

Biography of Senator Jeff Merkley

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley is the son of a millwright and the first in his family to attend college. Born in the timber town of Myrtle Creek, Oregon, Merkley has spent his career fighting to increase opportunities for working families.

After earning an undergraduate degree from Stanford and graduate degree in Public Policy at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Merkley worked as a national security analyst at the Pentagon and at the Congressional Budget Office. In 1991 Merkley returned to Oregon to lead Portland's Habitat for Humanity, which works to empower low-income families through home ownership. Merkley went on to serve as president of the World Affairs Council in Portland before entering the Oregon House of Representatives in 1998. Merkley became Speaker of the House in 2007.

As Oregon's House Speaker, Merkley led the most productive legislative session in decades. The legislature increased education funding, expanded access to affordable prescription drugs, passed landmark environmental and energy legislation, established domestic partnerships, cracked down on predatory payday and title lending, and created Oregon's first ever Rainy Day fund.

As Oregon's junior U.S. Senator, Merkley is fighting to curb global warming, increase oversight and accountability of financial markets and banks, provide access to affordable health care for all, and make America work for working Americans. He is a member of the Senate Committees on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; Banking and Urban Development; Environment and Public Works; and Budget.