Biography

Congressman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security

Bennie G. Thompson is now serving his thirteenth term as the Democratic Congressman from Mississippi's Second District and eighth term on the Homeland Security Committee. The Second District encompasses most of the Mississippi Delta and is a unique blend of agricultural economies and city life.

Congressman Thompson has spent his career fighting for the voiceless. While attending Tougaloo College and Jackson State University, he joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and helped to organize voter registration drives for African-Americans in the Mississippi Delta. After graduating from college, Thompson followed in the footsteps of his mother and worked as a schoolteacher before entering a career in elected public service. After serving as alderman and mayor in his hometown for 12 years, Thompson served as Hinds County Supervisor for 13 years before being elected to Congress in 1993.

Having entered public service in 1968, he is now the longest-serving African-American elected official in the state of Mississippi. His reputation as a no-nonsense problem solver has earned him the trust of his constituents and the respect of his colleagues in Washington. In 1975, he was a plaintiff in a lawsuit that resulted in a $503 million increase in funding for Mississippi's historically black universities. In 2000, Congressman Thompson's legislation creating the National Center for Minority Health and Health Care Disparities became law.

Drawing on his 27 years of experience as a volunteer firefighter in Hinds County, Congressman Thompson understands that our nation's law enforcement and first responders are our first line of defense in times of emergency. In Washington, he has constantly fought to ensure they are fully-equipped with the resources and tools to effectively prepare for and respond to emergencies.

In August 2005, the State of Mississippi was severely damaged by the natural disasters of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Congressman Thompson aggressively advocated for disaster relief improvements within government agencies, and provided oversight to ensure that federal funds were properly allocated for recovery.

Congressman Thompson served on the Agriculture, Budget and Small Business Committees before assuming the top Democratic position on Homeland Security in 2005. Soon after, his colleagues promoted Congressman Thompson to serve as the first ever Democratic Chairman of the Homeland Security Committee.

During his tenure as Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, despite jurisdictional challenges, the Committee bolstered resources and operational capacity within the Department of Homeland Security by passing legislation authorizing TSA, the

Coast Guard, and other critical component agencies. Congressman Thompson believes we can protect civil rights and civil liberties and still work together in a bipartisan way to ensure the homeland is secure from foreign and domestic threats.

In his first act as Chairman, Congressman Thompson introduced and engineered House passage of the most comprehensive homeland security package since September 11, 2001 - H.R. 1, the "9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007." Chairman Thompson also authored and championed many important pieces of legislation aimed at strengthening the security of our nation's chemical facilities, improving our cybersecurity posture, and protecting our rail and mass transit systems.

While on the Committee, Congressman Thompson also assists small, minority and disadvantaged businesses gain valuable information on opportunities with the federal government.

Congressman Thompson is a lifelong member of the Asbury United Methodist Church in Bolton, Mississippi. He married his college sweetheart, London Johnson in 1968. They have one daughter BendaLonne, one granddaughter, Jeanna, and one grandson, Thomas Gordon. When the duties of Congressman and Grandfather permit, Congressman Thompson enjoys hunting, gardening, reading and listening to blues music.