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Texas - 2nd District

2 Charles Wilson (D)

Of Lufkin — Elected 1972

Born: June 1, 1933, Trinity, Texas.

Education: Attended Sam Houston State U., 1950-51; U.S. Naval Academy, B.S. 1956.

Military Career: Navy, 1956-60.

Occupation: Lumberyard manager.

Family: Divorced.

Religion: Methodist.

Political Career: Texas House, 1961-67; Texas Senate, 1967-73.

Capitol Office: 2265 Rayburn Bldg. 20515; 225-2401.



In Washington: Wilson's reputation for high living long has obscured his image on the inside as one of the better lobbyists and vote traders in the House.

Now approaching his mid-50s, Wilson still struts as he moves his lanky frame across the House floor, with a quick, wide grin and a handshake ready for whoever is handy. But there is usually a serious purpose lurking behind his roguish friendliness.

One of his purposes in the 99th Congress was to gain a seat on Intelligence, where he could pursue his favorite foreign policy cause of the 1980s — the rebels fighting against Soviet occupation in Afghanistan. Earlier, Wilson had exacted a promise from fellow-Texas Jim Wright to place him at the top of his list for Intelligence when Wright became Speaker.

Wright agreed to honor the commitment. But when the time came for making assignments, the new Speaker found some liberal Democratic colleagues very upset; they felt Wilson's hard-line anti-communism would lead him to vote with the panel's Republicans and undermine the Democratic majority.

The deal, however, stood. Wright added another Democrat to join Wilson, diluting his potential influence as a swing vote.

However he chooses to vote on intelligence matters, Wilson is unlikely to tone down his rhetoric, which has always tended to be belligerent. During the 99th Congress, he told a closed meeting of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee that he wanted to help the Afghanistan rebels because "it's the only place in the world where we are killing Russians."

The Afghan guerrillas certainly have benefited from having Wilson as a member of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, the Appropriations panel that doles out most foreign aid. "I don't know anybody who wants to be against

backing religious freedom fighters against the atheistic horde from the north," he has said. Wilson has visited Afghanistan several times when his safety could not be guaranteed.

Wilson's Afghan crusade led to a somewhat embarrassing incident in 1984, when he amended a supplemental spending bill to include \$40 million worth of supposedly secret aid to the rebels. The parliamentary procedure he used to offer the amendment made the item readily identifiable, and the news leaked out. Wilson later said "there were enough inaccuracies" in the press to protect the program's secrecy. But he added, "I learned a lesson."

Wilson also pushes hard for aid to Pakistan, Afghanistan's next-door neighbor. Helping Afghan rebels will do no good, he says, unless there is "confidence and stability in Pakistan." In 1985, Wilson won \$575 million for Pakistan after reaching an agreement with Foreign Operations Chairman David R. Obey of Wisconsin, who had originally proposed reducing Reagan's request. Wilson, frustrated by Obey's opposition, had considered trying to organize a coalition to vote against Obey, but the two men reached a compromise.

Wilson is a strong supporter of U.S. military aid to numerous countries and movements he sees as crucial to the global struggle against communism. He lobbies for aid to Egypt and Turkey, and to the Cambodians who are fighting Vietnamese forces occupying their country.

Wilson was a militant defender of Somoza's regime in Nicaragua. As a member of Foreign Affairs early in the Carter administration, he sometimes made his support for overall foreign aid programs contingent upon inclusion of money for Nicaragua. When the administration proved unfriendly to Somoza, Wilson became increasingly unfriendly to its requests. Once leftist guerrillas seized power in Nicara-

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Texas 2

Traditionally poor, isolated and dependent on timber, the east Texas, piney woods 2nd took on a new look in the 1970s with the growth of the oil industry. But oil has proven to be a fickle economic generator. The downturn in oil prices has brought hard times to many here for much of this decade.

Lufkin, the district's largest city, once boasted some 275 sawmills, testimony to the importance of the local lumber industry. The city still relies on a large paper mill for many of its jobs, but steel mills and factories making oil and gas drilling equipment now compete in the local economy.

Orange, located to the southwest, used to draw its revenues from timber, cattle and rice. Today, it is the domain of petrochemical facilities that have been forced to lay off workers. Goodyear, Gulf Oil and Du Pont all maintain plants along Orange's major industrial corridor, known locally as "Chemical Row." A major shipyard in Orange closed recently, helping push unemployment in the city toward 20 percent. Orange has the 2nd's only significant concentration of union members.

Independent oil outfits that have sprung up throughout the district in recent years have altered the 2nd's landscape. But the district has not entirely lost its Deep

East — Lufkin; Orange

South woodland feel. Big chunks of the area are designated as national forest land, along the fringes, there are places resembling Louisiana's bayous.

Like all of east Texas, the 2nd is conservative territory with strong ties to Dixie. The 2nd's Deep South character was evident in 1968, when it was the only district in the state to back George C. Wallace. Its character is further evident in the slow progress blacks have made in local elections. Although they comprise 15 percent of the district's population, blacks are seldom a significant political force.

Bolstered by a residual populist streak in the rural counties, Jimmy Carter received a favorable reception in the 2nd in 1976; he took nearly 60 percent of the district vote. Even in 1980, when Carter lost the state by a decisive margin, he carried the 2nd.

By 1984, however, the national Democratic Party's liberal tilt had alienated even some of the most staunchly Democratic voters. Of the 16 counties wholly or partially in the 2nd, only two voted for Democratic presidential nominee Walter F. Mondale.

Population: 526,772 White 433,363 (82%) Black 81,820 (16%) Other 2,862 (1%) Spanish origin 16,906 (3%) 18 and over: 372,792 (71%), 65 and over 62,165 (12%) Median age 30

gua. Wilson militantly opposed U.S. aid.

Wilson is a fairly safe vote for Reagan's military aid requests for Central America, though he sometimes can throw the administration a curve. In 1984, the subcommittee declined to spend more than \$17 million to run a military training center in Honduras. The panel accepted a Wilson motion that Honduras first settle a claim by an American citizen whose land was expropriated for the center.

A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, Wilson has been a foreign policy hawk his entire congressional career, and spent several years on Appropriations working his way up to a place on the Defense Subcommittee. He made it there in 1980. During the Carter years, he advocated developing the neutron bomb and the B-1 bomber, both of which President Carter opposed. Wilson has supported the MX missile, and in 1985 gave a blunt warning to liberal Democrats who oppose such weapons.

"If the perception persists in this country

that the Democratic Party is the party of isolation and . . . weakness on defense," he said, "we are flat through in the South and West, and we can forget about winning presidential elections."

Wilson has proved to be a good friend of Texas defense interests and contractors; he stays in close touch with them by telephone when the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee marks up its annual funding bills. In 1981 Wilson lobbied strongly for funding for the A7-K attack plane, which has relatively few friends at the Pentagon but was manufactured by the Vought Corp. of Dallas. He led an Appropriations Committee attempt to block the Pentagon from moving Army helicopter maintenance facilities from Texas to Pennsylvania.

To make it onto Appropriations at all, Wilson had to use some of his best Texas lobbying skill. He made his move in 1977, after two House terms, upsetting a more senior colleague endorsed by the Texas Democratic dele-

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gation. Once he joined Appropriations, he paid his dues by spending a term as chairman of the District of Columbia Subcommittee, where he argued frequently with city officials.

"I think this city is a basket case," he said at one point. "In Washington, it takes 143 people to do what it takes 100 people to do any place else, and I aim to do something about it." His views brought him into frequent conflict with District Mayor Marion S. Barry Jr., as Wilson refused to support as large a federal subsidy for the financially plagued city as Barry wanted.

Wilson made his earliest mark in the House, however, as an ally of his state's independent oil producers. Some members who initially thought of him only as "good-time Charlie" were surprised one day early in his second term when they listened to him leading the defense of the percentage depletion allowance for independent oil producers. Instead of the Wilson they were used to, wisecracking his way down the aisle, they watched him in the well of the House presenting charts, graphs, statistics and a flood of effective rhetoric.

Without his amendment preserving depletion for the independents, Wilson said, "the petroleum industry of the United States will be controlled by the eight men who head the eight major oil companies in the United States."

It did not quite work. The House rejected his amendment, 216-197. But depletion was preserved for independents in the bill that emerged from conference, which they still have.

That depletion debate in 1975 was a decisive moment in Wilson's career. Since then, he has become known as the most persistent House defender of independent oil interests. As public clamor against the major oil companies has grown in recent years, the independents have surpassed the majors as a lobbying force in Congress and as a source of money for conservative congressional campaigns. To a certain extent, the industry's greater clout has increased Wilson's influence. In 1979 Wilson used some of his vote-trading skill to work a favorable deal for independents on windfall profits tax legislation.

In recent years, Wilson's support for oil has broadened into a defense of Texas and other Sun Belt states against the claims of the Frost Belt region that it is discriminated against in federal spending formulas. In 1981 he became the head of a new "Sun Belt Caucus" of 90 members, aimed at resisting Frost Belt arguments with counterstatistics. "What's wrong with those states," he said of the Frost Belt in 1982, "is the weather, the business climate and the tax policy. They can't pass bills

to make it warmer up there."

Wilson has successfully managed to combine his active legislative career with the pursuit of pleasure in Washington. He has never seemed embarrassed about being labeled a playboy or a smiling Texas rogue; he seems to enjoy it. For a time he dated a woman whose picture had appeared on the cover of *Playboy*.

In recent years, health problems have slowed down the pace of Wilson's social life somewhat, but he shows no signs of having abandoned his conviction that Washington is a place for play as well as work. "I love what I'm doing," he once told a reporter. "Why should I go around looking like a constipated hound dog? I'm having the time of my life."

At Home: Wilson found himself in political trouble in 1984 for the first time in his 12-year House career. The previous year he had been the target of a federal grand jury investigation into whether he had used cocaine, and while the charges were eventually dropped for lack of evidence, the controversy attracted a wealth of unwanted attention to Wilson, and encouraged primary challenges from four contenders who would never have taken on the popular incumbent in an ordinary year. Wilson's problems were compounded in August of 1983, when he was ticketed for a hit-and-run auto accident on a Washington, D.C., bridge.

The candidate best-positioned to take advantage of Wilson's troubles was Nacogdoches bank executive Jerry K. Johnson, who was making his first bid for public office after long tenure as an activist in the local GOP. A farm-bred Baptist church deacon and Sunday school teacher, Johnson projected a clean-cut image that contrasted with Wilson's flamboyance.

Like all of Wilson's primary opponents, Johnson avoided overt mention of the drug issue. But he was not shy about painting the incumbent as a man whose taste for glamour had superseded his interest in the concerns of the district. "Unlike the incumbent, I won't go into the Washington real estate and nightclub business and forget where I come from or who I'm working for," a Johnson release read.

But Wilson was well-prepared for the fight. Tapping his close ties to defense contractors and the independent oil industry, he amassed a substantial treasury, using some of his money to run TV ads that showed him talking with laid-off blue-collar workers and trumpeting his support for domestic content legislation. He also deployed phone banks for the first time in his electoral history.

Wilson sought to defuse controversy over the Justice investigation by attacking the department, vehemently denying allegations

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against him and accusing the Justice Department of prolonging its investigation solely because he was a member of Congress. He told constituents that he was "set up" by an embittered former business partner who had embezzled money from him.

If the investigation hurt Wilson among the district's Democrats, the damage was limited on primary day. Johnson, the only challenger to clear 10 percent, carried his home base of Nacogdoches County. But the rest of the district stayed by Wilson's side. Squelching speculation that he might be forced into a runoff, Wilson captured 55 percent of the primary districtwide, and won handily in November.

By 1986, Wilson was back on track. He went unopposed in the primary, and clinched re-election by a comfortable margin.

Wilson's outgoing, likable nature has always helped him at home, and his loyalty to the independent oil industry has bought him some freedom on other issues. Those factors have

enabled him to spend most of his political career somewhere to the left of his constituents.

In 1960, when most Texas Democrats were backing Lyndon B. Johnson for the Democratic presidential nomination, Wilson was for John F. Kennedy. In the Texas Legislature, Wilson crusaded against high utility rates, fought for Medicaid and tax exemptions for the elderly, and sponsored bills to remove a ceiling on welfare spending. He was commonly identified as "the liberal from Lufkin," advancing his career with the help of Arthur Temple, a maverick lumber millionaire who treated him as a protégé and helped with campaign financing.

During his successful congressional race in 1972, Wilson softened his liberalism, somewhat opposing school busing and gun control. But he still drew the support of blacks and labor and easily defeated the wife of Rep. John Dowdy in the Democratic primary. Dowdy's husband had been sentenced to prison earlier in the year for bribery, conspiracy and perjury.

Committees

Appropriations (15th of 35 Democrats)
Defense, Foreign Operations, Military Construction.

Select Intelligence (10th of 11 Democrats)
Legislation, Oversight and Evaluation

Elections

1986 General

Charles Wilson (D)	78,529	(66%)
Julian Gordon (R)	35,986	(30%)

1984 General

Charles Wilson (D)	113,225	(59%)
Louis Dugas Jr. (R)	77,842	(41%)

Previous Winning Percentages: 1982 (94%) 1980 (69%)
1978 (70%) 1976 (95%) 1974 (100%) 1972 (74%)

District Vote For President

1984		1980		1978	
D	81,989 (42%)	D	86,056 (50%)	D	85,850 (59%)
R	114,915 (58%)	R	81,093 (48%)	R	59,163 (41%)

Campaign Finance

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs		Expenditures
1986				
Wilson (D)	\$367,600	\$265,206 (72%)		\$339,873
Gordon (R)	\$59,138	0		\$47,660
1984				
Wilson (D)	\$607,575	\$285,156 (47%)		\$597,330
Dugas (R)	\$27,764	\$700 (3%)		\$25,966

Voting Studies

Year	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
	S	O	S	O	S	O
1986	38	50	61	18	72	12
1985	40	43	63	15	60	22
1984	36	32	44	21	59	15
1983	45	37	53	28	66	13
1982	47	30	51	30	63	15
1981	57	54	54	36	68	24

S = Support O = Opposition

Key Votes

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

Interest Group Ratings

Year	ADA	ACU	AFL-CIO	CCUS
1986	35	50	92	27
1985	40	55	75	44
1984	35	26	73	38
1983	45	48	75	50
1982	25	47	47	56
1981	20	50	50	58

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