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Biography of Strom Thurmond

Strom Thurmond

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Thurmond, James Strom - Formerly Lawyer and Farmer, at Edgefield; born December 5, 1902, at Edgefield; son of J. William and Eleanor Gertrude (Strom) Thurmond of Edgefield; married Miss Jean Crouch of Elko, South Carolina, November 7, 1947; graduate of Clemson College, B. S. 1923; studied psychology and other special courses in summer schools thereafter; studied law at night and admitted to South Carolina Bar December 13, 1930, and subsequently admitted to practice before the various Federal Courts, including the United States Supreme Court; served as County Attorney and City Attorney; served as teacher in McCormick, Ridge Spring and Edgefield High Schools, 1923-29; member County Board of Education, Edgefield County, 1924; County Superintendent of Education, Edgefield County, 1929-33; State Senator from Edgefield County, 1933-38; while in the Senate, he was a member of the Social Security Committee that prepared and sponsored the first law providing for assistance to the old people, the blind, and needy children, the joint committee of the Senate and House that prepared and sponsored the first Rural Electrification Act, and the joint committee that prepared and sponsored the act to construct the Santee-Cooper Power and Navigation Project, sponsored legislation for increased State-supported school term, school textbook system, school attendance law, prevention of chiseling of teachers' salaries, new buildings at the State colleges and other legislation for the promotion of education, Soil Conservation Act, the Wade Hampton State Office Building, and legislation for betterment of labor conditions and protection of farmers; Circuit Judge of South Carolina, 1938-46 (served in Army in World War II for 3½ years during this period), and while Circuit Judge occasionally served as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the State.

Served in Officers' Reserve Corps 1924-37 and subsequent to World War II, and as Officer in State Guard 1941-42; Volunteered for service in World War II the first day war was declared against Germany, obtained a leave of absence from his position of Circuit Judge and entered upon active duty April 17, 1942, member of the First Army and attached to the famous 82nd Airborne Division for the invasion of Europe, served in all battles of the First Army which fought through France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Czechoslovakia and Germany, transferred to Pacific Theatre after the war in Europe ended and was serving in the Phillipine Islands when the war against Japan terminated, discharged from service January 20, 1946, received the following decorations, awards and medals for his war service: Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services on the Continent of Europe, Bronze Star for heroism on the field of battle in France, Army Commendation Ribbon for service of an exceptionally high order in both quality and volume of output, Purple Heart for injuries received in action against the enemy in Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944 (D-Day), Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance.
GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA (Continued)

of duty in action in the initial assault on the Coast of France, Bronze Arrowhead for service as a member of the Assault Troops landing in enemy-held territory, France on D-Day, Five Battle Stars for campaigns in Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes, and Central Europe, the Cross of Military Service by United Daughters of the Confederacy for faithful and honorable service, Selective Service Medal for patriotic services, Cross of the Officer of the Order of the Crown by the Belgian Government for services to the cause of freedom, Croix de Guerre avec Etoile de Vermiel by the French Government for exceptional services of war rendered in the course of the operations for the liberation of France, medals for service in the American, European and Pacific Theaters, and the Victory Medal.

Upon release from the Army he returned to the Circuit Bench; resigned from the Bench when he announced for Governor on May 15, 1946; and in the race for Governor was elected over ten opponents; has served in such varied capacities as Superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School, County Chairman of American Red Cross, President of the Clemson College Alumni Association, Trustee of Winthrop College (the South Carolina College for Women), State Councilor of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, President of the Lions Club, Vice-President of the South Carolina Bar Association, delegate to the National Democratic Conventions of 1932 and 1936, and member of State and National Defense Committees of American Legion; is also a member of the American Bar Association, Reserve Officers Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans of Global Wars, Military Order of the World Wars, Masonic Order, Woodman of the World, Knights of Pythias, Loyal Order of Moose, Sons of American Revolution, South Carolina Historical Society (Charleston), Grange and South Carolina Farm Bureau; honorary member of the Clariosophic Literary Society of the University of South Carolina, the Strawberry Leaf Club (Forensic) of Winthrop College and Tiger Brotherhood and the Blue Key (Leadership fraternities) of Clemson College; a prominent street in Edgefield was named for him, and also "Thurmond Hall" the new Home Economics Building at Winthrop College; member Executive Committee of National Governors' Conference and Chairman Freight Rate Committee of Southern Governors' Conference; Baptist Democrat.
During the first 18 months of Governor Thurmond's administration, the following progressive steps have been taken:

GOVERNMENT REORGANIZATION

1. Commission to study reorganization of the executive and administrative branches of the State Government.
2. Commission to study reorganization and streaming of Legislature.
3. Constitutional Amendment removing clemency power from Governor.
4. Provision for microfilming of State records to save space and rentals.
5. Committee to study outmoded portions of the 1895 State Constitution.
6. Measures to end dual office holding.
7. A measure to end the practice of securing compensation and expenses from more than one State department.

EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

1. Best teacher-pay schedule in the State's history.
2. A great Building Program to modernize State Institutions.
3. A system of Area Trade Schools to teach vocational skills.
4. Increased appropriations for vocational education.
5. A permanent nine-months school term.
6. Reorganization of State Education Department for greater efficiency.
8. Enlarged appropriations for libraries, Negro education, adult education, and school bus transportation.
9. State participation in the Regional Education Plan of Southern States.
10. State payment of County Superintendents of Education.
11. Increased financial aid to higher institutions of learning.

AGRICULTURAL ADVANCEMENTS

1. State Marketing Commission to establish and construct a system of State Farm Markets.
2. Provision for construction of Farm-to-Market roads.
3. Committee to solicit Federal support for sale and export of tobacco.

ATTENTION TO NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Increased appropriations for State Parks.
2. Committee to study possible legislation for proper use of fresh water resources.
3. Memorial to Congress urging completion of Clark's Hill Hydroelectric and navigation project.
4. Continued development of ports and expansion of commerce.

IMPROVEMENTS IN FISCAL POLICY

1. Inclusion of all public appropriations in State Appropriation Bill, to keep public informed of how funds are spent.
2. Committee to study property evaluation for tax assessments.
3. Exemption from taxation of household goods and furniture.
Sound financial operation, leading to accumulation of surplus of more than $6,000,000 on July 1, 1948, after taking care of the multi-million-dollar building program.

PUBLIC HEALTH ADVANCEMENTS

1. Standards for hospitals and provision for their regular inspection.
2. More adequate hospital facilities, including a $500,000 cancer control clinic and a teaching hospital to cost more than $3,000,000.
3. Appropriation of $3,660,000 for county health centers and other purposes.
4. Creation of a formula for distribution of Federal health funds to counties.
5. Provision for committing to sanatoria persons suffering from tuberculosis who constitute a health menace.
6. Creation of 10 medical scholarships to provide medical care in rural areas where no physician is available.

LIQUOR CONTROL MEASURES

1. A graduated wholesale and retail tax to channel excessive profits of liquor dealers into the State Treasury.

MISCELLANEOUS IMPROVEMENTS

1. Creation of an agency to assist in securing war surplus property.
2. Broadening of public welfare program, with increased benefits to needy.
3. Legislation to decrease incidence of drunken driving on highways.
5. Transfer of State Identification Bureau from Highway Department to Law Enforcement office, leading to creation of State Bureau of Investigation.
7. An intensive drive to bring new industries to South Carolina.

Governor Thurmond is now actively seeking to effect the following improvements for South Carolina:

1. A centralized State Purchasing Department, to save many thousands of dollars annually through business-like procurement.
2. A Merit Personnel System for the State Government, to give fair and equal treatment to all State employees.
3. A new State Penitentiary, for a more adequate program of rehabilitating our criminal element.
4. Legislation for a proper system of County Government.
5. Further Public Health legislation, including the reorganization of the State Health Department for greater efficiency.
6. The Australian (or secret) ballot for our elections.
7. Adequate voting laws.
8. A State Bureau of Investigation, to modernize our State aid to the police officers of South Carolina.
9. Co-ordination of our educational system.
10. A clinic for the treatment of alcoholism.
11. An industrial school for Negro girls.
12. An interim appointment law, so that vacancies may be filled properly by the Governor when the General Assembly is not in session.
13. Adequate labor legislation, including regulation of child employment, a maximum hour and minimum wage law, laws to insure proper health conditions in our factories, and regulation of hours women may work.
14. Regulation of schoolbus transportation.
15. Removal of the poll tax as a voting requirement.
16. Voting machines for our elections.
17. Adequate veterans' legislation.
18. An occupational disease law.
19. Regulation of child placing and adoptions.
20. More strict regulation of the liquor traffic and local option for our counties.
22. Clarification of laws governing juvenile delinquency.
23. A comprehensive reforestation program to preserve our natural wealth.
24. More adequate fish & game protection.