4 Jim McCrery (R)

Of Shreveport — Elected 1988; 4th full term

Biographical Information
Born: Sept. 18, 1949, Shreveport, La.
Education: Louisiana Tech U., B.A. 1971; Louisiana State U., J.D. 1975.
Occupation: Lawyer; congressional aide; government relations executive.
Family: Wife, Johnette Hawkins; two children.
Religion: Methodist.
Political Career: Candidate for Leesville City Council, 1978.
Capitol Office: 2104 Rayburn Bldg. 20515; 225-2777.

Committees
Ways & Means
Health; Human Resources
Joint Economic



In Washington: McCrery turned in a studious and restrained first term on the Ways and Means Committee in the 103rd Congress, but after Republicans gained control of the House in the 104th he became a prominent activist in the committee's social-policy work, in particular challenging some traditional views of the nation's "social safety net" programs, such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and welfare.

McCrery's social conservatism riled the more liberal Democrats on Ways and Means, and their sometimes open hostility to his ideas triggered the occasional, unaccustomed flight of partisan rage from the otherwise subdued Southerner.

One notable episode occurred as the House debated the GOP welfare plan in March 1995, when McCrery wondered aloud whether "petulance [is] a proper form of behavior for a member of Congress" after an outburst from Ways and Means' ranking Democrat Sam M. Gibbons, D-Fla. He also once called Democrats "ninnies" and "scaredy cats" during a Ways and Means debate of proposed cuts in Medicare growth. He apologized the next day.

McCrery had little success pushing his ideas about welfare, health and tax policy when Democrats controlled the House, but success came quickly after Republicans gained control of the agenda. His most significant achievement was enactment of a plan to transform the SSI program, which is run by the Social Security Administration. Among other things, the program provides a monthly check to families with disabled children to help them pay medical and other expenses.

The program grew from $1.3 billion for 290,000 beneficiaries in 1989 to an estimated $5 billion for nearly 900,000 beneficiaries in 1995. McCrery set his sights on SSI after educators in his district began complaining that some parents were encouraging their children to misbehave regularly so they could be classified as "disabled" and receive a monthly SSI benefit of more than $400. He drafted a plan to end the cash benefits and replace them with block grants to the states. The final version of his proposal, which was enacted as part of a larger overhaul of the welfare system, will reduce SSI rolls by about 22 percent, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

McCrery, a conferee for Republicans on both their welfare and budget-reconciliation proposals, was a central figure in other GOP fights in the 104th. He was among the most outspoken critics of Democrats' efforts to alter the GOP welfare plan, arguing against vouchers for children whose parents exceed their five-year limit on benefits and against additional benefits for teenagers who have more children after going on welfare. And he was a key advocate of offering medical savings accounts to seniors as a way to limit the growth of Medicare.

In his House floor votes during the Bush administration, McCrery almost without exception followed the line laid down by the White House on economic, social policy and foreign policy questions. His one high-profile departure came in October 1990, when he joined with the GOP wing most hostile to tax increases and voted against a budget compromise crafted by the president and House and Senate leaders. The compromise included tax increases.

Although generally loyal to House GOP leaders in the 104th, McCrery at times was a step or two off the leadership line. He openly questioned the size of the tax cuts Republican leaders included in their budget-reconciliation bill, specifically the $500-per-child tax credit. "I'm not convinced that it's desirable to extend this all the way up to $200,000," he said during Ways and Means consideration of the plan in January 1995.

McCrery's hard-line opposition to abortion prompted him to question, and ultimately defeat, a welfare-related proposal once heralded by Ways and Means Chairman Bill Archer, R-Texas. Archer originally proposed giving states an extra 10 percent of their welfare grants for reducing out-of-wedlock births by 2 percent from the previous year, but McCrery said states could qualify for the bonus "simply by performing more abortions." He

LOUISIANA 4
Northwest and west — Shreveport; Bossier City

The 4th has mired Louisiana's redistricting map in a morass of litigation in the 1990s. The version of the 4th used for the 1992 election was a Z-shaped creature that zigzagged through all or part of 28 parishes and five of Louisiana's largest cities, digesting black communities to create the state's second black-majority district.

Although the boundaries were substantially reoriented for the 1994 election, the 4th's black majority was retained and the district still covered a vast distance, sticking to a northwest-to-southeast diagonal from Shreveport to Baton Rouge and resembling, in the words of a state official, "a sash on a beauty queen."

But remapping in 1996 smoothed out the district boundary lines and eliminated the black-majority 4th. Unaccustomed to running in majority-white districts, Democratic Rep. Cleo Fields retired from Congress.

Encompassing northwest and west Louisiana, the current 4th comprises twelve whole parishes and part of another, bordering Arkansas to the north and taking in much of Louisiana's western border with Texas.

Shreveport (Caddo Parish), in the northwest corner of the state, is the third-largest city in Louisiana. About 40 percent of the district's registered voters are from Caddo.

The area economy boomed in the beginning of the 20th century, when oil was discovered near Shreveport. But the city has never fully recovered from the fading of the oil boom. Shreveport's population declined in the 1980s, though its population has inched above 200,000 in the 1990s.

The city's largest employers include General Motors, AT&T, Libbey Glass and Frymaster Corp. The gaming industry — notably Horseshoe, Isle of Capri, and Hannah's casinos — accounts for thousands of jobs in the area.

Shreveport also is home to Centenary College, the oldest chartered institution of higher learning west of the Mississippi. And it is the site of the annual Poulan Weedeater Independence Bowl.

Shreveport has a black population of almost 45 percent, making Caddo a source of Democratic votes. In the 1996 presidential election, Bill Clinton defeated Bob Dole 56 percent to 39 percent in Caddo. But parish voters freely split their tickets, giving Republican McCrery 65 percent of their votes. The general results were similar throughout the district. In fact, of the 30 districts nationally that gave Clinton a majority of their votes while opting for a Republican House member, none of the contested Republicans received a higher percentage than McCrery's 71 percent.

Just across the Red River from Shreveport is Bossier City (population 52,700). The largest single employer for both cities is Barksdale Air Force Base, headquarters for a unit of the Air Combat Command and home to most of the Air Force's fleet of B-52s. Bossier was one of just two parishes in the district that Dole carried.

Fort Polk, the district's other large military installation, is in Vernon parish in the district's southwestern region. Fort Polk employs about 11,000 active-duty and civilian personnel.

Natchitoches, located in its namesake parish in the district's center, is the oldest settlement in the Louisiana Purchase territory.

Claiborne Parish has become a barometer of the overall state's inclinations in presidential campaigns. In the last five presidential elections, the winning candidate's percentages in Claiborne and Louisiana at-large have differed by less than 2 percentage points.

As of May 19, the Census Bureau had not recalculated population data, racial and ethnic breakdowns and age statistics for districts newly drawn for the 1996 elections.

convinced the committee, on a 21-15 party-line vote, to adopt an amendment to require that any increase in abortions be factored into the formula for determining a state's illegitimacy rate.

A stalwart supporter of gunowners' rights, McCrery opposed a five-day waiting-period requirement for handgun purchases and a ban on certain semiautomatic assault-style weapons. He also opposed lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military and voted for legislation that bars federal recognition of same-sex marriages.

McCrery made an unusual splash when he first came to Congress. A 1989 article in the Capitol Hill newspaper Roll Call described McCrery's visit to a topless club in South Carolina, where he wore a dancer's bra on his head. "I'm not going to live like a monk while I'm in Congress," he said.

At Home: Relatively safe in his district since first winning election to the House in a 1988 special election, McCrery, along with some other Republicans in Louisiana's House delegation, toyed with seeking the Senate seat being vacated by retiring Democrat J. Bennett Johnston in 1996.

He ultimately opted out of the race, instead choosing to run in the hospitable confines of the newly drawn 4th District. It is a product of Louisiana's third district map of the 1990s; judges rejected the first two as "racial gerrymanders."

The new lines certainly did not cause McCrery much stress in 1996: He won election to a fifth term outright in the all-party open primary, taking more than 70 percent of the vote.

That was not too far below his high-water mark, 80 percent in 1994.

McCrery's most significant re-election challenge came in 1992, after the initial round of 1990s redistricting matched him against fellow incumbent Jerry Huckaby, an eight-term Democrat.

Although Huckaby chaired the Agriculture Subcommittee on Cotton, Rice and Sugar — commodities of great concern to Louisiana — he had his back to the wall in the new 5th, with its smaller black population and the conservative GOP incumbent from the former 4th District on the ballot.

To win re-election, McCrery had to withstand some unflattering personal publicity: The Advocate, a national gay and lesbian magazine, published an article that said McCrery had had several homosexual affairs. McCrery, recently married, said the story was not true. Voters in the conservative district did not appear to be troubled by the publicity. They gave McCrery a 44 percent to 29 percent lead over Huckaby in the five-candidate, all-party primary.

Huckaby appeared to suffer more lasting damage from his own troubles: He had 88 overdrafts at the House bank; McCrery had none. In the runoff, McCrery breezed past Huckaby, winning with 63 percent of the vote.

McCrery, a former Democrat and once an aide to then-4th District Democratic Rep. Buddy Roemer, was well-positioned to make a bid for the House when Roemer left Congress after his 1987 election as Louisiana governor. McCrery's GOP label, acquired in late 1987 before his House bid began, helped his victory.

McCrery served at one time as assistant city attorney in Shreveport, and more recently had worked in Baton Rouge as a lobbyist for Georgia-Pacific Corp.

He was not well known in the 4th; he stood out in the special election's 10-person primary field largely because he was the only Republican, and he impressed many with his knowledge of legislative issues. And while linking himself to Roemer, he also associated himself with Republican figures, running ads featuring President Ronald Reagan.

McCrery's conservative ties helped him finish atop the large field, sending him into a runoff with Democratic state Sen. Foster L. Campbell Jr. Campbell was a flamboyant, populist-style campaigner whose base was in the 4th's rural northern parishes. But a month before the election, he was seriously injured in a car crash while driving on a closed highway. McCrery won the special election with 51 percent of the vote.

After the special election, McCrery had little time to prepare for November. Fortunately for him, the Democratic effort in the 4th fizzled. Potential challengers stopped in their tracks when Roemer's mother, Adeline, entered the race. She lost badly. And in 1990, McCrery defeated Campbell in a rematch.

HOUSE ELECTIONS

1996 Primary †		
Jim McCrery (R)	94,822	(71%)
Paul M. Chachere (D)	38,015	(29%)
1994 Primary †		
Jim McCrery (R)	106,204	(80%)
Paul Henry Kidd (D)	21,467	(16%)
E. Auston Simmons (I)	5,365	(4%)

Previous Winning Percentages: **1992** (63%) **1990** (55%) **1988** (69%) **1988*** (51%)

** Special election*

† In Louisiana the primary is open to candidates of all parties. If a candidate wins 50 percent or more of the vote in the primary, no general election is held. A candidate unopposed in the primary and general election is declared elected and the candidate's name does not appear on the ballot.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs	Expenditures
1996			
McCrery (R)	$913,505	$448,425 (49%)	$823,121
1994			
McCrery (R)	$770,648	$335,943 (44%)	$459,098

DISTRICT VOTE FOR PRESIDENT

1996		1992	
D	122,776 (52%)	**D**	150,000 (68%)
R	92,220 (39%)	**R**	54,230 (25%)
I	17,198 (7%)	**I**	16,475 (8%)

KEY VOTES

1997	
Ban "partial birth" abortions	Y
1996	
Approve farm bill	Y
Deny public education to illegal immigrants	Y
Repeal ban on certain assault-style weapons	Y
Increase minimum wage	N
Freeze defense spending	N
Approve welfare overhaul	Y
1995	
Approve balanced-budget constitutional amendment	Y
Relax Clean Water Act regulations	Y
Oppose limits on environmental regulations	N
Reduce projected Medicare spending	Y
Approve GOP budget with tax and spending cuts	Y

VOTING STUDIES

	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
Year	**S**	**O**	**S**	**O**	**S**	**O**
1996	35	59	91	6	94	2
1995	18	80	94	3	100	0
1994	53	41	80	13	92	8
1993	44	56	86	12	95	5
1992	77	6	74	6	83	2
1991	84	12	78	15	95	3

INTEREST GROUP RATINGS

Year	ADA	AFL-CIO	CCUS	ACU
1996	0	n/a	100	95
1995	0	0	100	92
1994	5	13	100	90
1993	0	0	100	92
1992	5	10	83	91
1991	0	8	90	85

ZIP CODES

Louisiana's 4th District

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