9 Nathan Deal (R)

Of Gainesville — Elected 1992, 3rd term

Biographical Information

Born: Aug. 25, 1942, Millen, Ga.
Education: Mercer U., B.A. 1964, J.D. 1966.
Military Service: Army, 1966-68.
Occupation: Lawyer.
Family: Wife, Sandra Dunagan; four children.
Religion: Baptist.
Political Career: Assistant district attorney, 1970-71; juvenile court judge, 1971-72; Hall County attorney, 1977-79; Ga. Senate, 1981-93, president pro tempore, 1991-93.
Capitol Office: 1406 Longworth Bldg. 20515; 225-5211.

Committees

Commerce
Finance & Hazardous Materials; Health & Environment; Telecommunications, Trade & Consumer Protection
Education & Workforce
Postsecondary Education, Training & Life-Long Learning



In Washington: Deal had a fairly quiet first term in the House, settling in with other centrist Southerners in the Democratic majority who, as the 103rd Congress wore on, grew increasingly restive about what they saw as the liberal bent of the Clinton administration.

But after Republicans took control of the House, Deal was much in the news. First, he drew attention when his plan to overhaul the welfare system was embraced by House Democratic leaders as an alternative to the GOP's "Contract With America" proposal.

Then, to the chagrin of Democrats and the delight of Republicans, Deal made another big news splash with his April 1995 announcement that he was joining the GOP.

Once in Republican ranks, Deal faded into the background again, even though GOP leaders gave him a slot on the influential Commerce Committee, which addressed such high-profile topics as telecommunications and health insurance during the 104th. There is no doubt, however, about Deal's loyalty to his new party. In 1996, his first full year in the GOP, on floor votes pitting a majority of Republicans against a majority of Democrats, Deal's party unity score was 92.

In Georgia, partisan Democrats howled about Deal's party switch, noting that just three months before he jumped, he had said: "If I choose to switch [parties] during the term, I think the honest thing to do is to resign and have a special election." Deal, of course, did not follow that course, and his seat on Commerce helped him amass a sizable treasury for his first race as a Republican. Few voters seemed much bothered by the change of heart: He won re-election in 1996 with 66 percent of the vote.

The positions Deal took as a Democrat may have prepared voters in the 9th to anticipate his party switch. In the 103rd, he voted against family and medical leave legislation and the "motor voter" bill; he opposed banning certain semiautomatic assault-style weapons and opposed lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military.

In 1993, he and 20 other first-term Democrats who dubbed themselves the "Fiscal Caucus" pressured the Clinton administration to make more spending cuts. And in May 1994, Deal played a prominent role when the Mainstream Forum, a coalition of moderate and conservative Democrats, unveiled a welfare-overhaul plan that aimed to get welfare applicants working or training for work as soon as they applied for assistance.

Deal's disenchantment with Democrats became increasingly clear at the start of the 104th, when he became a leader in another group of conservative Democrats — The Coalition, also known as the "blue dogs." He voted to pass all but two of the 33 bills based on the GOP's "Contract With America." "I voted like a Republican even when I was a Democrat," Deal said after he switched parties.

As a Republican, Deal, who had previously stated his support of a constitutional right to abortion, sided with anti-abortion lawmakers on three high-profile votes in the 104th. He voted to ban a particular abortion technique that opponents call "partial birth" abortion, to prohibit privately funded abortions at overseas military hospitals and to reinstate a prohibition on family planning assistance funds going to foreign organizations that perform abortions or offer abortion counseling. Early in the 105th Congress, he again sided with the majority of abortion opponents as they unsuccessfully sought to block President Clinton's request for an early release of funds to promote international family planning and population control programs.

Deal does part ways with most of his GOP colleagues on some issues. In May 1996, he supported an increase in the minimum wage and opposed an effort to exempt small businesses from paying it — a reflection perhaps of his working-class Democratic roots. And as the debate on welfare reform proceeded through the 104th, he worked to convince his new GOP colleagues of the merits of compromise with the

GEORGIA 9
North — Dalton; Gainesville; Toccoa

The 9th, anchored in north Georgia's mountains, runs across the state, from Alabama on the west to South Carolina on the east. At the local level, Democrats have long been dominant in most parts of the district. When the 9th was open in 1992, then-Democrat Deal held it easily for his party.

Deal racked up a career-high percentage in his first congressional race since his 1995 switch to the Republican Party, in part because the district's GOP presence is strong. The district is overwhelmingly white — remapping in 1995 kept the 9th's black voting-age population at 3.5 percent — and Republican. In 1996, both Bob Dole and unsuccessful GOP senatorial nominee Guy Millner won every county in the 9th, often by overwhelming margins.

The 9th has Republican pockets of long standing, particularly in the north-central counties of Union, Fannin, Gilmer and Towns; their allegiance to the GOP dates to the Civil War. Republicans are becoming more prevalent in the southern part of the district, where Cherokee and Forsyth counties are filling up with Atlanta suburbanites.

Cherokee (which is shared with the 6th) and Forsyth are two of the state's fastest growing counties — their populations increased by 27 percent and 41 percent, respectively, from 1990 to 1995.

In economic terms, the 9th is a blend of new and old. For many of those living in the metropolitan Atlanta orbit, white-collar and service-oriented occupations predominate. Elsewhere, apparel manufacturing, poultry processing and carpet-making are major providers, and tourism and recreation are increasingly important.

Raising and processing chickens is big business in Hall County (Gainesville) and Whitfield County (Dalton), the district's two most populous counties. Gainesville calls itself the "poultry capital of the world," and in the center of town is the Georgia Poultry Federation's monument to the industry: an obelisk with a chicken statue on top.

Dalton, in the northwestern part of the district, is one of the country's top carpet-making centers. Despite its substantial blue-collar employment base, Whitfield County generally favors Republicans in statewide and federal contests. In 1996, Dole and Millner racked up 57 percent and 65 percent, respectively.

In the district's extreme northwestern corner are Walker, Catoosa and Dade counties, conservative pillars whose economic fortunes are linked to Chattanooga, just over the border in Tennessee. Millner's 67 percent tally in Catoosa was his best showing in the state.

Millions who have never set foot in Georgia have seen its rugged northeast on film. "Deliverance" was set in Rabun County, and "Smokey and the Bandit" was made in the area.

Tourist dollars play a crucial role in the district's economy. Dotting the mountains are an array of attractions, including Cloudland Canyon (Walker County), the manmade Lake Lanier (Hall County), the wineries of Habersham County and, in White County, the hamlet of Helen, a replica of a Swiss village.

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 election.

Clinton administration, a course that some House conservatives were reluctant to follow.

As a freshman Democrat, Deal had sought federal funding for the National Park Service to help Georgia relocate a heavily traveled U.S. highway that cuts through the Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. As a Republican in the 104th, he secured that funding in the 104th Congress, snaring an additional $21.9 million.

At Home: Deal's April 1995 jump to the GOP piqued the interest of potential 9th District candidates in both parties. But two possible Republican rivals — state Rep. Steve Stancil and Robert L. Castello, whom Deal had easily defeated in the 1994 general election — chose not to challenge Deal, who had the backing of Republican leaders, including House Speaker and fellow Georgian Newt Gingrich.

The lack of a primary challenge enabled Deal to focus his campaign efforts and financial resources on the Democratic nominee, state Rep. McCracken "Ken" Poston.

Deal's move to the GOP became Poston's rallying cry. He urged voters to punish Deal for that move and for breaking the pledge to resign and seek re-election in a special election if he switched parties. "The party switch is important because it's indicative of a character trait," Poston said. "It says this guy wouldn't hold up in a strong wind."

Deal said he never offered to resign and run again but had merely suggested that as one way to change parties. He was one of the GOP incumbents who had to contend with an AFL-CIO independent-expenditure campaign calling for his defeat. The union organization spent millions in an effort to oust Republicans from control of the House.

But Deal's position on the Commerce Committee gave him entree to numerous business and industry PACs, and he used their con-

tributions to fuel a campaign that ended up overwhelming Poston, who lost by more than 30 percentage points points.

Deal won a state Senate seat in 1980 and had put together a string of effortless re-elections by the time Democratic Rep. Ed Jenkins announced in 1992 he was leaving the 9th. Deal and two others sought the Democratic nomination; Deal ran first in the primary with 45 percent of the vote, then won a runoff by 10 points.

The GOP nomination went to Daniel Becker, who made abortion the focus of a "morality in government" campaign; he aired anti-abortion TV ads featuring graphic photos of allegedly aborted fetuses. Becker's appeal proved to be limited. Although George Bush carried the 9th District with 49 percent of the vote, Becker managed only 41 percent.

Deal's conservative first-term voting record helped protect him from the Republican electoral tide in 1994.

He won re-election by a solid margin, even as Democratic incumbents lost in the neighboring 7th and 10th districts.

HOUSE ELECTIONS

1996 General		
Nathan Deal (R)	132,532	(66%)
McCracken "Ken" Poston (D)	69,662	(34%)
1994 General*		
Nathan Deal (D)	79,145	(58%)
Robert L. Castello (R)	57,568	(42%)

Previous Winning Percentages: 1992* (59%)

** Deal was elected to the House as a Democrat 1992-1994.*

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs	Expenditures
1996			
Deal (R)	$747,417	$384,842 (51%)	$865,898
Poston (D)	$508,435	$118,093 (23%)	$429,454
1994			
Deal (D)	$489,911	$215,091 (44%)	$368,648
Castello (R)	$23,740	$14 (0%)	$22,953

DISTRICT VOTE FOR PRESIDENT

1996		1992	
D	74,125 (35%)	**D**	71,216 (35%)
R	115,861 (55%)	**R**	98,713 (49%)
I	20,840 (10%)	**I**	32,981 (16%)

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	Y
Freeze defense spending	Y
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	37	63	92	8	94	6
1995†	23	77	93	6	95	5
1994	63	36	61	36	86	8
1993	58	40	68	31	80	20

† Deal switched to the Republican Party on April 10, 1995. As a Democrat in 1995 he was eligible for 23 presidential support votes, 218 party unity votes, and 37 conservative coalition votes. As a Republican in 1995 he was eligible for 110 presidential support votes, 417 party unity votes, and 74 conservative coalition votes. His 1995 scores include votes he cast both as a Democrat and a Republican.

INTEREST GROUP RATINGS

Year	ADA	AFL-CIO	CCUS	ACU
1996	5	n/a	81	90
1995	0	0	96	80
1994	15	33	92	67
1993	15	42	73	61

ZIP CODES

Georgia's 9th District

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