3 Mac Collins (R)

Of Hampton — Elected 1992, 3rd term

Biographical Information
Born: Oct. 15, 1944, Butts County, Ga.
Education: Jackson H.S., graduated 1962.
Military Service: National Guard, 1964-70.
Occupation: Trucking company owner.
Family: Wife, Julie Watkins; four children.
Religion: Methodist.
Political Career: Butts County Commission chairman, 1977-81; candidate for Ga. Senate, 1984, 1986; Ga. Senate, 1989-93.

Capitol Office: 1131 Longworth Bldg. 20515; 225-5901.

Committees
Ways & Means
Human Resources; Social Security



In Washington: "Send a Working Man to Congress," was Collins' campaign slogan in 1992, and this high school-educated trucking company owner quickly worked himself into a good spot in the House, taking a seat on the Ways and Means Committee in 1995. As he participates in the committee's consideration of complex and controversial subjects, Collins maintains his plain-speaking, "regular guy" persona.

Despite being a newcomer to the committee in the 104th, Collins more than once had some blunt talk for senior Democrats who railed at GOP policy proposals. There were noteworthy exchanges between Collins and Florida Rep. Sam M. Gibbons, the committee's ranking Democrat and former chairman. In February 1995, Gibbons accused Republicans of crafting a welfare bill that was "radical . . . cruel . . . and mean to children." Collins' reply: "That is bull, and you know it."

Gibbons heard a similar retort the next year when he lashed out at Republicans for their proposals to restrain the cost of social-welfare programs, especially Medicare. "You're spouting bull," said Collins, a member of the unofficial congressional Cowboy Boot Caucus.

Collins likes to say that he is a "representative," not a "politician." But he has long been wise in the ways of electioneering. As a boy in Flowvilla, Ga., politics were family table talk; his mother was the first woman elected to the City Council there. Coming into his first House campaign in 1992, Collins had eight years' experience in public office — four as a Butts County Commissioner and four as a Georgia state senator.

A reliable vote for the Republican leadership, Collins posted party unity scores near the 100 percent mark in the 104th Congress. He voted with the majority of Republicans against the majority of Democrats 97 percent of the time in 1995 and 98 percent of the time the following year.

That loyalty has endeared him to Republican leaders. Collins began to lobby for a seat on Ways and Means in 1994, anticipating vacancies in the 104th Congress because three Republicans on the panel were waging bids for statewide office. The GOP takeover of the House in 1994 gave Republicans even more slots on the panel, and Collins got one of them. Since then, he has been made a deputy whip, and in October 1996 he was named to head an eight-member Ways and Means task force that began a comprehensive study of all types of transportation taxes.

The task force grew out of Collins' unsuccessful effort in the 104th to repeal the 4.3-cent federal tax on aviation jet fuel. Republicans included a two-year repeal of that tax in their balanced-budget plan, but Clinton vetoed that measure. Early in the 105th Congress, lawmakers voted a temporary renewal of the tax on airline tickets, and they are debating other transportation taxes in the context of renewing the nation's highway law.

Explaining the objective of his task force, Collins told The Associated Press in 1996: "What we're doing is looking into how those taxes are assessed, what they're assessed upon, how they affect the industry, how they affect the consumer . . . to see if it's fair and equitable. If so, you do nothing. If it's not, we'll make some recommendations that hopefully will make it more fair and equitable."

It didn't take long for Collins to have an impact on the legislative process after arriving in Congress. He made his first mark in May 1993, when the House was considering a measure to allocate $1.5 billion to help small- and medium-sized businesses compete globally. GOP efforts to trim the bill were turned back, but Collins unexpectedly scored with an amendment to bar any money in the bill from having a "direct financial benefit to any person who is not a citizen or national of the United States" or a legal alien.

When voting time on the amendment ran out, Collins was prevailing with the support of most Republicans and several Democrats. Many more Democrats, perhaps skittish about being criticized as coddling illegal aliens, then lined up to change their votes. As Republicans applauded, 37

GEORGIA 3
West Central — Columbus; Atlanta suburbs

The 3rd is an eclectic mix of urban, suburban and rural counties extending from the Alabama border to the southeast of Atlanta.

The 3rd previously included all or part of sixteen counties because of its proximity to the oddly-shaped, black-majority 2nd. But 1995 remapping smoothed out the boundaries; now the 3rd includes all of nine counties and splits only one — Clayton, an Atlanta suburban area shared with the 5th.

The district's black population increased to almost 25 percent primarily because of the addition of Columbus (Muscogee County). Just outside of Columbus is Fort Benning, the state's largest military base. Known as the "Home of the Infantry," Fort Benning employs about 20,000 active-duty personnel. During the Civil War, Columbus was one of the leading suppliers of war materials for the Confederacy, and the city's Confederate Naval Museum is a tourist draw. The city's large black population makes Muscogee favorable terrain for Democrats, although Collins won the county in 1996.

At the northern end of the district is Clayton County, home to one-fifth of the 3rd's residents. The sprawling and ever-bustling Hartsfield International Airport is a prime driver of the district's economy. Others look to military facilities for economic sustenance — Fort Gillem is in northeast Clayton and Fort McPherson is in the 5th district's southern Atlanta suburbs. Ford also makes Taurus automobiles in Clayton and adjoining Fulton County. Jonesboro, the county seat, is perhaps best known as the literary setting for Margaret Mitchell's "Gone With The Wind."

Abutting Clayton to the south are the burgeoning areas of Fayette and Henry. Fayette more than doubled its population in the 1980s, and Henry's population grew 63 percent. This is staunchly Republican territory — in 1996, Bob Dole beat Bill Clinton in both counties by more than 25 percentage points.

West of Fayette is Coweta County, where the atmosphere changes, although GOP voting habits do not. Newnan's wealth is tied less to Atlanta's recent growth than to the more distant past; a hospital zone that was spared during the Civil War, Newnan is known for its stately antebellum mansions. Dole racked up 57 percent of the county's votes in 1996.

Textiles are especially important to the Spalding County economy. Dundee Mills, a towel manufacturer, is one of the largest employers here. The county also is home to the Atlanta Motor Speedway.

The most loyal support for Democratic candidates comes from the counties at the district's ends — Muscogee and Clayton — and in some rural areas in the southern part of the district. In 1996, Clinton won Talbot and Meriwether counties; the latter was the only county Collins lost that year.

But the precarious Democratic tendencies in these areas is offset by the overwhelming Republican trend in the southern Atlanta suburbs.

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

Democrats switched their votes from "nay" to "yea." In the end, Collins' amendment won, 263-156.

A dependable vote against the Clinton administration's budget proposals and social policy initiatives, Collins stood apart from the White House even on NAFTA, which a majority of Republicans backed. In 1994, Collins also opposed GATT.

In his role as protector of constituents' interests, Collins fought in the 104th against a proposal by budget-cutters in his own party to sell the Southeastern Power Administration and 23 Corps of Engineers dams and lakes, including some in Georgia. Collins argued that privatization could lead to steeper power costs for consumers and could restrict recreational use of the lakes in his district. His view ultimately prevailed.

Although Collins' district was altered only minimally by a court-drawn redistricting plan in 1996, he thrust himself into the debate about the new map. His argument, however, was not with the Supreme Court, which ordered the new map, or the three-judge federal panel that originally ruled Georgia's 11th District unconstitutional on the grounds of "racial gerrymandering," but with the Justice Department. He said it was to blame for the court ruling because it had written the guidelines that governed creation of the unconstitutional 1992 lines. Collins called on Congress to reimburse the Georgia Legislature for the $25,000-a-day special session it held to redraw the districts, but his proposal was never considered.

At Home: Georgia's new congressional map did not greatly alter the boundaries or the conservative tilt of Collins' district, yet he briefly flirted in 1996 with seeking the open Senate seat of retiring Democrat Sam Nunn. Rather than take that risk, though, he chose to run again for the House.

Collins' Democratic challenger, Jim Chafin, sought to make a negative out of the incumbent's fealty to the GOP line. "Mac Collins has been a loyal foot soldier in Newt Gingrich's Republican

Revolution. . . . He deserves a medal for his loyalty in going along with the radical Republican leadership 99 percent of the time," Chafin said. "But he doesn't deserve a medal for independence or leadership. And he doesn't deserve your vote."

Voters did not buy the pitch. Collins won a third term with 61 percent of the vote.

The first round of 1990s redistricting in Georgia had worked to Collins' advantage because it crippled Democratic Rep. Richard Ray, dramatically altering his 3rd District and giving it a mixture of independent voters, Reagan Democrats and GOP suburbanites who did not know him. Collins won the 1992 GOP primary in the 3rd and then set out pillorying five-termer Ray as a politician who had lost touch with the folks back home.

Collins revived a 1980s charge that Ray, a member of the Armed Services Committee, had accepted an illegal contribution from Unisys, a defense contractor. Ray denied the charge, and he waged an aggressive, $1.1 million campaign defending his moderate-to-conservative record and tearing into Collins.

Both men opposed homosexuals in the military and supported anti-abortion policies, a capital gains tax cut and a balanced-budget constitutional amendment. But on ground largely unfamiliar to him, Ray could not overcome voters' anti-Congress mood. George Bush carried the 3rd by 11 percentage points, and Collins, who often stumped in jeans and cowboy boots and spent less than $250,000, won with 55 percent of the vote.

In 1994, Collins swatted away an aggressive challenge from Democratic attorney Fred Overby, who spent more than $1 million but took only 34 percent of the vote.

HOUSE ELECTIONS

1996 General		
Mac Collins (R)	120,251	(61%)
Jim Chafin (D)	76,538	(39%)
1994 General		
Mac Collins (R)	94,717	(66%)
Fred Overby (D)	49,828	(34%)

Previous Winning Percentages: **1992** (55%)

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

	Receipts	Receipts from PACs	Expenditures
1996			
Collins (R)	$527,416	$289,014 (55%)	$485,354
Chafin (D)	$123,915	$34,450 (28%)	$122,393
1994			
Collins (R)	$504,907	$191,807 (38%)	$503,867
Overby (D)	$1,294,536	$92,100 (7%)	$1,284,414

DISTRICT VOTE FOR PRESIDENT

1996		1992	
D	88,260 (43%)	**D**	82,790 (40%)
R	104,247 (50%)	**R**	96,444 (46%)
I	13,525 (7%)	**I**	28,381 (14%)

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	32	68	98	2	98	2
1995	15	85	97	1	95	4
1994	36	63	90	8	86	14
1993	29	71	94	6	91	9

INTEREST GROUP RATINGS

Year	ADA	AFL-CIO	CCUS	ACU
1996	5	n/a	94	100
1995	0	0	100	92
1994	0	22	75	95
1993	10	25	82	100

ZIP CODES

Georgia's 3rd District

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