

# Sen. Jeff Sessions (R)



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**COMMITTEES**  
Armed Services  
(Seapower - chairman)  
Health, Education, Labor & Pensions  
Judiciary  
(Administrative Oversight & the Courts - chairman)  
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

<b>1996 GENERAL</b>		
Jeff Sessions (R)	786,436	52.5%
Roger Bedford (D)	681,651	45.5%

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

<b>1996 PRIMARY</b>		
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%

## Elected 1996; 1st term

A steadfast conservative with a career rating of 100 percent from the American Conservative Union, Sessions has had to display his pragmatic deal-making side as a key player on several judicial and education issues. In the 106th Congress, for example, he had a central role in negotiations on bankruptcy reform, seizure of assets from criminals and legislation to give states more flexibility in spending federal education dollars.

But, even after four years in office, Sessions has yet to make as much news in the Senate as he did more than a decade ago when senators rejected his nomination to the federal bench.

In 1986, Sessions was only the second judicial nominee in 48 years whose nomination was killed by the Senate Judiciary Committee — which refused even to let the nomination come to the Senate floor for a vote. Sessions' opponents accused him of "gross insensitivity" on racial issues. On a 9-9 vote, the panel killed the nomination. (The nays included the man Sessions replaced in the Senate, Democrat Howell Heflin.)

For his part, Sessions says that the Senate on occasion has been insensitive to the rights and reputation of nominees. Now a member of the Judiciary panel and a subcommittee chairman, he allows that his presence on the committee 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, and he is often looked to for guidance on how to handle controversial nominations.

Sessions was serving as chief prosecutor for the Southern District of Alabama and making a name for himself through his prosecution of drug dealers when President Reagan nominated him to be a federal judge. But according to sworn statements by Justice Department lawyers, Sessions called the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union "communist-inspired" and said they tried to "force civil rights down the throats of people." Sessions reportedly said of the Ku Klux Klan that he "used to think they're OK" until he learned that some Klan members were "pot smokers." Sessions said his words were in jest or had been misrepresented.

Even though his remarks got him in trouble as a nominee, he is not afraid to speak his mind, even when a little more judicious caution or diplomatic phrasing is called for.

Sessions himself has voted "nay" on at least one judgeship nomination, in both the Judiciary Committee and on the floor, each year since he has been in the Senate. And he has held up nominees to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in a long-running battle with other Western conservatives against the court, which he characterized as "the furthest-left circuit in the American judiciary."

Sessions' legislative efforts cut across a wide range of issues. In the 106th Congress, he played a key role in the bipartisan development of legislation to make it more difficult for law enforcement authorities to seize property that may have been linked to a crime. Sessions fought to moderate the bill's provisions and succeeded in protecting the interest of law enforcement officials. And he was in the inner circle of lawmakers who negotiated on a measure to streamline bankruptcy law.

On the Armed Services Committee, he urges increased budgets for the Pentagon and seeks to protect Alabama military bases and the interests of defense contractors. On defense policy, he says the United States "should be an active participant in world affairs, but we must avoid protracted deployments that drain our military budget and capabilities." During the

106th Congress, he made several trips to Kosovo to review the U.S. peace-keeping mission and urged the Clinton administration to pull out U.S. troops as soon as possible.

Sessions and his wife both taught school long ago, and he lists education as his top priority. On the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee in the 106th Congress, he sought changes in the federal program that supports the education of disabled children. The Individuals with Disabilities Act should be amended to give schools greater leeway in dealing with disruptive students, Sessions argued. "Learning is severely affected when students won't behave themselves," he told The Associated Press.

Much of Sessions' energy on Judiciary has been devoted to legislation to toughen punishment of juvenile offenders. He chaired the Judiciary panel's Youth Violence Subcommittee in the 106th Congress and moved to the committee's Administrative Oversight and the Courts panel in the 107th.

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. In 2000, he began an "Integrity Watch" program modeled after former Democratic Sen. William Proxmire's Golden Fleece award, to highlight reports of what he considered inappropriate federal spending.

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

Sessions grew up in the tiny towns of Hybart and Camden, southwest of Montgomery. His father owned a general store and then a farm equipment dealership, and Sessions worked around the stores and lived what he describes as an idyllic childhood. A high school teacher introduced him to the National Review magazine, which he says "helped me to appreciate the United States and to develop a political philosophy that respected hard work, faith and country."

His parents were not active politically but urged him to take an interest in government, which he did, as a history and political science student in college. He was active in the Young Republicans and student body president at Huntingdon College in Alabama.

After earning his law degree, Sessions was a lawyer for a firm in Russellville, Ala., becoming assistant U.S. attorney in 1975. He was named U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Alabama in 1981, eventually winning the recognition of the Reagan White House. After the Senate turned back his judgeship nomination, Sessions returned to his work as a federal prosecutor. In 1994, he ran for state attorney general, and with a corruption scandal raging in Montgomery, he rode to victory on a vow to clean up the ethics mess.

Two years later, 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, and he emerged the winner in a runoff. 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. In the end, Sessions prevailed over Bedford, 52 percent to 46 percent. Sessions' victory gave Alabama two Republican senators for the first time since Reconstruction.

## KEY VOTES

### 2000

- Yes Overhaul bankruptcy law and increase minimum wage
- Yes Limit fiscal 2001 discretionary spending to \$600.3 billion
- Yes Override veto on nuclear waste disposal at Yucca Mountain site in Nevada
- No Oppose effort to terminate Kosovo mission
- No Include gender, sexual orientation and disability in federal hate crime protections
- Yes Approve GOP plan to restrict use of genetic information by health insurers
- Yes Kill amendment delaying implementation of an anti-missile defense system
- Yes Cut taxes for married couples
- Yes Grant China permanent normal trade status

### 1999

- Yes Remove President Clinton from office for obstruction of justice
- Yes Kill amendment authorizing state grants to hire teachers and reduce class size
- No Require criminal background checks for purchases at gun shows
- Yes Approve GOP proposal to increase rights of patients in managed-care health plans
- No Block effort to allow farm and medicine exports to Cuba
- No Allow study of tougher automobile fuel efficiency standards
- No Ratify nuclear weapons testing treaty
- No Prohibit national political parties from collecting "soft money" donations
- Yes Remove barriers among banking, securities and insurance companies

## INTEREST GROUPS

	AFL-CIO	ADA	CCUS	ACU
2000	0%	0%	86%	100%
1999	11%	0%	88%	100%
1998	0%	0%	89%	100%
1997	0%	0%	70%	100%

## CQ VOTE STUDIES

	PARTY UNITY		PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
2000	97%	3%	42%	58%
1999	94%	6%	24%	76%
1998	98%	2%	28%	72%
1997	99%	1%	56%	44%