

Gary Franks

Gary Alvin Franks (born February 9, 1953) is an American politician who was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Connecticut for six years, from 1991 until 1997. He is the only African-American elected to the U.S. Congress from Connecticut, the first modern black conservative elected to Congress, and the first black Republican elected in sixty years. Franks ran for the United States Senate in 1998, losing to incumbent Democratic U.S. Senator Chris Dodd.

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Early life

Franks was born in Waterbury, Connecticut. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Yale University in 1975.

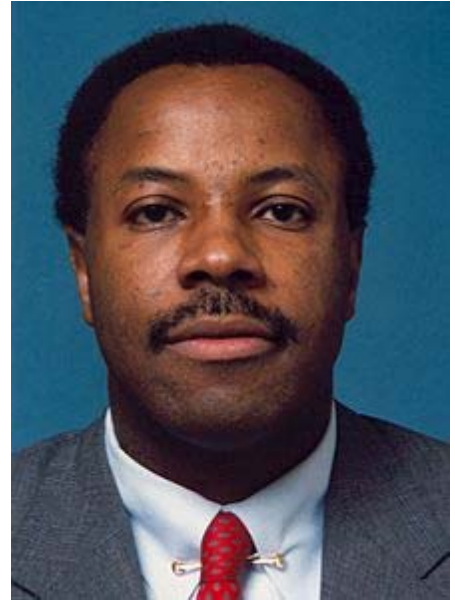
Career

Franks served as a member of the Waterbury board of aldermen from 1986 to 1990. He was an unsuccessful candidate for Connecticut comptroller in 1986.

U.S. House of Representatives

Elections

Gary Franks



**Member of the
U.S. House of Representatives
from Connecticut's 5th district**

In office

January 3, 1991 – January 3, 1997

Preceded by John G. Rowland

Succeeded by James H. Maloney

Personal details

Born Gary Alvin Franks
February 9, 1953
Waterbury,
Connecticut

Political party Republican

Alma mater Yale University

Franks was the first African-American Republican to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives since Oscar Stanton De Priest won his last term representing the South Side of Chicago in 1932. The other African-American Republican member of the U.S. House in the 1990s was J. C. Watts from Oklahoma. In his 1990 election, Franks defeated former 6th District congressman Toby Moffett, whom Franks portrayed as too liberal to represent the district. Franks won in a three-way election in 1992 when Democratic candidates split between endorsed candidate Judge James Lawlor, a moderate from Waterbury, and A Connecticut Party candidate Lynn Taborsak, a pro-labor candidate from Danbury. James H. Maloney, then the Democratic state senator from Danbury, challenged Franks in 1994 and received 46% of the vote. In a 1996 rematch, Maloney ran again and defeated Franks, benefiting from President Bill Clinton's strong showing in Connecticut.

Tenure

As Chairman of the Panel for Defense Conversion, Franks got \$20 million approved for the demolition and cleanup of an old defense manufacturing site in his hometown of Waterbury, CT. When it opened it was the site of New England's second largest commercial mall.

As Connecticut's lone member on the Armed Services Committee, Franks delivered more defense contracts to Connecticut than ever before. This included the awarding of the 'Seawolf Submarine' which produced thousands of jobs in Connecticut for more than a decade. Franks also secured orders of the M16 rifle for Colt Manufacturing which helped to save the company.

Franks wrote the bill that authorized Connecticut's first and only National Park located in Ridgefield, Connecticut called Weir Farm National Historic Site.

Franks was a high-profile Republican into his third term as Congressman, and embarked on a nationwide tour to promote his book *Searching for the Promised Land: An African American's Optimistic Odyssey* (<https://www.amazon.com/Gary-Franks/e/B001HOPYCC>) (1996).

1998 Campaign for Senate

Frank's high visibility in congress led to speculation about a run for higher office.^[2] Franks declared his candidacy for U.S. Senate in 1998, challenging incumbent Senator Chris Dodd.^[3] He ran unopposed for the Republican nomination.^[4] Franks was defeated by Dodd in the election, receiving just 32 percent of the vote.

Subsequent career

In 1999, Franks founded and became a partner in the public affairs firm, Gary Alvin Associates, LLC based in Washington, DC. Franks has served as an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University and is currently a Visiting Professor at Hampton University and the University of Virginia.^[5]^[6] He also served as president and chairman of Pacific Rim Trading & Investment Corp., a Fort Lauderdale group that recycles American scrap metal from America to China.

In 2010, 13 years after leaving Congress, Franks was profiled by the *Waterbury Republican-American* in a piece detailing his history of unpaid debts, back taxes, and foreclosed properties. Although Franks was registered to vote in Waterbury, he had not done so in 10 years, during which time he and his wife lived in Maryland and Florida under alternate versions of their legal names.^[7]

Political views

Franks ran as a candidate in favor of welfare reform, an opponent of affirmative action and a supporter of the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court. He opposed increased taxation and supported a reduced capital gains tax and an amendment to ban desecration of the American flag.

Franks opposed the Civil Rights Act of 1990 when it was being debated in Congress, and when he was running for his first term. One of his reasonings was that enforced quotas would encourage companies to move out of Connecticut to states with a greater proportion of whites, since in Connecticut, companies' ability to recruit out-of-state white workers would be balanced against a large in-state African American population in a way that would not occur in states with fewer African Americans. However, he did vote for the Civil Rights Act of 1991 when he was in Congress during his first term.^[8]

After becoming the first Republican voting member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Franks was ejected from the strategy sessions of the caucus on the claim he was a Republican mole due to his opposition to racial gerrymandering. He was later barred from the beginning half-hour-long lunch of the Caucus.

Personal life

Franks married Donna Williams in 1990; they have two daughters and a son.

See also

- List of African-American United States Representatives

References

- ↑ (<http://www.nndb.com/people/449/000163957/>)
- ↑ <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/07/05/nyregion/gary-r-franks-tries-the-rebound-trail.html>
- ↑ <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/11/04/nyregion/1998-elections-around-region-senate-dodd-coasts-victory-4th-term-senate.html?ref=topics>
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- ↑ <http://www.garyfranks.org>
- ↑ <http://politics.virginia.edu/garyfranks/>
- ↑ [2] (<http://www.rep-am.com/articles/2010/11/29/news/local/523668.txt>)
- ↑ [3] (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/102-1991/h386>)

External links

- Black Americans in Congress bio of Franks (<http://baic.house.gov/member-profiles/profile.html?intID=73>)
- United States Congress. "Gary Franks (id: F000348)" (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=F000348>). *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*.
- Appearances (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?garyfranks>) on C-SPAN

Party political offices		
Preceded by <u>John G. Rowland</u>	Republican Party Nominee for the 5th Congressional District of Connecticut <u>1990</u> (won), <u>1992</u> (won), <u>1994</u> (won), <u>1996</u> (lost)	Succeeded by <u>Mark Nielsen</u>
Preceded by <u>Brook Johnson</u>	Republican Party nominee for United States Senator from Connecticut (Class 3) <u>1998</u> (lost)	Succeeded by <u>Jack Orchulli</u>
U.S. House of Representatives		
Preceded by <u>John G. Rowland</u>	Member of the <u>U.S. House of Representatives</u> from <u>Connecticut's 5th</u> <u>congressional district</u> January 3, 1991 – January 3, 1997	Succeeded by <u>James H. Maloney</u>

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