

John Conyers, Jr.



A Legislative Record of Jobs, Justice and Peace

A Summary of Legislative Achievements

Executive Summary

John Conyers, Jr. is the second most senior Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. He was the first African American Chair of the House Committee on the Judiciary and the Committee on Government Operations. As the below analysis makes clear, scores of Rep. Conyers' bills and initiatives have been enacted into law (including the Martin Luther King Holiday Act, the Voting Rights Act, the Violence Against Women Act, and the Hate Crimes Prevention Act) and he has taken a lead role in enacting many additional laws. He has paid specific attention to the Detroit area, being responsible for delivering more than \$100 million in appropriations since 2007 and \$178 million in grants since 1993, and securing an advance payment of \$28 million in federal funds from the Department of Health and Human Services in 2003 to prevent the closing of the Detroit Medical Center. In the current Congress, Rep. Conyers has introduced more than 40 bills and amendments, 5 of which have thus far been enacted into law, and continued his decades-long fight against unwise and extreme legislation.

These following materials provide a summary of Rep. Conyers' legislative and other achievements. The Executive Summary includes a brief biography and overview of Rep. Conyers' legislative achievements. The remaining pages provide a more detailed 106-page review, beginning with the current 112th Congress and continuing back to the 89th Congress in 1965 when Rep. Conyers was first sworn in as a Congressman.

Brief Biography

John Conyers, Jr. was born on May 16, 1929 in Detroit, Michigan. After graduating from Northwestern High School in Detroit, Rep. Conyers served in the Michigan National Guard from 1948 to 1950, the U.S. Army from 1950 to 1954, the U.S. Army Reserves from 1954 to 1957, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers during the Korean War. Following his military service, Rep. Conyers earned his Bachelor of Arts and law degrees (1958) from Wayne State University. After passing the Michigan bar exam Rep. Conyers co-founded the law firm of Conyers, Bell, and Townsend. He then went on to serve as Rep. John D. Dingell's Legislative Assistant from 1958 to 1961, before being appointed as a state worker's compensation referee by Michigan governor John Swainson in 1961. Rep. Conyers served as the Vice President of the Detroit Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild, was an Executive Board Member of the NAACP, and an Executive Board Member of the American Civil Liberties Union. He was also appointed by President Kennedy in 1963 to serve as a charter member of the National Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

In 1964, following the Supreme Court's landmark decision in Baker v. Carr, establishing the principle of "one person one vote," the Michigan legislature underwent a state-wide redistricting. Under the redrawn map, Rep. Conyers ran for Congress representing the north side of Detroit and won his first bid for office by 44 votes in the primary. Rep. Conyers was the only African American candidate ever to be endorsed by Martin Luther King Jr. and he employed Rosa Parks in his congressional staff from 1965 to 1988.

Rep. Conyers is a founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus. As the Dean of the CBC and the senior Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Conyers has hosted annual CBC Brain Trusts to discuss topics such as jobs, health care, law enforcement accountability, criminal justice, racial profiling, hate crimes, reparations, gun safety, prison rehabilitation, police brutality, and national security.

Brief Summary of Legislative Achievements

I. Major Legislative Achievements

- Violence Against Women Act (1994, 2000, 2005, 2012) – Rep. Conyers was one of the lead sponsors of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994 and co-authored the VAWA reauthorization in 2000. In 2005 Rep. Conyers presented the Domestic Violence Connections Campaign Act to Congress, which ultimately served as a basis for the 2006 reauthorization of VAWA. Currently, he is leading the effort to ensure that the 2012 reauthorization does not rollback existing protections for immigrant women and that it extends much-needed protections to Native Americans and members of the LGBT community (P.L. 103-322, P.L. 106-386, P.L. 109-162, H.R. 4271/H.R. 4970).
- Amendment to The Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010 – The amendment would prevent authorized funds from being used to establish on the ground in Libya the presence of members of the Armed Forces or private security contractors. This amendment was offered as the United States was beginning to consider engaging with Libya as tensions were escalating between revolutionary protestors and the Qaddafi regime. (Agreed to by a recorded vote in the House of 416-5; P.L. 112-81).
- National Guard and Reservist Debt Relief Extension Act – Extended for four years an exemption from bankruptcy means-testing for members of the National Guard and military reserves (P.L. 112-64).
- Fair Sentencing Act (2010) – As Judiciary Committee Chairman, Rep. Conyers cosponsored and managed this legislation reducing the sentencing disparity between crack and powder cocaine from 100 to 1 to 18 to 1 (P.L. 111-20).
- Helping Families Save Their Homes Act (2010) – As originally introduced and passed by the House, Rep. Conyers' bill would have allowed homeowners to reduce the amount of the principal balance of their mortgages to the value of their homes in bankruptcy. While this provision was stripped out by the Senate, the remainder of the bill, which among other things expanded bankruptcy eligibility by excluding home mortgage debt from the maximum allowable debt limitations, was passed into law in May, 2009 (P.L. 111-22).
- James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act (2010) – As Judiciary Chairman, Rep. Conyers cosponsored and managed this bill that established a health care fund and compensation claims program for first responders and

others suffering serious health problems caused by exposure to toxic materials after the September 11 attacks (P.L. 111-347).

- Hate Crimes Prevention Act (2009) – Rep. Conyers’ legislation extended the coverage of the hate crimes law beyond federally protected activities as well as extended its protection to crimes of violence based on gender, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity (P.L. 111-84).
- Pigford Claims Remedy Act (2007, 2009) – Rep. Conyers was the leading Member responsible for the enactment of legislation ensuring that black farmers could file legal claims pertaining to harms resulting from discrimination in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s farm loan programs. Rep. Conyers legislation extended the statute of limitation period for the claims process to ensure that all farmers who were the victims of discrimination by USDA would have their claims adjudicated if flaws in the notice process were revealed in the claims process (2007). Rep. Conyers also worked with other Members and the Obama Administration to insure that monies were appropriated to fund adequately the claims adjudication process and settlement fund (2009) (P.L. 110-34).
- Second Chance Act (2008) – As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Rep. Conyers managed this legislation, which expanded prison reentry services, developed alternatives to incarceration, and expanded substance abuse programs (P.L. 110-199).
- Honest Leadership and Open Government Act (2008) – Rep. Conyers’ comprehensive ethics reform was enacted in the wake of the Jack Abramoff scandal (P.L. 110-81).
- Emmett Till Unsolved Civil Rights Crime Act (2008) – Rep. Conyers’ legislation established an unsolved crimes section in the Civil Rights Division to investigate and prosecute decades old cases (P.L. 110-344).
- Court Security Improvement Act (2008) – In the wake of an outbreak of court shootings around the country, Rep. Conyers’ legislation enhanced a variety of court security measures (P.L. 110-177).
- Voting Rights Act (2006, 1982, 1975, 1970, 1965) – Rep. Conyers cosponsored the original Voting Rights Act, which passed in 1965, and has cosponsored and/or managed extensions enacted in 1970, 1975, 1982, and 2006 (P.L. 109-246).

- Help America Vote Act (2002) – In the wake of the controversy over the 2000 election, Rep. Conyers introduced legislation to help modernize the voting system, which ultimately helped serve as a basis for passage of this law (P.L. 107-252).
- Church Arson Prevention Act (1996) – Rep. Conyers was the lead Democrat in enacting legislation to help combat a wave of attacks against African-American churches during the 1990's (P.L. 104-155).
- Pattern and Practice Violations (1994) – Rep. Conyers' amendment authorizing the Department of Justice to take action against law enforcement agencies that engage in unconstitutional and discriminatory treatment became law as part of the 1994 Omnibus Crime bill. The provision has been used repeatedly since that time, most recently with the Department of Justice's overhaul of the New Orleans Police Department (P.L. 103-322).
- National Voter Registration Act, the "Motor Voter Act" (1993) – One of the earliest laws passed under President Clinton, Rep. Conyers managed legislation facilitating voter registration by requiring state governments to allow registration at motor vehicle bureaus and social service agencies (P.L. 103-31).
- Hate Crimes Statistics Act (1990) – Rep. Conyers' legislation established a system to keep track of hate crimes, including those based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity. This helped pave the way for the eventual passage of a stronger hate crimes law (P.L. 101-275).
- Racial Justice Act / Innocence Protection Act (1988) – Rep. Conyers first introduced legislation in 1988 permitting the use of statistical evidence to challenge discriminatory imposition of death penalty, and it passed the House in 1994. Although this provision has not passed into law, in the 108th Congress Rep. Conyers managed passage of the Innocence Protection Act, providing increased funding for defense counsel in death penalty cases and increased use of DNA evidence to exonerate applicable defendants (P.L. 108-405).
- Alcoholic Beverage Labeling Act (1988) – Rep. Conyers' legislation required government warning labels concerning alcohol and its effects (P.L. 100-690).
- Martin Luther King Holiday Act (1986) – Three days after Rev. King's assassination in 1968, Rep. Conyers was the first Member to introduce legislation commemorating King's life through a federal holiday. After an 18-

year long campaign led by Rep. Conyers, President Reagan signed legislation into law (P.L. 98-399).

- Sexual Abuse Act (1986) – Rep. Conyers’ legislation increased a range of penalties for sexual abuse crimes. He has subsequently introduced, supported, and managed numerous laws to combat against sexual abuse (P.L. 99-654).
- Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (1976) – Rep. Conyers’ legislation reauthorized the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, created an Office of Community Anti-Crime, and authorized new funds to help low income youth (P.L. 94-503).

II. Michigan-Related Legislative and Other Achievements

As a senior member of the Michigan delegation, Rep. Conyers has secured more than \$100 million in appropriations since 2007 and \$178 million in grants since 1993 for the Detroit metropolitan area. Rep. Conyers also secured an advance payment of \$28 million in federal funds from the Department of Health and Human Services in 2003 to prevent the closing of the Detroit Medical Center.

Grants and Earmarked Appropriations

- 112th Congress - Rep. Conyers, with others, has requested and secured over \$67.6 million in grants and appropriated funds thus far. Of this total, \$3.2 million was from appropriated funds, and \$64.4 million was from grant funding (specific earmarks have been banned in the 112th Congress).
- 111th Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$86.8 million in local grants and earmarked appropriations. Of this total, \$62.2 million was from earmarked appropriations, and \$24.5 million was from grant funding.
- 110th Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$73.3 million in local grants and earmarked appropriations. Of this total, \$39.4 million was from earmarked appropriations, and \$33.8 million was from grant funding.
- 109th Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$4.9 million in local grants including \$2,800,290 from the Detroit Community Justice Partnership for Project Safe Neighborhoods in Detroit and \$600,937 was awarded from the Detroit Community Justice Partnership for the 2006 Anti-Gang Initiative in Detroit.

- 108th Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$11.7 million in local grants. In addition to securing \$3 million for the Wayne County Sheriff's Department Rep. Conyers also led the effort to prevent the closing of the Detroit Medical Center by securing an advanced payment of \$28 million in federal funds from the Department of Health and Human Services.
- 107th Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$4.3 million in local grants including \$1,290,747.65 for local law enforcement block grants to Rockwood, Brownstown, Hazel Park, Hamtramck, Highland Park, Lincoln Park, Southgate, Allen Park, Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, and Redford.
- 106th Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$4 million in local grants including \$625,000 for the Highland Park Department of Public Safety and \$766,529 for Violence Against Women Training and local law enforcement block grants in Detroit.
- 105th Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$4.8 million in local grants. In addition, Rep. Conyers successfully worked to have the Detroit River designated as an "American Heritage River."
- 104th Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$27.1 million in local grants including \$1 million for the City of Detroit Police Department for an anti-gang initiative.
- 103rd Congress - Rep. Conyers requested and secured over \$2.7 million in local grants including \$1.5 million for the City of Detroit Police Department and \$663,572 for the Highland Park Department of Public Safety, and police hiring through the Bureau of Justice Assistance Programs.

Legislation

- Detroit Patent Office Opening (2012) – Rep. Conyers successfully advocated for the Patent and Trademark Office to open their first ever satellite office in Detroit, creating some 100 patent examiner jobs, and numerous potential additional high technology spin off opportunities and jobs.
- Temporary Bankruptcy Judgeships Extension Act (2012) – As Ranking Member of the Judiciary Committee, Rep. Conyers helped shepherd through an extension of thirty bankruptcy judgeships, including that of a bankruptcy judge located in Detroit.

- Michigan Emergency Manager Law (2012) – Rep. Conyers sought the Justice Department’s review of the constitutionality of this law, organized a letter signed by 55 public officials to Governor Snyder expressing concerns about its possible application to Detroit, organized a public forum in Highland Park on February 21, 2012, and issued a 26-page Democratic staff report concluding that certain aspects of the law were likely unconstitutional.
- Asian Carp Prevention and Control Act (2010) – As Judiciary Chairman, Rep. Conyers managed this legislation that added Asian Carp to the list of injurious species prevented from being imported into the United States.
- Great Lakes Water Compact (2008) – As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Rep. Conyers managed this legislation allowing Great Lakes States to preserve and protect their abundant fresh water resources.

III. Selective Remaining Initiatives (Pending Legislation)

Notwithstanding Rep. Conyers numerous legislative achievements, he is continuing to aggressively push a number of additional legislative items, introducing more than 40 bills thus far in the current Congress. Below is a selective list of some of these ongoing priorities:

- Protecting Voting Rights (H.R. 533, H.R. 2212, H.R. 5038, H.R. 5799) – Rep. Conyers has been and continues to be the lead sponsor on a number of initiatives to protect and enhance voting rights, including legislation which would prohibit states from denying the right to vote in federal elections to ex-felons, making it unlawful to engage in unfair or deceptive practices, prohibiting voter caging, tracking allegations of voting irregularities, requiring nationwide same day registration and absentee ballots, requiring paper trail voting, clarifying rules for provisional ballots, minimum election standards and training, studying election day holiday, limiting voter purging, and easing requirements for military voting. Rep. Conyers has introduced or cosponsored voter protection initiatives since his first term in Congress in 1965.
- Universal Health Care (H.R. 676) – Rep. Conyers has introduced legislation since 2001 providing for Medicare for All, which has nationwide grass roots support and endorsements and has garnered 76 cosponsors in the current Congress.
- Home Foreclosure Reduction Act of 2011 (H.R. 1587) – Rep. Conyers has managed or introduced legislation since 2007 allowing homeowners to utilize

bankruptcy proceedings to reduce the principal amount of their mortgage to reflect the fair market value of their residence.

- Internet Sales Tax (H.R. 2701) – Rep. Conyers has introduced or cosponsored legislation leveling the playing field between brick and mortar retailers with online retailers by having the latter collect state and local sales tax since 2000. Passage would allow the state of Michigan to increase state revenues by an estimated \$872 million in uncollected sales taxes due to remote ecommerce and consumer mail order sales per year.
- End Racial Profiling Act (H.R. 3618) – Rep. Conyers has introduced legislation, prohibiting race-based traffic stops and other forms of racial profiling, since 1999.
- Shield Our Streets Act (H.R. 4098) – Would provide grant programs for local law enforcement and public safety to help counties such as Wayne County, Michigan that are facing high crime and budget cuts.
- Humphrey-Hawkins 21st Century Full Employment and Training Act (H.R. 4217) – Would utilize a financial transaction fee to fund full employment and training nationwide.
- Health Insurance Industry Antitrust Enforcement Act (H.R. 5838) – Rep. Conyers has introduced legislation to repeal the McCarran Ferguson antitrust exemption benefitting health insurers since 2009.
- Protecting Employees and Retirees in Business Bankruptcies Act (H.R. 6117) – Rep. Conyers has introduced or cosponsored legislation since 1987 leveling the playing field for employees and retirees in business bankruptcy cases by requiring heightened standards to reject a collective bargaining agreement and reduce employee benefits.
- Cyber Privacy Fortification Act (H.R. 6183) - providing criminal penalties for the failure to comply with federal or state obligations to report security breaches of the sensitive personally identifiable information of individuals. Rep. Conyers originally introduced these provisions in the 110th Congress.
- American Investment and Job Creation Act (H.R. 6210) - creating new programs that allow foreign entrepreneurs to earn green cards by establishing new U.S. businesses that create jobs for American workers. This legislation is designed to help spur new foreign investment, business development and job

creation in the United States, particularly in distressed urban and rural areas like Detroit.

IV. Extreme Republican Measures Rep. Conyers Has Led Successful Opposition Against

As the Ranking Member on the House Judiciary Committee, Rep. Conyers has taken the lead in successfully opposing a wide variety of extreme measures by the Republicans, including the following:

Constitutional Amendments

- Balanced Budget Amendment: balancing the budget on the back of seniors by raiding Social Security and Medicare Trust Funds and making it more difficult to increase the debt limit.
- Flag Desecration Amendment: altering the First Amendment for first time in our nation's history.
- Tax Limitation Amendment: requiring super-majority votes to increase taxes, including eliminating tax loopholes benefitting the rich.
- Federal Marriage Amendment: preempting states' ability to regulate marriage by defining marriage as between one man and one woman, thus prohibiting any state from marrying same-sex couples.

Rolling Back Civil and Constitutional Rights

- Limiting the government's ability to fight discrimination: by banning affirmative action in all federal programs and activities.
- Limiting the anti-discrimination protections found within the Fair Housing Act.
- Limiting the Voting Rights Act: prohibiting bilingual ballots.
- Limiting Civil Rights Commission: funding and authority.
- Birthright Citizenship: preventing individuals born on U.S. soil from automatically receiving citizenship.
- "Child Custody Protection Act/Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act": limiting the ability of women to seek otherwise lawful abortions across state lines.
- Limiting the Americans with Disabilities Act: by requiring pre-suit notification.
- "Human Cloning Prohibition Act": interfering with therapeutic cloning as well as development of stem cell research.

- Series of court-stripping bills: such as legislation preventing federal courts from being able to rule on the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act and adjudicating legal challenges to the Pledge of Allegiance.
- “No Taxpayer Funding of Abortion Act”: making it difficult if not impossible for private health care plans or insurance markets to include reproductive rights options.
- “Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act”: attempting to obstruct women’s choice rights by falsely equating anti-choice legislation with civil rights by legislatively banning so-called race and sex selected abortions. During the committee markup of the bill in February 2012, Rep. Conyers’ amendment striking the names “Susan B. Anthony” and “Frederick Douglass” from the title of the bill was adopted by the committee.
- District of Columbia Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act: prohibiting any person from performing an abortion in the District of Columbia after 20 weeks.

Limiting Health, Safety, and Consumer Rights

- Limits on Rights of Injured Tort Victims: bills (i) imposing series of restrictions on product liability victims, including limits on pain and suffering, punitive damages, shorter statute of limitations; (ii) requiring individuals to pay attorney’s fees of large corporate defendants in unsuccessful legal actions; and (iii) mandating court imposed legal sanctions.
- Limiting rights of injured medical malpractice victims: bills that would, among other things, limit pain and suffering and punitive damages.
- Limiting legal aid: reducing funding and restricting the types of cases legal aid attorneys may pursue.
- Limiting agencies’ ability to issue health, safety and other regulations.
- Legislation making it more difficult for workers harmed by deadly asbestos: restricting the ability of victims to obtain compensation from corporate wrongdoers.
- “BATF Modernization and Reform Act”: imposing new limits on the ability of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives to pursue gun dealers for illegal gun sales and purchases.
- Concealed Carry legislation: requiring all states that have concealed carry laws to accept permits from all other states, regardless of whether the state has greater restrictions on concealed carry permits.

Impeachment of President Clinton – In 1998, Rep. Conyers led the fight against the Republican Majority’s unprecedented impeachment of President Clinton, for what was essentially a private affair. Although three articles of impeachment passed the

House on largely party line votes, the articles were soundly defeated in the Senate the following year. Rep. Conyers is the only Member of Congress involved in the impeachments of two presidents – Richard Nixon and William Clinton.

Major Reports/Investigations – In recent years, Rep. Conyers conducted a number of path breaking investigations and issued associated reports. These include:

- “What Went Wrong in Ohio” (2005) – 102-page Report identifying serious election irregularities in Ohio affecting hundreds of thousands of voters. This in turn led Rep. Conyers to join with Senator Barbara Boxer and the late Rep. Stephanie Tubbs Jones in filing a historic electoral challenge on the House floor, and led to the introduction of numerous bills to enhance voting protection.
- “The Constitution in Crisis” (2006) – 350-page Report based on multiple hearings and the review of tens of thousands of documents, found substantial evidence that President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and other high ranking members of the Bush Administration misled Congress and the American people about the decision to go to War in Iraq; engaged in extraordinary rendition; countenanced torture and mistreatment of detainees; permitted inappropriate retaliation against critics of the Bush Administration; and approved unlawful domestic surveillance.
- U.S. Attorneys Investigation (2007) – As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Rep. Conyers led the investigation of the Bush Administration’s U.S. Attorney firings. His committee and the House held several Bush Administration officials in contempt of Congress for refusing to cooperate with the investigation and Rep. Conyers prevailed in federal court before agreeing to a settlement in early 2009 with the Bush Administration producing the necessary documents and testimony (including testimony by Karl Rove).
- “Reining in the Imperial Presidency: Lessons and Recommendations Relating to the Presidency of George W. Bush” (2009) – a 539-page Report updating the abuses identified in “The Constitution in Crisis”; describing the investigation of those abuses by Rep. Conyers’ Judiciary Committee and others; and making 50 recommendations to prevent their recurrence.

V. Legislative Pioneer

In addition to the foregoing achievements, throughout his career Rep. Conyers has been a legislative pioneer in pursuing key initiatives years prior to their passage into law, including:

- Civil Rights – Rep. Conyers introduced fair housing legislation in 1968, 20 years before the Fair Housing Act was enacted into law. In 1968, he introduced legislation proclaiming the week of Frederick Douglass’ birthday of February 14 as African-American History Week; in 1976, President Ford declared February to be African American History month. Rep. Conyers introduced legislation in 1972 granting amnesty for Vietnam War protestors; 2 years later, President Carter offered full pardons. Rep. Conyers introduced legislation making non-discriminatory practices by U.S. firms doing business in South Africa a condition for U.S. government contracts in 1972; comprehensive anti-apartheid legislation was signed into law 14 years later. Rep. Conyers first introduced legislation providing legal protections for individuals with disabilities in 1988; the Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted in 1990 and Rep. Conyers helped to manage updates and improvements to the law through the ADA Amendments Act of 2008.
- Constitutional Amendments – Rep. Conyers introduced a constitutional amendment lowering the voting age to 18 in 1966; a Senate version of the Amendment ultimately was passed and ratified by the states as the 18th Amendment in 1971. He introduced an equal rights constitutional amendment in 1966 and a version passed the Congress in 1972, but proponents fell one state short of ratification in 1979; Rep. Conyers has continued to support and cosponsor the Amendment since that time.
- Economic Security and Safety – Rep. Conyers proposed legislation disqualifying felons and mental incompetents from owning handguns in 1976; the Brady Act providing for such disqualifications was enacted into law in 1994. He first introduced crime victims fund legislation in 1973; similar legislation was enacted in 2002. Rep. Conyers introduced legislation limiting work hours for resident physicians in 2005; six years later, in July 2011, the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education adopted standards similar to Rep. Conyers’ bill.