

## **Cynthia McKinney**

Since being elected in 1992 as the first African-American Congresswoman from Georgia, Cynthia Ann McKinney has gained national and international renown as a tireless advocate for human rights, voting rights and holding government accountable. McKinney's voting record reflects her philosophy that government should serve to provide uplift to local communities and the dignity of the human spirit. This means promoting the rights of seniors, students, the disabled, minorities, veterans and workers. She is known as a passionate, intelligent, charismatic and effective member of the House of Representatives and of the Democratic Party.

Cynthia McKinney's political career can be traced to 1986, when she won 40% of the popular vote when her father, state representative Billy McKinney, submitted her name as a write-in candidate for a Georgia state house district, despite the fact that she lived in Jamaica at the time. Two years later she ran for the seat herself and won, thus making the McKinneys the first father-daughter duo to serve simultaneously in the Georgia House. During her two terms, McKinney gained national attention for her determined struggle for a fair and just reapportionment plan in Georgia. As soon as she was elected to represent Georgia's Eleventh District in Congress in 1992, the District was challenged by 5 voters and the case went to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court dismantled the 11th District, which at that time was Georgia's second poorest District. Despite the Supreme Court decision, McKinney maintained that the decision violated the Voting Rights Act.

Where the Eleventh district had stretched from Atlanta to Savannah, McKinney found herself representing [Georgia's Fourth district](#), which is one of the most ethnically diverse districts in the southeastern United States. The district comprises parts of DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties, two of the most dynamic and populous counties in the fifteen-county metropolitan Atlanta area. South DeKalb County is home to one of the most affluent African-American communities in the country. Likewise, Gwinnett County has consistently ranked among the top five fastest growing counties in the country.

Upon entering Congress in 1993, Representative McKinney was quickly recognized as a leader by her freshman colleagues when she served as Secretary of her freshman class, as the first freshman to head the Women's Caucus Task Force on Children, Youth and as Families, as Democratic Caucus Whip for southeastern Region 8. She later served as Vice President of the Democratic sophomore class. She would be rewarded for her service with appointments to the powerful and prestigious Armed Services Committee and the International Relations Committee, where she served as a Ranking Member on its International Operations and Human Rights Subcommittee. In this capacity, McKinney sponsored the Arms Transfer Code of Conduct, aimed at preventing the sale of US weapons to dictators, which passed the House in June of 1997.

As a member of the [International Relations Committee](#), McKinney took a leading role in promoting stronger diplomatic ties with African Nations. She was asked by President Clinton to attend a presidential inauguration in Liberia, and high-level talks to open diplomatic ties with the

new Democratic Republic of Congo. McKinney also worked to build stronger economic ties between the United States and Africa, and specifically assisted a number of Georgia-based companies in this endeavor.

After ten years of service, Congresswoman McKinney lost her seat in 2002 thanks to a concerted effort by Republicans to organize voters to "cross over" and vote against her in the Democratic Primaries. Her experience as the target of such an orchestrated campaign has been documented in a film titled "American Blackout," directed by Ian Inaba. This film, which won an award at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival in Utah, features McKinney's career as a Congresswoman and deals with the historical suppression of black voters in the United States. McKinney made a stunning comeback in 2004, a year in which Republicans took firm control of both Chambers of Congress and the White House, when she was elected once again to represent Georgia's Fourth District.

Upon returning to Congress, McKinney brought ten years of experience with her, but was denied her seniority status and her seat on the [International Relations Committee](#). This has not kept her from taking on challenging and controversial issues. On the first anniversary of the release of the 9/11 Commission Report, McKinney presided at a Congressional Briefing where dozens of experts and family members of 9/11 victims gave nine hours of testimony critiquing the Report's errors, omissions, and recommendations. Further testimony on 9/11 was heard at the Congressional Black Caucus' annual legislative weekend in September 2005, where McKinney also organized a brain trust panel dealing with political attacks on black musicians, including the MK-ULTRA and COINTELPRO programs conducted by the FBI from the 1950s to the 1970s. McKinney has introduced a bill demanding the release of records pertaining to the life and death of musician and rap artist Tupac Shakur. This piece of legislation is modeled after another bill introduced by McKinney, the Martin Luther King Records Act, which would release all files currently locked up until 2038 pertaining to the life and assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, McKinney spoke out against the inadequate government response. A long-time environmental advocate, McKinney introduced a bill to be a comprehensive environmental clean-up plan to deal with the toxic aftermath of the hurricane. Another bill introduced by McKinney would deny funding to the Gretna Police for one year for turning away desperate survivors in the aftermath of the hurricane. McKinney has cosponsored numerous bills seeking relief for the hurricane survivors, and has consistently spoken out on behalf of the survivors, demanding that their urgent needs be addressed. She participated in the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, traveling with the Committee on a delegation to the Gulf Coast in January 2006. McKinney's 70-page supplemental report was the only report by a Democrat to be included in A Failure of Initiative, the Select Committee's Final Report. McKinney currently serves on the Katrina Task Force organized by the Democratic Caucus.

She currently sits on both the [Armed Services Committee](#) and the [Budget Committee](#), and throughout her six terms in Congress has been a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Progressive Caucus, and has worked closely with the Hispanic Caucus and the newly

formed Tri-Caucus. In addition to advocating and legislating for civil rights and the environment, McKinney has been a champion of veterans affairs, co-sponsoring legislation to beef up veterans' health care, and to grant work opportunity credits to employers who hire veterans. McKinney has introduced a resolution to reaffirm the 1878 Posse Comitatus Act that protects the distinction between civilian and military policing. She has supported calls for a planned and orderly withdrawal of United States forces from Iraq.

Born in Atlanta, Georgia on March 17, 1955, Cynthia currently lives in south DeKalb County. She earned a B.A. in International Relations from the University of Southern California in 1978 and a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy from The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Cynthia was accepted into Berkeley's Ph.D. program and hopes to graduate from that institution one day. In 1984, Cynthia worked as a Diplomatic Fellow at Spelman College in Atlanta. She also taught Political Science at Clark Atlanta University and later at Agnes Scott College, a women's college in Decatur, Georgia. Before being elected to Congress, Cynthia served on the board of the HIV Health Services Planning Council of Metro Atlanta from 1991-92.

Cynthia is the daughter of veteran Georgia State Representative Billy McKinney and Leola McKinney, a nurse of forty years at Grady Hospital in Atlanta. Cynthia McKinney is the proud mother of Coy.

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