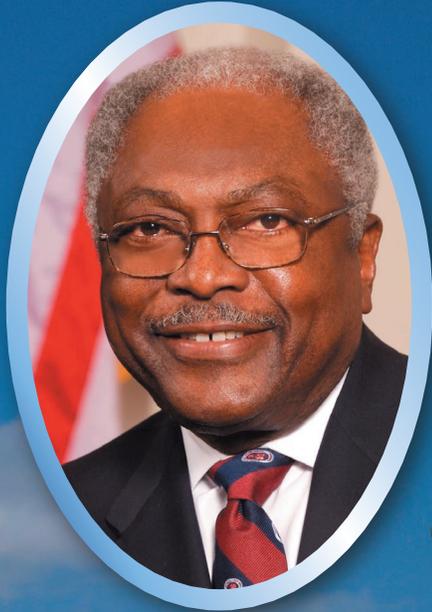


February/March 2012

living ROOTS

A CELEBRATION OF SOUTHERN SOUL



Representative Jim Clyburn
6th District



Representative Tim Scott
1st District

A Tale of Two Congressmen

U.S. Reps. Jim Clyburn and Tim Scott

McKinley Washington
*Serving the Sea Islands for
Four Decades*

Phylcia Rashad
on the Strength of Family



a Tale *of two* Congressmen

REPRESENTATIVES  JIM CLYBURN & TIM SCOTT

THEY ARE AS different as a slow Southern drawl and a nasal New York twang, as diverse as a sunny summer day in Summerville and a mid-winter dusting of snow in Spartanburg and as dissimilar as homemade Charleston grits and the kind you mix with water and heat up in the microwave.

They are not, however, as different as black and white.

James Enos Clyburn and Timothy Eugene Scott have little in common

except the color of their skin – they both are African-Americans – and the fact that they serve the people of South Carolina as members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Jim Clyburn is 71 years old, and, though he was a teacher early in his professional career, he has been involved in government and politics in one way or another for the past four decades. He has represented South Carolina’s 6th District since 1993 and as assistant Democratic leader is currently the third-ranking Democrat in the House. He is a staunch supporter of President Barack Obama,

insisting that the nation’s chief executive deserves another four years in office and the opportunity to continue the policies he has established since moving into the White House in 2009.

“He has demonstrated a capacity to lead this country,” Clyburn explained. “When he took over we were hemorrhaging 700,000 jobs a month. We lost 2.1 million jobs in the three months prior to him being sworn in. The first thing he had to do was stop the hemorrhaging. It took time to put the tourniquet on. He has done a tremendous job, and his policies will



make the economy well again.”

Tim Scott, 46, is one of 60 or so conservatives swept into office by the “Tea Party Revolution,” when the Republicans wrested control of the U.S. House in 2010. He and U.S. Rep. Allen West of Florida are the first black members of their party to serve in Congress since J.C. Watts of Oklahoma retired in 2002. Scott, who represents South Carolina’s 1st District, sat on the Charleston County Council for 13 years and was a state representative for two years before besting eight other Republicans and then Democrat Ben Frasier in the general election. Among those he vanquished in the primary were members of two of South Carolina’s most prominent political

families: Paul Thurmond and Carroll Campbell. Scott gives the president a failing grade for his first term in office. In his efforts to see that his party regains control of the executive branch of government, he has held town hall meetings in his district for most of the Republican candidates for president.

“Our unemployment situation is a result of a model that simply doesn’t work in the 21st century,” Scott commented. “We are being driven by a larger, more centralized government. In a global economy, that fails. Unfortunately, that has been the approach of this administration.”

PUTTING PEOPLE BACK TO WORK

Scott and Clyburn obviously have a difference of opinion on the president’s performance. They do agree, however, that the most important issue during the 2012 election cycle is putting people back to work. They don’t agree on how to accomplish that monumental feat. According to Scott, a three-pronged approach would cut the nation’s unemployment rate in half: reducing regulations on businesses, allowing businesses to return profits earned outside the borders of the United States without double taxation, and lowering the corporate tax rate. Scott said this plan would help provide jobs for 7 million Americans.

Clyburn prefers to depend on earmarks – funds included in legislation for a specific purpose, usually for a project in a specific legislator’s state or district – to kick-start the economy into high gear. Scott and many other Republicans see eliminating earmarks as a way to make a dent in the ever-growing national debt.

In Clyburn’s opinion, that attitude is stifling South Carolina’s economy because an earmark is the only way to obtain funding to deepen the Charleston

Harbor shipping channel, making Charleston more competitive with other ports, including nearby Savannah.

“To have that port jeopardized is a real serious problem. I got the money through the House twice to deepen the harbor. Both times it failed in the Senate,” Clyburn explained. “I don’t understand people who hold onto a philosophy that is detrimental to the state. The same non-earmark philosophy was held by senators from Georgia, but when it came to the Savannah port, they decided they were going to find the \$600 million to deepen the harbor.”

According to Clyburn, without an earmark, federal funding for work on Charleston’s shipping lanes won’t be available until 2024. He blamed conservative U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint of South Carolina, a Republican, for the demise of his earmark for the harbor.

“We need to stop making the defeat of the president the number one priority,” Clyburn said. “You’ve got people in the Republican Party whose priority is to make sure Obama is a one-term president. My number one priority is getting people back to work. You have people who believe that in order to drown the captain you have to sink the whole ship.”

THE PARTY OF LINCOLN

Clyburn, who served on the staff of Gov. John West and as South Carolina’s human affairs commissioner before winning his current congressional seat, actually started life as a Republican, though he sees little similarity between the party of Lincoln and today’s party of Romney, Gingrich, Santorum and Palin. He remembers wearing “I Like Ike” buttons in 1952 and 1956, supporting the candidacy of Republican President Dwight David Eisenhower, and working to elect Richard Nixon as president on the

South Carolina State campus during the 1960 campaign. He also was deeply involved in the civil rights movement, organizing sit-ins and helping to establish the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee at a meeting at Shaw University in Raleigh.

Following a civil rights demonstration at a lunch counter in Orangeburg in March 1960, he and around 300 of his colleagues were carted off to jail, which turned out to be a fortunate stroke of luck for the future congressman. He explained that the students who were not arrested – because there was no place to put all of them – returned to the South Carolina State campus, raided the dining hall and brought dinner to their incarcerated friends. His future wife, Emily, was among them.

“She came up to me with a hamburger in her hand, broke it in two, and we each ate half,” he said.

They now have three daughters and three grandchildren.

During this tumultuous time in his life, Clyburn began to see what he considered to be the dark side of the Republican Party. He said Nixon’s running mate, Henry Cabot Lodge, made some positive comments about the progress South Carolina State students were making and what the Nixon administration would do for African-Americans. Instead of agreeing with his colleague, Nixon repudiated his statements and “took him to the woodshed,” according to Clyburn.

Later that year, when the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was jailed in Albany, Ga., the civil rights leader’s wife got an empathetic call from Nixon’s opponent, John F. Kennedy. Clyburn tried unsuccessfully to get Nixon to do the same.

“There was no response,” Clyburn

remembered. “The plea went unaddressed. That was when I began to



6th District Rep. Jim Clyburn

see a Republican strategy that was, if not anti-student and anti-black, certainly struck me as being so. That was my



1st District Rep. Tim Scott

break with the Republican Party.”

He added that in 1964, when the Republican candidate for president, Barry Goldwater, opposed the Civil Rights Act, the majority of African-

Americans turned to the Democratic Party. According to Clyburn, they have stuck with the Democrats because even in the 21st century, many Republican policies are seen as anti-black.

“There are exceptions, but, for the most part, Republicans are against Social Security, Medicare and universal access to health care. Most blacks believe that health care is a fundamental right. It’s no accident that African-Americans die younger and get less health care. If the president didn’t do anything else, putting health care on the agenda was monumental, and every black person knows that.”

BLIND LOYALTY

Scott, on the other hand, is not convinced that African-Americans should blindly follow the Democratic Party. He grew up in a broken home in North Charleston and made such poor grades in his freshman year at Stall High School that he had to take summer school classes to advance to the 10th grade. He survived and eventually thrived through the influence of his mother, football and a mentor who taught him about free enterprise system.

“I have a very strong mom, and she kept me pumped with optimism,” Scott said. “She taught me that if you shoot for the moon and miss, you’ll still end up among the stars.”

He added that the lessons he learned growing up about individual responsibility and “being right is far more important than being popular” took him in the direction of the Republican Party.

“There’s no doubt that those lessons led me to be a conservative,” Scott explained. “My mentor taught me that you have to have a plan. You can think

your way out of poverty. That was revolutionary for me.”

He first encountered his mentor when he was in high school, working at a movie theater. The man, who owned a fast food restaurant, taught him about life and succeeding in the business world, lessons that proved important later when Scott owned an insurance agency.

“It turned into a mentoring situation for me, and it was quite impactful. The lessons stuck with me and led me in many ways to become a Republican,” Scott said.

While Clyburn said he knew from the age of 8 that he would someday run for Congress, Scott set his sights at an early age on playing football for a living. Though his dream of wearing a Dallas Cowboys uniform never materialized, he did play a few years at Stall and at Presbyterian College.

“Football taught me leadership skills and to be a team player,” he commented. “And I saw it as a way out of poverty. At the end of the day, it’s a great recreational activity and one of my best experiences in life.”

Unlike Clyburn, Scott doesn’t necessarily see African-Americans as a natural fit for the Democratic Party. He said the Republican Party aligns better with the basic value system of the black community, but he added that he

hopes African-Americans will vote for candidates rather than for candidates who belong to specific political parties.

“Ultimately, my hope is that the African-American community would embrace not political parties but philosophies that will lead us where we are destined to go as a community and as a nation,” he said. “Far more important than parties is voting for the right candidate. Voting straight down party lines is not effective.”

“We continue to take our message to the African-American community,” he added. “There are more African-Americans running as Republicans now

rules in the house.

“We had to recite Bible verses every morning, and before you put a fork-full in your mouth, you had to do a Bible verse, and you couldn’t say the same one twice. And every evening we had to share with him or my mother a current event. We had to share something we learned from the newspaper that day.”

His father’s rules about current events eventually drew Clyburn into the political arena. In 1948, he was captivated by Harry Truman, the ultimate political underdog, and he still reads books written by the former president, as well as the Bible.

“I was carried away with Harry Truman. He was running against Thomas Dewey, a member of a wealthy upstate New York family. And this little known, handicapped person from Missouri got elected when nobody thought he could,”



than since Reconstruction. We hope the voters will start investigating the best candidates and vote accordingly. We need to eliminate the whole notion of being judged superficially. I live by that creed. People should be judged by what they do.”

DEEPLY RELIGIOUS MEN

Both Scott and Clyburn are deeply religious men. Clyburn related that his father, a minister, enforced two main

Clyburn remarked. “When I’m wrestling with things, I ask myself, ‘What would Jesus do, or what would Harry do?’”

Scott agrees that religion and moral values should play a role in American politics.

“A better America is an America with a moral foundation that is as solid as a rock,” he commented. “In this country, there is a strong conviction that there is a God who overlooks us and works on our behalf.”