

JOHNNY ISAKSON (R-GA)**IN OFFICE**

Up for re-election in 2016

2nd Term


Re-elected in 2010


SENIORITY RANK

33


Out of 100

CONTACT

 **Email** [Contact Form](http://www.isakson.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-me)
<http://www.isakson.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/email-me>

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<http://www.isakson.senate.gov/public>

 **Twitter** [@SenatorIsakson](https://twitter.com/SenatorIsakson)
<https://twitter.com/SenatorIsakson>

 **DC Office** 131 Russell Senate Office Building

BGOV BIOGRAPHY

By Eun Kim for Bloomberg News

Johnny Isakson began his congressional career by assuming the seat vacated by Republican icon Newt Gingrich. Even so, the senior U.S. senator from Georgia continues to get his conservative bona fides questioned despite consistent support by fellow Republican office holders and his rise in the GOP ranks in the Senate.

In the 114th Congress, he assumed the chairmanship of the Veterans Affairs Committee, and his committee portfolio also included seats on the Finance, Foreign Relations, and Health, Education, Labor and Pensions panels. He also retained his membership on the Ethics panel, where service helps a senator build a reputation as a team player.

When he announced plans to launch his 2016 re-election campaign -- in November 2014 -- Isakson flanked himself with Georgia Governor Nathan Deal and other top party leaders from the state, which may provide some inoculation from critics such as the small-government, low-taxes Club for Growth and the Eagle Forum, which supports "conservative and pro-family men and women."

"I'm a known commodity in this state," he declared at a news conference describing why he deserved a third term. "All you've got to do is Google my name and you can find out everything I've ever done -- and everything I haven't ever done."

Just around the same time, the Conservative Review gave Isakson a failing 46 percent "liberty score." The group also placed Isakson on its 2016 primary "hit list" of lawmakers it viewed as moderate.

The Club for Growth gave him a 59 percent rating for 2013, 41st among 45 Republican senators, although his lifetime score from the small-government group was 76 percent.

In addition to his voting record, Isakson has been willing to partner with Democrats on such issues as housing, worker training and education. He's worked with Democrat Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire on a proposal to move the federal government to a biennial budget and embraced the recommendations of the bipartisan Simpson-Bowles deficit reduction commission, which recommended spending cuts, increased revenues and changes in entitlement programs.

Washingtonian magazine announced that congressional aides had voted Isakson the "nicest" member of Congress in 2012. The magazine said he received more votes than half a dozen runners-up.

Isakson's cordial demeanor may be partly why he draws the ire of opponents who distance themselves from someone

known for being willing to compromise and strike deals in the Senate.

But it's a skill Isakson takes pride in. On his website, he boasts of bringing "common sense leadership to Congress" through his bipartisan work.

That knack prompted President Obama to ask him in 2012 to organize a White House dinner with Republican senators to discuss ways to break through a budget impasse at the time. The group also touched on other divisive issues, including immigration and gun control.

The hard-liners throwing darts at Isakson have based their concerns on what they see as his squishy stances on issues including immigration, abortion and President Barack Obama's health care bill. They also point to a past in which Isakson voted for the financial industry bailout in 2008 and a bill to raise the debt ceiling in 2011.

Isakson voted against the 2010 health-care insurance bill, the Affordable Care Act. However in 2013 he voted for a spending bill that included money for Obamacare. The vote drew the wrath of the Tea Party-backed Senate Conservatives Fund, which slammed Isakson for the vote with two weeks of radio ads.

Isakson opposes the immigration policy the president introduced in November 2014, calling Obama's executive order to allow some undocumented immigrants to remain in the country a "political exercise" to "buy friends" following a mid-term election season with crushing losses for Democrats.

Isakson said he opposes abortion except in the cases of rape, incest and to save the mother's life.

Yet, anti-abortion activists are quick to bring up how he identified himself as a pro-choice candidate during a failed Senate campaign in 1996. Isakson has since drifted increasingly to the right on the issue.

Although his score varied while serving in the U.S. House, Isakson has achieved a perfect voting tally from the National Right to Life Committee while in the Senate.

Early Years

Upon graduating from the University of Georgia in 1966, Isakson served in the Georgia Air National Guard until 1972. He also began his professional career in the family's real estate business. He eventually built Northside Realty into one of Atlanta's largest independent residential real estate brokerage firms.

His interest in politics led him to volunteer in the presidential campaigns of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and Richard Nixon in 1972.

After two unsuccessful electoral bids, he won election to the state House in 1976 and rose to minority leader. In 1990, he ran for governor, losing to Democrat Zell Miller. Two years later, he was elected to the state Senate.

In 1996, Isakson made his first bid for the U.S. Senate. He declared himself a pro-choice candidate, a move that cost him conservative support, as well as the Republican primary. It was one of the first times he was tagged as a party moderate. He finished a strong second in the six-candidate GOP primary to Guy Millner.

In 1997, then-Governor Zell Miller appointed Isakson as chairman of the Georgia Board of Education. In 1999, Isakson won a special election to succeed Newt Gingrich after the House speaker resigned from his congressional seat. Isakson easily won re-election the following year and again in 2002.

He ran for the Senate in 2004 when his political path again crossed that of Miller: He won the seat Miller was vacating through retirement. In that election, and again in 2010, he won by comfortable margins -- 18 percent and 19 percent respectively.

Updated Jan. 9, 2015

BIO FROM REPRESENTATIVE'S WEBSITE

From the Senator's Website

Johnny Isakson is a businessman, a public servant and family man whose conservative, thoughtful and independent approach have made him a leader in Georgia for over 30 years.

Johnny began his business career in 1967 when he opened the first Cobb County office of a small, family-owned real estate business, Northside Realty. Johnny later served as president of Northside for 20 years, presiding over the company's growth into the largest independent residential real estate brokerage company in the Southeast and one of the largest in America.

Bloomberg GOVERNMENT

Johnny entered politics in 1974 and served 17 years in the Georgia Legislature and two years as Chairman of the Georgia Board of Education. In 1999, Johnny was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives for the first of three terms before being elected to the U.S. Senate in 2004. He was re-elected to the Senate in 2010.

In Washington, Johnny has proven to be a leader who gets results. When the mortgage and financial crisis hit in 2008, Johnny drew on his decades of experience in real estate in offering solutions to reduce the inventory of foreclosed homes and to restore the nation's housing market.

The Senate overwhelmingly passed his legislation to create the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, styled after the 9-11 Commission, to investigate the near collapse of the banking system and loss of tens of trillions of dollars in order to gather the facts before rushing to create new regulations.

Johnny continues to lead in Congress through his successful bipartisan efforts to address federal spending, reduce the debt and change the way Washington does business. He introduced the Biennial Budgeting and Appropriations Act to end reckless spending and reform the federal budget process by converting it from an annual spending process to a two-year cycle, with one year for appropriating federal dollars and the other year devoted to much-needed oversight of federal programs. He also co-sponsored the Balanced Budget Amendment and the Commitment to American Prosperity Act, or CAP Act, designed to significantly reduce federal spending by tying spending levels to the gross domestic product. He follows his own advice and has returned over \$3 million of his own Senate office budget to the Treasury over the years as a former member of the House and current member of the Senate.

In January 2013, Johnny was named to the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, which has jurisdiction over taxes, trade, Medicare and Social Security and which plays a critical role in the debate over cutting spending and reducing our nation's debt.

Johnny has worked to strengthen our Armed Forces, and continues to show unwavering commitment to the men and women who serve our country.

On energy, Johnny is committed to lessening America's dependence on foreign oil as well as pushing for alternative energy sources and conservation. He has worked to enhance and maintain Georgia's roads, while also working for mass transit alternatives to reduce congestion and improve air quality.

Johnny was an original author of the No Child Left Behind Act, the most significant improvement to our education system in a generation.

He continues to push for immigration reform that is built on a foundation of securing our borders first.

Johnny is a 1966 graduate of the University of Georgia and he served in the Georgia Air National Guard from 1966 to 1972. Johnny and his wife, Dianne, have been married since 1968 and have three grown children and nine grandchildren. They live in Marietta, Georgia, and attend Mount Zion United Methodist Church, where Johnny taught sixth-grade Sunday school for 30 years.

PERSONAL PROFILE

COMMITTEES

[Senate Committee on Finance](#)

[Senate Committee on Foreign Relations](#)

[Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions](#)

[Senate Select Committee on Ethics](#)
Chairman

[Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)
Chairman

CAUCUSES

Birthdate 12/28/1944

Birthplace Atlanta, GA

Political Party Republican Party

Marital Status Married

Spouse Dianne

Residence Marietta, GA

Family 3 children; 9

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Education

University of Georgia

Graduated 1966

1966 - 1967 (US)Air Force 1966 - 1972 Staff Sergeant, (US)Nat'l Guard 1966 - 1972 Senior Sergeant, (GA)Air National Guard 1976 - 1990 State Representative, (GA)House of Representatives 1979 - 1998 President, Northside Realty 1993 - 1996 State Senator. (GA)Senate 1996 - 1999

Bloomberg GOVERNMENT

[Senate Cancer Coalition](#)

grandchildren

Chief Executive Officer, Fairgreen Capital
LP 02-23-1999 - 01-03-2005
Representative:Georgia , (US)House of
Representatives 01-2005 - Present
Senator:Georgia, (US)Senate 01-10-2015 -
Present Chairman, Senate Committee on
Veterans' Affairs

[Senate Chicken Caucus](#)

Religion

Methodist

[Senate Real Estate Caucus](#)