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In Memoriam: Former Cong. John Conyers Dies at 90

By Stacy M. Brown, NNPA Newswire Senior Correspondent
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Former U.S. Congressman John Conyers, whose 15-year fight to pass legislation that would make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a federal holiday, has died. He was 90.

The longtime Michigan Democrat represented what is now the state's 13th Congressional District (which includes parts of western Detroit) for more than 50 years. Conyers resigned in 2017.

Conyers was born in Detroit in 1929. He was elected to Congress in 1965 and immediately became a forceful voice in the Civil Rights Movement, co-sponsoring the Voting Rights Act of that same year.

Conyers was the first African American to chair the powerful House Judiciary Committee and helped spearhead the 1994 Violence against Women Act.

Conyers and 12 other African American members of the House of Representatives founded the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971.

"We always knew where he stood on issues of equality and civil rights in the fight for the people," Rep. Rashida Tlaib, who now

represents Conyers' district, tweeted.

"Sad to hear of the passing of former Congressman John Conyers," the Rev. Al Sharpton stated. "He worked with us on many civil rights cases as Chair of the House Judiciary Committee and helped lead the fight for the Martin Luther King [Jr.] Holiday."

"Most of us from Michigan loved our congressman. He was idolized and was absolutely an icon. Not only was he an icon of the civil rights movement but we looked to him for leadership. This is a massive loss. All of us in business, the clergy, the community, respected, admired and aspired to be like John Conyers," said Hiram Jackson, President and CEO of Real Times Media.

"Congressman John Conyers decades ago held the first U.S. Congressional Hearings on Racially-Motivated Police Brutality; led the House Judiciary Hearings on Criminal Justice and Prison Reform in America; was co-founder of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC); and was a leading congressional advocate for the freedom of Angela Davis, the Wilmington Ten, and all political prisoners in the United States," remarked Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., the president and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association.

"Conyers was a constitutional scholar and political visionary whose longstanding vision for freedom, justice and equality was unparalleled in the Congress of the United States," Chavis continued. "May God bless the freedom-fighting memory and legacy of The Honorable John Conyers." Chavis stated.



REP. ELIJAH CUMMINGS

Congress bids farewell to Cummings, a 'master of the House'

By Matthew Daly and Laurie Kellman

WASHINGTON (AP) - Members of Congress bid a tearful farewell Oct. 24 to Rep. Elijah Cummings, hailing the son of sharecroppers as a "master of the House" as the Maryland Democrat became the first African American lawmaker to lie in state in the U.S. Capitol.

Lawmakers eulogized Cummings as a mentor and close friend, with a voice that could "shake mountains," in the words of Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, and a passion for justice and his hometown of Baltimore.

"He had a smile that would consume his whole face. But he also had eyes that would pierce through anybody that was standing in his way," said Republican Rep. Mark Meadows, whose bond with the Cummings was among Congress's most surprising friendships.

"Perhaps this place and this country would be better served with a few more unexpected friendships," Meadows added, growing emotional. "I know I've been blessed by one."

Cummings' death at 68 on Oct. 17 stunned and saddened many on Capitol Hill accustomed to seeing him with the gavel as chairman of the House Oversight and Reform Committee - or zipping by on his scooter between votes. On Oct. 24, his casket rested in National Statuary Hall for the service and was later moved to a passage directly in front of the House chamber, where he served for 23 years. The doors were pinned open in his honor as the public filed past.

The chairmanship gave Cummings a sizable role in the impeachment proceedings against President Donald Trump. The two tangled last summer when the president insulted Cummings and suggested he pay more attention to his impoverished city than to investigations.

Cummings responded by inviting Trump to visit his hometown and assuring him he would be welcomed.

Cummings never left Baltimore, friends and family recalled Oct. 24, even as he tended to official duties in Washington.

Another child of Baltimore, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., remembered the man she's called "sweet Elijah" and said Cummings had been the "North Star" for the Democrats he served alongside.

"Elijah was truly a master of the House. He respected its history, and in it, he helped shape America's future," Pelosi said.

"He was also the mentor of the House," she told the friends and loved ones assembled among the statues in the gilded, semicircular room.

Last year when leaders assigned members to committees, Cummings said, "Give me as many freshmen as you can. I love their potential and I want to help them realize it," Pelosi recalled.

Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, said Cummings was respected and revered in the caucus, "a quiet giant" whose words were heeded.

"He pulled no punches. He was authentic to the core and a champion of our democracy," Bass said.

Later in the services, the Morgan State University Choir sang, "If I Can Help Somebody" from the balcony overhead.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., recalled Cummings' efforts to calm his native Baltimore amid violent 2015 protests following the death of a black man, Freddie Gray, in police custody.

By day, Cummings was at the Capitol in the halls of power, McConnell said, but at night he returned to Baltimore to encourage unity. Taking to the streets with a bullhorn, Cummings helped quiet the disturbances.

"Let's go home. Let's all go home," McConnell recalled Cummings saying at the time. "Now our distinguished colleague truly has gone home."

House Majority Whip James Clyburn, D-S.C., recalled connecting with Cummings over their shared roots as "PKs" - preachers' kids - who followed their own paths to Congress rather than their fathers' into the ministry.

Two arrested at Confederate monument protest in North Carolina

PITTSBORO (AP) - Police in North Carolina say they've arrested two people after a "physical altercation" at a protest over a Confederate statue slated to be removed.

The Chatham County Sheriff's Office said Oct. 26 it arrested Calvin James Megginson and Timothy James Osborn on charges related to the altercation. Both were released and are due in court next month.

A pro-Confederate group is trying to stop removal of the statue, which has been stationed outside the county courthouse in Pittsboro since 1907.

The county's plans to remove the monument have sparked protests and counter-protests that have resulted



Former U.S. Congressman John Conyers (Photo: United States Congress Official Photo / Wikimedia Commons)

While Trump rakes in cash, some Senate Republicans lagging

By Brian Slodysko

WASHINGTON (AP) - President Donald Trump is raising record amounts of cash for his 2020 reelection. But that fundraising might isn't spilling over to the most vulnerable Republicans fighting to hold onto their seats in a narrowly divided Senate.

During the third quarter, former astronaut Mark Kelly took in \$2.5 million more than Republican Sen. Martha McSally in Arizona. In Maine, state House Speaker Sara Gideon bested longtime Republican Sen. Susan Collins by over \$1 million. And in Colorado, Cory Gardner, who led Senate Republicans' campaign arm in 2018, barely outraised former Gov. John Hickenlooper, who had been in the race just five weeks before the quarter ended.

The trouble for Republicans extends to states where they're supposed to be on firmer ground. Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst didn't crack \$1 million and was outraised by the leading Democrat. North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis narrowly outraised Democrat Cal Cunningham but is also facing a primary challenge from the right that has forced him to spend millions in early TV and radio ads.

The lagging numbers suggest that much of the enthusiasm among the GOP base is focused on Trump and doesn't necessarily translate to Republicans running for other offices. Democrats, meanwhile, are paying close attention to races across the board, including the House, Senate and presidency, fueling them with small-dollar donations that Republicans have struggled to counter.

Fundraising prowess isn't always an indicator of who will actually win on Election Day. But the dynamic could complicate the GOP's effort to maintain their 53-47 grip on the Senate.

This should serve as a "real wakeup call," said Scott Reed, a senior political strategist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a group that has long been allied with Senate Republicans. The "ongoing Trump drama" over impeachment and other issues "drowns out all the political news back home every single night," making it difficult for GOP candidates to get their message out, Reed said.

But the challenges facing Republicans have mounted in recent weeks as the Democratic-controlled House pursues an impeachment inquiry. Instead of focusing on their own records, Republicans seeking reelection have often been barraged with uncomfortable questions about Trump's conduct. The pressure will only grow if the Senate holds an impeachment trial, forcing these Republicans to decide whether Trump should be removed from office.

"Republicans are going to struggle with fundraising and messaging if the only thing they can talk about is President Trump," said Jonathan Kott, who was a senior adviser to Sen. Joe Manchin, a West Virginia Democrat, during his successful 2018 reelection bid. "What we found is no matter how popular the president is, you have to stand up to him when it's good for your state. Democratic senators are finding a way to do that. Republican senators aren't."

Democrats also have a small-dollar cash advantage.

Despite an organized push, Republicans have yet to develop an online fundraising behemoth rivaling ActBlue, the Democrats' donation platform, which enables donors across the country to direct a contribution of \$1, \$5 or any amount up to \$2,800 with a few taps on a smartphone.

"Democrats over the last several years have formulated a culture among the activist class where every time they are motivated by content or a candidate they contribute five bucks," said Josh Holmes, an adviser to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who is running for reelection in Kentucky and was outraised almost 5-to-1 last quarter even though the state isn't considered a battleground. "Republicans have made strides, but we still have a long way to go."

Still, there are bright spots for the GOP. In order to regain control of the Senate, Democrats might have to win in states that have traditionally sided with Republicans over the past two decades, such as Arizona and Georgia.

And some GOP candidates are successfully putting Democrats on defense. Michigan candidate John James, who came up short in his bid last year to oust Sen. Debbie Stabenow, is now beating Democratic incumbent Gary Peters in the money game. The African American, pro-Trump candidate raised \$3 million, while Peters took in \$2.4 million over the past three months, records show.

In Georgia, where there will be two Senate seats on the ballot because of the retirement of Sen. Johnny Isakson, Democrats are still sorting out who all will run. Jon Ossoff was the top-raising Democrat in the contest to take on Republican incumbent David Perdue. But of the \$1.3 million he took in, more than \$500,000 was left over from his failed 2017 bid for a suburban Atlanta House seat. Perdue, meanwhile, raised about \$2.5 million.

While Republicans acknowledge they face an unfavorable political environment, it's also early in the cycle.

In 2018, Democrats appeared to be making strides in Senate contests as the election neared, but the party's handling of a sexual misconduct allegation leveled against now-Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh galvanized the Republican base and helped them turn the tide. Kavanaugh denies the allegation. If Democrats were to mishandle the impeachment inquiry of Trump, it could deliver a similar jolt.

"Democrats have found fundraising success pretty regularly during the last several years," said Jesse Hunt, spokesman for the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. "In many cases, that's not manifested itself into electoral victories."



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