

OCA FILE

*Rep Skelton*  
*Rep Snowe*  
*Rep Stenholm*

OCA 88-1881  
10 June 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Intelligence

VIA: Director of Congressional Affairs

FROM:

[Redacted]

House Affairs  
Office of Congressional Affairs

**SIGNED**

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SUBJECT: Your Breakfast with Representatives Skelton  
(D., MO), Snowe (R., ME) and Stenholm (D., TX)

1. The Representatives have asked for a breakfast briefing on the current situation in Panama. The briefing will be held on 14 June 1988 at 0730 in the DCI Dining Room. In addition to the three representatives, Tommy Glakas, a personal staffer to Mr. Skelton, will attend.

2. These breakfasts are somewhat of a tradition with Mr. Skelton, especially in connection with his influential membership on the House Armed Services Committee. [Redacted]

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[Redacted] It is possible that he may ask for additional information during this breakfast. Please note that none of our guests serve on the House Intelligence Committee and are not entitled to operational information.

3. It is not unusual for staff member Tommy Glakas to attend these meetings; in addition to his substantive role, Mr. Glakas assists Mr. Skelton, a victim of childhood polio.

4. Mrs. Snowe, our only Republican guest, represents the massive congressional district of northern Maine. She is the ranking member on the International Operations Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Mrs. Snowe has zealously guarded her independent interests with votes on foreign affairs. After a visit to Central America in 1986, she became a supporter of the Contra cause. She has a special interest in the security of US facilities abroad.

5. Mr. Stenholm is a conservative Democrat from the west central Texas prairie. He leads the Conservative Democratic Forum (the Boll Weevil group). Mr. Stenholm serves on the Agriculture and Veteran Affairs Committees and shares the foreign policy views of our other guests.

[Redacted]

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6. While our guests did not make a specific request for information on Panama, we should anticipate their interest in:

- the long term security of the Panama Canal,
- possible threats to US persons and facilities; and
- the likelihood of an "after Noriega" scenario.



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Attachments  
Biographies

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Missouri - 4th District

## 4 Ike Skelton (D)

Of Lexington — Elected 1976

**Born:** Dec. 20, 1931, Lexington, Mo.  
**Education:** Attended Wentworth Military Academy, 1949-51; U. of Edinburgh, 1951-53; U. of Missouri, B.A. 1953, LL.B. 1956.

**Occupation:** Lawyer.

**Family:** Wife, Susan Anding; three children.

**Religion:** Christian Church.

**Political Career:** Chairman, Lafayette County Democratic Committee, 1962-66; Mo. Senate, 1971-77.

**Capitol Office:** 2453 Rayburn Bldg. 20515; 225-2876.



**In Washington:** A quiet, courteous Democrat with a hawkish record on defense issues, Skelton nevertheless has an instinctive skepticism about military leaders themselves, and the structure of Pentagon power. He has spent much of his career on Armed Services working to revamp the Defense Department hierarchy.

Along with other Pentagon critics in both the House and Senate, Skelton began arguing early in the 1980s that U.S. military strength was being hindered by interservice rivalry, and that power in the military establishment needed to be centralized. In the 99th Congress, Skelton offered two Pentagon reform bills. The first aimed at granting more authority to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and less to the individual service branches. The second, offered chiefly to spawn discussion, would have abolished the Joint Chiefs entirely and replaced them with a single chief of staff.

Under the existing system, Skelton complained, "you get a committee — watered-down, consensus advice as opposed to strong military advice. . . . The Good Book informs us quite pointedly that no man can serve two masters."

The effort made him an enemy of John Lehman, the secretary of the Navy, who said it would create "a Prussian-style general staff reporting to a strengthened chairman." Skelton insisted he only wanted to avoid waste when the services compete against each other.

By the end of 1986, the effort had been more successful than even Skelton might have hoped, due largely to the support of Sens. Sam Nunn and Barry Goldwater and of Rep. Bill Nichols of Alabama, perhaps the single most respected member of House Armed Services.

Those senior members were the most visible advocates of Pentagon reform as it cleared Congress in 1986, but Skelton's early contribu-

tions were crucial in bringing the process forward. The bill strengthening the role of the Joint Chiefs' chairman passed the House 406-4.

At the start of the 99th Congress, the Missourian played a role even more striking for him than that of Pentagon critic — he joined what amounted to a liberal rebellion against the Armed Services chairman. Skelton was crucial as Armed Services dissidents persuaded House Democrats to oust Chairman Melvin Price and install Les Aspin of Wisconsin.

In Skelton's case, liberalism had little to do with it. He simply felt that the 80-year-old Price was too feeble to give the committee the independent leadership it needed. He was important to the rebellion because of his credibility among other conservative Democrats who would likely have ignored lobbying by anybody identified with the party's left.

"This was a very, very unpleasant thing to do," Skelton said after Price was defeated. "It was a matter of leadership and no longer just accepting the wish lists of the four branches of the military." Skelton also helped out in 1987 as Aspin fought off a challenge to his chairmanship from Marvin Leath of Texas.

Also in the 99th Congress, Skelton led the effort in the House to restore funding for production of lethal chemical weapons for the first time since 1969. The House had fended off administration requests to resume nerve gas production in 1982, 1983 and 1984. In 1985, Skelton's amendment to include \$124 million for binary weapons production was adopted.

Skelton is a keen supporter of the administration's policy against the leftist government in Nicaragua, and he was the chief Democratic sponsor in 1986 of the GOP-initiated plan to provide aid to the contras fighting the Nicaraguan regime. That proposal was to send \$100 million in military and non-military aid to the

*Ike Skelton, D-Mo.*

## Missouri 4

Sprawling across west-central Missouri, the 4th is an amalgam of rural farm land, scenic tourist resorts and blue-collar suburban turf outside Kansas City.

Much of the area is given over to small farming. The 4th's cattle business is focused toward its southern end; corn, soybeans, pork and dairy production are important districtwide. Pockets of rural poverty — especially in parts of Texas County — stand in contrast to the economic climate enjoyed by comfortable landowners living in Lafayette and Pettis counties at the 4th's northern end.

Tourism has supplemented the district's agriculture in recent years. Winding around Camden County's northern border is the Lake of the Ozarks, a stretch of water that draws boaters, swimmers and skiers from around the state and nurtures a growing restaurant and motel trade.

Roughly 40 miles northeast of the lake lies Jefferson City, all but a sliver of which falls within the 4th's boundaries. Missouri's capital since 1826, it has never developed into a city of much size or sophistication. State government is the largest employer.

## West — Kansas City Suburbs; Jefferson City

The district reaches into the Kansas City area to pick up some 80,000 constituents, many of whom commute to work in Kansas City factories. Other population centers in the 4th include Sedalia, a historic rail town and site of the annual Missouri State Fair, and Warrensburg, a grain and livestock center that is home to Central Missouri State University.

Between those two cities is Whiteman Air Force Base, whose Minuteman missiles make civil defense a paramount concern. In addition, the Richards-Gebaur Air Force Base (near Kansas City) and the Army's Fort Leonard Wood (Pulaski County) are located here.

The 4th contains some solidly Democratic areas of Jackson County east of Kansas City. But votes from this region have not been sufficient to overcome the GOP margins districtwide in recent elections for state and national office.

Population: 546,637. White 524,772 (96%), Black 14,950 (3%), Other 4,383 (1%). Spanish origin 5,503 (1%). 18 and over 390,415 (71%), 65 and over 70,341 (13%). Median age: 30.

rebels. After an intense, emotional debate, the House adopted the amendment 221-209.

Skelton's interest in defense policy began long before he gained a seat on Armed Services. Searching for an issue in building a legislative career when he came to Congress, Skelton quickly found one in civil defense.

There are 150 reasons why civil defense is a good issue for Skelton — 150 Minuteman missiles that fan out from Whiteman Air Force Base through his district. For Skelton, civil defense is constituent service, and he lobbies for a national plan that would include local blast shelters able to withstand nuclear attack or a sophisticated new evacuation system.

"Western Missouri is a potential holocaust," he warned in 1979. "These people didn't ask to have missiles put in their back yards... to be sitting ducks for the benefit of 200 million other Americans."

A childhood polio victim who went on to graduate from a military academy, Skelton added funding to a 1981 military pay bill increasing ROTC scholarships for the Navy and Air Force; the next year, he put through a

requirement that ROTC students complete their education.

**At Home:** A small-town lawyer with a sincere and low-key style, Skelton has had only one tough contest since winning election in 1976. In 1982, redistricting threw him together with another incumbent, freshman Republican Rep. Wendell Bailey.

Map makers gave Skelton a head start in the race. When Bailey's old 8th District was dismembered, the largest single bloc of his constituents — about 178,000 people in seven counties — was added to Skelton's 4th. So Bailey decided that was the place to seek a second term. But for every one of his old constituents in the new district, there were nearly two of Skelton's.

Numerous political action committees and nationally known politicians came into the 4th and billed the Skelton-Bailey match as a test of the popularity of Reaganomics in the rural heartland. The candidates responded with appropriate rhetoric: Skelton called Bailey a "rubber stamp" because he supported nearly all the president's budget and tax proposals.

**Missouri - 4th District**

and Bailey countered that Skelton's mixed record of support for Reaganomics showed him to be a liberal who occasionally waffled to appease conservatives.

Bailey, known as one of Missouri's most effective Republican campaigners, was relying on the gregarious, hard-charging style he developed as a car salesman to help him pull Democrats away from the less-dynamic Skelton.

But in the end, all the discussion over Reaganomics and the differing styles of the two candidates probably were not decisive. Most of the voters chose the man most familiar to them. Of the seven counties that had been part of Bailey's old 8th District, Bailey carried six. But Skelton had represented 13 counties, and managed to carry 12 of them. That brought him in nearly 18,000 votes ahead.

Skelton was a rural state legislator with a narrow political base when he began his 1976 campaign to succeed retiring Democratic Rep. William Randall. Only two counties in his state Senate district were within the borders of the

4th District as it was then drawn: His major rivals for the Democratic nomination, Jack Gant and Don Manford, were state senators from the Kansas City suburbs, which cast about 40 percent of the district vote.

Skelton chose to emphasize that he was the only major candidate from the rural part of the district, and campaigned actively for farm and small-town support. It was a successful strategy. He ran third in the suburbs, but with the rural vote he won with 40 percent overall.

Independence Mayor Richard A. King was the Republican nominee. A protégé of Republican Gov. Christopher S. "Kit" Bond, King tied his general election campaign to the GOP ticket of Bond and senatorial candidate John C. Danforth, hoping to benefit from their coattails. Skelton emphasized his farm background and fiscal conservatism, voting against a pay raise for state legislators as an example.

King was not greatly helped by the top of the GOP ticket; Danforth carried the 4th, but Bond lost it. Skelton won by 24,350 votes.

**Committees**

**Armed Services** (13th of 31 Democrats)  
Military Installations and Facilities; Military Personnel and Compensation; Procurement and Military Nuclear Systems.

**Select Aging** (23rd of 39 Democrats)  
Health and Long-Term Care.

**Small Business** (5th of 27 Democrats)  
Exports, Tourism and Special Problems (chairman).

**Elections**

**1986 General**  
Re Skelton (D) 129,471 (100%)

**1984 General**  
Re Skelton (D) 150,624 (67%)  
Carl D. Russell (R) 74,434 (33%)

**Previous Winning Percentages:** 1982 (55%) 1980 (68%)  
1978 (73%) 1976 (56%)

**District Vote For President**

1984		1980		1976	
D	75,862 (33%)	D	90,030 (40%)	D	97,502 (48%)
R	155,939 (67%)	R	125,179 (56%)	R	103,436 (51%)
		I	6,185 (3%)		

**Campaign Finance**

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs	Expenditures
1986			
Skelton (D)	\$300,019	\$150,050 (50%)	\$183,973

1984

Skelton (D) \$275,213 \$150,770 (55%) \$214,962

**Voting Studies**

Year	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
	S	O	S	O	S	O
1986	48	47	66	26	76	20
1985	44	46	66	25	85	15
1984	54	38	63	27	76	15
1983	45	50	56	37	74	22
1982	46	34	40	41	73	14
1981	58	39	45	45	91	5

S = Support O = Opposition

**Key Votes**

Produce MX missiles (1985)	Y
Cut federal subsidy for water projects (1985)	N
Weaken gun control laws (1986)	Y
Cut back public housing construction (1986)	N
Aid Nicaraguan contras (1986)	Y
Impose textile import limits over Reagan veto (1986)	Y
Block chemical weapons production (1986)	N
Impose South African sanctions over Reagan veto (1986)	?

**Interest Group Ratings**

Year	ADA	ACU	AFL-CIO	CCUS
1986	35	55	86	47
1985	40	50	63	33
1984	35	36	77	33
1983	50	57	82	30
1982	10	65	50	63
1981	25	43	67	37

Maine - 2nd District

## 2 Olympia J. Snowe (R)

Of Auburn — Elected 1978

**Born:** Feb. 21, 1947, Augusta, Maine.

**Education:** U. of Maine, B.A. 1969.

**Occupation:** Concrete company executive; public official.

**Family:** Widowed.

**Religion:** Greek Orthodox.

**Political Career:** Maine House, 1973-77; Maine Senate, 1977-79.

**Capitol Office:** 2464 Rayburn Bldg. 20515; 225-6306.



**In Washington:** Seldom does a member who votes against her party's majority almost as often as she votes with it find a place in the party leadership, but Snowe has shown an ability to retain her independence while showing loyalty when it counts.

When she was denied a seat on the Appropriations Committee in the 98th Congress, many members thought the GOP was punishing Snowe for her liberal voting record. But a few weeks later she was appointed deputy Republican whip. The fact was, Snowe's record had been leavened with support for the Reagan administration on most key economic issues. Even more important, the leadership had to have a tangible moderate presence to attract the votes it needed on the party's left.

Snowe provided that presence. She had been actively involved with the Gypsy Moths, the group of Northern Republicans that tried to win concessions from the party on budget bills to help Northern states. Snowe has been particularly concerned with energy conservation and low-income energy assistance programs. In the 98th Congress she made several successful appeals to administration officials for more funding for the assistance programs.

Still, there is a widespread feeling that Snowe has not taken full advantage of her key position among Republicans in the House. As a youthful and attractive moderate in GOP ranks, she has no difficulty attracting publicity, but she rarely goes out of her way to expand on the attention she seems to draw naturally.

Snowe is now in the middle seniority ranks among Republicans on Foreign Affairs, where the party faces a leadership vacuum at the top, but she has not been one of the more active or visible members of the committee. She tends to function as a swing vote there, sometimes joining the Democrats against the orthodox Republican hard-line position.

After having consistently opposed aid to the Nicaraguan contras battling the leftist Sandinista government, Snowe switched in 1986, voting to send \$100 million in military and non-military aid to the guerrillas. Her vote came a month after visiting Central America on a 13-member House delegation led by Oklahoma Democrat Dave McCurdy. Explaining her reversal in *The Boston Globe*, she said that she came away from the trip convinced that the contras were needed to maintain pressure on the Sandinistas to negotiate a regional settlement. The contra-aid package, she said, "could be, in fact, the last and best hope for democracy to take root in Central America."

Snowe focused much of her Foreign Affairs activity in the 99th Congress on maintaining the U.S. commitment to U.N.-sponsored family planning programs. When Republicans led by Christopher H. Smith of New Jersey sought to eliminate all U.S. contributions to these programs, Snowe cautioned that "the anti-abortion crusade has become an anti-family planning crusade." Snowe proposed denying U.S. funds only for U.N. programs in China, which has been accused of condoning forced abortions and female infanticide. The committee preferred Snowe's plan to Smith's.

Snowe has been co-chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues with Democrat Patricia Schroeder of Colorado, and has been an outspoken proponent of legislation to aid women. "I think it's important for women in Congress to ensure equity for women," she said in 1983. "If we don't, who will?"

In her first House term, Snowe concentrated on changing federal aid formulas to win a bigger portion of the pie for smaller state-like Maine. Her greatest victory came when she amended a \$1 billion anti-recession aid bill in 1980 to place a cap of 12.5 percent on the share

Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine

## Maine 2

America's largest congressional district east of the Mississippi, the 2nd accounts for the vast bulk of Maine's territory. Across its northern reaches stretch the pine forests that have fueled the northwoods economy since the 18th century. Its people are clustered at the southern end, closer to the state's industrial core.

The one portion of the district actually within Maine's industrial belt is Androscoggin County, anchored by the twin cities of Lewiston (population 40,000) and Auburn (population 23,000). Ancient factory towns — Auburn claims to be the birthplace of the shoe industry in Maine — the cities anchor the Democratic vote in the district. Lewiston, the state's second-largest city, is the more Democratic of the two — it went narrowly for Walter F. Mondale in 1984, while Auburn fell to Reagan after voting for Jimmy Carter four years earlier. Both cities, however, tend to abandon their Democratic leanings to vote for Snowe and Republican Sen. William S. Cohen.

The only other city of any size in the 2nd is Bangor (Penobscot County), the third-largest in the state. Bangor's heyday as a ship-making center is over, as are the days when woodsmen from the north would come to squander their paychecks in the neighborhood known as the "Devil's Half-Acre." But its wood-products industry and modest port remain in operation.

Though still Democratic in local elec-

## North — Lewiston; Bangor

tions, Bangor is a more dependable Republican vote at the national level than the two cities farther south. Reagan carried it by 50 votes in 1980 and by about 2,000 in 1984. But when Democrats put up a strong candidate, Bangor will show its Democratic stripes; in 1982, Democratic Sen. George J. Mitchell won 63 percent in Penobscot County.

The rest of the district is rural, much of it covered with the forests that supply trees for huge lumber and paper mills. The land that is left raises apples, blueberries, corn, chickens and Maine's biggest cash crop, potatoes. The potatoes are grown largely in Aroostook County, the huge northern tract that is bigger than four states.

Yankee Republican farmers form a solid majority outside the industrial cities, and their votes keep the district Republican in most elections. Still, the chronic poverty that afflicts the area is gradually bringing some of its residents into the Democratic column as they turn to the government for assistance. Pockets of severe poverty are found in the woodlands in Aroostook County and in coastal Washington County, which lacks the tourist attraction of the more accessible coastal regions. With the large Franco-American population, Democrats often prevail in Washington County.

**Population:** 561,587. White 552,343 (98%), Black 1,492 (0.3%), Other 4,367 (1%), Spanish origin 2,322 (0.4%), 18 and over 397,442 (71%), 65 and over 68,462 (12%). Median age: 30.

of the money any state could get.

Snowe has also worked on behalf of Maine's troubled potato growers and shoe and textile industries. She has protected potato growers from subsidized Canadian exports, and when the International Trade Commission refused to recommend import protection for footwear manufacturers in 1984, Snowe introduced a bill limiting imports to 50 percent of the market. She reintroduced this legislation in the 99th Congress.

**At Home:** No one in Washington is likely to confuse the fashionable Snowe with Margaret Chase Smith, the flinty Republican who represented the same part of Maine a generation ago. But she has all of Smith's ambition and talent for winning votes.

An orphan at age 9, Snowe was raised by

her aunt, a textile mill worker, and her uncle, a barber. Like most working-class Auburn families, they voted Democratic. But after working as an intern for Democratic Gov. Kenneth M. Curtis, Olympia Bouchles met Peter Trafton Snowe, a young Auburn businessman involved in GOP politics. She married him in 1969, adopting his partisan allegiance.

In 1973, four months after Olympia Snowe began working in the district office of Republican U.S. Rep. William S. Cohen, her husband was killed in an automobile accident while returning from Augusta, where he was serving his second term in the state House. A month later she was elected to fill his seat. After winning another term on her own, she was elected to the state Senate in 1976. At that point, Snowe began contemplating a run for the



**Olympia J. Snowe, R-Maine**

U.S. House amid rumors that Cohen planned to leave the seat to try for the Senate.

Republicans at the state and national levels felt she was the ideal replacement for Cohen, and they successfully arranged for her to be the only GOP candidate in 1978. Her Democratic opponent was Secretary of State Markham L. Gartley, who had attracted some attention because of his 1974 campaign against Cohen — in which he won only 29 percent — and because he was the first prisoner of war released by the North Vietnamese.

To broaden her exposure and help soften her "Fifth Avenue" image, Snowe traded her designer clothes for a wool shirt and hiking boots and walked across the district — a tactic Cohen had been using successfully. Opposing the construction of the Dickey-Lincoln Dam and favoring "some kind" of national health insurance, Snowe appealed to many Democrats who were put off by Gartley's conservative stance. She ran far ahead of the GOP ticket in Democratic Androscoggin County, her home territory, and picked up the usual Republican vote in the rest of the district to defeat Gartley handily. Since then, Democrats have found no

effective counter to Snowe's popularity. Her 1982 Democratic opponent tried to tie into national concern over the economy and Social Security, but Snowe stressed her independent voting record — she supported Reagan's position less than half the time during 1982 — and she won re-election by a 2-to-1 margin. Two years later, against Democrat Chipman C. Bull, a former Agriculture Department official who ran on the slogan, "It's Bull," she won more than 75 percent, topping that figure again in 1986 against former Democratic state Sen. Richard Charette.

Snowe gave up a chance to run in 1982 for the Senate seat held by Democrat George J. Mitchell, deferring to the ambitions of her GOP House colleague, David F. Emery, who had served in Congress four years more.

Snowe said her outlook was so similar to Emery's that a primary contest between them would focus mainly on personalities and might divide the party. Looking back on 1982, some Republicans may wish that Snowe had been their Senate nominee. Emery's campaign faltered, and in the end he lost to Mitchell by a wide margin.

**Committees**

- Foreign Affairs** (6th of 17 Republicans)
- International Operations (ranking); Arms Control, International Security and Science.
- Select Aging** (5th of 25 Republicans)
- Human Services (ranking).
- Joint Economic**
- Economic Goals and Intergovernmental Policy; Education and Health; International Economic Policy.

**Elections**

**1986 General**

Olympia J. Snowe (R)	148,770	(77%)
Richard A. Charette (D)	43,614	(23%)

**1984 General**

Olympia J. Snowe (R)	192,166	(76%)
Chipman C. Bull (D)	57,347	(23%)

**Previous Winning Percentages:** 1982 (67%) 1980 (79%) 1978 (51%)

**District Vote For President**

1984		1980		1976	
D	93,807 (37%)	D	106,383 (42%)	D	111,634 (48%)
R	155,692 (62%)	R	116,329 (46%)	R	113,300 (49%)
		I	23,209 (9%)		

**Campaign Finance**

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs	Expenditures
<b>1986</b>			
Snowe (R)	\$216,402	\$79,075 (37%)	\$215,659
Charette (D)†	\$28,780	\$1,000 (4%)	\$23,779

**1984**

Snowe (R)	\$236,623	\$86,150 (36%)	\$236,273
Bull (D)	\$44,895	\$4,964 (11%)	\$44,866

† Totals based on incomplete data.

**Voting Studies**

Year	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
	S	O	S	O	S	O
1986	44	54	53	47	64	36
1985	46	52	56	43	69	31
1984	49	51	47	53	64	36
1983	50	50	46	53	49	49
1982	47	52	53	46	58	40
1981	67	33	68	32	69	31

S = Support O = Opposition

**Key Votes**

- Produce MX missiles (1985) Y
- Cut federal subsidy for water projects (1985) Y
- Weaken gun control laws (1986) Y
- Cut back public housing construction (1986) N
- Aid Nicaraguan contras (1986) Y
- Impose textile import limits over Reagan veto (1986) Y
- Block chemical weapons production (1986) Y
- Impose South African sanctions over Reagan veto (1986) Y

**Interest Group Ratings**

Year	ADA	ACU	AFL-CIO	CCUS
1986	50	48	64	61
1985	35	48	53	55
1984	55	25	38	36
1983	35	43	29	75
1982	50	36	35	57
1981	45	87	40	82

Texas - 17th District

# 17 Charles W. Stenholm (D)

Of Stamford — Elected 1978

**Born:** Oct. 26, 1938, Stamford, Texas.  
**Education:** Attended Tarleton State Jr. College, 1957-59; Texas Tech U., B.S. 1961, M.S. 1962.  
**Occupation:** Cotton grower.  
**Family:** Wife, Cynthia Ann Watson; three children.  
**Religion:** Lutheran.  
**Political Career:** No previous office.  
**Capitol Office:** 1226 Longworth Bldg. 20515; 225-6605.



**In Washington:** Stenholm is best known as the ringleader of the Conservative Democratic Forum, the Boll Weevil group that used its leverage to help pass and shape the 1981 Reagan economic program. But he also commands considerable attention for his work on the Agriculture Committee. He is less visible in that role, but he is widely respected as a man of both principle and substance.

During work on the 1985 farm bill, Stenholm showed a consistent willingness to take on technical tasks that required attention from the committee but offered little or no political benefit. One contribution was his work to forge compromise on "clear title" provisions. That compromise was intended to prevent the automatic transfer of farm debts to those who acquire farm land or make some other agricultural purchase.

But Stenholm's influence on the committee stems as much from ideological positioning as it does from hard work. His reputation for independence leads to solicitations for his support from all sides when an issue is debated. When Stenholm himself is attempting to round up support for an idea, Republicans tend to look favorably upon it with an eye to winning him over on another issue later.

Stenholm has generally advocated lower federal spending on agriculture, and has spoken out in favor of helping farmers cut back on production rather than increasing direct subsidies. But in 1985 he was an adamant opponent of a plan to allow farmers to vote for mandatory production controls as a way of raising prices. On the floor he argued in favor of a successful amendment to kill the plan, saying that it had not been thoroughly examined by the committee, could pose compliance problems and might lead to higher unemployment and foreign production. "We should have spent

more time on it if we wanted farmers to vote on it," he said.

A courteous, soft-spoken cotton grower from West Texas, Stenholm seemed an unlikely choice to be the conservative Democratic leader in the early days of the Reagan administration. He had spent much of his time prior to that listening quietly to arguments about cotton prices at the Agriculture Committee.

When he stepped forward after the 1980 election as spokesman for 40 conservative Democrats demanding more influence within the party, observers wondered whether the pleasant Stenholm was a "front man" for more outspoken members of the group; he insisted he was chosen mainly because he was willing to go public. Stenholm had no record of leadership to draw on, but unlike some of the others, he had no real enemies either. He turned out to have real organizing ability.

His group made its presence felt in the committee assignment process in 1981, as conservative Democrats found their way onto Budget, Ways and Means and other key committees in unusual numbers for the 97th Congress. When the conservatives formed a permanent organization, the Conservative Democratic Forum, Stenholm became coordinator.

In that capacity, he met frequently with officials in the Reagan administration as the president lobbied for his budget proposals in 1981 in the Democratic House. Reagan did not have to worry about Stenholm's vote; the conservative Texan was with him on all major budget issues. As a reward, Stenholm won a \$4 million solar energy plant for his district.

Stenholm also negotiated administration support for the peanut allotment program, a key interest for Southern members. In return, Stenholm helped persuade his fellow CDF

*Charles W. Stenholm, D-Texas*

## Texas 17

The 17th stretches across more than 300 miles of rolling West Texas prairie. Its life revolves around cattle, cotton, oil and gas. It is predominantly Democratic territory, but its conservative tilt has brought Republicans some success. Ronald Reagan carried all but two of the district's counties in 1984. For years there was no steady habit of GOP voting in state and local races — Republican William P. Clements Jr. carried just a handful of the 17th's counties in his 1982 gubernatorial re-election campaign. But four years later Clements practically swept the district.

Despite Clements' 1986 success, which came about because the oil industry's downturn left voters disgruntled with incumbent Democrat Mark White, Stenholm felt no pressure. As usual, he did not even have a Republican opponent; the GOP has offered a congressional candidate in the 17th only twice in the past 22 years.

Republicans do best in Taylor County (Abilene), which stands almost in the middle of the 17th and casts about one-fifth of the vote. Clements easily won Taylor in both 1982 and 1986.

Abilene sprang to life when the railroad came through in 1881 and cattlemen started driving herds there for shipment. Today the city has nearly 100,000 people, but it still touts its cowhand flavor; one of the biggest annual events is the International Cowboy

## West Central — Abilene

### Campfire Cook-Off.

The oil downturn has brought considerable unemployment to Abilene, a plight unaccustomed there because the economy is fairly diversified. The city processes cottonseed, meats and dairy products; it makes aircraft parts, trailers and electronic items. Another dependable provider of jobs is Dyess Air Force Base.

Other than Taylor, only six counties in the 17th have more than 20,000 people. Five of them are at the far eastern edge of the district, either in or near the metropolitan sphere of Fort Worth. Population growth there has been brisk, with Parker and Wise counties leading the way. Republicans are gaining strength in the east — Clements got nearly 60 percent in Parker and Wise in 1986.

Settlement is generally sparse among the oil and gas wells, range land and cotton fields in the western half of the 17th. Several counties have just one or two crossroads that rate a dot on the map. While nearly all these western counties backed Clements in 1986, only a few of them traditionally vote Republican.

**Population:** 526,913. White 470,931 (89%), Black 16,940 (3%), Other 3,194 (1%). Spanish origin 59,274 (11%). 18 and over 380,499 (72%), 65 and over 82,648 (16%). Median age: 32.

members to support the Kemp-Roth tax cut. But the 1981 budget and tax bills were the high-water mark for the CDF. The 1982 elections added 26 seats to the Democratic majority in the House, giving Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. enough loyalist votes virtually to ignore the CDF.

After fading into the background, Stenholm resurfaced in 1985 with a brief quixotic challenge to O'Neill for the House leadership. He knew as well as anyone that he could not win, but he wanted, in the wake of the 1984 presidential landslide, to dramatize discontent in the Democratic Party's right wing. He also hoped to give some Boll Weevils a chance to cast an initial vote against O'Neill before his reelection, insulating them against anti-O'Neill feeling in their Southern districts.

In the end, the challenge never came off.

Pressured by fellow Texan Jim Wright, O'Neill's heir apparent, and by some of his own loyalists, Stenholm abandoned the challenge a few days before the voting. "I don't want to be a martyr," he said. "I have nothing to gain by fighting a losing battle."

Stenholm did meet with O'Neill, and won a few modest concessions. The Speaker agreed to appoint a "Cabinet" to advise him on strategy in the 99th Congress, and to include a conservative Democrat. He promised to place a Boll Weevil on the Budget Committee, and Texan Marvin Leath, one of the original backers of the Stenholm challenge, got the place.

Despite his criticism of the Democratic Party, Stenholm has made it clear that he does not plan to leave it. "I'm a Democrat, period," he said in 1986. "Philosophically, I am what I am, and that's a conservative Democrat. I be

**Texas - 17th District**

lieve that philosophy, tempered with the liberal and moderate viewpoints, is best for the country."

In the 99th Congress Stenholm tried to stress cooperation with his party, rather than collaboration with the GOP. In 1985, in a move that would not have been made four years earlier, Stenholm joined liberal Democrats in opposing administration attempts to boost defense spending. "If we're going to do something about the deficit, this is where we can start," he said, supporting an effort to cut the defense authorization. "If farmers are going to have to tighten their belt, the Pentagon should do the same thing."

**At Home:** Stenholm is a third-generation West Texan, descended from a family of Swedish immigrants who settled near his home town of Stamford. Agriculture has been the focus of his life and the basis of his political career.

He moved into politics in 1966, when the U.S. Agriculture Department made a ruling unfavorable to the cotton-growing plains sec-

tion of Texas. As executive vice president of the Rolling Plains Cotton Growers Association, Stenholm made several trips to Washington to lobby against the ruling, and was partially successful in changing it.

In 1977 President Carter appointed Stenholm to a panel that advises the U.S. Agricultural and Conservation Service. He resigned that position to run for the House in 1978, when veteran Democrat Omar Burleson retired. Stenholm had a much smaller campaign treasury than his major rival for the Democratic nomination, wealthy Abilene lawyer and businessman A. L. "Dusty" Rhodes. But as a farmer and former member of the state Democratic executive committee, Stenholm had extensive agricultural and party ties.

Although Rhodes spent over \$600,000 in an effort to win the nomination, Stenholm ran ahead of the crowded primary field and defeated Rhodes by a 2-to-1 margin in a runoff. An easy winner in the fall, he has not faced a major party foe since.

**Committees**

**Agriculture** (11th of 26 Democrats)  
Livestock, Dairy and Poultry (chairman); Cotton, Rice and Sugar; Department Operations, Research and Foreign Agriculture; Tobacco and Peanuts.

**Veterans' Affairs** (16th of 21 Democrats)  
Hospitals and Health Care.

**Elections**

**1986 General**  
Charles W. Stenholm (D) 97,791 (100%)

**1984 General**  
Charles W. Stenholm (D) 143,012 (100%)

**Previous Winning Percentages:** 1982 (97%) 1980 (100%)  
1978 (68%)

**District Vote For President**

1984		1980		1976	
D	65,480 (32%)	D	79,143 (46%)	D	99,077 (57%)
R	140,748 (68%)	R	87,449 (51%)	R	73,789 (43%)
		I	2,988 (2%)		

**Campaign Finance**

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs		Expenditures
<b>1986</b>				
Stenholm (D)	\$225,411	\$91,840 (41%)		\$217,744
<b>1984</b>				
Stenholm (D)	\$254,615	\$93,727 (37%)		\$207,940

**Voting Studies**

Year	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
	S	O	S	O	S	O
1986	66	34	32	67	88	12
1985	66	31	35	64	96	2
1984	58	37	23	70	85	8
1983	63	35	21	77	92	7
1982	74	26	17	78	93	4
1981	75	24	28	67	91	5

S = Support O = Opposition

**Key Votes**

Produce MX missiles (1985)	Y
Cut federal subsidy for water projects (1985)	Y
Weaken gun control laws (1986)	Y
Cut back public housing construction (1986)	Y
Aid Nicaraguan contras (1986)	Y
Impose textile import limits over Reagan veto (1986)	Y
Block chemical weapons production (1986)	N
Impose South African sanctions over Reagan veto (1986)	N

**Interest Group Ratings**

Year	ADA	ACU	AFL-CIO	CCUS
1986	5	81	21	78
1985	20	90	24	86
1984	10	79	15	56
1983	15	91	13	85
1982	5	91	5	86
1981	0	93	20	84