

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable William Jefferson

PERSON

Jefferson, William J. (William Jennings), 1947-

Alternative Names: The Honorable William Jefferson;

Life Dates: March 14, 1947-

Place of Birth: Lake Providence, Louisiana, USA

Residence: New Orleans, LA

Work: New Orleans, LA

Occupations: U.S. Congressman

Biographical Note

Congressman William J. Jefferson was born in Lake Providence, Louisiana, on March 14, 1947. Jefferson graduated from Southern University A&M and went on to graduate from Harvard University's School of Law. In 1996, Jefferson received his LL.M. degree in taxation from Georgetown University.

After graduating from Harvard, Jefferson established the law firm of Jefferson, Bryan and Gray, which went on to become the largest predominantly African American law firm in the South. Entering public service, Jefferson spent some time as an officer in the Judge Advocate General's Corps, and then as a law clerk for Alvin B. Rubin of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Louisiana. Jefferson later served as a legislative assistant to Senator J. Bennett Johnson. In 1980, Jefferson was elected to the Louisiana State Senate, where he was twice named Legislator of the Year by the Alliance for Good Government. Jefferson's move to Washington, D.C., came in 1991 with his election to the U.S. House of Representatives, where he continued to serve. In the House, Jefferson served on the powerful Committee on Ways and Means, and served as co-chairman of the Africa Trade and Investment Congressional Caucus. Jefferson was also chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Jefferson was active in spreading technology and education to individuals in his own district, and across the country, as he sought to remove the technological barriers that divide many people. For his efforts in bolstering technology initiatives, the Information Technology Industry Council named Jefferson Legislator of the Year. Jefferson also

worked hard in Congress to bolster both domestic and international trade, leading both the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and the New Markets Initiative to passage. For his efforts with the economy, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce presented Jefferson with its annual Spirit of Enterprise award. Jefferson and his wife, Dr. Andrea Green Jefferson, raised five daughters.

Related Entries

East Carroll Parish Training School for the Colored [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

G.W. Griffin High School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

Harvard Law School [STUDENTOF]
[from ? to ?]

New Orleans, Louisiana [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Clerk for federal Judge Alvin Rubin

United States Senate [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Legislative assistant

Jefferson, Bryan and Gray [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from ? to ?]

Louisiana State Senate [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1979 to 1990]

United States House of Representatives [EMPLOYEEOF]
[from 1990 to ?]