

JEFF FLAKE (R-AZ)**IN OFFICE**

Up for re-election in 2018

1st Term


Elected in 2012


SENIORITY RANK

75


Out of 100


CONTACT

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 **DC Office** 413 Russell Senate Office Building

BGOV BIOGRAPHY

By Brian Faler, Bloomberg News

Jeff Flake is an easy-going lawmaker with a quick smile who's built a career out of being difficult.

The Arizona Republican with a fondness for puns and a passing resemblance to actor Owen Wilson is one of Congress's mavericks, willing to buck his party on major issues.

In his six terms in the House, he was perhaps best known for his long, lonely fight against spending earmarks -- during which he would take to the House floor, armed with amendments targeting Republican and Democratic projects alike. They were easily turned aside, and earned him the disdain of colleagues who saw his crusade as little more than preening for news reporters.

They later adopted Flake's position, banning earmarks -- funds directed to specific projects -- after a string of earmark-related scandals, rising concern over the budget deficit and the 2010 rise of the Tea Party movement. In a sign of the shifting political winds, Flake in the 112th Congress was named to the Appropriations Committee, which had been the epicenter of earmarking and a hotbed of antipathy toward the Arizona lawmaker.

He didn't fit in on the panel, even after it gave up earmarks, with Flake complaining the bills the committee developed still spent too much. Twice the panel couldn't get its biggest and most contentious bill -- one that funds a host of health-care, education and labor programs -- out of committee in part because of Flake's opposition.

Nor does he fit in with his state's tough stances on illegal immigration. In 2007, Flake cosponsored a bill with Illinois Democrat Luis Gutierrez that critics said would grant amnesty to illegal immigrants.

"You can get to the right of me on immigration easily," Flake told Esquire magazine in November 2012. He told the magazine he grew up on a ranch that hired immigrant workers and "I saw what these people went through and why they were here -- to work and sustain their family. And I've never been able to work up hatred towards them. I just can't do it."

In 2012 he declined to sign an anti-tax increase pledge authored by Grover Norquist's Americans for Tax Reform. He had

signed an earlier version of the pledge, but in a campaign debate, he said, "The only pledge I'd sign is a pledge to sign no more pledges."

He told the Arizona Republic newspaper, "I have a disagreement with it." He said the anti-tax group didn't like his efforts to eliminate an ethanol tax credit. "The position of Americans for Tax Reform is this violated the pledge because you're not having a commensurate tax cut," Flake said. "My position is if you can get rid of a bad tax expenditure or credit or deduction that fouls up the code or impacts our ability to trade overseas, then just do it."

Nevertheless, Flake says he is a fiscal conservative. "I have a record in the House for 12 years, and people know where I stand on taxes and government," he told the newspaper.

He supports President Barack Obama's efforts to loosen the trade embargo on Cuba, saying it should be ended altogether. "I was elected to be a member of Congress, not a travel agent," Flake has said. "Americans should be able to travel wherever they want. They don't need our advice and shouldn't have to seek our permission."

In 2009, Flake co-sponsored a bill to tax carbon emissions, something many Democrats wouldn't touch. "If there's one economic axiom, it's that if you want less of something you tax it," he said at the time. "Clearly, it's in our interest to move away from carbon."

He would have paired the tax with a corresponding reduction in payroll taxes so it wouldn't be a net tax increase. Flake has since abandoned the idea, saying he was offering an alternative to a doomed cap-and-trade bill that was being pushed by House Democrats.

Flake is comfortable enough in his own skin to spend a week alone on an uninhabited key in the Marshall Islands, in the South Pacific.

"Maybe I would learn something about myself," he wrote in the Washington Post in an account of the trip. He passed the time by writing numbers on the shells of hermit crabs. "No. 12 climbed on my foot and pinched my big toe," he said. "No. 44, my old football number, was a favorite."

Early Years

Flake, a Mormon, grew up on a cattle ranch in Snowflake, Arizona, a town partly named after his great-great-grandfather. William Jordan Flake, who had been sent by Brigham Young to colonize Arizona, founded the town in 1878. The name is combination of Flake's and the town's co-founder, Erastus Snow.

Flake was the fifth of 11 children, growing up on a ranch that he said sometimes had more than 1,000 cattle. His late uncle Jake was speaker of the Arizona House.

When he was 19, he went on his Mormon mission to Africa, spending two years proselytizing in South Africa and Zimbabwe. There he says he learned to speak Afrikaans. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Brigham Young University. Then after interning for Arizona Democratic Senator Dennis DeConcini ("He was quite conservative," said Flake, denying he was a Democrat at that time), Flake went back to Africa, to Namibia, where he ran a group monitoring the nation's independence from South Africa.

He later returned to Arizona to run the Goldwater Institute, a think tank, before running for what would be the first of six terms in the House. In 2000, when Matt Salmon decided not to run for re-election (Salmon returned to the House for the 113th Congress after a 12-year absence), Flake won Salmon's endorsement and prevailed in a five-candidate Republican primary. He won election in November with 54 percent of the vote.

He was re-elected by substantial margins, and in early 2011, soon after Republican Jon Kyl announced his plan to retire from the Senate after three terms, Flake entered the Senate race. He defeated two other Republicans on the primary ballot and bested Democrat Richard Carmona by three percentage points.

Updated Dec. 26, 2012

BIO FROM REPRESENTATIVE'S WEBSITE

From the Senator's Website

Senator Jeff Flake is a fifth-generation Arizonan who was raised on a cattle ranch in Snowflake, Arizona. Snowflake was named in part for Senator Flake's great-great grandfather.

Prior to his election to the U.S. Senate, Senator Flake served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2001-2013 representing the East Valley.

Bloomberg GOVERNMENT

After serving a Mormon mission in southern Africa, Jeff graduated from Brigham Young University, where he received a B.A. in International Relations and an M.A. in Political Science.

In 1987, Jeff started his career at a Washington, D.C. public affairs firm, but soon returned to Africa as Executive Director of the Foundation for Democracy in Namibia. In this role, Senator Flake helped monitor Namibia's independence process and saw that nation usher in freedom and democracy.

In 1992, Jeff and his family moved back to Arizona where he was named Executive Director of the Goldwater Institute. In this role, Jeff worked to promote a conservative philosophy of less government, more freedom, and individual responsibility.

Senator Flake and his wife, Cheryl, live in Mesa and have five children.

PERSONAL PROFILE

COMMITTEES

[Senate Committee on Foreign Relations](#)

[Senate Committee on the Judiciary](#)

[Senate Special Committee on Aging](#)

[Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources](#)

CAUCUSES

[USO Congressional Caucus](#)

[Anti-Value Added Tax Caucus](#)

[Senate Western Caucus](#)

Birthdate 12/31/1962

Birthplace Snowflake, AZ

Political Party Republican Party

Marital Status Married

Spouse Cheryl

Residence Mesa, AZ

Family 5 children

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Education

Brigham Young Univ

Master's Degree 1987

Brigham Young Univ

Bachelor's Degree 1986

Executive Director, Goldwater Institute 01-03-2001 - 01-03-2013

Representative:Arizona, (US)House of Representatives 01-03-2013 - Present

Senator:Arizona, (US)Senate