4 Cynthia A. McKinney (D)

Of Lithonia — Elected 1992, 3rd term

Biographical Information

Born: March 17, 1955, Atlanta, Ga.
Education: U. of Southern California, B.A. 1978.
Occupation: Professor.
Family: Divorced; one child.
Religion: Roman Catholic.
Political Career: Democratic nominee for Ga. House, 1986; Ga. House, 1989-93.
Capitol Office: 124 Cannon Bldg. 20515; 225-1605.

Committees

Banking & Financial Services
Financial Institutions & Consumer Credit; General Oversight & Investigations

International Relations
International Operations & Human Rights; Western Hemisphere



In Washington: McKinney fought for political survival on two fronts during the 104th Congress: in the U.S. Supreme Court and on the campaign trail. She lost her battle in the Supreme Court, which in 1995 invalidated Georgia's congressional district map as a "racial gerrymander" that violated the Constitution's guarantee of equal protection under the law, citing McKinney's then-11th District as the offending black-majority seat.

But at the polls, McKinney scored a surprisingly comfortable victory in the newly drawn, white-majority 4th District. Only one-third of the district's voting-age population is black, compared with 64 percent in her old 11th, yet in both the primary and general elections, McKinney dispatched her opponents by double-digit margins. (The home of GOP Rep. John Linder also was in the new 4th, but in 1996 he ran and won re-election in the new 11th, where blacks are only 11 percent of the voting-age population.)

McKinney's House district gained national notice after the June 1995 Supreme Court ruling. The 5-4 decision in *Miller v. Johnson* firmed up the court's 1993 ruling in a North Carolina case, *Shaw v. Reno,* also involving the issue of race-based redistricting. In that case, the court majority questioned the propriety of creating "bizarrely shaped" districts to aggregate minority voters. In the Georgia case, the court more explicitly rejected the use of race as the "predominant factor" in redistricting.

McKinney called the ruling "a setback for democracy." She said, "It is a shame that we are even here arguing whether or not we have gone overboard on perfecting democracy."

Her criticism went beyond rhetorical jabs, however. When the Georgia Legislature undertook the task of drawing new lines and its Senate was considering a plan that had just one black-majority district, McKinney hinted that black Democrats might form a third party based on the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition. She said that Senate plan would have used "traditional Democratic black voters as spare parts to bolster the prospects of certain favorite sons who are white Democrats."

And nearly two months later, she introduced legislation in the U.S. House that would have allowed states to experiment with new forms of electing lawmakers. Her proposal would have allowed states to draw multimember districts and allowed voters to cast several votes and fill numerous seats. She said the existing system of winner-take-all, single-member districts works to the disadvantage of blacks and that her plan would "help heal the racial divisions created by current legal battles over districts drawn to ensure minorities comprise a majority."

The state's congressional lines ultimately were drawn by a three-judge federal panel, which in a 2-1 ruling in December 1995 issued a map that dismantled two of the state's three black-majority districts — McKinney's 11th and the 2nd, represented by black Democrat Sanford D. Bishop Jr. Under the new map, Georgia's only black-majority constituency is the Atlanta-based 5th, home of black Democratic Rep. John Lewis.

"I suppose they couldn't wait to toss us out of our districts, even before our constituents had a say in the matter," McKinney said after the judges' decision. A group of black voters, joined by the Justice Department, appealed that decision to the Supreme Court to have the lines redrawn again, and McKinney again defended the concept of majority-minority districts the day the justices heard oral arguments in December 1996. "Minority districts work," she insisted.

Because of her youthful face, trademark braids and bright stylish attire (often including gold tennis shoes), McKinney in her early days on Capitol Hill was sometimes mistaken for a staffer. "I got up here in Congress by being myself," she told The Boston Globe in 1994. "What's frustrating is that people are so accustomed to seeing white men in suits on the Hill that I still have to defend my presence here."

The first black woman elected to the House from Georgia, McKinney can be outspoken and reluctant to compromise — traits prone to inhib-

GEORGIA 4
Atlanta suburbs — Parts of De Kalb and Gwinnett counties

When McKinney decided to run in the DeKalb-based 4th District after a federal court ruled in 1995 that her majority-black, Atlanta-to-Savannah 11th district was an unconstitutional racial gerrymander, Republicans targeted her for defeat. She was liberal, black and a scathing critic of Speaker Newt Gingrich, who represents the adjacent 6th.

But while much of the new district's terrain was unfamiliar to McKinney, the strong Democratic tendencies were not. In the 1996 presidential race, Bill Clinton captured 64 percent of the district's votes, similar to his 65 percent showing in the 11th District four years earlier.

DeKalb County, just east of Atlanta, accounts for 87 percent of the district's population. As Atlanta blossomed into the South's financial capital during the 1960s and 1970s, De Kalb was the pacesetter of suburban growth. With more than a half-million people, De Kalb is now Georgia's second most populous county. But growth here has slowed as development has spread into outlying jurisdictions. Lately, the hot spots have been farther east, in Gwinnett and Rockdale counties. Still, DeKalb has the state's highest population density — 2,100 people per square mile.

Democratic candidates get a warm reception in the central and western parts of De Kalb. Decatur, the county seat, was a 19th century commercial hub until it lost out as a railroad center to Atlanta; it still has some industry and a Democratic complexion. Emory University is one of the district's largest employers. The university and the communities around it — many of them with substantial Jewish or black populations — give local politics a liberal slant. Chamblee, a blue-collar community in northern De Kalb, has a large immigrant community of both Asians and Hispanics, and they bolster the Democratic vote. Republicans run well in northern DeKalb, home to many affluent whites, and in fast-growing Gwinnett County, but these areas are Republican dents in the district's strongly Democratic armor.

Health care is one of the district's economic linchpins. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is near Emory University. DeKalb Medical Center, Emory University Hospital, and the Veterans Administration Medical Center also are among the county's largest employers.

A popular attraction is Stone Mountain Park in the eastern part of the county. The park features a mammoth granite outcropping into which a sculpture of Robert E. Lee and other Confederate heroes are carved.

In the past 30 years, DeKalb has undergone a political metamorphosis. In 1968, Democratic presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey received barely one-fourth of DeKalb's votes, and Jimmy Carter in 1976 had one of his lowest percentages here. But DeKalb opted narrowly for Michael S. Dukakis in 1988, and Bill Clinton in 1996 garnered 67 percent of the county's votes, more than 20 points above his statewide showing.

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.

it legislative accomplishment. Her four years in the Georgia House did not produce a broad legislative record, and her legislative achievements in Congress also have been few.

In the 104th Congress, she failed in her bid to curb U.S. arms sales to dictators, human-rights abusers and other global thugs. She offered her proposal, which the Clinton administration opposed, to foreign aid legislation, but the House defeated it on a 157-262 vote. McKinney serves on the International Relations Committee, as well as the Banking and Financial Services Committee.

McKinney's views are firmly anchored on the left side of the Democratic spectrum, and she has not been hesitant about sharing her dislike for the philosophy of the GOP majority. In the 104th, she attacked Republicans for what she called their "blitzkrieg against the poor" who are on welfare, and she accused fellow Georgian Newt Gingrich of engendering hate. To bolster her case, she read on the House floor a racist letter she had received that referred to blacks as "monkeys in the jungle" and concluded by saying, "Mr. Speaker, the spirit of GOP welfare lives in these words."

In February 1995, McKinney joined Democrats Patricia Schroeder of Colorado and Harry A. Johnston of Florida in filing an ethics complaint against Gingrich, one of a number of such filings. In January 1997, she voted with an overwhelming House majority to reprimand Gingrich and assess him a $300,000 penalty for ethics violations.

McKinney also has carried her battles to partisan rivals on the other side of the Capitol building. In January 1996, she and Schroeder sent a caustic letter to Sen. Alfonse M. D'Amato, R-N.Y., berating him for his Whitewater investigation of President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. They called the probe "a political witch hunt designed to distract President Clinton," and urged D'Amato to stop "tormenting the first lady" and "leave the television spectacles to daytime talk shows."

At Home: Although McKinney had the advantage of incumbency in her 1996 bid for a third term, few Georgia pols expected her to win reelection after the Supreme Court dismantled her black-majority district.

But in the four-candidate Democratic primary in July, she rolled up 67 percent of the vote, easily outdistancing her closest rival, lawyer Comer Yates. He had waged a respectable 1994 campaign in the old 4th District as the Democratic challenger to GOP Rep. Linder, taking 42 percent of the vote.

Then, in November, McKinney registered a 58 percent to 42 percent victory over Republican businessman-attorney John Mitnick.

Both contests were racially charged. McKinney lashed out at Yates for conducting what she called a racially tinged "push-poll" on her 1994 vote against a resolution that condemned a roundly criticized speech by Khalid Abdul Muhammad, then a top aide to Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. And she blasted Mitnick, a Jew, when he raised the same issue and accused McKinney of "buddying up" with Louis Farrakhan on many occasions."

McKinney forced her father and longtime campaign adviser, state Rep. Billy McKinney, to resign soon after he called Mitnick "a racist Jew" at a church forum, but neither Cynthia McKinney's ties to Farrakhan nor her own campaign's missteps lent any significant momentum to Mitnick. "I continue to be the candidate nobody wants but the people," McKinney said after her victory.

McKinney first won election to the House in 1992 by moving into the new black-majority 11th, running an aggressive, if low-budget, primary campaign and beating two better-financed, better-connected black legislators. That November, she was elected with 73 percent of the vote over Republican farmer Woodrow Lovett. She faced Lovett again in November 1994, winning a second term with 66 percent of the vote.

In the 1992 primary, McKinney went after state Sen. Eugene Walker, a De Kalb County resident and the presumptive favorite for the Democratic nomination when the campaign began, and state Rep. Michael Thurmond, the chairman of the state House black caucus and the recipient of The Atlanta Constitution's endorsement. She said both were too closely connected to the state's dominant white Democratic power structure and unresponsive to Georgia's black voters.

McKinney won the endorsement of a prominent black politician, former Atlanta Mayor and Rep. Andrew Young, whose 1990 gubernatorial bid she had actively supported. She led the primary field with 31 percent of the vote and landed in a runoff with George L. DeLoach, the only white candidate of five contenders. He was a surprise second in the primary, winning the support of white voters from a core of rural counties in the otherwise largely suburban and urban district. McKinney took 56 percent to DeLoach's 44 percent in the runoff, then coasted in November.

HOUSE ELECTIONS

1996 General		
Cynthia A. McKinney (D)	127,157	(58%)
John Mitnick (R)	92,985	(42%)
1996 Primary		
Cynthia A. McKinney (D)	42,508	(67%)
Comer Yates (D)	15,126	(24%)
Ron Slotin (D)	3,993	(6%)
David Hughes (D)	1,370	(2%)
1994 General		
Cynthia A. McKinney (D)	71,560	(66%)
Woodrow Lovett (R)	37,533	(34%)

Previous Winning Percentages: **1992** (73%)

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs		Expenditures
1996				
McKinney (D)	$1,063,250	$364,959	(34%)	$1,015,197
Mitnick (R)	$655,053	$119,274	(18%)	$654,287
1994				
McKinney (D)	$306,775	$189,181	(62%)	$274,232
Lovett (R)	$11,083	$1,514	(14%)	$12,019

DISTRICT VOTE FOR PRESIDENT

1996		1992	
D	141,017 (64%)	**D**	124,625 (55%)
R	69,824 (32%)	**R**	80,578 (35%)
I	8,006 (4%)	**I**	22,824 (10%)

KEY VOTES

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

VOTING STUDIES

	Presidential Support		Party Unity		Conservative Coalition	
Year	**S**	**O**	**S**	**O**	**S**	**O**
1996	80	20	94	2	4	94
1995	79	14	90	2	8	74
1994	77	23	98	1	3	97
1993	76	23	93	2	7	91

INTEREST GROUP RATINGS

Year	ADA	AFL-CIO	CCUS	ACU
1996	100	n/a	20	0
1995	85	100	4	13
1994	100	100	33	0
1993	100	100	9	0

ZIP CODES

Georgia's 4th District

Click here to go to the first page of the profile.

30002
30021
30027
30030
30031
30032
30033
30034
30035
30036
30037
30038
30049
30058
30071
30072
30074
30079
30083
30084
30085
30086
30087
30088
30089
30091
30092
30093
30136
30247
30306
30307
30316
30317
30319
30322
30324
30329
30333
30338
30340
30341
30345
30346
30347
30356
30359
30360
30362
30366
30376
30388
30396
31119
31141
31145
31146
39901