

Biography of John P. Murtha

U.S. Representative John P. Murtha has dedicated his

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life to serving his country both in the military and in the

halls of Congress. He had a long and distinguished 37-year career in the U.S. Marine Corps, retiring from the Marine Corps Reserve as a colonel in 1990.

He has been serving the people of the 12th Congressional District since 1974. Congressman Murtha is currently the eighth most senior member of the 435-member U.S. House of Representatives. Of the nearly 10,650 men

and women who have served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1789, only 81 have served longer than he has.

Congressional Leadership

Congressman Murtha has worked hard to bring thousands of family-sustaining jobs to Western Pennsylvania. With the wide-spread loss of coal and steel jobs that were the lifeblood of the area, he pushed the region in a new direction, intent on diversifying the economy by attracting health care, defense, medical research, tourism and high-tech jobs that would insulate the region from future shocks. This success has transformed communities and has brought thousands of jobs to the district he represents.

He co-founded the Congressional Steel Caucus in 1979 to preserve what remained of America's steel industry by fighting subsidized steel imports. Years ago he began to support funding for alternative energy technology, providing research dollars for military wind energy, fuel cell technology, and a coal-based jet fuel currently being tested in Air Force planes.

He has played a major role in heritage preservation and tourism efforts throughout Pennsylvania. He created a heritage region that became a model for the National Heritage Area program, which today includes both the Rivers of Steel and Path of Progress in Southwestern Pennsylvania. He has secured funding to preserve national heritage sites from Fort Necessity to Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater to Gettysburg National Military Park. He also authored legislation establishing the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania.

In the 1990s, the U.S. Justice Department attempted to exempt federal prosecutors from ethics rules. This effort was undertaken despite the fact that numerous cases emerged of unchecked prosecutorial activities far outside of ethical guidelines, including hiding evidence, distorting facts, paying for perjury, setting up innocent people and, in some of the severest cases, engaging in cover-ups. Congressman Murtha took on the Justice Department and Congress overwhelmingly passed the Murtha Amendment which codified that federal prosecutors are bound by the ethics rules of the jurisdictions in which they are practicing.

He has fought for a patient's bill of rights, prescription drug benefits, a higher minimum wage, and protecting Medicare, Social Security and veterans' and miners' benefits. When Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was about to be killed by federal regulations, he convinced the White House to be more flexible and saved the program. When the Environmental Protection Agency said the six-county Pittsburgh Air Basin would get no permits for industrial growth, he inserted language allowing time to finish a balanced, community-based plan. When Medicare refused to pay for preventive health care such as mammograms and flu shots, he included language in an appropriation that convinced the agency to provide coverage.

Military/Defense Leadership

Congressman Murtha is highly respected for his first-hand knowledge of military and national security issues. He has been a trusted adviser to Presidents of both parties and is one of the most effective advocates for our national defense. Currently the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, he oversees appropriations for the Department of Defense, which includes the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and the intelligence community.

As the first Vietnam War combat Veteran elected to Congress and a career Reservist, he has a rare combination of experience that enables him to lead his colleagues and the nation on defense issues.

He learned about military service from the bottom up, beginning as a raw recruit when he left Washington and Jefferson College in 1952 to join the Marines out of a growing sense of obligation to his country during the Korean War. He earned the American Spirit Honor Medal, awarded to fewer than one in 10,000 recruits. He rose through the ranks to become a drill instructor at Parris Island and was selected for Officer Candidate School at Quantico, Virginia. He then was assigned to the Second Marine Division, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. In 1959, Captain Murtha took command of the 34th Special Infantry Company, Marine Corps Reserves, in Johnstown. He remained in the Reserves after his discharge from active duty until he volunteered for Vietnam in 1966-67, where he served as the S-2 intelligence officer for the 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division and received the Bronze Star with Combat "V", two Purple Hearts and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry.

Upon his retirement from the Marine Corps Reserve in 1990, he was awarded the Navy Distinguished Service Medal by the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Health Care Leadership

Congressman Murtha's mission to improve access to preventative medicine, expand medical research, and ensure that health care is affordable has benefited people across our country.

In 2003, he found out through the Air Force Surgeon General that 144,000 Air Force personnel and members of their family have diabetes. Determined to reverse the diabetes epidemic in the military as well as throughout Western Pennsylvania, he has directed funding to the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's Diabetes Institute for diabetes prevention, education and outreach, which is having significant success on military installations and across rural communities. He has also directed funding to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh to continue research and clinical trials for a cure to Type 1 diabetes.

Congressman Murtha has worked with breast cancer survivor advocate groups to provide over \$2.2 billion for breast cancer research through the Department of Defense. This funding has led to state-of-the-art research for detecting and treating breast cancer, and has resulted in early detection technologies like imaging tools and molecular studies that yield more reliable results.

He has forged partnerships between Western Pennsylvania hospitals and world-renowned institutions such as Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital, one of which has led to research that could revolutionize the early detection and treatment of breast cancer and significantly advance efforts to eradicate the disease.

Through his leadership in securing continued funding for the healthcare program for retired miners, he has twice been able to save their benefits from being eliminated.

Foreign Policy Leadership

Congressman Murtha has traveled around the world leading Congressional and Presidential fact-finding missions, meeting with foreign leaders, monitoring international elections and representing the United States Congress abroad.

President Ford asked Congressman Murtha in 1975 to be part of the first Congressional fact-finding mission to Vietnam after U.S. forces had been withdrawn. He later returned in 1978 to discuss with the Vietnamese the issue of Americans still listed as missing in action and to try to bring back the remains of any Americans that had been found in recent years.

In 1982 and 1983, Speaker Tip O'Neill sent Congressman Murtha to Beirut, Lebanon, to assess President Reagan's decision to deploy U.S. Marines in the midst of civil unrest. He returned and warned that our troops were in a vulnerable position and that the force was inadequate to attain the mission outlined by the State Department. He argued for the withdrawal of the Marines from Beirut.

Congressman Murtha was part of a Congressional delegation that visited the Soviet Union in 1984 shortly before Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power. The delegation reinforced the United States openness to pending economic and military changes in that country. He later worked to provide funding essential to long-term global stability by decommissioning nuclear equipment and destroying warheads.

President Reagan named Congressman Murtha and Senator Dick Lugar as co-chairmen of a 20 member presidential delegation to monitor the Philippine elections of 1986. The delegation personally observed activities of voting fraud and manipulation and determined that the election had been stolen by the Marcos regime. After the delegation convinced President Reagan to delay certifying the election, Marcos fled the country and Corazon Aquino became president.

Congressman Murtha served as chairman or co-chairman of four separate presidential election-monitoring delegations to El Salvador. He had been one of the strongest and most influential supporters of El Salvador when communist insurgents threatened to overrun the democratically elected government.

In 1989, President George H.W. Bush named Congressman Murtha as Chairman of the U.S. delegation to monitor the elections in Panama. It quickly became clear that the election was fraudulent and that Panama's military dictator, Manuel Noriega, had removed the constitutionally elected President and held onto power by declaring his party as the election winner. At President Bush's urging, Murtha traveled to Panama on several more occasions and met secretly with the "defeated" candidates. He helped facilitate messages between them and the Bush Administration regarding support for an American intervention. He later inspected the build-up of U.S. forces that invaded in December 1989 and deposed Noriega.

Congressman Murtha played a key role in the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s. He worked with Congressman Charlie Wilson on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee to secretly provide funding for the CIA to supply arms to the Afghan fighters. Stinger Missiles became successful in shooting down Soviet helicopters and aircraft and turning the tide for the Afghan resistance.

During the Persian Gulf War, Congressman Murtha played a vital role as a moderate Democrat in attracting swing votes that assured passage of a House Resolution supporting the United Nations Resolution on the conflict. He made two trips to the Gulf Region to assess the situation and troop morale, and was invited numerous times by President George H.W. Bush to the White House for briefings and advice.

When President George H.W. Bush ordered 25,000 U.S. troops to Somalia in December 1992, Congressman Murtha appeared on Larry King Live that very evening to debate against the decision. He traveled to Somalia on three inspection trips. In July 1993, he wrote President Clinton a letter recommending a phased withdrawal of our troops. Although his advice was not heeded, history would prove him right.

From 1996 through 1998, Congressman Murtha made several trips to Bosnia to inspect the United Nations Forces. In September 1996, President Clinton asked him to co-chair a U.S. delegation overseeing the first post-war election, to certify that the election was fair and that the Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs were able to openly participate. He also

traveled to Bosnia with President Clinton for Christmas in 1997 and 1998.

Congressman Murtha voted to give President George W. Bush authorization to use military force against Iraq in October 2002. He inspected the build-up of U.S. troops in the Gulf Region weeks before the invasion and five months later in August 2003. He found severe shortages of body armor, electronic jammers, and vehicle spare parts. He has worked tirelessly to ensure that our troops have the proper equipment and training that they need. He wrote President Bush in September 2003 warning that, "we have severely miscalculated the magnitude of the effort we are facing" and said that he agreed with an assessment by Dr. John Hamre that we have a "narrow window of opportunity available to deliver progress in terms of economic infrastructure, security and basic service improvements." He received a reply seven months later from the Department of Defense saying that "we have made substantial progress in the very ways that you suggest." After voicing his concerns and suggestions directly to the Administration and being continually ignored, he made the decision to publicly argue for the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq on November 17, 2005. Since then, he has become one of Congress's most outspoken critics of the War in Iraq, convinced that the conflict can only be solved politically, diplomatically and economically by the Iraqis, not the American military. Since the war in Iraq has begun, he has made six visits to the region.

Honors and Awards

Congressman Murtha's countless honors include the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award, the National Breast Cancer Coalition Leadership Award, Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry's Government Leader of the Year, Pittsburgh's Riverperson of the Year and Pennsylvania's two highest honors, the Distinguished Service Medal and the Meritorious Service Medal.

A full list of honors and awards is located at the top of this page.