

★ CURRENT MEMBERS ★

*Artur Davis*  
1967–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE  
DEMOCRAT FROM ALABAMA

2003–



IMAGE COURTESY OF THE MEMBER

Hailing from a poor Montgomery, Alabama, neighborhood, Artur Davis used his academic prowess to earn two Harvard degrees and to launch a political career that brought him to the U.S. House of Representatives. Elected in 2002, Davis has built a reputation as an advocate for economic opportunities for low-income Americans and as a House Member who is attuned to the needs of his constituents.<sup>1</sup>

Artur Davis was born on October 9, 1967, in Montgomery, Alabama. He was raised in the poor west end of Montgomery by his mother, a schoolteacher, and his grandmother after his parents divorced when he was young. He attended the city public schools, graduating from Jefferson Davis High School. In 1990, Davis earned a B.A. *magna cum laude* from Harvard University, and three years later he graduated with a J.D. from Harvard Law School. Davis immediately began positioning himself for a career in politics. He clerked for Judge Myron Thompson—one of the first African-American judges appointed in the Middle District of Alabama. Appointed an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the same district in 1994, Davis served in that capacity until 1998, when he left to make his first run for Congress. Davis is not married.

In the 2000 election campaign, Davis challenged five-term incumbent Earl F. Hilliard in the Democratic primary for a district that represented portions of Birmingham and Tuscaloosa as well as low-income agricultural counties in west-central Alabama that were part of the “Black Belt,” so called for its dark, productive soils. Hilliard prevailed with a 58 percent majority.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, however, Hilliard ran into political trouble over perceptions of his lack of influence in the House and criticisms by pro-Israel groups that he favored the Palestinian cause.<sup>3</sup> Davis again challenged Hilliard in the Democratic primary, this time with support from the mayors of Birmingham and Selma. In a three-way contest, Hilliard failed to win an outright majority. In the runoff, Davis claimed 56 percent of the vote. In

the general election, running against a Libertarian candidate, Davis commanded a 92 percent majority. In his subsequent re-election campaigns, Davis won handily, garnering 75 percent in 2004 and facing no major party opposition in 2006.<sup>4</sup>

When Davis claimed his seat in the 108th Congress (2003–2005), he received assignments on the prestigious Budget and Financial Services committees. In the 109th Congress (2005–2007), Representative Davis was appointed a member of the Senior Whip Team for the Democratic Caucus. In the 110th Congress (2007–2009), Davis left the Budget and Financial Services committees to serve on two plum committees: Judiciary and Ways and Means. He also is a member of the Committee on House Administration and the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee.<sup>5</sup>

As a Representative-elect, Davis described his legislative agenda as focused on the “fundamentals”: schools, medical care, and transportation infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> Like many freshman Members, Davis committed himself to constituent services, assembling a professional staff that ran five district offices and was eight times larger than the staff of his predecessor.<sup>7</sup>

As a House Member, Davis earned a reputation as being liberal on economic legislation and moderately conservative on controversial social issues.<sup>8</sup> Davis has voted with a minority of Democrats to ban partial birth abortion and human cloning; he also supports a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. On issues of economic equality for Black Americans, Davis votes with his colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus. “I think I’ve always been able to overcome obstacles, overcome odds,” Davis said, shortly after winning his first election to the U.S. House. “That’s why I refuse to accept [that] the Black Belt has to lag behind the rest of our state.”<sup>9</sup>

The U.S. Census Bureau listed five of the 12 counties in Davis’s district as being among the 100 poorest in the country. Much of his agenda focuses on improving and expanding economic and educational opportunities for his constituents. During his freshman term, Davis successfully led an effort to restore funding for minority land grant colleges—including Tuskegee University—which had been cut in the annual budget. In the 109th Congress, he restored funding for HOPE VI, a program for renovating public housing, by convincing a large number of Republicans to cross the aisle and vote for his measure. Representative Davis worked with Representative Charles Rangel of New York to expand the child tax credit for poor families. Davis also was the lead Democratic sponsor of a bill to establish a national cord blood bank that will help provide blood transfusions to patients suffering from diseases such as sickle cell anemia and diabetes.<sup>10</sup>

#### FOR FURTHER READING

“Davis, Artur,” *Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, 1774–Present*, <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000602>.

#### NOTES

- 1 Jeffrey McMurray, “Davis Vows to Be ‘Executive’ Advocate for Poor Constituents,” 1 December 2002, Associated Press.
- 2 *Almanac of American Politics, 2002* (Washington, DC: National Journal Inc., 2001): 77.
- 3 *Politics in America, 2006* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2005): 20.
- 4 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” available at [http://clerk.house.gov/member\\_info/electionInfo/index.html](http://clerk.house.gov/member_info/electionInfo/index.html).
- 5 “Biography, Congressman Artur Davis,” <http://www.house.gov/arturdavis/biography.shtml> (accessed 31 October 2007).
- 6 “Can You Spot the Future Majority Leader? The Hill Queries Nine Freshmen on Their Priorities and Expectations,” 13 November 2002, *The Hill*: 18.
- 7 “Can You Spot the Future Majority Leader?”; *Politics in America, 2008*: 20; “Official Biography of Artur Davis,” <http://www.house.gov/arturdavis> (accessed 16 February 2006).
- 8 *Politics in America, 2008*: 19.
- 9 McMurray, “Davis Vows to Be ‘Executive’ Advocate for Poor Constituents.”
- 10 “Official Biography of Artur Davis”; *Politics in America, 2006*: 19.