

Joe Walsh (Illinois politician)

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William Joseph "Joe" Walsh (born December 27, 1961) is an American conservative talk radio host and politician. He served one term in the United States House of Representatives for Illinois' 8th congressional district.^{[1][2][3]} He served from January 2011 through January 2013, after defeating three-term incumbent Democratic Representative Melissa Bean by a margin of just 291 votes in a surprising upset.^[4] He is a member of the Republican Party. While he received little Republican Party support in his bid against Bean, he was popular with the Tea Party movement.^{[5][6]} Walsh ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996 and for the Illinois General Assembly in 1998.^{[7][8]} In the 1990s, he called himself a moderate Republican, but he is now a conservative and a Tea Party activist.^{[9][10]}

During his first months in Congress, Walsh emerged as a sharp critic of the Obama Administration, accusing the president of abandoning the U.S.–Israel alliance,^[11] and bankrupting the country.^[12] He also challenged President Barack Obama to secure the borders with "moats and alligators", if necessary.^[6] Walsh maintained a no-compromise approach to legislating that included rejecting any tax increases.^[12] He consistently voted against raising the federal debt ceiling and authored a balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution.^[13]

Walsh's district was redrawn for 2012 by the Democratic-controlled Illinois General Assembly.^{[14][15]} While he initially planned to run in his newly drawn 14th district against fellow Republican Representative Randy Hultgren, he eventually decided to run in the remapped 8th district against Democratic candidate Tammy Duckworth. Walsh was defeated by Duckworth in the general election on November 6, 2012.^[16] He now hosts a conservative radio show on WIND-AM 560.^[17]

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Joe Walsh



Official congress portrait, 2011

Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Illinois's 8th district

In office

January 3, 2011 – January 3, 2013

Preceded by Melissa Bean

Succeeded by Tammy Duckworth

Personal details

Born	William Joseph Walsh December 27, 1961 North Barrington, Illinois, U.S.
Political party	Republican
Spouse(s)	Laura Walsh (1987–2002) Helene Miller
Children	5
Alma mater	Grinnell College University of Iowa University of Chicago
Occupation	Radio personality, Political commentator

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Religion	Roman Catholicism
Website	walshfreedom.com (http://walshfreedom.com)

Early life, education and early career

Walsh was born and raised in the Chicago suburb of North Barrington, the fifth of nine children.^[18] He graduated from Barrington High School in 1980, where he was the class president and active in sports.^[19] He attended Grinnell College then earned a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Iowa in 1985.^{[1][18]} In the mid-1980s, he embarked on an acting career, taking lessons in stage, theater and television at The Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in New York and Los Angeles.^{[6][19]} He completed a Master of Public Policy at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy Studies in 1991.^{[1][20]}

Described as a "former social worker" by *The New York Times*, CNN, and *Human Events*^{[9][21][22]} Walsh worked with the Jobs for Youth program in the inner-city Chicago area, teaching high school dropouts basic academic and job skills.^[23] He later taught American government and American history at Oakton Community College and the Hebrew Theological College.^[23]

Fundraising and advocacy career

Walsh's congressional website indicates he has advocated for "market-based solutions to education reform and urban poverty".^[23] He ran the Daniel Murphy Scholarship Fund, a Chicago-based, privately funded program which grants scholarships to low-income students to attend private high schools.^[23] He raised funds for two organizations advocating school choice: the American Education Reform Council, and the Milton and Rose Friedman Foundation.^[23] In addition, Walsh raised nearly \$1 million over a five-year period for the Fabretto Children's Foundation, an international charity which uses education and micro-enterprise to alleviate poverty among Nicaraguan children.^[24]

Walsh also worked on state and local government policy issues for The Heartland Institute,^[23] a libertarian free-market think tank based in Chicago. He helped launch conservative organizations that seek to limit government and elect fiscal conservatives to state legislatures such as the Legislative Education Action Drive and the Americans for Limited Government.^[23] He also did consulting work with the United Republican Fund,

an Illinois political action committee helping to elect Republican state legislators.^[23]

He has also raised venture capital for a living, according to the *Chicago Tribune*^[25] with his campaign website indicating that he worked for Ravenswood Advisors, a Chicago boutique investment banking group which raised early-stage investment capital for new and small businesses.^{[23][24]} However, he never made much money^[6] and has pointed to salaries of \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year in the past.^[18] In 2010, he had a negative net worth of \$317,498 according to the Center for Responsive Politics.^[26]

Early political campaigns

1996

Walsh won the Republican nomination for Illinois' 9th congressional district and faced longtime Democratic liberal incumbent Sidney R. Yates, who was 87 years old, in the general election.^[7] Walsh campaigned by riding his bicycle through the district. He engaged in self-admitted "outrageous" stunts during the campaign which included paying the doorman at Yates' Chicago apartment building \$1,000 for being the first person to spot Yates in his district, and throwing a birthday party for Yates that included a cake decorated with 87 candles.^{[9][27]}

Walsh denied he was trying to play the "age card".^[9] Yates responded that his own age was not a factor, and that Walsh was too young and inexperienced for the job.^[9] Yates also commented that the district was too liberal for Walsh, and tried to tie Walsh to the conservative Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich.^[9] In response, Walsh distanced himself from Gingrich and said he considered himself a "moderate Republican";^[9] he also ran as a pro-choice candidate in the liberal-leaning district.^[28] Yates defeated Walsh 63%–37%.^[29]

1998

In 1998, Walsh challenged incumbent Democratic Jeffrey Schoenberg for the 58th district seat in the Illinois House of Representatives, which represents the Chicago North Shore suburbs of Wilmette and Evanston, Illinois. Walsh again ran as pro-choice on abortion.^[28] He drove a yellow school bus throughout the district during his campaign to focus attention on the issue of public school funding.^[30] He criticized Schoenberg for voting in favor of Republican Governor Jim Edgar's school-funding reform bill that would have increased state income taxes but given property tax relief to North Shore homeowners.^{[30][31]} Walsh lost to Schoenberg, 62%–38%.^[8]

U.S. House of Representatives (2010–2013)

Elections

2010

On September 28, 2009, Walsh launched an exploratory committee to run for the United States House of Representatives in the Illinois's 8th congressional district. The district included parts of the northwest Chicago suburbs: Arlington Heights, Schaumburg, Gurnee, Palatine, Mundelein, Zion, Barrington, McHenry, and Woodstock. It had long been reckoned as the most Republican district in the Chicago area, and by some measures in all of Illinois. However, in 2004, Democrat Melissa Bean had ousted 26-year Republican incumbent Phil Crane in a substantial upset, ending 70 years of Republican control.

In February 2010, Walsh won the Republican primary election, taking about 34 percent of the vote in a six-person field and moving into the district from Winnetka, Illinois in April.^{[28][32]} The Republican establishment refused to put much stock into the district with National Republican Congressional Committee member Tom Erickson, saying, "In the primary, we had really liked Dirk Beveridge or Maria Rodriguez. Those are the two candidates who we thought really had the potential to make this a very competitive race."^[33] Walsh's campaign responded that that GOP establishment was "a bit tone deaf when it comes to independent, conservative reform candidates".^[33]

Walsh then advanced to face Bean in the general election. In 2006, Bean had been re-elected with 51 percent and in 2008 with 60 percent of the vote. Bean was endorsed by the *Chicago Tribune*,^[28] the *Chicago Sun-Times*,^[34] *The Daily Herald*,^[35] and the *Lake County News-Sun*.^[36]

Walsh criticized Bean for her 2010 votes in favor of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act^[25] and against the Stupak–Pitts Amendment that would have prohibited the use of federal funds to cover any part of the cost of any health plan that included coverage of abortion.^[37] He described himself as a Tea Party conservative activist.^[38] and obtained endorsements from two Tea Party organizations, conservative radio talk show host Tom Roeser, and many others.^[39]

The national Democratic and Republican parties did not compete or spend any money in the district, and the state GOP did not help Walsh.^[5] As a result, during the 2010 election cycle, Walsh's campaign raised only one-quarter as much as Bean's.^[6] He spent about \$603,000 and ended the campaign about \$362,000 in debt according to campaign finance reports,^[40] (with much of the debt due to post election ballot counting of the close race).^[10] As late as October, *The New York Times* forecast that Bean had an 88 percent chance at winning re-election. Even CQ Politics had the election as "Safe Democratic". Despite the lack of funding and his long-shot status, Walsh narrowly defeated Bean by a margin of 0.1% or 291 votes. The race was not called until two weeks after Election Day when provisional ballots were counted. It appeared that the presence of Green candidate Bill Scheurer was a factor in the race; he tallied 6,400 votes, far more than Walsh's margin of victory.^{[4][41]}

2012

During the 2011 redrawing of Illinois' election districts by the Democratic-controlled state legislature, Walsh's home was placed in the 14th district, now represented by fellow Republican Randy Hultgren. The 8th was reconfigured to favor a Democratic candidate. Walsh and nine other Republican Illinois Representatives filed a lawsuit alleging that the new borders discriminated against Republican and Latino voters.^{[14][15]} On September 21, Walsh announced that if the new district lines were upheld in federal court, he would run for election in the still heavily Republican 14th District against Hultgren.^[42]

In late July 2011, Walsh was endorsed by the Club for Growth to run against Hultgren.^{[2][43]} However, after several ethics issues regarding Walsh emerged, (such as charges of failing to pay child support, and driving on a suspended license), the Club for Growth distanced itself from Walsh, stating that it would wait until more facts were known before making a decision.^[44] In November 2011, Walsh was cited by the Family Research Council Action committee for his "unwavering support of the family".^[45]

In December 2011, Walsh decided to run in the redrawn 8th district,^[46] where he would likely face Democratic Tammy Duckworth, a former assistant secretary of the VA,^[47] in what seemed to pose a tough race for Walsh.^{[48][49]} In January 2012, the conservative political advocacy group Americans For Prosperity gave Walsh a 100

percent rating.^[50]

The ensuing campaign between Walsh and Duckworth emerged as a bitter race. At a July 2012 campaign event, Walsh accused his opponent of politicizing both her military service as a helicopter pilot and her Iraq War injuries which cost her both legs and the partial use of one arm. He said, "my God, that's all she talks about. Our true heroes, the men and women who served us, it's the last thing in the world they talk about."^[51]^[52] Walsh later suggested that she was, in fact, a "true hero," but that she should not talk about her service so frequently,^[53] and that her service should not command votes.^[54] Walsh decided to skip the 2012 Republican National Convention, distancing himself from establishment Republicans.^[49]

Walsh's campaign was bolstered by major financial support in the form of outside spending by conservative Super PACs.^[55] In September 2012 Americans for Limited Government gave \$1,950,000 to the Now or Never PAC, which then spent \$2,022,039 to support Walsh and oppose Duckworth.^[56] Over \$6.6 million in outside spending was reported in the race, with Walsh receiving more than \$6 million of that total.^[57] Overall, Walsh outspent her \$7 million to \$4.7 million.

Despite his spending advantage, on November 6, 2012, Duckworth defeated Walsh 55%–45%.^[58] Despite his loss, Walsh outperformed the 2012 Republican Presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, who received 41% of the vote in the 8th district.^[59]

Tenure

Several days before being sworn into Congress, *The New York Times* criticized Walsh for his willingness to accept donations from political action committees and lobbyists.^[10] After being sworn in, Walsh announced that consistent with his opposition to government-provided health care and the 2010 health care reform legislation, he would not accept congressional health care benefits.^[60]^[61]

During his early months in Congress, he emerged as a vocal critic of the Democratic Party and President Obama's fiscal policies, and posted a YouTube video in which he accused President Obama of bankrupting the country. He also vowed, "I won't place one more dollar of debt upon the backs of my kids and grandkids unless we structurally reform the way this town [Washington, D.C.] spends money!"^[12] He became a frequent fixture on cable TV,^[6]^[12] advocating a "no compromise" approach to deficit reduction that rejects any tax increases on the wealthy.^[12] He consistently voted against raising the federal debt ceiling and authored a balanced budget amendment to the United States Constitution.^[13] Walsh has also said that President Obama was elected "because he pushed that magical button: a black man who was articulate, liberal, the whole white guilt, all of that."^[62]

During the election season, Walsh was asked what his approach to bipartisanship would be if elected. He replied it would "not be the time right now to extend your hand across the aisle."^[35]

In September 2011, Walsh was among 19 members of Congress criticized for ethics violations in the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington annual report.^[63]

In November 2011, Walsh was videotaped meeting with his constituents, becoming visibly aggressive and swearing at a woman who questioned him about his comment that the marketplace and the banks were not responsible "for the mess we're in right now." He later apologized for being "too passionate".^[64]

In Congress, Walsh held 363 townhall meetings, more than any other member of Congress.^[65]

Committee assignments

For the 112th Congress, Walsh was appointed to leadership positions on the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security (vice chairman), and the House Small Business Subcommittee on Economic Growth (chairman). A list of all of his former committee assignments follows:

- **Committee on Homeland Security**
 - Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence
 - Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications
 - Subcommittee on Transportation Security (Vice Chair)
- **Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**
 - Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives
 - Subcommittee on TARP, Financial Services and Bailouts of Public and Private Programs
- **Committee on Small Business**
 - Subcommittee on Healthcare and Technology
 - Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Tax and Capital Access (Chairman)
 - Subcommittee on Investigations, Oversight and Regulations

Caucus memberships

Walsh held other memberships related to his work as a congressman including: the Congressional Hockey Caucus, the House Republican Israel Caucus, the Republican Study Committee and the Tea Party Caucus.^[20]

Post-congressional career

On March 25, 2013, Walsh aired his first radio show on Chicago's talk station WIND-AM 560, accordingly called *The Joe Walsh Show*, as a conservative political commentator.^{[66][67]} After less than a year on the air in Chicago, *The Joe Walsh Show* began airing on WNYM-AM 970 in New York City.^[68] In April 2015, WNYM-AM 970 dropped Walsh from its radio platform.^[69]

On June 19, 2014, Walsh was removed from his radio show for using racially charged language. He was on air again the next day. WIND general manager Jeff Reisman commented: "During the segment Joe intended to cite several common racial slurs as examples. He did not in any way use them in a defamatory or derogatory manner, simply as examples. However, AM 560 The Answer did not allow them to go on the air. AM 560 The Answer has a policy of not using certain words on the air that are highly inflammatory and offensive even in the context of a discussion of why those words are offensive. We will continue that policy."^{[70][71]}

Political positions

In his failed 1996 Congressional bid, Walsh was more socially liberal, favoring abortion rights and gun control.^[19]

Walsh holds fiscally conservative views. On taxes, he said he favors extending the Bush tax cuts, abolishing the estate tax, and cutting both the capital gains and corporate tax rates.^[25] He blamed joblessness on a reluctance by small businesses to hire and traced that reluctance to an uncertainty on tax policy.^[25] In November 2011, Walsh described the Occupy movement as composed of "generally spoiled, pampered, unfocused, clueless young people and a smattering of other people who don't understand this country and are advocating

anti-American solutions." When a constituent pointed out that veterans have also taken part in the Occupy movement, Walsh responded, "I don't know how many veterans are part of the Occupy protest. I can't imagine it's many. But anyone who would advocate socialist solutions to certain problems in this country ... they don't understand this country."^[72]

On entitlement reform, he suggested cuts would have to be made.^[25] "The first thing we need to do is acknowledge that everybody is going to have to give on Social Security reform and Medicare reform," he said.^[25] Walsh opposes the extension of unemployment benefits.^[25] He said the benefits have already been extended for too long and that attention should be paid to the cost.^[25] Following President Obama's State of the Union address, Walsh remarked that he did not believe there should be a social safety net because it is not in the Constitution.^[6]

Walsh also tends rightward on social issues. On global warming, he said the science behind it was "not definitive" and that U.S. economic interests should come first in any discussion of climate agreements.^[25] Walsh also criticized President Obama's immigration policies, saying the president had made only token efforts toward securing the borders.^[73] In May 2011, while holding a toy alligator in his hand, Walsh announced on the House floor that he would support tough border legislation even if it involved building moats and filling them with alligators.^[73]

On abortion, he said to reporters on October 2012 that abortion is never medically necessary to save the life of the mother, saying that "with modern technology and science, you can't find one instance" of a medically necessary abortion.^[74] In response, the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, a professional association representing over 90% of board-certified obstetrician-gynecologists, said in a statement that "'contrary to the inaccurate statements made yesterday by Rep. Joe Walsh (R-IL), abortions are necessary in a number of circumstances to save the life of a woman or to preserve her health".^[75]

Walsh holds strongly pro-Israel views. In a May 2012 op-ed for the *Washington Times*, Walsh advocated for an Israeli annexation of the Palestinian territories, arguing that the Palestinians living there could be given "limited voting power" within the Jewish state and encouraging them to move to Jordan.^[76] This led to accusations that Walsh advocated apartheid and the "soft" ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their ancestral home.^[77] He wrote a column in *The Daily Caller* stating that President Obama is "not Israel's friend" and should not have criticized Israel for continuing to build settlements in the occupied territories.^{[6][11]} Walsh also argued that most American Jews are liberal and therefore, side with the Palestinians and vague ideas of peace, instead of with Israel.^[11] He stated that in order to achieve peace in the Middle East, the U.S. must publicly choose Israel's side, so that Palestinians will "face the combined wrath of Israel and the United States".^[11]

In November 2011, Walsh, along with fellow Tea Partier Ron Paul, met leader of the French National Front and anti-Islamist activist Marine Le Pen during her visit to the United States.^{[78][79]}

Walsh campaigned to get Chief Minister of the Indian state of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, a diplomatic visa to the United States, which had previously been denied to him due to allegations of violations of religious freedom against Muslims during the 2002 Gujarat riots. Walsh said that Modi had "quite a successful track record" of fiscal responsibility, described him as "kind of like a Tea Party free market guy in India, which I found very appealing" and noted that he "has been recognized across the world for establishing Gujarat as the most business-friendly state in India and is widely believed to be a serious contender for the 2014 election for Indian Prime Minister."^{[80][81][82]} Modi subsequently won the 2014 general election, becoming Prime Minister of India.

Personal life

Walsh has been married twice, and has three children and two stepchildren.^{[24][83]}

Following Walsh's victory in the 2010 Republican primary, it was reported that a bank had foreclosed on his condo and he had been evicted in October 2009, but that he and his family were living in a rented house in the Chicago North Shore suburb of Winnetka at the time.^[84] A GOP spokesman said that voters would likely identify with Walsh's financial troubles.^[84] He was also reportedly facing a lawsuit by a former campaign manager who claimed Walsh owed him \$20,000 for services^[84] and had had federal and state tax liens in the 1980s and 1990s (all paid by 2001).^[18] Walsh explained that the major portion of the past due taxes were on a college trust fund he received from his grandfather and that neither he nor his family had been aware that the funds were taxable.^[18] He also explained that his more recent financial struggles have made him more attuned to the difficulties faced by the average constituent.^[18]

In July 2011, the *Chicago Sun-Times* reported that Walsh's ex-wife, Laura, was suing him for \$117,437 for past due child support dating from 2005 for three of the children.^[12] Walsh allegedly had told his ex-wife that he did not have the money because he was out of work; she had later seen from his campaign disclosures that he had been employed.^{[12][85]} Walsh's attorney said that Walsh did not owe "anywhere near that amount," and that he had had no more problems paying child support than "any other average guy".^[85] Walsh and his ex-wife began working out a settlement of the disputed past due amount in late July 2011.^[12] Walsh's financial problems inspired the proposal of a bill which would forbid people owing more than \$10,000 in back child support from running for office in Illinois.^[86] On April 20, 2012, a settlement was reached, and the case dismissed.^[87] As part of the settlement, Walsh issued a statement on behalf of himself and his ex-wife which read, in part, "Having resolved these issues together and cleared up these mistakes in private, we now agree that Joe is not and was not a 'deadbeat dad' and does not owe child support."^[87]

In August 2011, the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Walsh lost his driving privileges from mid-April to mid-July 2011 because he let his insurance lapse. In response, Walsh criticized the *Tribune* for "wast[ing] time and ink scrutinizing [his] driving record over the last 22 years rather than Washington's unsustainable spending".^[19]

On February 1, 2013, Walsh filed a motion to terminate child support obligations,^[88] claiming that as he was now unemployed he was unable to contribute to the support of his five children.

Electoral history

See also

- List of Tea Party politicians

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- Joe Walsh vs. Joe Walsh: The rock star wrestles with the congressional candidate (http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/the_big_picture/2010/01/joe-walsh-vs-joe-walsh-the-rock-star-wrestles-with-a-tea-party-copyright-infringer.html), Patrick Goldstein and James Rainey, *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 2010
- Joe Walsh Questionnaire (<http://chicagotonight.wttw.com/2012/10/17/joe-walsh-questionnaire>), *Chicago Tonight*, PBS, October 17, 2012

External links

- *The Joe Walsh Show* official site (<http://walshfreedom.com/>)
- Joe Walsh for U.S. Congress (<http://walshforcongress.com/>)
- Biography (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=W000811>) at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*
- Profile (<http://www.votesmart.org/candidate/116545>) at Project Vote Smart
- Financial information (federal office) (<http://www.fec.gov/fecviewer/CandidateCommitteeDetail.do?&tabIndex=1&candidateCommitteeId=H0IL08090>) at the Federal Election Commission
- Legislation sponsored (<http://beta.congress.gov/member/joe-walsh/2012>) at The Library of Congress
- Appearances (<http://www.c-span.org/person/?joewalsh>) on C-SPAN

United States House of Representatives		
Preceded by Melissa Bean	Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Illinois's 8th congressional district January 3, 2011 – January 3, 2013	Succeeded by Tammy Duckworth

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