Russ Feingold

United States Senator

Biography of U.S. Senator Russ Feingold

"[Feingold] showed that a politician need not shelve his conscience to achieve success."

– "A Principled Win," The Washington Post, November 5, 1998

Russ Feingold is an independent voice for Wisconsin and the nation in the United States Senate – an effective legislator who works across party lines, and a respected leader in both domestic and foreign policy.

Best known for leading the fight for campaign finance reform in the Senate with Republican Senator John McCain, Feingold has been a tireless leader in bipartisan efforts to restore fiscal discipline in Congress and reduce the federal deficit. He is also a leading voice for protecting privacy and personal freedoms, having cast the Senate's lone vote against the USA PATRIOT Act – legislation which members of both parties now agree must be changed to protect the civil liberties of law-abiding Americans.

Fighting for Wisconsin

"The nation needs more leaders similar to Feingold – a Democrat in the Wisconsin Progressive Party tradition – who don't just talk the talk, they walk the walk."

– "When Wis. Talks, Feingold Listens," The Wausau Daily Herald, June 3, 2001

"Feingold shows a knack for thinking through issues on a case-by-case basis instead of marching in a partisan parade."

– "Feingold Sets the Bar a Little Higher," The Door County Advocate, June 28, 2002

Since he was first elected to the Senate in 1992, Russ Feingold has built a record as a staunch advocate for working families by fighting for measures to lower health care costs, stop the flow of jobs overseas, and preserve and strengthen our public education system. He has made combating terrorism a top priority and has worked to give more resources to first responders on the front lines at home.

Feingold stays in touch with Wisconsin's communities by visiting each of the state's 72 counties every year to hold his Listening Sessions. At these town hall-style meetings, Feingold hears directly about the issues that matter to the people of Wisconsin, from supporting Wisconsin's farmers to ensuring that our nation's veterans are aware of the benefits they have earned.

Feingold's record of achievement for Wisconsin includes authoring the law that created the Rural AED Program. This program provides federal assistance to help

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Biographical Highlights

- Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1992; Re-elected in 1998 and 2004
- U.S. Senate Committee Assignments: Judiciary, Foreign Relations, Budget and Special Committee on Aging
- Elected to the Wisconsin State Senate in 1982; Re-elected 1986 and 1990
- Practicing Attorney, Madison, Wisconsin, 1979 to 1985, at Foley & Lardner and La Follette & Sinykin

Education

- Harvard University Law School, Juris Doctor with Honors, 1979
- Rhodes Scholar, Final Honours School of Jurisprudence, Magdalen College, Oxford University, Bachelor of Arts with Honours, 1977
- University of Wisconsin - Madison, Phi Beta Kappa, Bachelor of Arts with Honors, 1975
- Janesville Craig High School, Janesville, Wisconsin, 1971

states increase public access to defibrillators for victims of cardiac arrest, bringing needed grant money to the state. He spearheaded successful Senate efforts to create 23 new teams around the country to respond in the event of a weapons of mass destruction attack, including a new team in Wisconsin. In 2003, Feingold authored an amendment that helped make the inclusion of Medicare fairness provisions in the Medicare prescription drug law possible, bringing over $200 million to the state. Feingold has also been a leader in the fight to stop the Department of Veterans Affairs from blocking health care marketing and outreach to veterans in Wisconsin and across the country; he was successful in passing a provision to overturn this policy that was signed into law in 2004.

A National Leader in Domestic and Foreign Policy

Senator Feingold is proud to represent Wisconsin, and carry forward the state's progressive tradition, in the U.S. Senate. In addition to the landmark McCain-Feingold bill, Feingold's long record of accomplishment on reform issues includes his key leadership role in the successful efforts to pass the congressional gift ban and lobbying disclosure legislation, as well as work on many other reform initiatives.

Feingold is also recognized leader in the fight to cut wasteful spending and reduce the nation's growing deficit. A ten-time winner of the Concord Coalition's deficit hawk award, he is the lead author of legislation to institute Pay-As-You-Go legislation to enforce limits on federal spending in Congress. As a member of the Senate Budget Committee, he has worked with Republican colleagues to reform budget rules and restore fiscal sanity to the congressional budgeting process.

A member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Feingold has brought critical attention to the need to combat terrorism without undermining the privacy and civil liberties of law-abiding Americans. Feingold also has played a lead role in protecting the rights of consumers and preserving access to the courts. As the ranking member of the Subcommittee on the Constitution, Feingold works to protect the civil rights of all Americans, including fighting against discrimination in the workplace and in the criminal justice system.

As a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, and the Ranking Member of the Africa Subcommittee, Feingold brings a critical focus to the fight against terrorism. Feingold opposed the war with Iraq because he understood from the start that it would direct critical resources away from the fight against the forces that attacked us September 11, 2001, and their allies. Feingold works to focus attention and diplomatic resources on countries in Africa that may be havens for terrorist activity. Finally, he has long been an advocate for making human rights a priority in our foreign relations, in Africa and around the world.

Background

In 1917, Feingold's family settled in Janesville, Wisconsin, where he was born to parents Leon and Sylvia on March 2, 1953. Feingold graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1975, received a degree from Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar in 1977, and then went on to Harvard Law School, where he earned his degree in 1979.

In 1982, in his first try for elective office, Feingold defeated a longtime incumbent and was elected to the Wisconsin State Senate for the 27th District. Feingold was re-elected in 1986 and 1990. When Feingold first ran for the U.S. Senate in 1992, he won a tough three-way primary, and went on to defeat a two-term incumbent. Feingold was reelected to the Senate in 1998 and 2004.

Feingold has two daughters, Jessica and Ellen, and his wife, Mary Feingold, has two sons, Sam and Ted Speerschneider. The Feingolds live in Middleton, Wisconsin.

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