

**Barbara Jordan**

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BARBARA JORDAN - Member of Congress from Texas  
(District 18)

Barbara Jordan is a very eloquent and effective Congresswoman. Barbara Jordan is the daughter of a Baptist preacher who moonlighted as a warehouse clerk to support his family. She graduated from all-Black Texas Southern University magna cum laude and earned her law degree from Boston University. When she came home to Houston, she set up law practice in her parent's home.

She lost in two tries for the Texas House of Representatives, but was elected to the Texas Senate in 1966. At the time, the Texas Senate had 31 members. Thirty were male and white. At the time she was elected, there was a lot of murmuring about "the washer-woman" and worse in the Senate cloakrooms. Four years later, she was president pro tempore of the Senate and one of its most respected members. When Ms. Jordan made her impassioned speech during the Watergate hearings, almost all of the members of the Texas Senate crowded around a television set to cheer her on, according to Molly Ivins in an article in the Atlantic.

In the same special issue of the Atlantic, Congresswoman Jordan explains that she gained the respect of the Senators by hard work. She learned the rules, and she learned the way around the rules, a skill which earned her the respect of some of the masters of the parliamentary finesse. She also did favors in abundance, and called in her i.o.u.'s only rarely. When she did, she let the opposition know that she had them beat in advance and in private, to prevent their embarrassment on the floor of the Senate.

Her accomplishments in the Texas Senate included legislation on welfare reform, minimum-wage and voter registration. Lyndon Johnson, always quick to pick up on a likely protegee, took Jordan under his

wing. He frequently made her a guest at the White House, a rare occurrence for a state legislator. He also got together with his buddies in Houston and Austin to put Jordan on the Congressional redistricting committee after the 1970 Census to ensure that a district in Congress for her was created. In Congress she was to represent the "Houston oil crowd" as well as her mostly-Black and Chicano constituents. LBJ also pulled some arms and called in some old political dues to get Jordan appointed to the Judiciary Committee. A check of Jordan's voting record shows that she has taken care of the oil interests in Texas.

In Congress, Jordan has earned the respect of her colleagues by her precision - both in speaking and on legislative matters. She refuses to be tied down, and is sometimes at odds with both the Black and Women's Caucuses. She refused to sit with Bella Abzug during the discussion of important women's legislation, and announced that she would move if Abzug tried to sit by her. A member of Jordan's staff pointed out that "(she) is not a standard bearer . . . She knows how to make the important move. What she does as a legislator is more important to her than rhetoric or being considered a liberal."

Her ability is so respected that Representative Peter Rodino checked parliamentary and judicial procedure with her during the Watergate hearings, and conservatives consult on legislative matters with her because of her skills and honesty.

She is also known as a horse-trader. In 1970, she supported Lloyd Bentsen's bid for the Senate after he had run, and won, conservative campaign against liberal former Senator Ralph Yarborough. Texas liberals felt betrayed, but as her consistently - high ADA ratings prove, she does not let them down on legislation.

Jordan is unable to delegate much authority, and this has caused her some problems in dealing with the many issues which confront Members of Congress. Yet she insists upon getting involved with every one. Only her extraordinary energy and drive has enabled her to do this. She spends 14 to 18 hours a day at her job, but her pre-occupation with her job has caused some of the people who come to see her to say that she is preoccupied and superficial. There is some truth in this, because she is spread so thin across the Congressional board, and she is unable to devote much time to every single matter that comes up. She really needs to learn to delegate authority. If she does, she could be a great Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, or better yet, with John Tower in disfavor, even among Texas Republicans, and with his seat open for election in 1978, Senator from Texas. In the meantime, Barbara Jordan will remain a rarity: a Member of Congress who knows how to get what she wants, both through legislative means and through legislative manipulation, a master of the Congressional process, and as stirring a speaker as she was on the day during the Watergate hearings when she spoke of the brilliance of the American Constitution, which originally protected only the white and free, and how it has expanded to become the protector of everyone in this country.

Jordan is 40, unmarried, and a Baptist.