



★ PART TWO ★

Current Black-American Members

★ INTRODUCTION TO ★

Profiles of Current Members

Nearly 140 years ago, Senator Hiram Revels of Mississippi and Representative Joseph Rainey of South Carolina became the first of 121 African Americans to serve in the U.S. Congress.* The history of African Americans in Congress contains many of the same themes that resonate in the larger chronicle of American democracy: a pioneering spirit, struggle, perseverance, gradual attainment of power, advancement through unity, and outstanding achievement.

The 42 African Americans (39 Representatives, two Delegates, and one Senator) who are serving in the 110th Congress (2007–2009) are the inheritors of that long historical legacy extending back to Revels and Rainey. One of the largest groups of black legislators to serve in the history of the institution (8 percent of the lawmakers in both chambers), these African Americans account for more than one-third of all the blacks who have ever served in Congress. All of them were sworn in to Congress after 1964, and the majority first took office in the 1990s.

The biographical profiles of these current Members, like those of their predecessors, contain information on pre-congressional careers, first House or Senate campaigns, committee and leadership positions, and legislative achievements. But because these Members are incumbents, comprehensive accounts of their congressional careers must await a later date. Current Members were given the opportunity to review their profiles before the book was published. At approximately 750 words each, these profiles are about half as long as those of most former Members. Also, these profiles are arranged alphabetically rather than chronologically. The profiles in this section are of the 38 African Americans who have served for two or more Congresses. The four freshman Members of the 110th Congress are profiled in a résumé format in Appendix A.

Among the current Members who are profiled in this section is Representative John Conyers, Jr., of Michigan, who had 43 years of congressional service as of January 2008. First sworn in to Congress in 1965, Conyers is the longest-serving African American in congressional history and one of the 15 longest-serving Members in House history. Also included in this section are profiles of Representative James Clyburn of South Carolina, one of only two African Americans ever to hold one of the top-three leadership positions in the House, and Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, currently the only African-American Senator.

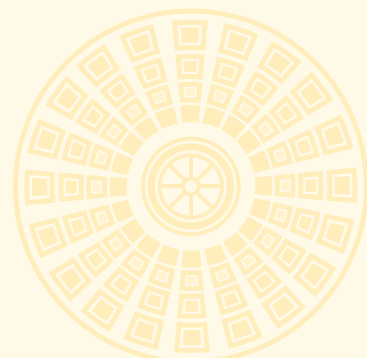
As incumbent Members retire, we will expand their profiles to include a more complete account of their congressional careers. As these members leave Congress, their profiles in the online version of *Black Americans in Congress*—<http://baic.house.gov>—will be updated to reflect these individuals' contributions to the rich history of African Americans in Congress.

*The total reflects the number who had served in Congress up to the closing date for this volume on December 31, 2007.

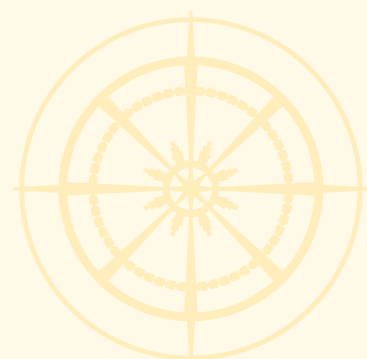
KEY TO MEMBER TITLES



★ SENATOR ★



★ REPRESENTATIVE ★



★ DELEGATE ★