



Sen. Jeff Sessions (R)

Elected 1996; 1st term

In Washington: Since his 1997 arrival in the Senate, Sessions has been a quieter presence than he was as a judicial nominee seeking the body's confirmation a decade earlier. He is a steadfast conservative voice on a variety of defense and social issues. "Without personal discipline and moral and religious faith, our nation's future is jeopardized," he said during his 1996 campaign.

Sessions, whose nomination to the federal bench was rejected by the Senate Judiciary Committee in 1986 largely because of a controversy over racially tinged remarks he had allegedly made, now chairs that panel's Youth Violence Subcommittee. Sessions allows that his presence on Judiciary alongside several of the members who voted against him is a "great irony," but he has been welcomed even by political opponents who voted against his confirmation.

Much of Sessions' energies on Judiciary are spent on legislation to toughen punishment of juvenile offenders. (He also offered several amendments during the 105th designed to limit the amount of money plaintiffs' lawyers could collect against tobacco companies.)

In the 106th, he also serves on the Armed Services and the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committees.

Sessions is a sure vote for cutting taxes, allowing investment of Social Security funds in the stock market, supporting a national missile defense system and opposing a chemical weapons treaty.

In 1998, Sessions sponsored a resolution in support of displaying the Ten Commandments in public buildings.

He is among those who regularly denounce government programs favored by liberals, whether it is the Endangered Species Act or the National Endowment for the Arts. Sessions in 1998 criticized President Clinton's plan to increase tax credits for parents who send their children to day care, but not for stay-at-home parents. He and Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., sought to end preferences in minority contracting as part of the 1998 highway and mass transit law.

Sessions said of his home state in 1996, "There's still a strong feeling here that money sent to Washington doesn't come back in effective ways." Nonetheless, Sessions has since lobbied for federal dollars for Alabama. He pushed for continued funding of the Tennessee Valley Authority's land and lake management programs and argued that the Energy Department should use TVA's Bellefonte nuclear plant in northern Alabama as its tritium source. Sessions helped secure extra millions for Alabama in road-building and mass transit funds in 1998.

Sessions regularly churns out press releases hailing such spending programs as \$12 million for a domestic preparedness center at Anniston's Fort McLellan, \$1 million for farm-raised catfish vaccine research at an Auburn lab and \$75.3 million for Alabama projects in the fiscal 1998 defense authorization bill.

Although he said during his 1996 campaign that his own experience before the Judiciary Committee would make him more sensitive to nominees, Sessions has joined the ranks of Republicans who have blocked some of President Clinton's judicial nominees based on ideology.

When the Judiciary Committee in 1986 blocked his nomination to a federal judgeship, Sessions was serving as the chief federal prosecutor for the Southern District of Alabama, building a reputation through his prosecution

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COMMITTEES
Armed Services (Emerging Threats & Capabilities; Seapower; Strategic Forces); Judiciary (Administrative Oversight & the Courts; Youth Violence - chairman); Health, Education, Labor & Pensions (Employment, Safety & Training; Public Health); Joint Economic

HOMETOWN
Mobile

BORN
Dec. 24, 1946, Hybart, Ala.

RELIGION
Methodist

FAMILY
Wife, Mary Blackshear Sessions; three children

EDUCATION
Huntingdon College, B.A. 1969; U. of Alabama, J.D. 1973

MILITARY SERVICE
Army Reserve, 1973-86

CAREER
Lawyer

POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS
Assistant U.S. attorney, 1975-77; U.S. Attorney, 1981-93; Ala. attorney general, 1995-97

ELECTION RESULTS

1996 GENERAL		
Jeff Sessions (R)	786,436	51.9%
Roger Bedford (D)	681,651	45.7%
Mark Thornton (LIBERT)	21,550	1.8%

1996 PRIMARY RUNOFF		
Jeff Sessions (R)	81,622	59.3%
Sid McDonald (R)	56,131	40.7%

1996 PRIMARY		
Jeff Sessions (R)	80,694	37.5%
Sid McDonald (R)	47,320	22.0%
Charles Woods (R)	23,796	11.1%
Frank McRight (R)	21,818	10.1%
Walter D. Clark (R)	18,513	8.6%
Jimmy Blake (R)	15,305	7.1%
Albert Lipscomb (R)	7,600	3.5%

of drug dealers.

But according to sworn statements by Justice Department lawyers, Sessions called the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union “un-American” and “communist-inspired” and said they “force civil rights down the throats of people.” He also reportedly said of the Ku Klux Klan, “I used to think they’re OK,” until learning that some Klan members were “pot smokers.” Sessions said the remarks were in jest or had been misinterpreted.

Democrats on the panel said Sessions’ remarks showed “gross insensitivity” on racial issues and argued that he had only marginal qualifications to be a federal judge. A 9-9 tie vote in the Judiciary Committee kept Sessions’ nomination from going to the floor. It was only the second time in 48 years the panel had declined to send a president’s judicial nominee to the full Senate.

At Home: The son of a country store owner in the small town of Camden, about 60 miles southwest of Montgomery, Sessions was an attorney for a firm in the only slightly larger town of Russellville in northwest Alabama before becoming assistant U.S. attorney in 1975 and then practicing law in Mobile.

He was named U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Alabama in 1981, and his work in that job won him the recognition of the White House. In 1986, President Ronald Reagan nominated Sessions to be a federal judge. After the Senate turned back the nomination, Sessions returned to his work as a federal prosecutor.

In 1994, Sessions ran for state attorney general, and with a corruption scandal raging in Montgomery, he rode his vow to clean up the ethics mess to an overwhelming victory. Sessions unseated Democrat James H. Evans, who had been targeted by the GOP after putting Republican Gov. Guy Hunt (1987-93) in jail on corruption charges.

Two years after that victory, Sessions was on the move again, lured into the Senate race by Democrat Howell Heflin’s retirement after 18 years in Washington.

Six other Republicans joined Sessions in the party primary. He led the pack with 38 percent, landing in a runoff with Sid McDonald, a former state legislator who headed the state’s largest long-distance telephone company. McDonald poured more than \$1 million of his own money into the race, and he accused Sessions of accepting campaign contributions from tobacco interests while his office was investigating a tobacco company. But Sessions successfully defended himself against a state ethics charge that he had shared information with the company while it was under investigation. He won nomination with 59 percent of the vote.

In the general election, Sessions faced Roger Bedford, chairman of the state Senate Judiciary Committee. As was the case with other Alabama GOP candidates in 1996, Sessions gave more prominence to social issues than to fiscal ones. He appealed to Alabama’s conservative Christian activists with his advocacy of a constitutional amendment permitting school prayer.

Sessions said Bedford was in the lap of the trial lawyers. He also criticized Bedford for his dependence on labor money to fuel his campaign. Bedford accused Sessions of cronyism in his use of outside counsel in the attorney general’s office. Sessions disputed Bedford’s characterization of himself as a “Reagan Democrat,” running ads to note that in each of the years Reagan won the presidency, Bedford was a convention delegate for Democratic candidates.

In the end, Sessions prevailed with 52 percent of the vote to 46 percent for Bedford. Sessions’ victory gave Alabama two Republican senators for the first time since Reconstruction.

KEY VOTES

1999

- Y Remove President Clinton for grand jury perjury
- Y Remove President Clinton for obstruction of justice

1998

- N Pass omnibus spending bill
- Y Override veto of bill to ban “partial birth” abortions
- N Allow vote on bill to increase restrictions on tobacco industry and raise tobacco taxes
- Y Restrict future NATO expansion
- N Allow vote on campaign finance overhaul

1997

- Y Allow vote on bill to give president fast-track trade negotiating authority
- Y Allow vote on bill to let companies offer comp time instead of overtime pay

INTEREST GROUPS

	AFL-CIO	ADA	CCUS	ACU
1998	n/a	0%	89%	100%
1997	0%	0%	70%	100%

CQ. VOTE STUDIES

	PARTY UNITY		PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
1998	98%	2%	28%	71%
1997	99%	1%	56%	43%

VOTING PARTICIPATION

1998	98%
1997	99%