for teen mothers. Her guidance counselors encouraged her to finish school and attend college; Hayes graduated from Crosby High School in Waterbury. She later enrolled in Naugatuck Valley Community College. In 2002, she earned an associate degree while working nights. Hayes graduated with a bachelor's degree from Southern Connecticut State University in nearby New Haven, Connecticut, in 2005. After college, Hayes taught social studies at James Hillhouse High School in New Haven. Two years later, she took a position at John F. Kennedy High School in her hometown of Waterbury. Hayes later earned a master's degree from the

University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford in 2012 and her certificate in educational leadership from the University of Bridgeport in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 2014.<sup>1</sup> She is married to Milford Hayes; the couple have four children.<sup>2</sup>

Hayes came to national attention in 2016 when she was named National Teacher of the Year. Conferred by the Council of Chief State School Officers, which selected from applications submitted by all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories, the award included being honored at the White House and a year spent traveling the nation as an education ambassador. Hayes left the classroom to advocate for public education, and following her tenure as Teacher of the Year, she served as an administrator and mentor for new teachers in the Waterbury central district office.<sup>3</sup>

Connecticut's Fifth Congressional District includes suburban communities such as Simsbury but also urban communities such as Danbury and Waterbury; African Americans compose about 7.5 percent of the district's population. In 2018, Hayes won a commanding 62 percent of the vote in the primary election, before receiving 56 percent of the vote in the general. She won re-election in 2020 with 55 percent of the vote.<sup>4</sup>

In both her terms in the House, Hayes has served on the Agriculture Committee and the Education and Labor Committee. Reflecting her background as a teacher, Hayes has prioritized educational measures and relief for students, teachers, and working families. In keeping with her campaign promises, Hayes's first bill was a resolution against using federal funding to arm school employees.<sup>5</sup> She submitted several measures through the Education and Labor Committee, including proposals for electric school buses, expanding Pell Grant eligibility, debt relief for teachers, and increased subsidies for child care.<sup>6</sup> In 2021, she submitted the House version of the CARE for Kids Act to ensure that children raised by grandparents were eligible for free school lunch programs.<sup>7</sup> "Having been raised by my grandmother," Hayes said. "I am personally aware that the nuclear family has changed."<sup>8</sup>

In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Hayes chairs the Agriculture Subcommittee on Nutrition, Oversight, and Department Operations. As subcommittee chair, Hayes oversees the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Hayes, who received benefits growing up and raising her own family, called the position "deeply personal" and argued "hunger is not inevitable—it's a policy decision."<sup>9</sup> Hayes had previously requested a study on hunger and homelessness among college students.<sup>10</sup> Shortly after being named chair, she introduced the Student Food Security Act to expand the food stamp program to include struggling college students.<sup>11</sup>

Following high COVID infection rates in her hometown, Hayes twice submitted resolutions declaring racism a public health crisis.<sup>12</sup> She also submitted a bill directing the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs to address staffing gaps at mental health facilities for veterans; this provision was included in the Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019.<sup>13</sup>

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# Steven A. Horsford

1973–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2013–2015; 2019–

Democrat from Nevada



Image courtesy of the Member

A former state legislator, Steven A. Horsford has served in Congress for three nonconsecutive terms. First elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2012, he lost re-election two years later but staged a political comeback in 2018. He is the first African-American Member of Congress from Nevada. In the House, Horsford has worked to improve the nation's health care system and bring more jobs to south and central Nevada.

Steven A. Horsford was born in Las Vegas, Nevada, on April 29, 1973, to Pamela Horsford and Gary Shelton. Horsford was the oldest of four children.<sup>1</sup> After graduating from Ed W. Clark High School in Las Vegas, Horsford attended the University of Nevada-Reno. When he was 19 years old, Horsford's father died from gun violence. He returned home from college to help his family and eventually had to leave school.<sup>2</sup> Horsford later resumed his studies and completed a bachelor's degree in 2014.<sup>3</sup> A devoted family man, Horsford is father to three children.<sup>4</sup>

As an undergraduate, Horsford interned for the Nevada state assembly's education committee and campaigned for Governor Bob Miller's re-election in 1994. He later worked as a lobbyist in the state legislature. For more than a decade, Horsford worked as the CEO of The Culinary

Academy of Las Vegas, a nonprofit training institute for students interested in careers in the hospitality industry. In addition, he was president of Nevada Partners, a nonprofit community organization that provides job training for underserved communities.<sup>5</sup>

In 2003, Horsford was elected Democratic national committeeman and represented his state at the 2004 Democratic National Convention.<sup>6</sup> Later that year, he won election to an open seat in the Nevada state senate. After Democrats regained control of the state senate in the 2008 election, Horsford became the youngest senate majority leader in Nevada history as well as the first African American to hold that position. As majority leader, Horsford helped pass legislation to recognize same-sex domestic partnerships in Nevada. Working with Republican lawmakers, he helped override 25 of Governor Jim Gibbons's vetoes.<sup>7</sup>

By the 2012 election, Horsford was well-positioned to seek election to the U.S. House. He chose to run in the newly created Fourth District, which combined a large swath of the rural middle of the state with the densely populated environs of northern Clark County.<sup>8</sup> The new district had a Democratic voter registration majority and



was about 27 percent Latino and 16 percent African American in 2012.<sup>9</sup>

Horsford ran unopposed in the Democratic primary and faced Republican Danny Tarkanian in a contentious race for the seat. Horsford echoed the priorities of President Barack Obama: supporting the Affordable Care Act and clean-energy jobs, championing the rights of immigrants, and increasing funding for the U.S. Department of Education.<sup>10</sup> The Democratic majority in the district carried Horsford to victory with just more than 50 percent of the vote to Tarkanian's 42 percent.<sup>11</sup>

In 2014, Horsford narrowly lost re-election in the competitive district to Republican Crescent Leo Hardy. Horsford spent four years working at the marketing and consulting firm he founded before challenging Hardy in a rematch in 2018.<sup>12</sup> He prevailed with 52 percent of the vote and won re-election in 2020 with 51 percent.<sup>13</sup>

In the 113th Congress (2013–2015), Horsford was assigned to the Homeland Security, Natural Resources, and Oversight and Government Reform Committees, but dropped the first two assignments for a seat on the Financial Services Committee in 2014.<sup>14</sup> When Horsford returned to the House in the 116th Congress (2019–2021), he was assigned to three committees: Budget; Natural Resources; and Ways and Means. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), he left Natural Resources for a seat on the Armed Services Committee.

Much of Horsford's district is public land administered by the Bureau of Land Management. On the Natural Resources Committee, Horsford promoted legislation to expand the use of these public lands for economic development and conservation.<sup>15</sup> Horsford has also introduced bills to promote tourism at the Lake Meade National Recreation Area and to designate certain lands as National Conservation Areas.<sup>16</sup>

During his first year in office, Horsford underwent surgery for a heart ailment. He said the experience renewed his support for universal health care.<sup>17</sup> Since his appointment to Ways and Means in 2019, Horsford has introduced multiple bills aimed at restricting prescription drug price hikes for people on Medicare and Medicaid. Horsford has also sponsored legislation to provide hospitals with grants to train low-income individuals for jobs in the health care field.<sup>18</sup>

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Horsford sponsored a bill that would expand tax credits to help

businesses in the hospitality industry recover from lost revenue.<sup>19</sup> When Congress passed the 2021 American Rescue Plan, it included his legislation to extend federal unemployment compensation for an additional six months.<sup>20</sup>

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# Sheila Jackson Lee

1950–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1995–

Democrat from Texas



Image courtesy of the Member

Sheila Jackson Lee won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1994. From her seats on the Judiciary, Budget, and Homeland Security Committees, she has focused on the needs of her constituents and has called attention to national issues, such as health care reform, immigration, and criminal justice reform.

Sheila Jackson Lee was born in Queens, New York, on January 12, 1950. She graduated from Jamaica High School and attended New York University before transferring to Yale University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in political science in 1972. Before receiving her law degree from the University of Virginia in 1975, she married Elwyn Cornelius Lee; they raised two children: Erica and Jason. She is also the proud grandmother of two twin grandchildren: granddaughter Ellison Bennett Carter and grandson Roy Lee Carter III. In 1977 and 1978, Jackson Lee worked as a staff counsel for the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations, which investigated the murders of Martin Luther King Jr. and President John F. Kennedy. Jackson Lee then moved to Houston with her family, where her husband taught law and she practiced at a private firm. She left her practice in 1987 to serve as an associate judge in the Houston municipal courts. Two

years later, she won election to the first of two terms on the Houston city council.<sup>1</sup>

In 1994, Jackson Lee challenged three-term incumbent Craig A. Washington for the Democratic nomination to a Houston-area seat in the U.S. House. Historically, the district has included many of the city's predominantly Black neighborhoods and was earlier represented by Barbara Jordan and Mickey Leland. Jackson Lee ran on a platform that called for reforms to America's health care industry and criticized Washington's vote against the North American Free Trade Agreement, arguing that it would generate new jobs. In the primary election, she defeated Washington with 63 percent of the vote.<sup>2</sup> She went on to win the general election handily with 73 percent of the vote against Republican Jerry Burley. In her subsequent 13 re-elections, she has won by similar margins—capturing a high of 90 percent in 1998.<sup>3</sup>

When Jackson Lee took her seat in the 104th Congress (1995–1997), her colleagues elected her president of the Democratic freshman class.<sup>4</sup> In her first term, she received assignments to the Judiciary and Science Committees but dropped the latter panel in the 109th Congress (2005–2007). In the 108th Congress (2003–2005), she

was assigned to the recently formed Select Committee on Homeland Security and kept her seat when it became a full standing committee. In the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011), she served on the Foreign Affairs Committee and chaired the Homeland Security Committee's Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection. She also picked up an assignment on the Budget Committee in the 115th Congress (2017–2019). In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Jackson Lee continued to serve on the Budget, Homeland Security, and Judiciary Committees and chair the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. Within the Democratic Caucus, Jackson Lee has served as Chief Deputy Whip since the 116th Congress (2019–2021).<sup>5</sup>

As cofounder of the Congressional Children's Caucus and a member of the Judiciary Committee, Jackson Lee has introduced numerous bills to fund bullying prevention and intervention programs, two of which have passed the House.<sup>6</sup> As chair of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security, she has also introduced bills aimed at prison reform to lessen overcrowding and reduce sentences for nonviolent offenders.<sup>7</sup> In 2021, President Joseph R. Biden Jr. signed into law her bill to prohibit the practice of female genital mutilation.<sup>8</sup>

Jackson Lee has advocated for funding for NASA, a major employer in the Houston area.<sup>9</sup> She also persuaded the administration of President William J. Clinton to designate low-income neighborhoods in Houston, Texas, as "empowerment zones," making them eligible for millions in federal grants.<sup>10</sup> When she chaired the Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection from 2007 to 2011, she held several oversight hearings on the implementation of the Transportation Security Administration's new air cargo screening measures.<sup>11</sup> In 2017, she introduced a bill that would have appropriated \$174 billion in federal disaster relief aid to regions affected by Hurricane Harvey.<sup>12</sup> During the 116th Congress, she secured passage of the Emancipation Trail Study Act, establishing a 51-mile National Historic Trail in Texas that chronicles the experience of African Americans who migrated from Galveston to Houston after emancipation.<sup>13</sup> Before his retirement, Michigan Representative John Conyers Jr. asked Jackson Lee to continue advocating for the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act, which Conyers had

introduced biennially since 1989. In 2019, the bill received a hearing, and in 2021, the Judiciary Committee sent it to the full House for consideration for the first time.<sup>14</sup>

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# Hakeem S. Jeffries

1970–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2013–

Democrat from New York



Image courtesy of the Member

In 2012, Hakeem S. Jeffries made the leap from the New York state assembly to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he has quickly risen through the ranks to become chair of the House Democratic Caucus. He has been a leading voice in crafting his party's legislative agenda. "We must use our majority to address racial injustice, confront the climate crisis, defend the Dreamers, expand access to high-quality, affordable health care, fix our crumbling infrastructure and end the era of voter suppression," he urged the caucus in 2020.<sup>1</sup>

Hakeem S. Jeffries was born in Brooklyn, New York, on August 4, 1970, to Laneda and Marland Jeffries, both social workers. He graduated from Brooklyn's Midwood High School in 1988 and earned a bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1992. He completed a master's degree in public policy at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, in 1994 and a law degree from New York University Law School in 1997. After law school, Jeffries clerked for Judge Harold Baer Jr. of the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York. He then practiced law in the private sector for several years. He is married to Kennisandra Jeffries, and they have two children.<sup>2</sup>

In 2000 and 2002, Jeffries unsuccessfully challenged Roger Green for his Brooklyn-area seat in the New York state assembly. When Green left the assembly in a bid for the U.S. House in 2006, Jeffries ran for and won election to the open seat.<sup>3</sup> In the state assembly, Jeffries successfully championed legislation to prohibit the New York City police department from storing the names and addresses of people stopped under the department's controversial "stop-and-frisk" policy, who were neither arrested nor fined.<sup>4</sup>

After six years in Albany, Jeffries announced his intention to run for a seat in the U.S. House against Representative Edolphus Towns, a 15-term incumbent. In April 2012, Towns announced his retirement, leaving the seat wide open.<sup>5</sup> The district, which was 53 percent Black, incorporated a mix of working- and middle-class neighborhoods in Brooklyn and parts of Queens. In the Democratic primary, Jeffries faced New York City councilman and former Black Panther Charles Barron. Both candidates pledged to allocate more government resources to lower the district's high unemployment rate, reduce housing costs, and combat police brutality. Barron received the endorsement of outgoing Representative Towns, while Jeffries carried the support of several labor unions and



raised far more money than his opponent.<sup>6</sup> Jeffries breezed through the primary with 72 percent of the vote. In the heavily Democratic district, he defeated Republican candidate Alan Bellone with 78 percent.<sup>7</sup>

As a freshman Member, Jeffries received two coveted assignments to the Judiciary and Budget committees. In the 114th Congress (2015–2017), he left the Budget Committee to serve on the Education and the Workforce Committee but returned to the Budget Committee in the 115th Congress (2017–2019). Jeffries quickly gained the favor of his Democratic colleagues, who elected him chair of the House Democratic Caucus for the 116th and 117th Congresses (2019–2023).<sup>8</sup> In 2020, he was appointed to serve as one of the impeachment managers for President Donald J. Trump's first trial in the Senate, after the House voted to impeach him for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.<sup>9</sup>

From his seat on the Judiciary Committee, Jeffries has led criminal justice reform efforts.<sup>10</sup> Reaching across the aisle, Jeffries partnered with Representative Doug Collins of Georgia as a lead Democratic sponsor of the First Step Act, which the President signed into law in 2018.<sup>11</sup> The bill provides retroactive relief for the crack cocaine sentencing disparity. The law shortens sentences by ensuring inmates can earn 54 days of good time credit per year. In addition, the bill bans the practice of shackling women throughout the duration of their pregnancy, during childbirth, and for three months post-partum. On June 25, 2020, the House passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. Jeffries helped lead the charge to pass the historic police reform bill, which included legislation authored by the Congressman to criminalize the chokehold and other inherently dangerous tactics such as a knee to the neck.<sup>12</sup>

Jeffries has successfully harnessed the power of intellectual property law to help small businesses. In 2014, President Barack Obama signed into law his bill to allow law schools to set up pro-bono legal clinics, in partnership with the United States Patent and Trademark Office, to help patent and trademark holders protect their work.<sup>13</sup> He also authored legislation to establish the Copyright Claims Board, providing creatives with an alternative way to pursue copyright claims worth less than \$30,000 without resorting to costly litigation. The measure was incorporated into an omnibus appropriations bill in 2021.<sup>14</sup>

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# Eddie Bernice Johnson

1935–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1993–

Democrat from Texas



Image courtesy of the Member

A nurse by training, Eddie Bernice Johnson was a political veteran decades before coming to Congress in the early 1990s. With her election to the Texas state legislature in 1972, Johnson became the first Black woman from the Dallas area to serve in the Texas house of representatives.<sup>1</sup> Elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992, Johnson is the dean of the Texas delegation and Chair of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee.<sup>2</sup>

Eddie Bernice Johnson was born in Waco, Texas, on December 3, 1935, to Lee Edward Johnson and Lillie Mae (White) Johnson. She graduated from A.J. Moore High School in Waco in 1952, and three years later received a nursing diploma from Holy Cross Central School of Nursing in South Bend, Indiana. Eddie Bernice Johnson married Lacey Kirk Johnson a year later in 1956. Before they divorced in 1970, the couple had one son, Kirk. Johnson graduated in 1967 with a bachelor's degree from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth and later became the chief psychiatric nurse of the Veterans Administration hospital in Dallas. In 1976, Johnson earned a master's degree in public administration from Southern Methodist University in Dallas.<sup>3</sup>

In 1972, Johnson was elected as a Democrat to the Texas state legislature, becoming both the first Black woman from

the Dallas area to serve in the Texas legislature and one of the first two Black women to serve in the Texas house.<sup>4</sup> As a member of the Texas legislature, she chaired the labor committee, becoming the first woman in Texas history to lead a major committee in the state house. In 1977, President James Earl “Jimmy” Carter appointed her as regional director for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare—a post she held until 1981. In 1986, Johnson won election to the Texas state senate, eventually serving as chair of the redistricting committee.<sup>5</sup>

During the 1992 redistricting process, Johnson helped create a new congressional district designed to elect an African-American lawmaker, in compliance with court decisions following 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act. The district was about 50 percent Black and centered around South Dallas. Johnson then ran for the new seat, easily securing the Democratic nomination with 92 percent of the vote. In an election year that saw a record number of women run for office, she was elected as a Democrat with 72 percent of the vote. In 1996, when court-ordered redistricting changed the boundaries of her district, Johnson was re-elected with 55 percent of the vote. In her subsequent re-election campaigns, Johnson has won

comfortably, often with margins in excess of 80 percent. In 2020 she won election to the 117th Congress (2021–2023) with 77 percent of the vote.<sup>6</sup>

Johnson has served on two committees since her House career began in January 1993: Transportation and Infrastructure and Science, Space, and Technology. In the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011), Johnson was chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Johnson became the chair of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee and continued as chair in the 117th Congress. During the 107th Congress (2001–2003), Johnson served as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.<sup>7</sup>

As a former nurse, Johnson has called attention to problems in the country's health care system, worked to strengthen the Medicare program, and repeatedly introduced legislation to create the position of National Nurse for Public Health, who would collaborate with the Surgeon General to determine national health priorities.<sup>8</sup> As chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, she helped shepherd the 2007 Water Resources Development Act into law over President George W. Bush's veto. The bill funded nationwide projects on flood control, coastal and wetland restoration, and river dredging.<sup>9</sup>

As a Member of the Transportation Committee, she urged funding for bridge construction projects over Dallas's Trinity River. She cosponsored the 2005 surface transportation bill, which included more than \$77 million for bridge construction projects in the city.<sup>10</sup> Early in her career, Johnson supported the North American Free Trade Agreement, recognizing that much of Dallas's business revolves around exports to Mexico. She later voted to normalize trade relations with China.<sup>11</sup>

As chair of the Science Committee, Johnson has defended the work of scientists at NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on climate change issues.<sup>12</sup> In 2019, she held a hearing on legislation to expand the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority students in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs. She reintroduced the bill, known as the STEM Opportunities Act, in the 117th Congress and it passed the House in May 2021.<sup>13</sup> In 2019, President Donald J. Trump signed her bill to award a Congressional Gold Medal in recognition of the

women mathematicians and engineers at NASA during the Space Race.<sup>14</sup>

In November 2021, Representative Johnson announced that she would not seek re-election in 2022 and would retire at the conclusion of the 117th Congress in January 2023.<sup>15</sup>

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## Henry C. “Hank” Johnson Jr. 1954–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2007–

Democrat from Georgia



Image courtesy of the Member

In 2006, Henry C. “Hank” Johnson Jr. successfully ousted an incumbent Representative in his bid for a U.S. House of Representatives seat. Prior to his service in Congress, Johnson ran his own law firm and served as a county magistrate judge, accruing decades of legal experience that he has used to shape his legislative agenda, which has included judicial reform and police accountability.

Hank Johnson was born in Washington, DC, on October 2, 1954, to Christine Callier Johnson and Henry C. Johnson Sr. His father worked for the Bureau of Prisons, and his mother was a schoolteacher. He grew up in Washington and graduated from Roosevelt High School before moving to Georgia to study at Clark College (now Clark Atlanta University), where he completed a bachelor’s degree in 1976. In 1979, he earned a law degree from the Thurgood Marshall School of Law at Texas Southern University, a historically Black university. That year, he married fellow law student Mereda Davis Johnson, who later served as a magistrate court judge and won election to the DeKalb County commission in 2015. They have two adult children.<sup>1</sup>

In 1980, Johnson opened his own law firm in Decatur, Georgia, where he practiced with his wife for more than 25

years. He first ran for public office in 1986 when he made an unsuccessful bid for the Georgia house of representatives. Three years later, he was appointed as a judge for the magistrate court of DeKalb County. In 2000, he won election to the DeKalb County commission, where he served for five years.<sup>2</sup>

In 2006, Johnson launched a primary challenge against incumbent Representative Cynthia A. McKinney for a district in Atlanta’s eastern suburbs, including a large part of DeKalb County. A second challenger, businessman John Coyne III, also entered the race. Johnson attacked McKinney’s legislative record and claimed that she “failed to deliver any meaningful legislation.”<sup>3</sup> He distributed campaign buttons that read “Replace McKinney” and pledged to bring employment and affordable health care to the district.<sup>4</sup>

On primary day, McKinney received 47 percent of the vote—a narrow plurality, with Johnson finishing second with 44 percent. Since no candidate secured a majority, a runoff was scheduled between the two. Johnson won the August runoff with 59 percent of the vote and defeated Republican Catherine Davis in the general election with 75 percent of the vote.<sup>5</sup> Johnson has won most re-elections



with comfortable margins, though he faced significant primary challenges in 2010 and 2014.<sup>6</sup>

In the House, Johnson has served on the Judiciary Committee since his first term, where he has chaired its Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property, and the Internet since the 116th Congress (2019–2021). He has also served on the Armed Services Committee from the 110th through the 114th Congress (2007–2017), the Small Business Committee in the 110th Congress (2007–2009), and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in the 111th Congress (2009–2011) as well as the 115th through the 117th Congress (2017–2023). At the start of the 117th Congress (2021–2023), he also joined the Oversight and Reform Committee.

While serving on the Armed Services Committee, Johnson introduced the Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act, which would prohibit the transfer of certain military surplus equipment and weapons to civilian police departments, including armored vehicles and military-grade firearms. His bill was incorporated into the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, which passed the House twice in 2020 and 2021.<sup>7</sup>

As a Judiciary subcommittee chair and a former judge, Johnson has proposed significant reforms to the federal judicial system. He introduced the Supreme Court Ethics Act, which would establish a code of conduct for Supreme Court Justices. The bill was incorporated into the For the People Act, a sweeping reform bill that passed the House in both 2019 and 2021.<sup>8</sup> He has also introduced bills to expand the Supreme Court from 9 to 13 seats and to create an online database that makes all public court records available for free.<sup>9</sup> “Wealth should not act as a barrier to access our courts,” he said before the House.<sup>10</sup> Johnson has served as a manager in two impeachment trials of federal judges, the second of which resulted in the removal of U.S. District Court Judge G. Thomas Porteous Jr. from the bench in 2010.<sup>11</sup>

Since his first term in office, Johnson has advocated to end the use of certain mandatory arbitration clauses that are frequently found in employment and consumer contracts, which he believed prevented victims of employment discrimination from suing their employers in court. Johnson has introduced legislation to prohibit civil rights, employment, and consumer-related disputes from being forced into arbitration. His bill passed the House in 2019 and again in 2022.<sup>12</sup>

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## Robin L. Kelly

1956–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2013–

Democrat from Illinois

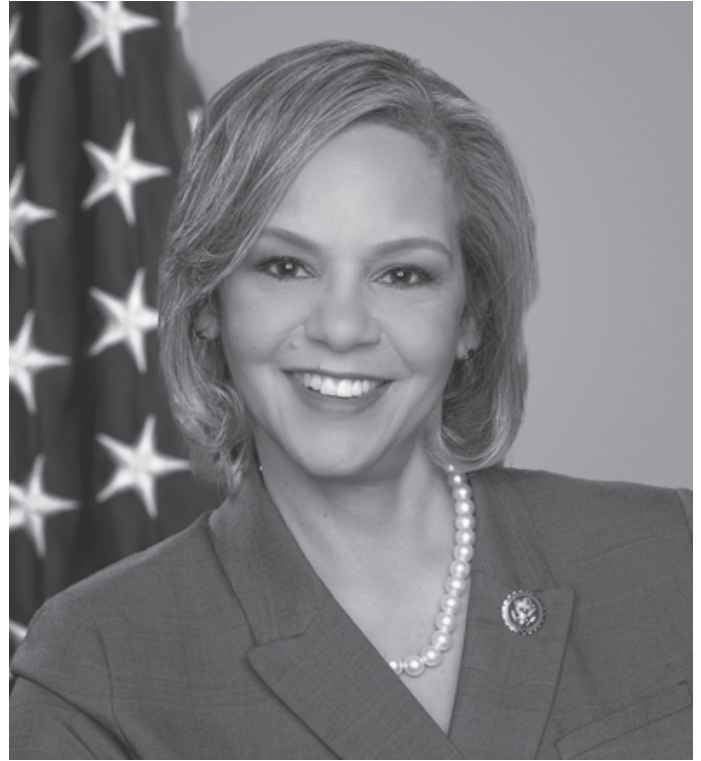


Image courtesy of the Member

A counselor, social worker, and civil servant before winning a special election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2013, Robin L. Kelly has focused on expanding access to healthcare and reducing gun violence, both in her district and throughout the nation. “I ran for Congress ... to bring about a safer, less violent, and more prosperous future,” she declared on her first day in office. “One in which our children can grow up without the fear of gun violence.”<sup>1</sup>

Robin Lynne Kelly was born in New York City on April 30, 1956. Her father was a grocery store owner, and her mother was a postal worker. Kelly attended local schools and graduated from Rhodes Preparatory School in 1973. She studied at Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in 1977 and a master’s degree in 1982. Gravitating toward social work, Kelly worked at a youth shelter and at a hospital before returning to Bradley as director of minority student services. She eventually moved to Matteson, Illinois, a suburb south of Chicago, and was the town’s community affairs director from 1992 to 2006. Kelly earned a Ph.D. in political science at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, in 2004. In 2003, she married physician Nathaniel Horn; each has two adult children from a previous marriage.<sup>2</sup>

Kelly’s public career began when she was elected to the Illinois state house of representatives in 2002 and re-elected in 2004 and 2006. In 2007, Kelly resigned her seat to become the first African-American woman to serve as chief of staff to any Illinois constitutional officer. When the state treasurer, Alexi Giannoulias, ran for the U.S. Senate in 2010, Kelly entered the race to succeed him as treasurer but lost in the general election. Kelly then worked as chief administrative officer for Cook County, Illinois, for two years.<sup>3</sup>

In late 2012, Kelly ran for a seat in the U.S. House when the incumbent Representative, Jesse L. Jackson Jr., declined to serve in the 113th Congress (2013–2015), to which he had been re-elected. The congressional district ran along the Indiana border from Chicago’s South Side to Kankakee County. In the primary, Kelly faced Deborah L. Halvorson, a former House Member who represented a nearby district in the 111th Congress (2009–2011). With gun safety as a central campaign issue, Kelly supported an assault weapons ban while Halvorson opposed it. Kelly defeated Halvorson in the primary by a 28-point margin and went on to win the April special election against Republican challenger Paul McKinley with 71 percent of the vote, becoming the

third African-American woman elected to Congress from Illinois.<sup>4</sup> She won with no less than 78 percent of the vote in her four re-elections.<sup>5</sup>

In the House, Kelly has served on the Committee on Oversight and Reform for her entire tenure. In addition, she served on the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology in the 113th Congress, Committee on Foreign Affairs in the 114th and 115th Congresses (2015–2019), and Committee on Energy and Commerce in the 116th and 117th Congresses (2019–2023). Kelly has served as a member of the House Democracy Partnership since the 116th Congress (2019–2021).

Kelly has used her Energy and Commerce Committee seat to address the gun violence that has affected her district. Kelly's Firearm Safety Act sought to tighten gun safety by enabling the Consumer Product Safety Commission to issue gun safety standards. She has repeatedly introduced legislation to require the U.S. Surgeon General to produce an annual report detailing the public health impacts of gun violence.<sup>6</sup>

Kelly's interest in public health has extended beyond her district. Her bill, the Action for Dental Health Act, became law in 2018 and called for the Department of Health and Human Services to award grants for oral health initiatives at the local and state level to prevent dental diseases. In the 116th Congress, she introduced a bill to expand coverage of postpartum care under Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program from 60 days to one year. In 2021, in the 117th Congress (2021–2023), she introduced a similar bill called the Helping MOMs Act, which would increase federal funding for pregnancy-related care under Medicaid. This policy was ultimately included in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.<sup>7</sup>

From her seat on the Oversight and Reform Committee, Kelly has authored and passed two bills to improve cybersecurity and expand internet accessibility. The Connected Government Act, which called for federal agencies to create or redesign websites to ensure they are compatible with mobile devices, was signed into law in 2018. The Internet of Things Cybersecurity Improvement Act, which became law in 2020, requires all smart devices operated by the federal government to comply with minimum cybersecurity standards established by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.<sup>8</sup>

## Notes

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## Brenda L. Lawrence

1954–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2015–

Democrat from Michigan



Image courtesy of the Member

As a four-term mayor of a northern Detroit suburb and a veteran employee of the United States Postal Service, Brenda L. Lawrence brought more than three decades of public service experience to the U.S. House of Representatives upon her election in 2014. In the House, Lawrence prioritizes legislation to address the nation's critical infrastructure needs, especially water resources.

Brenda Lawrence was born Brenda Bray on October 18, 1954, in Detroit, Michigan. Her mother died when she was three years old, leaving her to be raised by her father and grandparents. Lawrence graduated from Pershing High School in Detroit and enrolled at the University of Detroit, but left school before finishing her degree to marry her high school sweetheart McArthur Lawrence, an autoworker. The couple had two children: Michael and Michelle. In 1978, Lawrence began a lengthy career in the U.S. Postal Service, starting as a letter carrier and eventually becoming a human resources manager. She returned to college and obtained a bachelor's degree in public administration from Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.<sup>1</sup>

Her children's schooling drew Lawrence to education issues, and, in 1992, Lawrence won a seat on the Southfield, Michigan, board of education. She served on the board until

1996, when she won election to the Southfield city council. In 2001, Lawrence became the first woman and first African American to serve as mayor of Southfield. After Lawrence retired from the Post Office in 2008, she launched an unsuccessful campaign for Oakland County executive; and she was the Democratic nominee for Michigan lieutenant governor in 2010, but the campaign was unsuccessful in the general election. She first ran for Congress in 2012, entering a primary between two Democratic House incumbents Hansen Clarke and Gary C. Peters in a redrawn district that wound its way from southwest Detroit north to Pontiac. Lawrence came in third; Peters went on to win the seat.<sup>2</sup>

When Peters ran for an open U.S. Senate seat in 2014, Lawrence, then in her fourth term as Southfield mayor, announced her candidacy for the northern Detroit district. In the race for the Democratic nomination, Lawrence faced opposition from Clarke and state representative Rudy Hobbs. Lawrence ran a grassroots campaign, earning endorsements from women's groups and small businesses. She scored a victory, taking 36 percent of the vote in the primary. In the general election, Lawrence ran on policies that included protecting equal rights and women's reproductive rights. In September, Lawrence's Republican



opponent Christina Conyers (Representative John Conyers Jr.'s cousin) withdrew from the race, and the state party nominated local Republican Christina Barr to replace her. Lawrence won with 78 percent of the vote in the reliably Democratic district.<sup>3</sup> Lawrence has faced little Democratic opposition in her re-election efforts. She has won her three subsequent general elections with high margins of victory and most recently captured 79 percent of the vote in 2020.<sup>4</sup>

Lawrence took seats on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and the Committee on Small Business in the 114th Congress (2015–2017). In the 115th Congress (2017–2019), she left Small Business to serve on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. She then left that assignment to take a seat on the powerful Appropriations Committee in the 116th and 117th Congresses (2019–2023). Lawrence has also led several important caucuses as co-chair of the Congressional Women's Caucus, 2nd Vice Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, co-chair of the Democratic Women's Caucus, founder and co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Black–Jewish Relations, and co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Foster Youth.<sup>5</sup>

From her seat on the Oversight and Reform Committee, Lawrence has prioritized investigations into how the water supply in nearby Flint, Michigan, was contaminated with poisonous levels of lead. In committee hearings, she questioned state officials, including then-Governor Rick Snyder, on the role Michigan's government played in the environmental disaster.<sup>6</sup> She has also advocated for expanded lead testing in the soil of demolished properties in Detroit and has twice introduced a bill to test for and remediate lead levels in drinking water at school facilities.<sup>7</sup> She has also authored legislation that would raise corporate taxes to pay for improvements to the country's water infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>

During Lawrence's congressional tenure, she passed two bills renaming two Detroit post offices, one after civil rights activist Mary Eleanor McCoy and another after the Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin.<sup>9</sup> Lawrence has also worked to fix the U.S. Postal Service's financial woes and was instrumental in crafting and getting the Postal Service Reform Act of 2022 signed into law. She criticized a report issued by the Postal Task Force of President Donald J. Trump that proposed further cuts to the agency, and she pushed back against suggestions to privatize portions of the agency's delivery responsibilities.<sup>10</sup> Lawrence cosponsored

the Postal Service Reform Act of 2022, which requires the Postal Service to maintain a public-facing website that provides service performance data and repeals the requirement that the agency prepay future health benefits for its retirees. Lawrence was among several lawmakers who rejected Postmaster Louis DeJoy's plan to implement slower delivery times. "We must pair these reforms with strong language to repair and to require robust service standards," she said.<sup>11</sup> The House and Senate passed the legislation in 2022.

In early January 2022, Representative Lawrence announced that she would not seek re-election and would retire from the House at the end of the 117th Congress in January 2023.<sup>12</sup>

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## Al Lawson Jr.

1948–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2017–

Democrat from Florida



Image courtesy of the Member

Al Lawson Jr. won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2016 with almost three decades of experience as a state legislator. During his three terms in Congress, he has focused on funding historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), expanding opportunities for small businesses, and improving housing conditions in his northern Florida district.

Alfred Lawson Jr. was born in Midway, Florida, on September 23, 1948. After graduating from Havana Northside High School in Havana, Florida, in 1966, he went to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University in Tallahassee. There, he competed in basketball and track and earned a bachelor's degree in 1970. Lawson played basketball professionally before returning to school. At Florida State University in Tallahassee, he worked as an assistant basketball coach and graduated with a master's degree in public administration in 1973.<sup>1</sup> In 1976, Lawson joined Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance, where he worked as a life insurance agent and financial adviser for 38 years.

In 1982, Lawson won election to the Florida state house and served until 2000, when he was elected to the state senate. Lawson chaired the committee on natural resources in both chambers, authoring major environmental bills

concerning land acquisition and preservation.<sup>2</sup> When he reached his state senate term limit in 2010, he challenged Democratic incumbent Allen F. Boyd Jr. in Florida's Second Congressional District.<sup>3</sup> Lawson relied on name recognition from his state legislature tenure but lost in the Democratic primary.<sup>4</sup> He ran again in 2012 and won the primary but could not defeat Republican incumbent Steve Southerland, earning 47 percent of the vote.<sup>5</sup>

In 2016, redistricting altered Florida's Fifth District. It moved to the northern border, extending from Duval County to Gadsden County.<sup>6</sup> More than 47 percent of the district's Democratic voters were African American.<sup>7</sup> Since the newly configured boundaries included areas he represented in the state legislature, Lawson geared up for another campaign. This time, he looked to replace Democratic incumbent Corrine Brown, who had represented the Fifth District since 1993 but was under fraud investigations.<sup>8</sup> Lawson defeated Brown in the August primary, 48 to 39 percent—with another candidate claiming the remaining 13 percent.<sup>9</sup> In the general election, Lawson faced African-American Republican Glo Smith. On the campaign trail, Smith supported Republican presidential nominee Donald J. Trump's immigration policies and

tax reform proposals while Lawson promoted paths to citizenship for undocumented immigrants and restricting assault weapons.<sup>10</sup> Lawson won with 64 percent of the vote. He won his subsequent two elections by similar margins.<sup>11</sup>

As a new Member of the 115th Congress (2017–2019), Lawson joined the Congressional Black Caucus and the New Democrat Coalition, and was assigned to the Agriculture Committee and the Small Business Committee. In the following Congress, he left Small Business for a seat on the Financial Services Committee.

As a member of the Small Business Committee, Lawson introduced the Incentivizing Fairness in Subcontracting Act. The legislation aimed to create opportunities for small business owners by encouraging large companies with federal contracts to subcontract work to small businesses. The House passed the measure by voice vote in September 2018, but the Senate did not act on it.<sup>12</sup>

The House passed another of Lawson's bills, one commemorating Black history, in the 115th Congress. The measure would have prompted the Secretary of the Interior to determine the possibility of including in the National Park System the Jacksonville home of James Weldon Johnson—an activist, author, and songwriter and the first Black lawyer accepted to the bar association in Florida after Reconstruction. Lawson introduced a similar measure again in the following Congress.<sup>13</sup>

From his seat on the Agriculture Committee, Lawson had a hand in shaping the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, commonly known as the Farm Bill. In preparation for drafting the measure, which provided funding for agricultural programs at historically Black colleges and universities, Lawson held several roundtable discussions in his district to get constituent input.<sup>14</sup> His HBCU Parity Act was included in the final version of the farm bill signed into law in December 2018.<sup>15</sup>

Lawson prioritized the health and safety of federal housing residents and called for federal intervention in the absence of local health and safety enforcement. He introduced the HUD Inspection Oversight Act in July 2019 to revise the federal property inspection requirements of housing units.<sup>16</sup> The same year, he advocated for residents in a federally-assisted Jacksonville apartment complex that went without hot water and gas for weeks.<sup>17</sup> In 2021, Lawson reintroduced the measure and joined Florida Senator Marco Rubio in publicly criticizing a rat infestation at another apartment unit that received federal

funds.<sup>18</sup> “I was really concerned and really upset with the city code enforcement, because they didn’t really do their job to have these kind of things happen,” he told news outlets.<sup>19</sup> In both cases, he called on the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to address the issue.

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## Barbara Lee

1946–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1998–

Democrat from California



Image courtesy of the Member

A longtime California state legislator and former senior congressional aide, Barbara Lee has pursued the interests of Oakland and the East Bay in the U.S. House of Representatives. On Capitol Hill, Lee advocated for the Affordable Care Act to address racial disparities in health care, promoted funding for affordable housing, and served on the influential Appropriations Committee.

Barbara Lee was born in El Paso, Texas, on July 16, 1946.<sup>1</sup> In 1960, her family moved to the Los Angeles area, where Lee graduated from San Fernando High School in 1964. Lee married as a teenager, gave birth to two sons, and later divorced.<sup>2</sup> As a single mother, Lee attended Mills College in Oakland.<sup>3</sup> In 1972, as the Black Student Union president, she arranged for Representative Shirley Chisholm of New York to speak at the college and later worked for Chisholm's presidential campaign. "Shirley became a close friend and a mentor," Lee recalled.<sup>4</sup> After graduating with a bachelor's degree in psychology in 1973, she earned a master's degree in social work from the University of California at Berkeley in 1975. That year Lee joined the staff of Oakland Representative Ronald V. Dellums as an intern, and worked in his office for nearly 12 years, eventually serving as his chief of staff.<sup>5</sup> In 1990, Lee won

election to the California state assembly and later served in the state senate from 1997 to 1998.

Dellums announced his retirement in late 1997 and Lee entered the race for his seat. The district was 41 percent White, 31 percent Black, 15 percent Asian, and 12 percent Latino, and encompassed the Berkeley-Oakland area.<sup>6</sup> Dellums resigned from the House in February 1998 and Lee won the April 7 special election with 67 percent of the vote.<sup>7</sup> In her 11 subsequent re-elections, she has captured 80 percent of the vote or more.<sup>8</sup>

When Lee took her seat in the 105th Congress (1997–1999) on April 21, 1998, she received assignments on the Banking and Financial Services Committee (later renamed Financial Services), and the Science Committee. She left the Science Committee the following Congress for the International Relations Committee (later renamed Foreign Affairs) where she served through the 111th Congress (2009–2011). In the 110th Congress (2007–2009), she departed Financial Services for the Appropriations Committee. She was assigned to the Budget Committee in the 113th Congress (2013–2015). In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Lee became chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs.



In the 111th Congress, Lee served as chair of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). As Congress debated health care reform, Lee led the CBC in supporting the Health Equity and Accountability Act, introduced by Virgin Islands Delegate Donna M. Christensen on behalf of the CBC, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific Islander Caucus.<sup>9</sup> The bill addressed issues of racial and ethnic inequalities in health services and contained measures to increase diversity among health workers, fund linguistic services, and collect data on health disparities.<sup>10</sup> Sections of the bill were included in the version of the Affordable Care Act that passed the House.<sup>11</sup> Lee introduced it again in the following Congress.<sup>12</sup> In 2018, she was elected to the Democratic leadership as one of three co-chairs of the Steering and Policy Committee, which makes Democratic committee assignments and helps shape the party's legislative agenda in the House.<sup>13</sup>

In 2003, Lee and then Representative Bernard Sanders of Vermont introduced a bill to create a Federal Housing Administration-funded program to build and rehabilitate affordable housing.<sup>14</sup> In 2013, Lee cofounded the Democratic Whip Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity with Democratic Whip Steny Hamilton Hoyer of Maryland, which became the Majority Leader's Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity in 2019. As chair, Lee develops legislation to help low-income Americans.<sup>15</sup>

Lee coauthored two laws providing funding and technical assistance for global health initiatives: the Global AIDS and Tuberculosis Relief Act of 2000 and the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003.<sup>16</sup> As chair of the CBC Global AIDS Task Force, Lee introduced the Assistance for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children in Developing Countries Act, which became law in 2005. The measure created a special advisor position in the U.S. Agency for International Development and directed the administration to examine the health and education needs of vulnerable children around the world.<sup>17</sup>

In 2001, Lee was the lone dissenting vote against the resolution authorizing President George W. Bush to use force overseas after the September 11, 2001, terror attacks.<sup>18</sup> In July 2014, the House approved Lee's coauthored resolution requiring President Barack Obama to seek congressional approval before committing ground forces in Iraq.<sup>19</sup>

As chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, Lee was

responsible for overseeing the production of one of the 12 funding measures the full committee authors each fiscal year.<sup>20</sup> In March 2021, she led a subcommittee hearing addressing diversity in the U.S. foreign policy workforce.<sup>21</sup>

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# Lucy McBath

1960–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2019–

Democrat from Georgia



Image courtesy of the Member

In November 2018, Lucy McBath gained national attention when she won election as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives in a once reliably Republican district.<sup>1</sup> Inspired to enter politics following the murder of her teenage son, Jordan, McBath has made gun violence prevention, health care, veterans, and voting rights key elements of her congressional career.

Lucy McBath was born Lucia Kay Holman in Joliet, Illinois, on June 1, 1960, to Dr. Lucien and Wilma Holman. Her mother was a nurse, and her father was a dentist who served as the president of the Illinois branch of the NAACP during the 1960s. He also owned *The Black Voice*, a regional newspaper.<sup>2</sup> McBath attended West Joliet High School and in 1982 earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia, one of a number of historically Black colleges and universities. In college, she interned for Virginia Governor Douglas Wilder. In 1984, she joined Delta Airlines as a flight attendant and later moved to Atlanta, Georgia, near the company's headquarters.<sup>3</sup> In 2008, she married fellow flight attendant Curtis McBath.<sup>4</sup>

On November 23, 2012, McBath's teenage son Jordan was shot and killed by a 45-year-old White man for "playing

loud music." In the wake of her son's death, McBath joined the gun violence prevention advocacy groups Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, Everytown for Gun Safety, and Mothers of the Movement. Everytown for Gun Safety elevated McBath to national spokeswoman, and she routinely testified before Congress and state legislatures in favor of gun safety legislation. In 2016, she spoke at the Democratic National Convention.<sup>5</sup>

In early 2018, McBath considered running for a seat in the Georgia state legislature. However, following the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, McBath decided instead to run for Congress.<sup>6</sup> McBath entered a four-candidate primary in the Atlanta suburbs, which contained portions of Fulton, DeKalb, and Cobb counties. McBath placed first in the May primary, then defeated local businessman Kevin Abel in the July runoff.<sup>7</sup> Viewed as an underdog against incumbent Karen Handel in the general election, McBath staked out opposition to President Donald J. Trump's tax law and attempts to defund Planned Parenthood, and focused on stricter anti-gun-violence laws.<sup>8</sup> In 2018, McBath narrowly defeated Handel with 50.5 percent of the vote. McBath improved her margin in a 2020 rematch against Handel, winning 55 percent of the vote.<sup>9</sup>

During both of her terms in the House, McBeth has served on the Judiciary Committee and the Education and Labor Committee. From her position on Education and Labor, McBeth introduced legislation to support maternal health, refund defrauded students, and joined a bipartisan effort to end hazing at academic institutions.<sup>10</sup> McBeth has twice introduced the Family Violence Prevention and Services Improvement Act to increase funding available for shelters and programs designed to assist victims of domestic abuse. The House passed her measure in October 2021.<sup>11</sup> McBeth also has made health care a priority, passing legislation to expand health care protections for those who lose their job, to help plan for and prevent future pandemics, and to fund critical research to address the maternal mortality crisis and keep families safe.

McBeth's position on the Judiciary Committee increased her visibility during high profile investigations of the Trump administration in the 116th Congress (2019–2021). In 2019, McBeth's bill, the HAVEN Act, which excluded veterans benefits from income calculations for disabled veterans struggling against bankruptcy, was signed into law.<sup>12</sup> McBeth also guided another bill through the Judiciary Committee to hasten the patent approval process for humanitarian innovations, which was signed into law in 2021.<sup>13</sup>

McBeth has continued to advocate for legislation related to gun violence prevention, voting rights, and justice initiatives. She joined the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force as vice chair and serves as the vice chair for the Bipartisan Women's Caucus. McBeth has been considered "one of the House Democratic Caucus's most important voices" on gun violence prevention. She was one of eight original cosponsors on a new background check bill to tighten restrictions on private trades and exchanges; the bill stalled in the Senate.<sup>14</sup> Following the murders of George Floyd in Minnesota and Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, McBeth connected their deaths to her own painful past, calling them "a sucker punch in my heart and my gut" and reiterated her opposition to "stand your ground" laws.<sup>15</sup> She has continued to promote Democratic legislation to reform police departments and increase accountability.<sup>16</sup> McBeth has been called a "Mother on a Mission" to protect families across America.

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## A. Donald McEachin

1961–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2017–

Democrat from Virginia

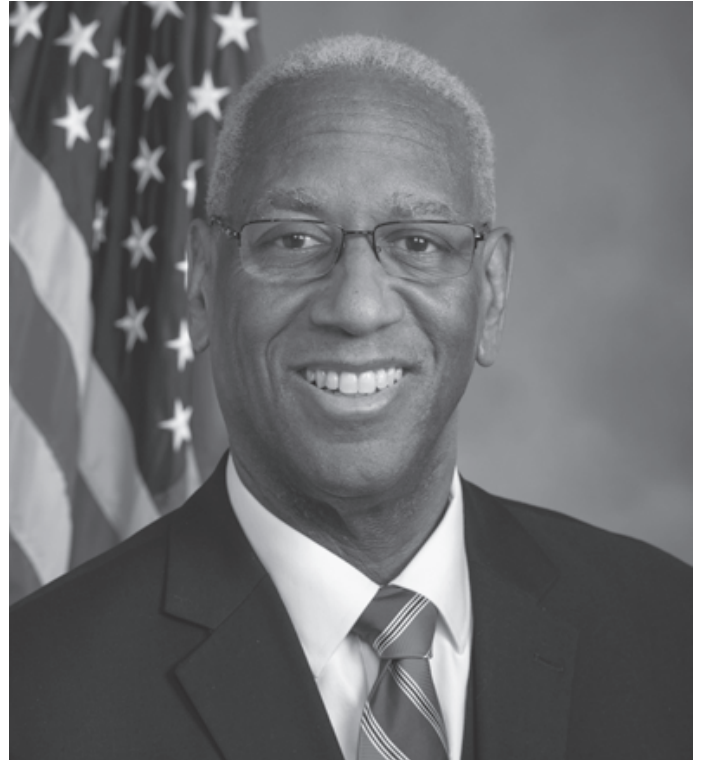


Image courtesy of the Member

Elected in 2016 from a redrawn district centered on Richmond, Virginia, A. Donald McEachin brought his experience as a veteran state legislator to Congress. A passionate advocate for environmental protection, McEachin has made addressing the climate crisis and its effect on underprivileged communities his chief legislative priority.

Aston Donald McEachin was born in Nuremburg, Germany, on October 10, 1961, to Ivan and Edna McEachin. His father Ivan, a Korean War veteran, left the U.S. Army in 1968 to work for C&P Telephone Company before its acquisition by Bell Atlantic; his mother Edna worked as a teacher and banker.<sup>1</sup> Donald McEachin spent his early years as a self-described “army brat” before the family settled in the Richmond, Virginia, area. McEachin attended St. Christopher’s School, a private all-boys school in Richmond, graduating in 1979. After earning a bachelor’s degree at American University in Washington, DC, in 1982, McEachin earned a law degree from the University of Virginia Law School in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 1986. While studying law, he met his wife Colette; they have three children.<sup>2</sup>

In 1990, he co-founded the McEachin and Gee personal injury law firm and won a landmark jury verdict in a civil case.<sup>3</sup> McEachin first ran for a seat in the Virginia house of

delegates in 1991 but failed to secure the nomination. Four years later, McEachin ousted a veteran legislator in the primary despite little outside support. After an unsuccessful run for state attorney general in 2001, McEachin temporarily left politics. He enrolled at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University, obtaining a master of divinity in 2008, and returned to the house of delegates in 2006. The next year, he earned the support of Virginia Senator James H. “Jim” Webb in primarying a state senator who had backed Webb’s opponent. McEachin won the race and served in the Virginia state senate until 2016.<sup>4</sup> As a state senator, McEachin fought to expand Medicare and led negotiations reducing rates for the statewide utility giant in exchange for increasing support for solar power.<sup>5</sup>

In 2015, a federal panel of judges ruled that the Virginia congressional map illegally packed Representative Robert C. “Bobby” Scott’s Tidewater district. When the legislature refused to redraw it, Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe requested that the judges redraw the districts. A new district included part of Richmond and Henrico County, territory more favorable to Democratic candidates. Before the map was even finalized, McEachin emerged as the favorite among the state’s Democratic establishment. He handily



won the June primary.<sup>6</sup> In the general election, McEachin faced Henrico Sheriff Mike Wade. McEachin supported maintaining the Affordable Care Act, improving local infrastructure, placing a ban on offshore oil drilling, and expanding refugee quotas. Amidst national concerns over police brutality and racism, Wade suggested Black men pulled over by police were already “on their way to jail” and typically suffered from mental illness or addiction. McEachin rebuked his opponent, recalling his own experience being racially profiled by police.<sup>7</sup> McEachin ultimately won with 58 percent of the vote. McEachin won re-election in 2018 and 2020 with more than 60 percent of the vote.<sup>8</sup>

McEachin entered Congress as only the third Black man ever to represent Virginia in Congress, and his election marked the first time the state simultaneously elected two Black Congressmen. Democratic leadership rewarded McEachin for his legislative experience by appointing him regional whip, and his fellow incoming freshmen named him one of three class presidents.<sup>9</sup> In the 115th Congress (2017–2019), McEachin was assigned to the Armed Services Committee and the Natural Resources Committee. The following Congress, McEachin left Armed Services for a seat on the Committee on Energy and Commerce. In March 2019, McEachin also was assigned to the newly created Select Committee on the Climate Crisis.

Assignments to Energy and Commerce and the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis aligned with McEachin’s focus on environmental protection. Shortly after taking office, McEachin cofounded the United for Climate and Environment Justice Task Force to address the climate crisis’s disproportionate effect on communities of color.<sup>10</sup> He submitted a bill to create interagency groups to regularly review the economic costs of greenhouse gases. He later proposed a Clean Cities Coalition Program under the auspices of the Department of Energy, encouraging cooperation between the executive branch and local urban task forces.<sup>11</sup> McEachin held to his original campaign promise to oppose and heavily regulate offshore drilling, twice introducing the Offshore Accountability Act to tighten reporting requirements for machinery failures on drilling rigs.<sup>12</sup> Starting in 2020, he pursued designating the Great Dismal Swamp located in Virginia and North Carolina as a National Heritage Area.<sup>13</sup> McEachin annually submitted resolutions honoring Earth Day and declared environmental protection “a moral obligation and an act of faith.”<sup>14</sup>

McEachin proposed a ban on corporal punishment in schools and the creation of a mentor program for larger, older firms to assist newer firms in competing for Homeland Security contracts. Representing a Tidewater district near several naval bases, he also supported additional ship construction.<sup>15</sup>

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## Gregory W. Meeks

1953–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1998–

Democrat from New York

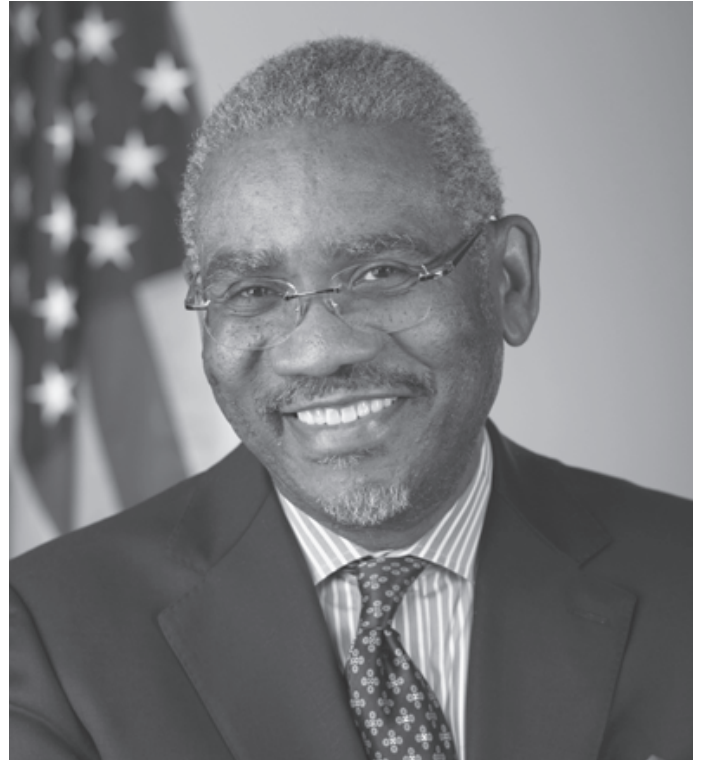


Image courtesy of the Member

Gregory W. Meeks, a former prosecutor and New York state legislator, has represented his Queens-centered U.S. House of Representatives district for 13 terms. An advocate for development at home and abroad, Meeks has served on the Financial Services Committee throughout his congressional career, heading two subcommittees in his tenure. He became the first African-American chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the 117th Congress (2021–2023). “My role, as part of a new generation of African American leadership,” he said, “is to take us to the next phase of the civil rights movement: that is, the economic development of our community.”<sup>1</sup>

Gregory Meeks was born on September 25, 1953, in East Harlem, New York. His father James was a heavyweight boxer, taxi driver, and theater handyman. His mother Mary was a teacher.<sup>2</sup> He is the oldest of four children.<sup>3</sup> He graduated from New York City’s Julia Richman High School in 1971. Four years later, he graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Adelphi University on Long Island. He earned a law degree from Howard University before settling in Far Rockaway, Queens. He worked for several legal offices in the New York City government before going into private law practice. From 1985 to 1992, he served as a supervising

judge on the New York State Workers Compensation Board. Meeks entered elective politics when he made an unsuccessful bid for the New York City Council in 1991. In 1992 he won election to the New York state assembly, representing Far Rockaway until 1998.<sup>4</sup> Meeks is married to Simone-Marie, has three daughters: Ebony, Aja, and Nia-Aiyana, and two granddaughters: London Gayle Laidley and Jayla Janee Johnson.<sup>5</sup>

During the 105th Congress (1997–1999) U.S. Representative Floyd H. Flake announced his retirement, requiring a special election to fill the seat. In place of a Democratic primary, Queens political leaders determined the Democratic nominee.<sup>6</sup> In January 1998, they chose Meeks as their candidate.<sup>7</sup> The heavily Democratic district was 70 percent African American and Hispanic.<sup>8</sup> In the February 3 special election, Meeks won by 57 percent.<sup>9</sup> In his 12 re-elections, Meeks won majorities between 64 and 86 percent.<sup>10</sup> In 2019, the Queens County Democratic Party named Meeks its chair.<sup>11</sup>

When Meeks was sworn in on February 5, 1998, he received a seat on the Banking and Finance Committee (later renamed Financial Services).<sup>12</sup> In the 106th Congress (1999–2001), Meeks was appointed to the International

Relations Committee (later renamed Foreign Affairs). Congressman Meeks still serves on both panels. In the 111th Congress (2009–2011), Meeks chaired the Financial Services Committee's International Monetary Policy and Trade Subcommittee. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), he chaired the Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Financial Institutions. In the 117th Congress, Meeks became chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

As chair of the International Monetary Policy and Trade Subcommittee, Meeks led the Financial Services Committee's response to a deadly earthquake that shook Haiti in January 2010. He oversaw committee passage of the Haiti Debt Relief and Earthquake Recovery Act, written by Maxine Waters of California, to cancel the country's debts with several international development banks.<sup>13</sup> Meeks also introduced the Haiti Private Sector Development Act to support the country's rebuilding efforts.<sup>14</sup> As subcommittee chair, Meeks played a critical role as a conferee for the Dodd–Frank Wall Street Reform Act, the most consequential finance reform bill since the Great Depression.

As chair of the Consumer Protection and Financial Institutions Subcommittee in the 116th Congress, Meeks focused on issues of discrimination and persistent redlining in banking, advanced legislation to save minority banks, and submitted proposals to increase banking and access to capital for the poor and underbanked.

In November 2012, Hurricane Sandy devastated the New York coastline, causing severe damage to Meeks's district and leaving many of his constituents without power, food, or water. He worked to pass a \$50.7 billion aid bill to rebuild and recover.<sup>15</sup> He also introduced the Disaster Assistance Recoupment Fairness Act to waive citizen debt owed to the Federal Emergency Management Agency due to clerical errors.<sup>16</sup> The bill attempted to reinstate an earlier law but was never voted on.<sup>17</sup> In 2020, Meeks and other New York officials announced the start of a federally-funded \$336 million coastal construction project to reinforce the state's shorelines and prevent future damage caused by hurricanes.<sup>18</sup>

As chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Meeks introduced the Ensuring American Global Leadership and Engagement (EAGLE) Act in May 2021, which aimed to reshape the relationship between the United States and China, including expanding the U.S. State Department's presence in the region, giving protections to Hong Kong and Uyghur refugees, and encouraging

a diplomatic boycott of the 2022 Beijing Olympics.<sup>19</sup> The committee voted favorably on the bill in July 2021. Prioritizing diplomacy in global leadership, Chairman Meeks successfully steered into law the first comprehensive authorizing bill for the State Department in nearly two decades. He also worked to strengthen the management and operations of the State Department, including its recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce. Under his tenure as chair, he held the first full committee hearing on LGBTQI+ rights abroad.

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# Kweisi Mfume

1948–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1987–1996; 2020–

Democrat from Maryland



Image courtesy of the Member

Kweisi Mfume (pronounced Kwah-EE-see Oom-FOO-may) began his political career in the Baltimore city council before winning election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1986. In 1996, Mfume voluntarily left his safe seat in the House to revive the then-struggling NAACP as its president and chief executive officer. He returned to the House 24 years later when he won the special election to fill the vacant seat opened by the death of his successor, Elijah E. Cummings of Maryland.<sup>1</sup>

Kweisi Mfume was born, raised, and educated in the City of Baltimore and there he followed his dreams to impact society and to help shape public policy. He attended Morgan State University and graduated *magna cum laude*. He also earned a master's degree from Johns Hopkins University.<sup>2</sup>

During his seven years of service in local government, Mfume chaired the Baltimore city council's committee on health policy and led the efforts to diversify city government, improve community safety, enhance business development, and divest city funds from the apartheid government of South Africa.<sup>3</sup>

At the age of thirty-eight, he was decisively elected to the U.S. House, and he firmly held his seat for the next decade.<sup>4</sup> Congressman Mfume served on several major committees.

As a member of the Banking and Financial Services Committee, he held the ranking seat on the General Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. He also served as a member of the Committee on Education and helped to impact commercial and industrial issues as a senior member of the Small Business Committee. While in his third term, he was chosen by the Speaker of the House Thomas S. Foley of Washington to serve on the Ethics Committee and the Joint Economic Committee of the House and Senate. He was later elected chair of the Joint Economic Committee.

Mfume consistently advocated for landmark business and civil rights legislation. He successfully cosponsored and helped to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act, strengthened the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, and co-authored and successfully amended the Civil Rights Bill of 1991 to apply its provisions to U.S. citizens working for American-based companies abroad. He also sponsored legislative initiatives banning assault weapons and establishing stalking as a federal crime. Mfume also served as both vice-chair and later chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Mfume left his congressional seat to become president and chief executive officer of the NAACP in February 1996 after being unanimously elected to the post; he served



in that position for nine years.<sup>5</sup> During that time, he reestablished the financial footing of the organization and significantly raised its national profile while also helping to restore its prominence among the nation's oldest civil rights organizations. His efforts included pursuing enhanced civil rights enforcement measures within the government and in the private sector, economic empowerment for all people, educational excellence, access to affordable healthcare in the most overlooked communities, and establishing 75 new college-based NAACP chapters across the nation.

In 2000, Mfume worked to negotiate, develop, and author the first-ever signed "Network Television Diversity Agreements" with broadcast television networks. In 2003, he successfully secured the NAACP's official United Nations' Status as a Non-Governmental Organization within that world body.

Mfume was an original member of the Continuity of Government Commission established following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The commission was created to study and recommend reforms related to presidential and congressional succession in a time of national catastrophic crisis or in the event of a terrorist attack.

Since his return to Congress in May 2020, Mfume's congressional successes include passing legislation to address the longstanding need for diversity in clinical cancer research by pharmaceutical companies using federal dollars (the Henrietta Lacks Enhancing Cancer Research Act), codifying and tripling the budget of the Minority Business Development Agency within Department of Commerce, the only federal agency tasked with promoting the growth and competitiveness of minority-owned businesses, bringing back billions of dollars in COVID-19 relief money to his Maryland district, and helping constituents with his constituent services efforts.<sup>6</sup> He remains a constant advocate for bipartisan political cooperation on social, economic, educational, and healthcare issues.

Mfume serves on the House Oversight and Reform Committee and the Education and Labor Committee, and he is vice-chair of the Small Business Committee. He is also a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressional Progressive Caucus, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Caucus, Defense Spending Reduction Caucus, and Ukraine Caucus.

Mfume is the recipient of honorary doctoral degrees conferred by Brandeis University, the University of

Maryland, Loyola University Maryland, University of the Virgin Islands, Meharry Medical College, Morgan State University, Morehouse College, Maryland Institute College of Art, Sojourner-Douglass College, Washington College, and Howard University.

Mfume has been honored with scores of other awards, proclamations, and citations, including twice being named "Marylander of the Year." His background in broadcasting includes 20 years in radio and television. His former bestselling autobiography published by Ballantine Books (Random House) is entitled *No Free Ride*. He is a proud husband and father of six adult sons.

## Notes

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# Gwen Moore

1951–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2005–

Democrat from Wisconsin



Image courtesy of the Member

Following a lengthy career in state and local government, Gwen Moore won election as Wisconsin's first Black Member of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2004. Building off her record as a state legislator, Moore advocates on behalf of women and low-income families. "My struggle to put myself through college while I raised my baby girl inspired me to run for office," she has said. "My mission is to fight for programs that will help lift up poor women and children."<sup>1</sup>

Gwendolynne Sophia Moore was born in Racine, Wisconsin, on April 18, 1951. Her father was a union factory worker and her mother was a public school teacher. She was the eighth of nine children. She grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and graduated from Northern Division High School in 1969. During her first year at Marquette University in Milwaukee, she became a single mother, seeking government assistance to support her family. Despite such challenges, she earned a bachelor's degree from Marquette in 1978. She is the mother of three children: Jesselynne, Ade, and Sowande.<sup>2</sup>

After college, Moore participated in Volunteers in Service to America, an antipoverty program created during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, where she helped create a credit union in her community so that neighbors would

not have to rely on predatory loans. She then held a variety of state and local government positions. On the municipal level, she worked for Milwaukee's department of city development, and on the state level, she worked for the Wisconsin housing and economic development authority, and the departments of employment relations and health and social services.<sup>3</sup>

In 1988, Moore won a seat in the Wisconsin state assembly. In 1992, after two terms in the assembly, Moore was elected to the state senate and became the first African-American woman to serve as a Wisconsin state senator. She held her seat in the senate for more than 10 years, eventually serving as president pro tempore from 1997 to 1998.<sup>4</sup>

When Milwaukee Representative Gerald Daniel Kleczka announced he was retiring from the House at the end of the 108th Congress (2003–2005), Moore entered the race to fill the seat against two other Democrats, state senator Tim Carpenter and Matt Flynn, a former chair of the Wisconsin Democratic Party. Moore ran a grassroots campaign and tapped into a support network that included women's organizations and teachers' unions. She won the primary with 64 percent of the vote. In the largely Democratic district, she won the general election easily, taking 70 percent of the vote over Republican Gerald H. Boyle.<sup>5</sup>

“We’ve got to preserve life, preserve resources and start focusing on a domestic agenda that’s going to relieve us of a dearth of jobs, a lack of health care and a divestment in educational opportunities,” she said upon her election.<sup>6</sup> Moore has won re-election eight times with comfortable margins. Most recently, she received 75 percent of the vote in the 2020 general election.<sup>7</sup>

Early in her House career, Moore was assigned to three committees: Financial Services; Budget; and Small Business. In 2019, she was appointed to the Ways and Means Committee. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Moore joined the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology and the Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth. In 2011, Moore became the Democratic co-chair of the Congressional Women’s Caucus for the 112th Congress (2011–2013).

Through her legislation, Moore has worked on behalf of vulnerable communities. While on the Financial Services Committee, which holds jurisdiction over housing policy, she introduced the Safe Housing Identification Exemption for the Lives of Domestic Violence Victims (SHIELD) Act in 2005. The legislation exempted victims of domestic violence or stalking from having their personal information disclosed through the federal Homeless Management Information System Database.<sup>8</sup> The bill’s provisions were added to the 2005 reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and passed into law.<sup>9</sup> From her work on the issue, Moore has led subsequent reauthorizations of VAWA. In January 2013, she introduced the VAWA reauthorization; a Senate companion bill became law two months later in March 2013.<sup>10</sup>

In 2018, Moore underwent treatment for small-cell lymphoma, and her cancer has been in remission since. She said her experiences with America’s health care system “quadrupled” her commitment to the Affordable Care Act. She is an ardent supporter of women’s reproductive rights and has worked to improve care for children and mothers.<sup>11</sup> In 2020, the House passed her bill to provide federal grants to improve data collection on cases of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome; a Senate version became law in late 2020.<sup>12</sup>

From her seat on the Ways and Means Committee, Moore has introduced legislation to reform the earned income tax credit, a tax credit for low-income workers. Her bill would increase the size of the credit and expand its eligibility criteria to include caregivers and college students.<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

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# Joe Neguse

1984–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2019–

Democrat from Colorado



Image courtesy of the Member

When Joe Neguse won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018 at the age of 34, he became the first African American to represent Colorado in Congress. As a federal lawmaker, Neguse has seen several of his bills signed into law, made efforts to preserve Colorado's public lands, and earned leadership positions within the House—including serving as the youngest impeachment manager in American history in 2021.

Joseph Neguse was born in Bakersfield, California, on May 13, 1984. His mother and father immigrated as refugees from the East African country Eritrea in the early 1980s and initially settled in California; the family moved to Colorado some years later.<sup>1</sup> Neguse graduated from Thunder Ridge High School in Highlands Ranch, Colorado, in 2002 before attending the University of Colorado in Boulder. He graduated *summa cum laude* with a bachelor's degree in political science and economics in 2005 and earned a law degree from the same university in 2009.

As a student, Neguse cofounded Colorado's largest voter registration nonprofit, and, in 2008, won election to the University of Colorado's Board of Regents for Colorado's Second Congressional District.<sup>2</sup> Following law school, Neguse practiced law in Denver and made an unsuccessful

run for secretary of state in 2014. Colorado Governor John Wright Hickenlooper appointed him to his cabinet as the executive director for the Department of Regulatory Agencies, Colorado's consumer protection agency, in 2015.<sup>3</sup> Neguse and his wife Andrea have a daughter, Natalie.

After Democratic Representative Jared Polis announced he would run for Colorado governor in 2017, Neguse entered the race in Colorado's Second District.<sup>4</sup> On the campaign trail, he criticized President Donald J. Trump's restrictive immigration policies and made gun violence prevention and environmental protection the centerpieces of his campaign.<sup>5</sup> The heavily Democratic district encompassed mountain towns and many of Denver's suburbs in the north-central part of the state, including Boulder, Fort Collins, Loveland, and Granby. Only one percent of the population was Black.<sup>6</sup> Neguse won the primary over business executive Mark Williams, with 66 percent of the vote.<sup>7</sup> In the general election, he beat the Republican, Independent, and Libertarian candidates with 60 percent of the vote. He won by a similar margin in his subsequent re-election.<sup>8</sup>

In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Neguse was assigned to the Judiciary Committee, Natural Resources



Committee, and Select Committee on the Climate Crisis. Neguse's fellow freshmen elected him as one of two co-class liaisons to House Democratic leadership.<sup>9</sup> In 2020, his colleagues elected him to co-chair the House Democratic Policy and Communications Committee, the number eight position in House Democratic leadership.<sup>10</sup> In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), Neguse joined the Rules Committee and became vice-chair of the Judiciary Immigration Subcommittee and the first Coloradan to chair the Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands.

One of the first bills Neguse introduced became law. Supported by his Colorado colleagues in the House and Senate, Neguse secured federal authorization to install an outdoor women's suffrage statue near the Capitol building in 2020. The design, created by one of his constituents, included influential advocates of color such as Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Wells.<sup>11</sup> "I want to ensure my daughter and every girl growing up alongside her feel represented and are assured of the fundamental role they play in our society," Neguse said in remarks he inserted into the *Congressional Record*.<sup>12</sup>

During his time in Congress, Neguse has been ranked by multiple entities as one of the most effective members of the House. Several of his bills, including legislation to increase funding for rural schools, expand opportunities for small businesses, and strengthen consumer protections, became law. From his seat on Natural Resources, Neguse also obtained the President's signature on multiple bills concerning public lands, including securing federal authorization to install the first women's suffrage monument in Washington, DC, and legislation incorporating the site of the Colorado Japanese internment location known as Amache into the National Park System. Neguse also secured passage of a bill expanding Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, and it became law on January 5, 2021.<sup>13</sup>

As chair of the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests, and Public Lands, and founder and co-chair of the bipartisan Wildfire Caucus, Neguse has held legislative and oversight hearings on the topics of the dangers of wildfires and the prospect of organizing a Civilian Climate Corps.<sup>14</sup>

On January 6, 2021, during the Joint Session of Congress to count the electoral votes from the 2020 presidential election, Neguse helped lead the debate on the House Floor to defend the results against Republican

objections. On January 12, Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California named Neguse one of the House managers for the second impeachment of President Trump on the charge of incitement of insurrection following the violence at the Capitol on January 6.<sup>15</sup>

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# Eleanor Holmes Norton

1937–

DELEGATE

1991–

Democrat from the District of Columbia



Image courtesy of the Member

In November 1990, Eleanor Holmes Norton won election as Delegate for Washington, DC, in the U.S. House of Representatives. A constitutional lawyer and former chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), Eleanor Holmes Norton has carried her lifelong commitment to protecting civil rights to Congress. Norton also has been a strong advocate for DC statehood and congressional voting rights. Alongside California Representative Maxine Waters, Norton is the longest-serving African-American woman in congressional history.

Eleanor Holmes Norton was born Eleanor Katherine Holmes in Washington, DC, on June 13, 1937, the oldest of three daughters of Coleman Holmes, a civil servant, and Vela Lynch Holmes, a teacher. She attended Dunbar High School in the District and earned a bachelor's degree at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, in 1960. She graduated with a master's degree in American Studies in 1963 and a law degree in 1964—both from Yale University. While a student, Norton worked in the civil rights movement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Mississippi. After graduating, she clerked for federal Judge A. Leon Higginbotham in Philadelphia and later became assistant legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union.

In 1965, she married Edward Norton. The couple raised two children, Katherine and John, and separated in 1990.<sup>1</sup>

In 1970, New York Mayor John Vliet Lindsay appointed Norton to chair the New York City commission on human rights.<sup>2</sup> In 1977, President James Earl “Jimmy” Carter appointed her chair of the EEOC, where she served until 1981. During the 1980s, Norton taught as a tenured professor of law at Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, DC. After her election to Congress, Norton taught one course there annually until 2019.<sup>3</sup>

In 1990, Norton joined the race to be the District of Columbia's Delegate in the U.S. House after the incumbent, Walter E. Fauntroy, opted to run for mayor of Washington, DC. Norton ran on a platform advocating for statehood and greater federal funding for the District. She won the primary with a plurality of 40 percent of the vote. In the general election, she won 62 percent of the vote over Republican Harry Singleton. Norton has faced little or no opposition in her re-elections. In 2020, she easily secured re-election to her sixteenth term with 93 percent of the vote.<sup>4</sup>

As a Delegate, Norton can introduce legislation, speak on the House Floor, vote in committee, and chair a committee but cannot vote on legislation on the floor. In 1993, however,

Norton pushed for and won the right to vote on the House Floor in the Committee of the Whole. Republicans withdrew the rule when they took control of the House in the 104th Congress (1995–1997), but Democrats restored it when they again held the majority from 2007 to 2011, and again in 2019.<sup>5</sup> As a Delegate, Norton has often been afforded senatorial courtesy to recommend federal judges, the U.S. Attorney, and other significant federal law enforcement positions for the District.<sup>6</sup>

Norton has served on the Committee on District of Columbia, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress, Committee on Oversight and Reform, Committee on Small Business, Select Committee on Homeland Security, and Committee on Homeland Security. She has chaired the Committee on District of Columbia Subcommittee on Judiciary and Education, the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service Subcommittee on Compensation and Employee Benefits, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings, and Emergency Management, and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), she sits on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and chairs its Subcommittee on Highways and Transit. She also serves on the Committee on Oversight and Reform, which holds jurisdiction over legislation affecting the District of Columbia.

Norton has used her positions on the Oversight and Transportation committees to bring significant economic development to the District of Columbia. When the District faced a financial crisis in the 1990s, Norton worked with Thomas M. Davis III of Virginia, then the chair of the District of Columbia Subcommittee, to pass legislation that created a financial control board to help balance the city's budget.<sup>7</sup> Norton helped ensure that the control board's broad budgetary powers did not infringe on the District's home rule.<sup>8</sup> She and Davis also collaborated on a law to create a tuition-assistance program that allowed college students from the District to attend out-of-state public institutions for the in-state price.<sup>9</sup> Norton also has supported legislation to redevelop portions of the District.<sup>10</sup>

Norton has prioritized statehood for the District of Columbia since her first term in office. On June 26, 2020, the House passed the Washington D.C. Admission Act for

the first time, 28 years after Norton introduced her first statehood bill. In the 117th Congress, the House passed the Admission Act for a second time, but it has failed to gain traction in the Senate.<sup>11</sup>

## Notes

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## Ilhan Omar

1982–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2019–

Democrat from Minnesota



Image courtesy of the Member

Just two years into her first term as a Minnesota state legislator, Ilhan Omar quickly seized on her burgeoning political profile to win election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2018. She is the country's first Somali-American lawmaker. Having grown up in a family displaced by war, Omar has brought a unique perspective to policy debates on immigration, domestic spending, and foreign affairs.

Ilhan Omar was born on October 4, 1982, in Mogadishu, Somalia, to Nur Omar Mohamed, a teacher, and Farli Abukar. Omar's mother died when she was two years old and she was raised by her father and grandfather.<sup>1</sup> When Omar was a child, Somalia plunged into a civil war. She and her family fled the country and lived in a Kenyan refugee camp for four years. In 1995, her family was granted asylum to the United States and ultimately settled in Minneapolis. Omar became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 2000 at age 17.<sup>2</sup> She graduated from Thomas Edison High School in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and worked as a community nutrition educator for the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. After earning a bachelor's degree from North Dakota State University in Fargo, North Dakota, in 2011, she returned to Minnesota to work as a child nutrition outreach coordinator for the state's

department of education.<sup>3</sup> Omar is married to Tim Mynett, a political consultant, and they have four children.<sup>4</sup>

Omar developed her interest in politics as a teenager when she accompanied her grandfather to Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) caucus meetings, acting as his interpreter.<sup>5</sup> In 2012, she managed Minnesota state senator Kari Dziedzic's campaign. The following year, she organized Minneapolis city council member Andrew Johnson's bid for office. Omar served as Johnson's policy aide until 2015 and worked at a nonprofit dedicated to the political empowerment of East African women living in the United States.<sup>6</sup> In 2016, Omar defeated a 44-year incumbent in a bid for a Minneapolis-area seat in the Minnesota house of representatives, becoming the nation's first Somali-American state lawmaker.<sup>7</sup>

On June 5, 2018, Minnesota Representative Keith Ellison announced his intention to run for Minnesota attorney general, setting off a frenzy of last-minute filings for the DFL primary in August. Omar joined the race for the open House seat representing Minneapolis and its surrounding suburbs. Though the district was majority White, it had a growing East African immigrant population.<sup>8</sup> In the primary, Omar faced several veteran



politicians, including former state house speaker Margaret Kelliher, and 11-year state legislator Patricia Torres Ray. Despite her relative lack of experience in elected office, Omar earned the endorsement of the DFL and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey.<sup>9</sup> She advocated for affordable higher education, Medicare for all, and the abolition of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.<sup>10</sup> Omar won the primary with a plurality of 48 percent of the vote.<sup>11</sup> In the heavily Democratic district, a DFL nomination all but ensured Omar's victory in the November general election. She bested her Republican opponent with a comfortable 78 percent and won re-election in 2020 with 64 percent.<sup>12</sup>

Along with Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, Omar was one of the first two Muslim-American women elected to the House and the first to wear a hijab on the House Floor. On the Opening Day of the 116th Congress (2019–2021), the House adopted a rules package that modified a 182-year-old rule banning hats in the chamber to allow exceptions for religious headwear.<sup>13</sup> In her first term, Representative Omar received assignments to three committees: Budget; Education and Labor; and Foreign Affairs. She remained on the latter two panels in her second term.<sup>14</sup>

From her seat on the Education and Labor Committee, Omar has worked to ensure equitable access to schooling. Working alongside Senator Bernard Sanders of Vermont, she introduced a bill that would cancel existing federal student loans and require the Department of Education to buy out and forgive private loans.<sup>15</sup> She has also cosponsored legislation to eliminate tuition at public colleges and universities for students below a certain income level.<sup>16</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, Omar introduced the MEALS Act, which ensured that children eligible to receive free and reduced-price school lunches would continue to receive meals during school closures.<sup>17</sup> The bill was incorporated into the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which President Donald J. Trump signed into law in March 2020.<sup>18</sup>

As a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Omar has endorsed a humanitarian approach to foreign policy. She has criticized the levying of economic sanctions on foreign governments, arguing that such measures only punish a country's citizens without affecting their leaders' behavior. She also introduced a bill that would allow certain exports to sanctioned countries, including healthcare and

educational products.<sup>19</sup> In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), the House passed her bill, the Combating International Islamophobia Act, which would establish a new office within the State Department to monitor and combat Islamophobic activity in foreign countries.<sup>20</sup>

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## Donald M. Payne Jr.

1958–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE  
2012–

Democrat from New Jersey



Image courtesy of the Member

In 2012, Donald M. Payne Jr. won election to the U.S. House of Representatives after the death of his father, Representative Donald M. Payne. Representing Newark, New Jersey, Payne has prioritized security, transportation, and access to health care in Congress. He has chaired two subcommittees of the Homeland Security Committee and the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and has led hearings on high-speed rail systems and helping small, minority-owned businesses work on federal infrastructure projects.

Donald Payne Jr. was born on December 17, 1958, in Newark, New Jersey, to Donald Payne and the former Hazel Johnson. His mother died of cancer in 1963, and his father worked as a teacher before becoming a member of the Essex County board of freeholders and the Newark city council.<sup>1</sup> In 1976, Payne Jr. graduated from Hillside High School in Hillside, New Jersey, and went on to attend Kean College in Union, New Jersey.<sup>2</sup> Payne worked for the New Jersey highway authority and Essex County schools.<sup>3</sup> In 2005, Payne won election as a freeholder-at-large on the Essex County board of freeholders (now called the board of county commissioners).<sup>4</sup> The following year, he was elected as an at-large representative to the Newark city council and became president in 2010. He remained on the council and the board until 2012.

Payne's father, Donald Payne, became the first African American to represent New Jersey in Congress when he won election to the House in 1988. In March 2012, after 23 years in Congress as an advocate for education, health care, and human rights across the African continent from his seat on the Foreign Affairs Committee, the elder Payne died in office from colon cancer.<sup>5</sup> To fill the vacancy for the remainder of the 112th Congress (2011–2013), a special election was scheduled for June 5, the same day as the Democratic primary for the full term in the 113th Congress (2013–2015).<sup>6</sup> Payne joined five other candidates, including well-known state politicians, in running for the seat and the nomination.<sup>7</sup> The northeastern New Jersey district, which encompassed Newark, Orange, and Union, was majority Black and heavily Democratic.<sup>8</sup> The winner of the Democratic primary was expected to win the general election. Payne won the special election with 70 percent of the vote and the primary with 57 percent.<sup>9</sup> In November, he easily won election to the full term with 88 percent of the vote. In four subsequent House races, Payne secured re-election with overwhelming majorities of more than 79 percent.<sup>10</sup>

Since his arrival on Capitol Hill, Payne has been a member of the Homeland Security Committee. In the

116th Congress (2019–2021), he chaired the panel’s Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Subcommittee. During his first two full terms, Payne sat on the Small Business Committee before joining the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure at the start of the 115th Congress (2017–2019). In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), he relinquished his Homeland Security subcommittee gavel and became chair of Transportation and Infrastructure’s Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials—a key position for his industrial district with numerous freight and passenger railroad lines.

In July 2015, Payne successfully guided the Department of Homeland Security Interoperable Communications Act into law.<sup>11</sup> The bill directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to create a strategy for maintaining communications between all of its agencies. During the floor debate in February 2015, Payne cited testimony from the DHS inspector general which reported a 99.8 percent failure rate of field radios attempting to communicate on one channel.<sup>12</sup> Payne told his colleagues, the “TSA must be able to talk to FEMA and the Coast Guard during an emergency, be it a terrorist incident or natural disaster.”<sup>13</sup>

As chair of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials, Payne focused on high-speed rail and Amtrak in the first session of the 117th Congress. In May 2021, he led a hearing to discuss the benefits of high-speed rail systems in the United States.<sup>14</sup> In April, he introduced the Rail Passenger Fairness Act, which would allow Amtrak to sue rail companies that prioritize freight trains ahead of passenger trains.<sup>15</sup> Payne co-authored the INVEST in America Act, which was signed into law as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 and contained a \$66 billion investment in passenger rail, the single largest federal railroad investment since Amtrak was founded.<sup>16</sup>

Since 2015, Payne has co-chaired the Congressional Men’s Health Caucus.<sup>17</sup> The group promotes active and healthy lifestyles for men, holds workout sessions and cancer screenings, and raises awareness of colorectal and prostate cancers on the Hill. In December 2020, as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, Payne’s measure for Medicare to cover polyp removal during colonoscopies became law.<sup>18</sup> The procedure was not previously covered and caused unexpected expenses for patients.<sup>19</sup> “I have wanted to pass this bill since I lost my father ... to the

deadly disease in 2012,” Payne stated in a press release. “I know it will increase the number of Americans who get screened for colorectal cancer ... and help save thousands of lives annually.”<sup>20</sup>

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# Stacey E. Plaskett

1966–

DELEGATE

2015–

Democrat from the U.S. Virgin Islands



Image courtesy of the Member

Stacey E. Plaskett had a substantial legal career and experience on Capitol Hill before her election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014. In the House, Plaskett pushed for equal federal representation and access to government services for U.S. territories and other underserved areas and served as a House manager in President Donald J. Trump's 2021 impeachment trial in the U.S. Senate.

Stacey Plaskett was born in Brooklyn, New York, on May 13, 1966. Her parents moved from St. Croix, Virgin Islands, to the U.S. mainland in the 1950s. Her father was a New York City police officer and her mother was a clerk in the local court system. She graduated from Choate Rosemary Hall in Wallingford, Connecticut, in 1984 and earned a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in Washington, DC, in 1988. After college, she worked as an aide for Virgin Islands Delegate Ron de Lugo.<sup>1</sup> She enrolled at the American University School of Law in Washington, DC, while working for the American Medical Association. After completing a law degree in 1994, Plaskett moved to New York where she was an assistant district attorney in the Bronx until 1997. She returned to Washington, DC, to work on the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, and, in 2002,

she joined the U.S. Justice Department, eventually serving as senior counsel to Deputy U.S. Attorneys General Larry Thompson and James Comey (at Justice she notably worked on the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act case against tobacco companies and the 9/11 Victims Compensation Fund). Plaskett served as deputy general counsel at AmeriChoice, a division of United Health Group, before moving to the U.S. Virgin Islands and working in private practice. In 2008, she became counsel to the Virgin Islands economic development authority, a position she held until 2014.<sup>2</sup> Plaskett is married to Jonathan Buckney-Small and they have five children.<sup>3</sup>

In 2012, Plaskett unsuccessfully challenged incumbent Delegate Donna M. Christensen in the Democratic primary.<sup>4</sup> Two years later, Christensen ran for territorial governor, and Plaskett entered the race for the Delegate's seat. In the Democratic primary, she faced Virgin Islands senators Shawn-Michael Malone and Emmett Hansen. Plaskett secured the nomination with 50 percent of the vote.<sup>5</sup> In the general election, she easily beat Republican nominee Vince Danet with 90 percent of the vote.<sup>6</sup> In 2016, Plaskett was challenged by former Virgin Islands Senator Ronald Russell in the Democratic primary and



won with 85 percent of the vote. She defeated Republican Gordon Ackley with 98 percent of the vote in the general election. In 2018, Plaskett won re-election unopposed and in 2020, she defeated an Independent candidate with 88 percent of the vote.<sup>7</sup>

When Plaskett arrived for the 114th Congress (2015–2017), she was assigned to the Agriculture Committee and Oversight and Government Reform Committee. In the 115th Congress (2017–2019), she took a seat on the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. When Democrats won control of the House in the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Plaskett became chair of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Biotechnology, Horticulture, and Research. She retained the Agriculture subcommittee chair in the 117th Congress (2021–2023), but departed her other assignments for seats on the Budget Committee and the Ways and Means Committee. She became the first Member from a territory and only the fourth Black woman to be appointed to Ways and Means.

In the House, Plaskett worked to stimulate the Virgin Islands' economy and secure equal representation for her territorial constituency. She introduced legislation to require the federal government to return all excise tax revenue generated from rum production in the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico to the respective territorial governments.<sup>8</sup> Hoping to boost medical tourism, Plaskett introduced a bill to waive visa requirements for residents of Caribbean nations to visit the Virgin Islands.<sup>9</sup> She also worked to ensure that the Virgin Islands benefited from federal programs. In 2019, she introduced a bill to define the word "state" as it relates to the federal code as automatically inclusive of territories unless expressly written otherwise.<sup>10</sup> Another of Plaskett's proposals was designed to remove the Medicaid cap imposed on the territories and allow them to receive funding equal to the states.<sup>11</sup>

In September 2017, two hurricanes designated as Category 5—the highest possible hurricane rating—hit the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and Plaskett called for a "Marshall Plan" response for the two territories—a reference to the economic aid the United States provided to Europe after World War II.<sup>12</sup> A bipartisan Congress eventually authorized legislation not just to rebuild but to provide resilience to the two territories.

In 2019, the House voted to impeach President Trump for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress.<sup>13</sup> The violence at the Capitol on January 6, 2021, led the House to

impeach Trump again, this time on the charge of incitement of insurrection. Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California chose Plaskett to serve as one of the impeachment managers, making her the first Territorial Delegate to hold this position during a presidential impeachment.<sup>14</sup>

## Notes

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# Ayanna Pressley

1974–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2019–

Democrat from Massachusetts



Image courtesy of the Member

In 2018, Ayanna Pressley won the Democratic primary over an incumbent and, after winning the general election, she became the first Black woman elected from Massachusetts to serve in Congress. Early in her congressional career, she prioritized justice and healing and garnered national attention as a younger woman of color on Capitol Hill.

Ayanna Pressley was born on February 3, 1974, in Chicago, Illinois. She graduated from Francis W. Parker School in Chicago in 1992. While attending Boston University in Massachusetts, she worked in the district office of Representative Joseph Patrick Kennedy II.<sup>1</sup> In 1996, she got a job with Massachusetts Senator John Forbes Kerry as a volunteer coordinator in Washington, DC, eventually becoming political director.<sup>2</sup> In 2009, Pressley ran for a seat on Boston's city council. She won the race and became the first Black woman elected to the council in its 100-year history.<sup>3</sup> As a city councilor at large, Pressley founded and chaired a committee on healthy women, families, and communities.<sup>4</sup> She advocated for low-income young women of color by instituting sexual education programs, disciplinary reforms, and support for pregnant high schoolers in the Boston public schools.<sup>5</sup> Pressley is married to Conan Harris and is stepmother to his daughter Cora.<sup>6</sup>

In 2018, Pressley launched a campaign for Massachusetts's Seventh District against Democratic incumbent Michael Everett Capuano, who was elected to Congress in 1999 and had never faced a serious primary challenge.<sup>7</sup> After redistricting in 2012, the district covered most of Boston and its surrounding neighborhoods and was the state's only congressional district with a majority of people of color.<sup>8</sup> On the campaign trail, Pressley discussed her father's incarceration and his struggles with addiction, as well as her experience surviving sexual assault. She told voters she would bring their unheard voices to Congress, saying, "The people closest to the pain should be closest to the power."<sup>9</sup> In September, Pressley beat Capuano in the primary with 59 percent of the vote.<sup>10</sup> In the general election, she did not face a Republican opponent and won 87 percent of the vote. In her 2020 re-election, she won 82 percent of the vote.<sup>11</sup> In her first term, at the start of the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Pressley was assigned to the House Financial Services Committee and the House Oversight and Reform Committee.

The 116th Congress began during a government shutdown as Congress and President Donald J. Trump disagreed about border security. In response, the first bill Pressley introduced was the Fair Compensation for

Low-Wage Contractor Employees Act. The measure aimed to compensate furloughed, laid-off, or reduced-hours government contractors—such as those in food, custodial, and security services. It also directed agencies to restore paid leave if they required their employees to use it during the shutdown.<sup>12</sup> The measure was included in the House-approved appropriations bill but was removed before final passage.<sup>13</sup>

As a member of Financial Services, Pressley took aim at credit reporting practices and introduced the Comprehensive CREDIT Act. The measure consolidated several credit-related bills and would have allowed consumers to fix mistakes on their credit reports more easily, barred medical debt from affecting scores for a year, created a private student loan rehabilitation program, and make credit reports more accessible.<sup>14</sup> “At a time when wages are stagnant but the cost of housing, childcare, and education continue to rise, we should be working to provide our constituents pathways to financial stability and success,” she said on the House Floor during the debate of the bill on January 29, 2020.<sup>15</sup> The House passed the bill later that day, 221 to 189.<sup>16</sup> The Senate, however, did not pass it. Pressley reintroduced it in the 117th Congress (2021–2023).<sup>17</sup>

In January 2020, Pressley publicly announced she lives with alopecia, an autoimmune disorder that causes hair loss. Pressley expressed that she had always been intentional about her hair as a public figure; she wore Senegalese twists as a city council member and in her first year in Congress, prompting young girls in her district to wear “My Congresswoman Wears Braids” shirts.<sup>18</sup> Pressley said she announced her condition to spread awareness about the disorder, which affects nearly 7 million people in the United States. In September 2020, Pressley took to the House Floor to speak during Alopecia Areata Awareness Month. “No doubt about it, a bald woman entering a room or entering the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives makes people uncomfortable,” she told her colleagues. “Visually, it challenges every antiquated cultural norm about what is professional, what is pretty, what is feminine.”<sup>19</sup> During the same speech, she spoke about a measure she co-sponsored with Massachusetts Representative James P. McGovern, to direct Medicare to cover the expense of medically-necessary wigs. The bill was sent to the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Ways and Means Committee to be considered.<sup>20</sup>

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# Bobby L. Rush

1946–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1993–

Democrat from Illinois

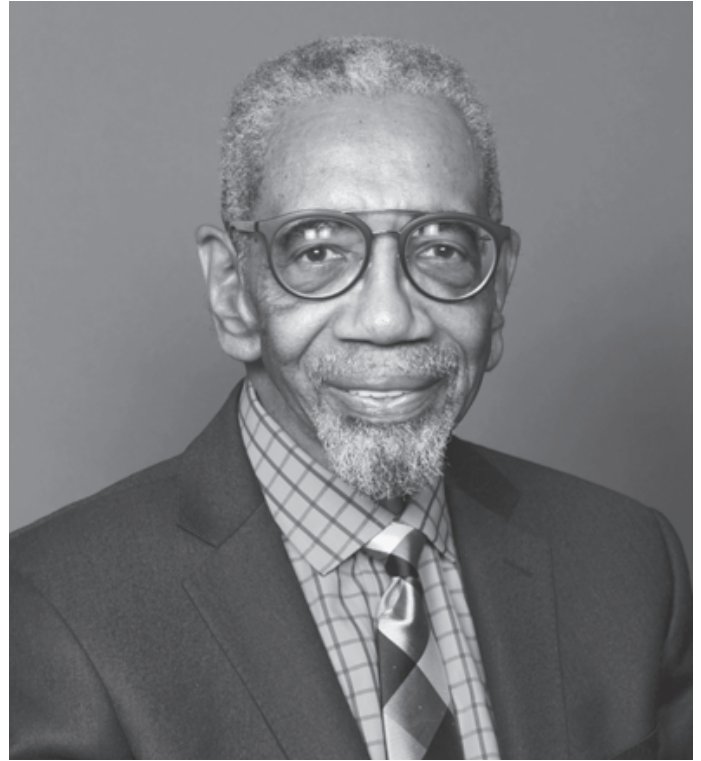


Image courtesy of the Member

A former Black Panther and Chicago alderman, Bobby L. Rush won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in November 1992 and has since become the dean of Illinois's congressional delegation. Rush has devoted his political career to bringing a measure of power to those outside the political system.

Bobby Lee Rush was born on November 23, 1946, near Albany, Georgia, the son of Cora Lee, a beautician and teacher, and Jimmy Lee Rush, a taxi driver. At age seven, he and several siblings moved to Chicago with his divorced mother.<sup>1</sup> In 1963, Rush dropped out of high school to join the U.S. Army. He was stationed in Chicago during the 1960s civil rights movement and joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. In 1968, he cofounded the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party.<sup>2</sup> When police murdered the chapter's chairman Fred Hampton in a 1969 raid, Rush took his place as leader. In 1974, Rush earned a bachelor's degree from Roosevelt University in Chicago. In 1994, he earned a master's degree in political science from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and four years later he completed a master's in theological studies from McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago.<sup>3</sup> Rush was married to Carolyn Rush for 36 years

and raised seven children. After his wife's death in 2017, Rush married Paulette Holloway.<sup>4</sup>

Rush first ran for office in 1975, when he unsuccessfully sought a seat on the Chicago city council. He also ran for the Illinois state house of representatives in 1978.<sup>5</sup> In 1983, Rush was elected alderman in the city's South Side Second Ward. In 1990, Rush became deputy chairman of the Illinois Democratic Party.<sup>6</sup>

In 1992, Rush challenged Representative Charles A. Hayes, a five-term veteran, in a district that encompassed much of Chicago's predominately African-American South Side and a few majority-White suburbs. Rush defeated Hayes in the primary by three percentage points.<sup>7</sup> In the general election, he defeated his Republican opponent with 83 percent of the vote. Rush has won his 14 re-elections with comfortable margins, though in 2000 he faced a significant primary challenge from then-state senator Barack Obama. Rush made an unsuccessful bid for Chicago mayor in 1999, receiving 28 percent of the vote in the primary against incumbent Richard M. Daley.<sup>8</sup>

In 103rd Congress (1993–1995), Bobby Rush served on the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs; Committee on Government Operations; and Committee



on Science, Space, and Technology. Rush has served on the Committee on Energy and Commerce since his second term in the House. In the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011), he chaired its Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection. In the 114th Congress (2015–2017) Rush emerged as the committee's second-highest ranking Democrat, and since the 116th Congress (2019–2021), he has chaired the committee's Subcommittee on Energy. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), he also picked up a seat on the Committee on Agriculture.<sup>9</sup>

Rush's seat on the Energy and Commerce Committee has enabled him to advocate on behalf of consumers and improve healthcare services. Following a series of recalls on children's toys in the mid-2000s, Rush authored the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, which imposed strict testing requirements for lead and other prohibited chemicals in children's products. It became law in 2008.<sup>10</sup> In 2007, the House passed his bill to promote scientific research on the prevention and treatment of postpartum depression. These provisions were included in the 2010 Affordable Care Act.<sup>11</sup> Rush also sponsored legislation to reduce the prevalence of asthma in urban communities that was caused by cockroach infestations in schools and housing. The measure was signed into law in 2000 as part of the Children's Health Act.<sup>12</sup> In the 117th Congress, the House passed two of his bills designed to improve the resiliency of the country's energy grid.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout his House service, Rush has also addressed many challenges facing his Chicago district. When a hospital in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood faced severe staffing shortages, Rush passed into law a bill issuing temporary work visas to foreign nationals with nursing credentials to work in areas with limited healthcare capacity.<sup>14</sup> In 1999, Rush's son, Huey, was murdered in Chicago during an armed robbery, a tragedy that has strengthened Rush's resolve to address gun violence in his district. Three times he has introduced legislation that would expand the use of background checks and would require all gun owners to obtain a firearm license.<sup>15</sup>

In March 2022, President Joseph R. Biden Jr. signed into law Rush's bill, the Emmett Till Antilynching Act, which designates lynching as a federal hate crime. The legislation was enacted more than 120 years after George Henry White of North Carolina first introduced his antilynching bill in 1900.<sup>16</sup>

In early 2022, Representative Rush announced that he would not seek re-election to the House and would retire at the end of the 117th Congress in January 2023.<sup>17</sup>

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## David Scott

1945–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2003–

Democrat from Georgia

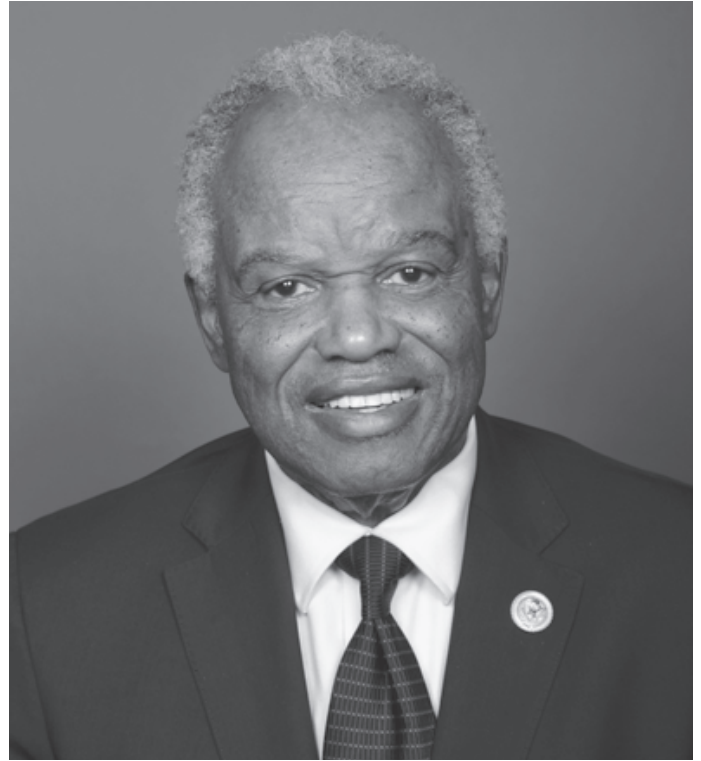


Image courtesy of the Member

A 28-year veteran of the Georgia legislature, David Scott won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2002 representing a newly created district in suburban Atlanta. Known for working across the aisle during his lengthy tenure in the state legislature, Scott has worked with Republicans to pass banking and agriculture reforms. “It’s all about relationships,” Scott said. “Going in, you try to meet people, you try to become friends with them, let them know that you’re there to help them.”<sup>1</sup>

David Albert Scott was born on June 27, 1945, in Aynor, South Carolina. His father Albert James Scott was a preacher, chauffeur, and businessman, and his mother Mamie Polite Scott was a domestic worker and a hospital worker. As a child he lived in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Scarsdale, New York, and Daytona Beach, Florida.<sup>2</sup> Scott graduated with a bachelor’s degree in English and speech from Florida A&M University in 1967. Scott briefly interned at the Labor Department in Washington, DC, before earning a master of business administration degree from Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania in 1969. Scott married Alfredia Aaron, sister of Hall of Fame professional baseball player Henry “Hank” Aaron. They raised two daughters: Dayna and Marcy.<sup>3</sup>

After earning a business degree, Scott advised then Georgia Governor James Earl “Jimmy” Carter of Georgia on revenue policy. In 1972, he worked on Andrew Young’s successful congressional campaign. Two years later, Scott won election to the Georgia house of representatives, where he served through 1982. He then won election to the Georgia senate, where he served from 1983 until 2002—eventually chairing the prestigious rules committee. He authored legislation that gave breast cancer patients and their doctors ultimate control over determining hospitalization and treatment measures to combat the disease as well as a law making it a felony to knowingly sell or provide a handgun to a minor. He further championed state senate bill 32, which became law and allowed local communities to fight landfill developments when landfill expansion disproportionately affected African-American communities. Scott owned and managed an advertising firm from 1979 through 2002.<sup>4</sup>

David Scott entered the race in 2002 for a newly reapportioned U.S. House district that surrounded metro Atlanta, including large parts of Fulton, Gwinnett, and Clayton counties. The district—the result of the spectacular growth of suburban Atlanta in the 1990s—also reached into

eight other surrounding counties, drawing in communities that had seen a rise in the African-American population during the 1990s. The new district was largely middle-class, and was 42 percent White, 41 percent Black, and 10 percent Hispanic. Scott won 54 percent of the vote against a former state Democratic Party chairman and a popular state senator, whom the party backed. With baseball legend Hank Aaron as his campaign chair, Scott organized a billboard campaign that reached thousands of drivers who used the major interstates that crossed the spidery district.<sup>5</sup> He won the general election with 60 percent of the vote. Scott has never received less than 69 percent of the vote in subsequent elections and has been re-elected unopposed several times.<sup>6</sup>

In the 108th Congress (2003–2005), Scott received seats on the Agriculture Committee and the Committee on Financial Services, assignments he has maintained throughout his career. During the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011), Scott also served on the Foreign Affairs Committee. After Democrats regained the House majority in the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Scott was appointed chair of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Commodity Exchanges, Energy, and Credit. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), he became the chair of the full Agriculture Committee.

From his seat on the Financial Services Committee, Scott strived to balance reducing financial regulations with protecting consumers. In 2008 and 2010, from his seat on the Committee on Financial Services, Scott sponsored legislation intended to streamline the licensing of insurance agents and brokers between states that passed the House.<sup>7</sup> Scott has attempted to combat predatory lending practices and provide financial education. He has also introduced legislation requiring the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to report on and design strategies to assist historically underserved communities by the financial industry.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Scott authored successful legislation to establish a \$10 billion Homeowner Assistance Fund to aid struggling homeowners affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through the Agriculture Committee, Scott has worked on several policies important to his state and district. Scott authored bipartisan legislation to amend the Cotton Futures Act to help U.S. farmers compete against international cotton producers.<sup>9</sup> Scott played a major role in crafting the 2018 Farm Bill, successfully removing work requirements for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance

Program from the final bill and working alongside Georgia Senator David Alfred Perdue Jr. to secure \$80 million for an agriculture scholarship to historically Black colleges and universities.<sup>10</sup> Since becoming chair in 2021, Scott has introduced legislation to address racial prejudice within the United States Department of Agriculture.<sup>11</sup>

Congressman Scott maintains an active presence in his district where he sponsors annual health fairs and jobs fairs to help bring wellness and economic assistance to his constituents.<sup>12</sup>

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## Robert C. “Bobby” Scott

1947–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1993–

Democrat from Virginia



Image courtesy of the Member

When he won election in November 1992 to the U.S. House of Representatives, Robert C. “Bobby” Scott became the first African American since John M. Langston left office in 1891 to represent Virginia. Because of his Filipino ancestry on his mother’s side of the family, he was also the first American of Filipino ancestry to serve as a U.S. Representative.<sup>1</sup> During his lengthy career, Scott has led efforts to reform the criminal justice system and improve education nationwide.

Robert Cortez Scott was born in Washington, DC, on April 30, 1947, the son of Charles Waldo Scott, a doctor, and Mae Hamlin Scott, a teacher. He was raised in Newport News, Virginia. When Virginia officials resisted court-ordered public school integration in the late 1950s, Scott’s parents sent him to Groton School, a college preparatory school in Massachusetts.<sup>2</sup> He graduated with a bachelor’s degree in liberal arts from Harvard University (class of 1969), and four years later he earned a law degree at Boston College.<sup>3</sup> While in law school, Scott served in the Massachusetts National Guard and later in the U.S. Army Reserve.

Scott practiced law in Newport News, Virginia. From 1975 to 1980, he served as president of the local branch of the NAACP. In 1977, he won election to the Virginia

House of Delegates and served there for five years until his election to the state senate, where he served for another decade. Scott is divorced and has no children.<sup>4</sup>

Scott first attempted to win national office in 1986, when he challenged two-term Republican incumbent Herbert Harvell Bateman for a seat in the U.S. House. The campaign generated wide name recognition for Scott, although he lost the general election by a margin of 56 to 44 percent.<sup>5</sup>

After gaining an extra seat in the 1990 Census and in order to comply with the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act, Virginia created a new majority-Black district that ran from southeast Richmond into portions of Newport News and Norfolk at the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay. Scott, who had represented portions of the new district in the state legislature, ran for the seat. He received two-thirds of the vote in the primary, defeating two Black women—a state legislator and the chair of the state retirement system. In the general election, he prevailed handily over Republican candidate Daniel Jenkins with 79 percent of the vote.<sup>6</sup> Despite multiple court-ordered redistrictings, Scott has never received less than 66 percent of the vote and has run unopposed in multiple elections.<sup>7</sup>



Scott was appointed to three committees in the 103rd Congress (1993–1995): Judiciary; Education and Labor; and Science, Space, and Technology. He left the Science, Space, and Technology Committee after one term. Scott served on the Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People’s Republic of China, formed during the 105th Congress (1997–1999) to investigate China’s covert actions within the United States. Scott left Education and Labor in the 108th Congress (2003–2005) to serve on the Budget Committee, but returned the following term. He served on the Budget Committee during the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011) and the 116th and 117th Congresses (2019–2023). He left the Judiciary Committee in the 114th Congress (2015–2017) after becoming ranking member on Education and Labor. When Democrats regained the majority in the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Scott became chair of Education and Labor.

Reflecting his legal background and Judiciary Committee service, Scott has advocated criminal justice reform. He authored legislation providing state sentencing commissions access to national criminal records maintained by the Department of Justice.<sup>8</sup> Scott cosponsored the Death in Custody Reporting Act, signed into law in 2000, which requires states to report the deaths of individuals in the custody of law enforcement or in the process of arrest. Scott reintroduced an expanded version of the bill each Congress following its 2006 expiration and secured passage in 2014.<sup>9</sup> He also played a crucial role in the passage of the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010, which reduced mandatory minimum sentences in many drug cases.<sup>10</sup>

In 2015, Scott was one of the four primary negotiators of the Every Student Succeeds Act, which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act for the first time in 13 years, replacing the No Child Left Behind Act.<sup>11</sup> As ranking member on the Education Committee, Scott also cosponsored legislation to strengthen protections for underaged criminal offenders.<sup>12</sup> Since becoming chair of the Education and Labor Committee in 2019, Scott has prioritized addressing unequal funding for schools along racial lines. As chair, he has guided two bills that aim to improve access to quality education in low-income communities and discourage discrimination in educational programs. Scott emphasizes that achieving equity in education requires additional federal assistance, “Low-income, at-risk students actually need more funding, not less. Equal isn’t enough.”<sup>13</sup>

Chairman Scott was also a lead author and negotiator of key provisions in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to provide historic federal investments in public K-12 schools and Historically Black College and Universities, as well as to shore up and protect the private retirement plans of millions of Americans.<sup>14</sup>

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# Tim Scott

1965–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2011–2013

UNITED STATES SENATOR

2013–

Republican from South Carolina



Image courtesy of the Member

Republican Tim Scott was appointed as South Carolina's junior U.S. Senator in 2013 after serving one term in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is the first African American to serve in both chambers of Congress and the first to serve as a Senator from South Carolina.

Tim Scott was born on September 19, 1965, in North Charleston, South Carolina. His mother, Frances Scott, raised him and his brother while working as a nurse's assistant.<sup>1</sup> He attended Presbyterian College in Clinton, South Carolina, from 1983 to 1984 before transferring to Charleston Southern University in North Charleston, South Carolina, where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1988. He won election to the Charleston County council in 1995 and served in that position until 2008, after an unsuccessful campaign for the state senate in 1996. In 2009, he won election to the South Carolina house of representatives.

In 2010, Scott started a run for South Carolina lieutenant governor but decided to enter the race for the open House seat left vacant by U.S. Representative Henry Edward Brown Jr., who chose not to seek re-election.<sup>2</sup> The heavily Republican district stretched along the coast of the state, from Myrtle Beach to Charleston.<sup>3</sup> The majority of its residents were White.<sup>4</sup> Also seeking election was Paul

Thurmond, son of U.S. Senator James Strom Thurmond of South Carolina.<sup>5</sup> Scott came in first in the June contest with 32 percent, but because no candidate received more than half the vote the state scheduled a runoff between him and Thurmond, the second-place candidate.<sup>6</sup> This time, Scott won with 68 percent of the vote.<sup>7</sup> In the general election, Scott defeated Democrat Ben Frasier by 36 percent.<sup>8</sup>

In December 2012, shortly after Scott won re-election to the House with 62 percent of the vote, South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley appointed him to the U.S. Senate to fill the seat left open by Senator James W. DeMint, who resigned to become president of a DC-based think tank.<sup>9</sup> The special election to fill the remainder of the term set to expire in 2016 was scheduled for 2014. Scott won both the 2014 special and the 2016 general election with more than 60 percent of the vote.<sup>10</sup>

In the 113th Congress (2013–2015), Scott sat on the following committees: Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Energy and Natural Resources; Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Special Committee on Aging. In the 114th Congress (2015–2017), he replaced the first two assignments with spots on the Committee on

Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, and the Committee on Finance. He also became the chair of Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs' Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development. In the 115th Congress (2017–2019), he joined the Committee on Armed Services, and he also chaired Finance's Subcommittee on Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Growth. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), he left Armed Services and replaced both chairmanships with new ones on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs' Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Protection, and Finance's Subcommittee on Energy, Natural Resources, and Infrastructure. In the Democratic controlled 117th Congress (2021–2023), he remained on the same committees.

In 2015, after a White police officer shot and killed an unarmed Black man named Walter Scott (no relation) in North Charleston, Scott came out in support of police officer body cameras. He requested a Senate hearing on the subject and introduced the Safer Officers and Safer Citizens Act, which offered grants from the Department of Justice to police departments for body cameras.<sup>11</sup> In 2020, after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, sparked worldwide protests, Scott re-introduced the Walter Scott Notification Act, which he had introduced twice previously. The measure restricted federal grants to police departments that failed to report data on fatal shootings.<sup>12</sup> He introduced the JUSTICE Act the same year, which aimed to incentivize law enforcement branches to complete de-escalation trainings, cease the use of chokeholds, and purchase body-worn cameras.<sup>13</sup> Neither bill passed the Senate.

Scott has successfully guided some of his measures into law, including the HBCU PARTNERS Act, which directs certain federal grant programs to present annual plans to Congress for increasing participation from historically Black colleges. Scott was also a principal negotiator in the 2017 tax reform package, which included his signature Opportunity Zone program that provides tax incentives for development in financially disadvantaged areas.<sup>14</sup>

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## Terri A. Sewell

1965–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2011–

Democrat from Alabama



Image courtesy of the Member

In 2010, Terri A. Sewell became the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Alabama and one of the first women from Alabama ever elected to Congress. A native of Selma, Alabama, and born two months before Bloody Sunday—the day when Alabama state troopers violently assaulted peaceful voting rights protesters in Selma in 1965—Sewell has carried the legacy of the civil rights movement with her to Congress, passing legislation to honor key figures in the movement and sponsoring a bill to restore the full protections of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Terri Sewell was born on January 1, 1965, in Huntsville, Alabama. Her father, Andrew, was a coach, and her mother, Nancy, was a librarian and the first Black woman elected to the Selma city council. Sewell graduated from Selma High School as its first Black valedictorian in 1982 and earned a bachelor's degree with honors from Princeton University in 1986. She graduated from Oxford University in Oxford, England, with a master's degree in 1988, and earned a law degree from Harvard Law School in 1992. Sewell started her law career clerking for a U.S. District Court judge in Birmingham, Alabama, later moved to New York City to practice law, and eventually returned to Alabama to become partner at a Birmingham law firm.<sup>1</sup>

In 2009, Sewell ran for the open congressional seat to represent Alabama's Seventh Congressional District after Democratic incumbent Artur Davis ran for governor.<sup>2</sup> The district included parts of Montgomery and Tuscaloosa and all of Birmingham and Selma. In the primary, Sewell faced several established candidates—including state representative Earl Hilliard Jr., the son of a former U.S. Representative.<sup>3</sup> She came in first with 37 percent of the vote in the June primary, but because no candidate received more than half the vote, the state scheduled a runoff.<sup>4</sup> She defeated Jefferson County commissioner Shelia Smoot in the runoff with 55 percent of the vote. Sewell won the general election against Republican Don Chamberlain, with 72 percent of the vote.<sup>5</sup> Along with her House colleague Martha Roby, Sewell became one of the first women elected from Alabama.<sup>6</sup> In her 2012 re-election, Sewell won with 76 percent of vote. She did not face a Republican challenger in four other re-elections.<sup>7</sup>

When Sewell took her seat in the 112th Congress (2011–2013), she was elected freshman class president and assigned to the Agriculture Committee and the Science, Space, and Technology Committee. She left those panels in the 113th Congress (2013–2015) for seats on the Financial



Services Committee and the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. In 2013, then Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi of California named Sewell to the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee.<sup>8</sup> Sewell continued to sit on the Intelligence Committee but left Financial Services in the 115th Congress (2017–2019) for a seat on the prestigious Ways and Means Committee. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Sewell served as vice chair of Ways and Means and chaired the Intelligence Committee's Subcommittee on Defense Intelligence and Warfighter Support. She left the Intelligence Committee at the start of the 117th Congress (2021–2023). Beginning in the 113th Congress, Sewell has served as a Chief Deputy Whip for House Democrats.<sup>9</sup>

Sewell used her position on the powerful Ways and Means Committee to pass key tax legislation, including the expansion and extension of the New Markets Tax Credit, to incentivize investment in rural and underserved communities.<sup>10</sup> In 2019, she introduced the RURAL Act, the HEARTS and Rural Relief Act, and the Rural Jobs Act, all of which target improvements for infrastructure, health care services, and local economies in rural areas.<sup>11</sup> In 2019, Sewell successfully extended the Caribbean Basin Initiative trade program through the Extension of the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act.<sup>12</sup> The bill provided funding through fiscal year 2030 and was signed into law in October 2020.<sup>13</sup>

Sewell's district was the location of some of the country's most pivotal civil rights protests in the 1960s. In 2013, Sewell passed legislation to posthumously award the Congressional Gold Medal to four African-American girls killed in the 1963 bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church.<sup>14</sup> In 2015, Sewell passed legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to individuals who took part in the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965.<sup>15</sup> The House also passed Sewell's resolution to collect oral histories of Members who participated in the civil rights movement.<sup>16</sup>

Since the 113th Congress, Sewell has introduced the Voting Rights Advancement Act, that revised the procedures for federal oversight of elections following the Supreme Court's 2013 decision *Shelby County v. Holder*, which declared parts of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 unconstitutional. Sewell successfully shepherded the bill through the House in 2019 and 2021.<sup>17</sup>

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# Bennie G. Thompson

1948–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1993–

Democrat from Mississippi

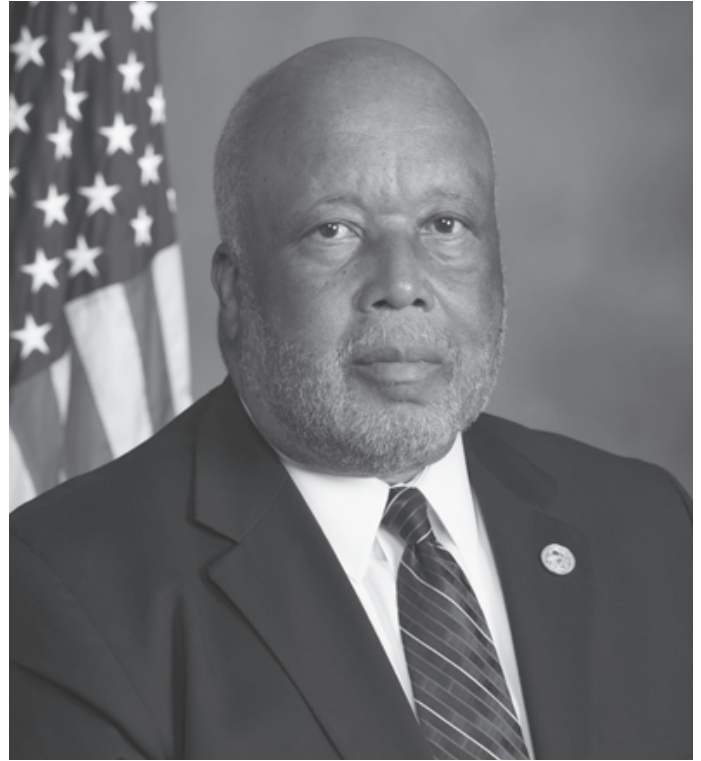


Image courtesy of the Member

A veteran of Mississippi politics for nearly 50 years, Bennie G. Thompson has served in the U.S. House of Representatives since winning a special election in 1993. As chair of the Homeland Security Committee, he has been at the forefront of national emergencies throughout his congressional career, including the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, and the coronavirus pandemic.

Bennie Thompson was born in Bolton, Mississippi, on January 28, 1948, to Will, an auto mechanic, and Annie Laura Thompson, a teacher.<sup>1</sup> He grew up in an all-Black neighborhood and attended segregated schools.<sup>2</sup> In 1968, he graduated with a bachelor's degree from Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi. In college, he was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and volunteered on the congressional campaign of civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer.<sup>3</sup> He earned a master's degree from Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1972. He married London Johnson, a teacher, and they raised one daughter: BendaLonne.<sup>4</sup>

In 1969, Thompson won election to the board of aldermen in Bolton, Mississippi, while working as a teacher. He served for four years, but his measures to improve the

Black district were repeatedly blocked by the White mayor. In 1973, he won election as mayor of Bolton and served until 1979. In 1980, Thompson was elected to the Hinds County board of supervisors and remained on the board for 13 years.<sup>5</sup>

In 1993, Thompson entered the race for a congressional seat after four-term Democratic Representative Mike Espy of Mississippi resigned to become Secretary of Agriculture in the President William J. Clinton administration.<sup>6</sup> The district encompassed west-central Mississippi and included the state capital Jackson and a nearly 230-mile stretch of agricultural communities along the Mississippi Delta—some of which were the poorest counties in the country. A majority of the voting-age population was Black.<sup>7</sup> His two principal Democratic contenders were Henry Espy, the brother of Congressman Espy, and James Meredith, a 1960s civil rights activist and the first African American to attend the University of Mississippi.<sup>8</sup> In the all-party open primary in March 1993, GOP candidate Hayes Dent won with a 34 percent plurality. Thompson was second with 28 percent.<sup>9</sup> In accordance with state election law, the top two finishers squared off in another election, scheduled for April. Thompson prevailed against Dent, with a 55 percent

majority.<sup>10</sup> In his 14 re-election bids, Thompson won with comfortable margins between 54 and 72 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Thompson was sworn-in to the House on April 13, 1993, several months after the start of the 103rd Congress (1993–1995) and received assignments on three committees: Agriculture; Small Business; and Merchant Marine and Fisheries. He left the Small Business Committee in the 104th Congress (1995–1997), and Merchant Marine and Fisheries was disbanded in that same Congress. Thompson left the Agriculture Committee in the 108th Congress (2003–2005). In the 104th Congress, Thompson joined the Budget Committee, and remained there until the 107th Congress (2001–2003). In 2004, he won a seat on the newly created Select Committee on Homeland Security.<sup>12</sup> In the 110th Congress (2007–2009), Thompson became the first Democratic chair of the committee and served as chair in the following Congress. In the 116th and 117th Congresses (2019–2023), Thompson chaired the committee again. In 2021, Thompson became chair of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol.

As ranking member of the Homeland Security Committee, Thompson was in a key position to serve his district after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in August 2005. Thompson was critical of the lack of post-hurricane contracts that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) awarded to Mississippi businesses. In response, he drafted legislation to create a database of small and minority owned businesses for FEMA to contact for future disaster-related contracts.<sup>13</sup> A month later, he introduced the Small Business Disaster Relief and Recovery Participation Act that required a portion of government funds be dedicated to local, small, and minority businesses in emergencies.<sup>14</sup> Neither bill was reported out of committee. In the district, Thompson set up job fairs and seminars for his constituents to learn how to apply for government contracts or get in touch with companies that offered recovery-related jobs.<sup>15</sup>

As chair of the Homeland Security Committee in 2007, Thompson introduced the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act, which sought to enact some of the 41 recommendations the independent National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (known as the 9/11 Commission) made. Signed into law in August 2007, the bill designated federal funds to high-risk areas and first responders, required

the scanning of foreign container ships for nuclear weapons, and included a lawsuit immunity provision for citizens reporting suspected terrorist activity.<sup>16</sup>

Several other of Thompson's homeland security bills became law, including the Aviation Security Stakeholder Participation Act of 2014, which required the Aviation Security Advisory Committee to consult stakeholders—including aircraft manufactures, labor organizations, and passenger groups—when aviation security changes occur.<sup>17</sup>

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# Lauren Underwood

1986–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2019–

Democrat from Illinois



Image courtesy of the Member

In November 2018, Lauren Underwood won election as a Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives from Illinois's Fourteenth Congressional District. Underwood became the youngest Black woman elected to Congress when she defeated a Republican incumbent. As a registered nurse, she has prioritized issues of national health care and has focused specifically on veterans' health, shepherding a bill to prevent veteran suicide into law in her first term.

Lauren Underwood was born on October 4, 1986, in Mayfield Heights, Ohio. In 2004, she graduated from Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville, Illinois. While attending the University of Michigan, she interned for then Senator Barack Obama in 2006.<sup>1</sup> In 2008, she graduated with a bachelor's degree in nursing. She earned advanced degrees in nursing and public health from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, in 2009. From 2014 to 2016, Underwood worked as a special assistant at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under President Obama. From 2016 to 2017, she was a senior advisor at HHS. From 2013 to 2017, she taught virtual classes at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, as an adjunct instructor. Afterwards, she worked for a healthcare company in Chicago from 2017 to 2018.<sup>2</sup>

Underwood announced she would run in the 2018 Democratic primary in the Fourteenth District in August 2017.<sup>3</sup> The district incorporated Chicago suburbs and farms from the Wisconsin border to Kendall County. Its population was 87 percent White.<sup>4</sup> Underwood faced six Democrats in the March primary but won by a wide margin, earning 57 percent of the vote.<sup>5</sup> She then defeated Republican incumbent Representative Randy Hultgren in the November general election with 52.5 percent of the vote. In her 2020 re-election, Underwood won with 50.6 percent of the vote but her Republican challenger, former state senator Jim Oberweis, contested the election.<sup>6</sup> In May 2021, the Committee on House Administration dismissed the challenge.<sup>7</sup>

In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Underwood received assignments on the Education and Labor Committee, Homeland Security Committee, and Veterans' Affairs Committee. In September 2020, Underwood was named chair of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Innovation Subcommittee for the remainder of the 116th Congress.<sup>8</sup> In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), she remained on Veterans' Affairs but left her other two assignments as required to serve on the Appropriations Committee.



Concerned with mental health issues and high rates of suicide among veterans, Underwood introduced the Veterans' Care Quality Transparency Act in April 2019. The bill directed the Government Accountability Office to examine partnerships between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and mental health organizations that provide services to former service members. Staffing, data security protocols, results tracking, and outreach to women and minorities were among the aspects to be studied.<sup>9</sup> President Donald J. Trump signed the bill into law on October 20, 2020.<sup>10</sup> In 2021, Underwood's measure to expand veteran scholarships in science, technology, engineering, and math fields of study passed as part of the Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act.<sup>11</sup>

In December 2019, Underwood introduced the Lower Insulin Costs Now Act, citing the high price of insulin and other prescriptions. The bill extended the timeline for applications to be submitted to the Food and Drug Administration to develop generic biologic products—including insulin. The bill was enacted as part of the 2020 appropriations law.<sup>12</sup>

As a member of the Homeland Security Committee, Underwood visited detention centers along the U.S.–Mexico border in 2019 and took issue with the quality of medical care for the migrants. In response, she introduced the U.S. Border Patrol Medical Screening Standards Act, which directed the Department of Homeland Security to utilize an electronic health care system to create health records for each detained individual that could be sent to other centers, especially for children. The House passed the bill in September 2019 by a vote of 230 to 184. One portion of that bill, to provide an electronic health record for U.S. Customs and Border Protection, was enacted as part of an appropriations bill for 2020.<sup>13</sup>

In 2019, Underwood and North Carolina Representative Alma S. Adams founded the Black Maternal Health Caucus.<sup>14</sup> In that Congress and the following one, Underwood introduced the Protecting Moms Who Served Act. Her measure directed funds to maternity care programs, which offer trainings and support to non-Veterans Affairs care providers. President Joseph R. Biden Jr. signed the bill into law on November 30, 2021.<sup>15</sup> In the 116th and 117th Congresses, Underwood introduced the Black Maternal Health Momnibus Act, which packaged several Black maternal health bills into one bill. In May 2021, Underwood testified before the House Oversight

Committee during a hearing on Black maternal health. “At the heart of these investments,” Underwood said, “is the principle that in America, every family has the right to thrive, a principle that begins with a safe and healthy pregnancy and birth.”<sup>16</sup> The 2021 bill was referred to several committees for consideration.<sup>17</sup>

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## Marc A. Veasey

1971–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2013–

Democrat from Texas



Image courtesy of the Member

In November 2012, Marc A. Veasey won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in a newly created Texas district. As a member of the Armed Services Committee, he has played an active role in shaping annual defense spending bills.

Marc Veasey was born on January 3, 1971, in Fort Worth, Texas. He graduated from Arlington Heights High School in Fort Worth in 1990. In 1995, he earned a bachelor's degree from Texas Wesleyan University in Fort Worth. He worked in journalism and real estate and was also an aide to Texas U.S. Representative Jonas Martin Frost for six years.<sup>1</sup> In 2004, he won election to the Texas state house of representatives. As a state legislator, he supported reduced electricity rates for low-income residents, advocated for fairer mineral lease negotiations in neighborhoods of color, and fought against state voter ID laws.<sup>2</sup> Veasey and his wife, Tonya, have one son: Adam.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the 2010 Census, Texas added four congressional districts in 2012. The newly drawn Thirty-Third District encompassed parts of Fort Worth and Dallas. In the district, Latinos and African Americans made up a majority of the voters.<sup>4</sup> In the May primary, Veasey was the top vote-getter with 37 percent of the vote, and former state representative Domingo Garcia finished second with

25 percent.<sup>5</sup> Because no candidate received a majority, the state scheduled a runoff between Veasey and Garcia. Veasey mobilized Black voters and received endorsements from the area's two major newspapers.<sup>6</sup> After winning the runoff with 57 percent of the vote, he defeated Republican Chuck Bradley with 76 percent in the general election.<sup>7</sup> Veasey has won his four re-elections with more than 67 percent each time.<sup>8</sup>

In the 113th (2013–2015) Congress, Veasey received assignments to the Armed Services Committee and the Science, Space, and Technology Committee. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), he left his previous assignments for spots on the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Small Business Committee. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), he left Small Business and returned to Armed Services.

As a member of Armed Services, Veasey was well-positioned to shape the panel's annual funding bill known as the National Defense Authorization Act. In 2020, the bill included a provision Veasey first introduced as the Capturing All Small Businesses Act. The measure allowed growing small businesses to remain categorized as such for longer, extending access to financial benefits.<sup>9</sup> The House passed Veasey's bill in January 2020 and it was included in the final defense bill, which overcame a presidential veto on

January 1, 2021.<sup>10</sup> Another of Veasey's bills, the Emergency Broadband Connections Act, became law as part of the coronavirus relief bill Congress passed in December 2020.<sup>11</sup> It provided reimbursements to laid-off and furloughed workers for their internet service fees, allowing them to continue their schooling, manage their health, and look for jobs online.<sup>12</sup>

Recognizing the dangers of “notarios publicos”—or people posing as professional immigration consultants—in his district, Veasey introduced the Notario Victim Relief Act in the 116th Congress, as he had done during the three previous Congresses.<sup>13</sup> The bill would remove the time limit an immigrant has to re-file documents after experiencing fraudulent services. In conjunction with the bill, Veasey hosted a workshop in Fort Worth to warn his constituents of the predatory practice.<sup>14</sup>

Building off his work in the state legislature, Veasey founded and co-chaired the Voting Rights Caucus in 2016 with his congressional colleagues. As the lead plaintiff in a 2011 case against Texas's strict voting laws, he sought to end voter ID requirements.<sup>15</sup> “They must be done away with immediately so that everyone can have full access to the ballot box,” Veasey said while introducing the caucus.<sup>16</sup> Later in 2016, he introduced the Poll Tax Prohibition Act, which would end election centers' requirement of providing documentation with an associated cost in order to vote. The measure did not come to the floor for a vote.<sup>17</sup>

In 2014, Veasey started visiting and working in businesses across his district as part of his “Marc Means Business” initiative. The effort led Veasey to drive for a ride-hailing app, work in a cafe, and stock grocery store shelves.<sup>18</sup> In 2016, Veasey co-founded the Blue Collar Caucus with Pennsylvania Representative Brendan Francis Boyle after that year's presidential election. The group aimed to connect the Democratic Party with working-class voters.<sup>19</sup>

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# Maxine Waters

1938–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

1991–

Democrat from California



Image courtesy of the Member

Since 1991, Maxine Waters has represented a Southern California district in the U.S. House of Representatives. During her public service career, including time in California's state assembly, Waters has prioritized women, children, people of color, and the poor. At the start of the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Waters became the first woman and first African American to chair the Financial Services Committee.

Maxine Waters was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on August 15, 1938, the fifth of 13 children. Early in her career, Waters worked as an assistant teacher and volunteer coordinator for a Head Start program.<sup>1</sup> In 1977, she married Sidney Williams, a former NFL player and U.S. Ambassador to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.<sup>2</sup> She is the mother of two children: Edward and Karen.

Maxine Waters won a seat in the California state assembly in 1976. Before becoming Democratic caucus chair in 1984, she served as the assembly's majority whip.<sup>3</sup> In the state assembly, she authored landmark legislation on affirmative action, child abuse prevention, police reform and more. In addition, Waters fought for the passage of a bill that forced California to divest \$12 billion in state pension funds tied to the apartheid regime in South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

After anti-apartheid leader Nelson Mandela was released from prison in South Africa, Waters chaired a committee that brought over 90,000 people together in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum to welcome him into the United States.

When Augustus F. "Gus" Hawkins announced his retirement from the House in January 1990, he asked Waters to enter the race.<sup>5</sup> In the general election she won handily, capturing 79 percent of the vote. Waters captured similar percentages in her 15 re-elections.<sup>6</sup>

From the 102nd Congress through the 104th Congress (1991–1997), Waters served on the Veterans' Affairs Committee. During the 103rd (1993–1995) and 104th (1995–1997) Congresses she also served on the Small Business Committee. From 1996 to 2013, she served on the Judiciary Committee, where she fought to end mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug users and led national public policy discussions to eliminate the crack cocaine sentencing disparities.<sup>7</sup>

Waters has served on the Financial Services Committee since 1991. In the 110th and 111th Congresses (2007–2011), she chaired Financial Services's Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee. In the 116th and 117th Congresses (2019–2023), Waters has chaired the full



Financial Services Committee. In 2020, Waters joined the Select Oversight Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.

Waters chaired the Congressional Black Caucus in the 105th Congress (1997–1999) and led the development of the Minority AIDS Initiative.<sup>8</sup> In addition, Waters co-chaired the bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Alzheimer's Disease.<sup>9</sup> Early in her career, Waters was chosen to serve on the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee in the House, which develops the party's agenda.<sup>10</sup>

From her seat on the Financial Services Committee, Waters advocated for reforms following the Great Recession and financial crisis of the late 2000s, including a measure in the Housing and Economic Recovery Act that awarded grants to nonprofits and local municipalities to redevelop vacant properties.<sup>11</sup> In 2010, Waters was a member of the conference committee for the Dodd–Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.<sup>12</sup> Through her efforts, the law also established the Office of Minority and Women Inclusion.<sup>13</sup>

In Waters's first Congress as chair of the Financial Services Committee, the panel took several steps to address the nation's financial and housing emergencies caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of the COVID-19 relief bill, Waters obtained \$25 billion for rental assistance. Furthermore, she secured \$77 billion in the American Rescue Plan, including an additional \$21.6 billion for rental assistance for struggling families. Waters is also a champion for Minority Depository Institutions (MDIs) and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) and successfully secured \$12 billion in capital investments and grants to support these institutions in serving disadvantaged communities. Waters also helped pass \$60 billion for CDFIs, MDIs, and other community financial institutions to deliver Paycheck Protection Program loans to small and minority-owned businesses that missed out of the first round when megabanks prioritized wealthier clients. Additionally, one of Waters' first actions as chair was creating the Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee to focus on diversity in the financial industry. Waters also established the first ever task forces on Artificial Intelligence and Financial Technology to examine financial technologies such as cryptocurrency.<sup>14</sup>

Waters has been an advocate for peace and justice in developing countries. From 1999 to 2000, she was a leader of congressional efforts to cancel poor country debts, offering an amendment that tripled funding for poor

country debt cancellation. In response to the earthquake that devastated Haiti in 2010, Waters secured the passage of legislation that canceled all debt owed by Haiti to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.<sup>15</sup> In honor of South African President Nelson Mandela's 95th birthday, she organized a celebration of his life and legacy in the Emancipation Hall of the United States Capitol Visitor Center. She also cofounded the Out of Iraq Caucus in 2005 and co-chaired the Congressional Caribbean Caucus.<sup>16</sup>

Waters is one of the two longest-serving African-American women in House history.

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# Bonnie Watson Coleman

1945–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2015–

Democrat from New Jersey



Image courtesy of the Member

The daughter of a prominent assemblyman, Bonnie Watson Coleman grew up within New Jersey's dynamic political environment. Watson Coleman made history by becoming the first African-American woman to serve as majority leader of the state assembly, and again when, in 2014, she won election to the U.S. House of Representatives, becoming the first African-American woman elected to Congress from New Jersey.

Bonnie Watson Coleman was born Bonnie Watson in Camden, New Jersey, on February 6, 1945, to Marie Watson and John S. Watson. Her father served in the New Jersey state assembly for six terms. Watson Coleman and her three brothers grew up in Ewing Township, where she attended local schools and graduated from Ewing High School. She attended Rutgers University, and then earned a bachelor's degree from Thomas Edison State College in 1985.<sup>1</sup> In 1995, Bonnie Watson married William E. Coleman Jr., a minister and former New York City detective; the couple has three children from their previous marriages and several grandchildren.<sup>2</sup>

Watson Coleman's public service career began in 1966 when she started working in the civil rights division of New Jersey's department of law and public safety. She

then served as director of the office of civil rights, contract compliance, and affirmative action in the state department of transportation from 1974 to 1980. In 1980, she moved to the state department of community affairs and eventually became its assistant commissioner.<sup>3</sup> In 1997, Watson Coleman won election to the state assembly. She served in the state capital, Trenton, for 16 years, including as the assembly's majority leader from 2006 to 2009.<sup>4</sup> Watson Coleman became the first Black woman to lead the state party when she was elected chair of New Jersey's Democratic state committee in 2002.<sup>5</sup>

When eight-term Democratic incumbent Rush Holt decided to retire from the U.S. House in 2014, Watson Coleman ran for the open seat. Situated in the middle of the state, the majority-White district included Trenton and Princeton.<sup>6</sup> With large workforces that support Princeton and Rutgers Universities, the district also had an established health care sector anchored by local hospitals. Watson Coleman won the Democratic primary with 36 percent of the vote against four opponents.<sup>7</sup> She won the general election with 61 percent of the vote. She won re-election with 62 percent of the vote in 2016, 68 percent of the vote in 2018, and 66 percent of the vote in 2020.<sup>8</sup>

In the 114th and 115th Congresses (2015–2019), Watson Coleman had seats on the Committee on Homeland Security and the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. In the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Watson Coleman remained on Homeland Security, but dropped Oversight for a seat on the prestigious Appropriations Committee. She remained on both panels in the 117th Congress (2021–2023), and chaired Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Transportation and Maritime Security.

In the House, Watson Coleman's legislative interests have included criminal justice reform and health care. Her bill, the End For-Profit Prisons Act, called on the Justice Department to phase out existing contracts with private prison companies and to prevent the Bureau of Prisons from entering into or maintaining similar contracts. It also required federal officials to create guidelines for reintegrating recently released prisoners into society.<sup>9</sup> One of her health care-related bills, the Healthy MOM Act, would require health insurers, health insurance exchanges, and group health plans to offer a special enrollment period for women whenever a pregnancy is reported.<sup>10</sup> Another, the Pursuing Equity in Mental Health Act, which Watson Coleman introduced in the 116th and 117th Congresses, set out to establish grants for research into the mental health needs of people of color.<sup>11</sup> The bill passed the House in both Congresses.

On the Homeland Security Committee, Watson Coleman focused on preparedness and strategy documentation. Her bill, the Quadrennial Homeland Security Act, which aimed to revise the Department of Homeland Security's long-term strategy document, passed the House four times.<sup>12</sup> As chair of the Transportation and Maritime Security Subcommittee, she held a number of hearings regarding the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). In March 2021, she introduced the Transportation and Security Preparedness Act. The bill passed the House in July and, if enacted into law, will direct the TSA to create a preparedness strategy regarding disease outbreaks.<sup>13</sup>

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## Notes

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## Frederica S. Wilson

1942–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

2011–

Democrat from Florida



Image courtesy of the Member

In 2010, Frederica S. Wilson was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives after 12 years in the Florida legislature. Congresswoman Wilson has drawn from her experience as an educator and school principal to become an outspoken champion for Black families, marginalized communities, workers, students, and immigrants—winning her broad support in her district.

Frederica Smith Wilson was born November 5, 1942, in Miami, Florida. She graduated from Miami Northwestern Senior High in 1959 and attended Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, graduating with a bachelor's degree in childhood education in 1963. She earned her master's degree in elementary education from the University of Miami in 1972 and taught elementary school before leaving the classroom to raise three children: Nicole, LaKeshia, and Paul. She returned to work as a school principal before running for the Miami-Dade County school board in 1992.<sup>1</sup> As an educator at Skyway Elementary School, it became apparent to her that young boys were disproportionately being incarcerated, entering the drug trade, or dropping out of school leading to the founding of a program to intervene in the lives of at-risk youth: The 500 Role Models of Excellence Project.

In 1998, Wilson was elected to the state house, and, in 2002, to the state senate.<sup>2</sup> While in the Florida legislature, Wilson fought to successfully remove the Confederate flag from the Florida state capitol. She also fought to mandate HIV/AIDS testing for newly released prisoners, opposed standardized testing, pushed to ban the term “illegal alien” in state records, and partnered with the then governor to restore voting rights for returning citizens.<sup>3</sup>

In 2010, Wilson won in a crowded primary for an open seat in the U.S. House and went on to win an overwhelming majority of the vote in the general election.<sup>4</sup> Her constituency spans parts of Miami-Dade and Broward counties and includes a large immigrant population, particularly from Haiti. The district is overwhelmingly working-class, Black, and Latino.<sup>5</sup> In five re-election bids Wilson ran unopposed three times and won with large margins in 2014 and 2020.<sup>6</sup>

During her first term, Wilson served on the Foreign Affairs and the Science, Space, and Technology committees, and joined the Congressional Black Caucus. In the 113th Congress (2013–2015), she left Foreign Affairs and joined the Committee on Education and the Workforce. In the 115th Congress (2017–2019), Wilson left Science, Space,



and Technology to join Transportation and Infrastructure. For the 116th Congress (2019–2021), Wilson was named chair of the Education Committee’s Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions Subcommittee. In the 117th Congress (2021–2023), she chaired the Education Committee’s Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment.

On Capitol Hill, Wilson has criticized income inequality and called for a more active federal role in anti-poverty efforts, introducing bills to expand access to education and training, increase the minimum wage, and fund infrastructure projects to create jobs. She reintroduced the American Jobs Act in 2013, which aimed to reform unemployment insurance, allocate tax credits for low- and middle-income workers, and establish infrastructure grants.<sup>7</sup>

Wilson has also fought against injustice at home and abroad. In 2012, she was a vocal advocate for Trayvon Martin, an African-American teenager and constituent of hers who was shot and killed in an act of racism. Wilson spoke on the House Floor to denounce racial profiling and violence against Black youth.<sup>8</sup> She also focused attention on the 2014 kidnapping of 276 Nigerian girls by Boko Haram, a militant Islamist group from West Africa, and wrote legislation calling for a five-year plan to combat Boko Haram, which the Senate passed and President Barack Obama signed into law in December 2016.<sup>9</sup>

Wilson has been an advocate for the Haitian community since the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> She has traveled to Haiti and raised awareness for issues such as women’s rights and the hardships faced by the nation following the 2010 earthquake.<sup>11</sup> Wilson has also campaigned for a family reunification program for Haitian immigrants and the rights of migrants and refugees in the United States.<sup>12</sup> She has also fought for the extension of the Temporary Protected Status designation for Haitian nationals and introduced the Haitian Deportation Relief Act, which sought to suspend the removal of Haitian migrants from the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>13</sup>

Congresswoman Wilson has long demonstrated a willingness to find support across the aisle to improve the conditions of her community and its residents. In 2020, she worked with Senator Marco Rubio and the Donald J. Trump administration to establish the Commission on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, which will study disparities in education, criminal justice, health,

employment, fatherhood, and violence and produce an annual report with recommendations to improve the social conditions and reduce racial disparities. The bipartisan and bicameral Caucus on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys, which Congresswoman Wilson founded and co-chairs, will craft legislation to implement these recommendations and meaningfully improve experiences and pathways available to young Black men.

## Notes

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Image courtesy of the Member

## Jamaal Bowman

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE  
Democrat from New York

**Congressional Committees:** Education and Labor; Science, Space, and Technology

**Born:** April 1, 1976, Manhattan, New York

**Family:** Spouse: Melissa Oppenheimer; three children

**Education:** Graduated from Sayreville War Memorial High School, Sayreville, New Jersey; attended Potomac State Junior College, West Virginia University, Keyser, West Virginia; BA, University of New Haven, West Haven, Connecticut, 1999; MA, Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York, 2006; Ed.D., Manhattanville College, Harrison, New York, 2019

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** N/A

**Professional Career:** Teacher; principal

**Publications:** N/A



Image courtesy of the Member

## Shontel M. Brown

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE  
Democrat from Ohio

**Congressional Committees:** Agriculture; Oversight and Government Reform

**Born:** June 24, 1975, Cleveland, Ohio

**Family:** Unmarried

**Education:** Graduated from John Adams High School, Cleveland, Ohio; A.B., Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio; B.S., Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** Member of the Warrensville Heights, Ohio, city council, 2012–2015; member of the Cuyahoga County, Ohio, council, 2015–2021; chair, Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Democratic Party, 2017–present

**Professional Career:** Marketing professional; business owner

**Publications:** N/A



Image courtesy of the Member

## Cori Bush

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE  
Democrat from Missouri

**Congressional Committees:** Judiciary; Oversight and Reform

**Born:** July 21, 1976, St. Louis, Missouri

**Family:** two children

**Education:** Graduated from Cardinal Ritter College Prep High School, St. Louis, Missouri, 1994; attended Harris-Stowe State University, St. Louis, Missouri, 1995–1996; RN Diploma, Lutheran School of Nursing, St. Louis, Missouri, 2008

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** N/A

**Professional Career:** Early childhood teacher and administrator; nurse; pastor; community organizer

**Publications:** N/A



Image courtesy of the Member

## Troy A. Carter

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE  
Democrat from Louisiana

**Congressional Committees:** Small Business; Transportation and Infrastructure

**Born:** October 26, 1963, New Orleans, Louisiana

**Family:** Spouse: Andree Navarro-Carter; two sons

**Education:** Graduated from O. Perry Walker High School, New Orleans, Louisiana; BA, Xavier University, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1986

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** Member of the Louisiana state house of representatives, 1992–1994; member of the New Orleans, Louisiana, city council, 1994–2002; member of the Louisiana state senate, 2016–2021

**Professional Career:** Entrepreneur; business consultant

**Publications:** N/A



Image courtesy of the Member

## Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

Democrat from Florida

**Congressional Committees:** Education and Labor; Veterans' Affairs

**Born:** January 25, 1979, Brooklyn, New York

**Family:** Spouse: Corlie McCormick; two children

**Education:** Graduated from Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory, Hollywood, Florida, 1997; B.A., Howard University, Washington DC, 2001; attended University of Maryland Global Campus, Adelphi, Maryland, 2005–2007; J.D., St. Thomas University College of Law, Miami Gardens, Florida, 2010

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** N/A

**Professional Career:** Health care executive

**Publications:** N/A



Image courtesy of the Member

## Byron Donalds

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

Republican from Florida

**Congressional Committees:** Budget; Oversight and Reform; Small Business; Select Committee on Economic Disparity and Fairness in Growth

**Born:** October 28, 1978, Brooklyn, New York

**Family:** Spouse: Erika Donalds; three children

**Education:** Graduated from Nazareth Regional High School, Brooklyn, New York, 1996; attended Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University, Tallahassee, Florida, 1996–1999; BA, Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida, 2002

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** Member of the Florida state house of representatives, 2016–2020

**Professional Career:** Financial advisor

**Publications:** N/A





Image courtesy of the Member

## Mondaire Jones

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

Democrat from New York

**Congressional Committees:** Education and Labor; Ethics; Judiciary

**Born:** May 18, 1987, Nyack, New York

**Family:** Unmarried

**Education:** Graduated from Spring Valley High School, Spring Valley, New York, 2005; BA, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 2009; JD, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2013

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** N/A

**Professional Career:** Attorney, Westchester County Law Department, White Plains, New York, 2018–2019; attorney, Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP, 2015–2018, 2013–2014; law clerk, United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, 2014–2015; John Gardner Public Service Fellow, 2009–2010

**Publications:** N/A



Image courtesy of the Member

## Burgess Owens

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

Republican from Utah

**Congressional Committees:** Education and Labor; Judiciary

**Born:** August 2, 1951, Columbus, Ohio

**Family:** Six children and 16 grandchildren

**Education:** Graduated from James S. Rickards High School, Tallahassee, Florida, 1969; B.S., in biology and chemistry, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, 1975

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** N/A

**Professional Career:** NFL Super Bowl champion; business executive; nonprofit executive; entrepreneur

**Publications:** *Liberalism or How to Turn Good Men into Whiners, Weenies and Wimps* (New York: Post Hill Press, 2016); *Why I Stand: From Freedom to the Killing Fields of Socialism* (New York: Post Hill Press, 2018)



Image courtesy of the Member

## Marilyn Strickland

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

Democrat from Washington

**Congressional Committees:** Armed Services; Transportation and Infrastructure

**Born:** September 25, 1962, Seoul, South Korea

**Family:** Spouse: Patrick Erwin; two stepchildren

**Education:** Graduated from Mount Tahoma High School, Tacoma, Washington, 1980; B.A., University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, 1984; M.B.A., Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia, 1992

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** Member of the Tacoma, Washington, city council, 2008–2009; mayor of Tacoma, 2010–2017

**Professional Career:** Business executive; development officer, Tacoma, Washington, public library

**Publications:** N/A



Image courtesy of the Member

## Ritchie Torres

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

Democrat from New York

**Congressional Committees:** Homeland Security; Financial Services

**Born:** March 12, 1988, New York, New York

**Family:** Unmarried

**Education:** Graduated from Herbert H. Lehman High School, New York, New York, 2006; attended New York University, New York, New York, 2006–2007

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** New York city council, 2014–2020

**Professional Career:** Civil servant; community organizer; staff, New York city council member Jimmy Vacca

**Publications:** N/A



Image courtesy of the Member

# Raphael Warnock

UNITED STATES SENATOR

Democrat from Georgia

**Congressional Committees:** Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs; Commerce, Science, and Transportation; Special Committee on Aging; Joint Economic Committee

**Born:** July 23, 1969, Savannah, Georgia

**Family:** Two children

**Education:** Graduated from Sol C. Johnson High School, Savannah, Georgia, 1987; B.A., Morehouse College, 1991; M.Div., Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York, 1994; M.Phil., Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York; Ph.D., Union Theological Seminary, New York, New York, 2006

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** N/A

**Professional Career:** Pastor

**Publications:** *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, and Public Witness* (New York: NYU Press, 2014)



Image courtesy of the Member

# Nikema Williams

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE

Democrat from Georgia

**Congressional Committees:** Financial Services; Transportation and Infrastructure; Select Committee on the Modernization of Congress

**Born:** July 30, 1978, Columbus, Georgia

**Family: Spouse:** Leslie Small; one son, Carter Small

**Education:** Graduated from Talladega High School, Talladega, Alabama, 1996; B.A. Talladega College, Talladega, Alabama, 2000

**Military:** N/A

**Prior Elected Office:** Vice-chair, Georgia Democratic Party, 2011–2013; acting chair, Georgia Democratic Party, 2013; member of the Georgia state senate, 2017–2021; chair, Georgia Democratic Party, 2019–2021

**Professional Career:** Nonprofit executive

**Publications:** N/A

