

**LEGISLATOR**

US Representative

**JOHN LEWIS (D-GA-05)****IN OFFICE**

Up for re-election in 2016

**LEADERSHIP POSITION**

House Democratic Whip

**15th Term**

Re-elected in 2014

**CONTACT**

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## BGOV BIOGRAPHY

By Jonathan Keehner, Bloomberg News

Civil rights activist John Lewis, a keynote speaker at the March on Washington in 1963, has represented Georgia's 5th Congressional District, which includes Atlanta, since 1987.

Lewis was recognized as one of the "Big Six" leaders of the civil rights movement, a group that included Martin Luther King Jr. The son of sharecroppers who was born in 1940 outside of Troy, Alabama, Lewis was also chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which organized sit-ins to protest racial segregation. President Jimmy Carter appointed Lewis to direct more than 250,000 volunteers of ACTION, the federal volunteer agency, in 1977.

Lewis was elected to the Atlanta City Council in 1981 and to Congress in November 1986. He was appointed to the House Ways and Means Committee in 1993. In the 112th Congress, he is the fifth ranking Democrat and the top Democrat on the panel's Oversight Subcommittee. In the two previous congresses, Lewis was the chairman of that subcommittee and conducted hearings on the Internal Revenue Service, the Treasury Department and the administration of Medicare, among other topics.

The congressman has touted the Social Security system as "one of the most successful and effective government programs ever implemented" and opposed the U.S. war in Iraq. He has promoted diplomacy with Iran, criticizing what he called "a misguided and reckless drive to a military confrontation and possible war" with the nation.

Lewis is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus and has been senior chief deputy whip in the Democratic caucus. He was arrested, with four other members of Congress, in 2009 outside the Sudan embassy during a protest against genocide in Darfur after crossing a police line.

Lewis, who has a B.A. in religion and philosophy from Fisk University, is a graduate of the American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, Tennessee. He wrote his autobiography "Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement," with writer Michael D'Orso in 1998.

He lives in Atlanta and is married to Lillian Miles. They have a son, John Miles.

## BIO FROM REPRESENTATIVE'S WEBSITE

From the Representative's Website

Often called "one of the most courageous persons the Civil Rights Movement ever produced," John Lewis has dedicated his life to protecting human rights, securing civil liberties, and building what he calls "The Beloved Community" in America. His dedication to the highest ethical standards and moral principles has won him the admiration of many of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the United States Congress.

He was born the son of sharecroppers on February 21, 1940, outside of Troy, Alabama. He grew up on his family's farm and attended segregated public schools in Pike County, Alabama. As a young boy, he was inspired by the activism surrounding the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the words of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., which he heard on radio broadcasts. In those pivotal moments, he made a decision to become a part of the Civil Rights Movement. Ever since then, he has remained at the vanguard of progressive social movements and the human rights struggle in the United States.

As a student at Fisk University, John Lewis organized sit-in demonstrations at segregated lunch counters in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1961, he volunteered to participate in the Freedom Rides, which challenged segregation at interstate bus terminals across the South. Lewis risked his life on those Rides many times by simply sitting in seats reserved for white patrons. He was also beaten severely by angry mobs and arrested by police for challenging the injustice of Jim Crow segregation in the South.

During the height of the Movement, from 1963 to 1966, Lewis was named Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which he helped form. SNCC was largely responsible for organizing student activism in the Movement, including sit-ins and other activities.

While still a young man, John Lewis became a nationally recognized leader. By 1963, he was dubbed one of the Big Six leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. At the age of 23, he was an architect of and a keynote speaker at the historic March on Washington in August 1963.

In 1964, John Lewis coordinated SNCC efforts to organize voter registration drives and community action programs during the Mississippi Freedom Summer. The following year, Lewis helped spearhead one of the most seminal moments of the Civil Rights Movement. Hosea Williams, another notable Civil Rights leader, and John Lewis led over 600 peaceful, orderly protestors across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama on March 7, 1965. They intended to march from Selma to Montgomery to demonstrate the need for voting rights in the state. The marchers were attacked by Alabama state troopers in a brutal confrontation that became known as "Bloody Sunday." News broadcasts and photographs revealing the senseless cruelty of the segregated South helped hasten the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Despite more than 40 arrests, physical attacks and serious injuries, John Lewis remained a devoted advocate of the philosophy of nonviolence. After leaving SNCC in 1966, he continued his commitment to the Civil Rights Movement as Associate Director of the Field Foundation and his participation in the Southern Regional Council's voter registration programs. Lewis went on to become the Director of the Voter Education Project (VEP). Under his leadership, the VEP transformed the nation's political climate by adding nearly four million minorities to the voter rolls.

In 1977, John Lewis was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to direct more than 250,000 volunteers of ACTION, the federal volunteer agency.

In 1981, he was elected to the Atlanta City Council. While serving on the Council, he was an advocate for ethics in government and neighborhood preservation. He was elected to Congress in November 1986 and has served as U.S. Representative of Georgia's Fifth Congressional District since then. He is Senior Chief Deputy Whip for the Democratic Party in leadership in the House, a member of the House Ways & Means Committee, a member of its Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support, and Ranking Member of its Subcommittee on Oversight.

John Lewis holds a B.A. in Religion and Philosophy from Fisk University, and he is a graduate of the American Baptist Theological Seminary, both in Nashville, Tennessee. He has been awarded over 50 honorary degrees from prestigious colleges and universities throughout the United States, including Harvard University, Brown University, the University of Pennsylvania, Spelman College, Princeton University, University of New Hampshire, Johnson C. Smith University, Delaware State University, Duke University, Morehouse College, Clark-Atlanta University, Howard University, Emory University, Brandeis University, Columbia University, Fisk University, Williams College, Georgetown University, and Troy State University.

John Lewis is the recipient of numerous awards from imminent national and international institutions, including the highest civilian honor granted by President Barack Obama, the Medal of Freedom, the Lincoln Medal from the historic Ford's

Theatre, the Golden Plate Award given by the Academy of Excellence, the Preservation Hero award given by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Capital Award of the National Council of La Raza, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Non-Violent Peace Prize, the President's Medal of Georgetown University, the NAACP Spingarn Medal, the National Education Association Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Award, and the only John F. Kennedy "Profile in Courage Award" for Lifetime Achievement ever granted by the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation.

John Lewis lives in Atlanta, Georgia. He has one son, John Miles.

## PERSONAL PROFILE

### COMMITTEES

[House Committee on Ways and Means](#)

### CAUCUSES

[Congressional COPD Caucus](#)

[Out of Afghanistan Caucus](#)

[Congressional Structured Settlements Caucus](#)

Birthdate 02/21/1940

Birthplace Troy, AL

Political Party Democratic Party

Residence Atlanta, GA

Family 1 child

### PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

#### Education

Fisk University

Bachelor's Degree 1967

Amer Baptist Theol Seminary

Bachelor's Degree 1961

1982 - 1986 Council Member, City of Atlanta  
GA 01-03-1987 - Present  
Representative: Georgia, (US) House of Representatives