

**The Life and Career
of
Congressman Joe Pitts
—
U.S. Congress (1997-2017)**

Created Fall 2016 by various staffers

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Born in the Kentucky Bluegrass in 1939, Joseph Pitts was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996 at the age of 57.

However, his public service truly began many years before. At the age of 24, Joe Pitts enlisted in the United States Air Force, where he completed five and a half years of active duty service and three tours of Vietnam. Afterwards he returned to civilian life as a high school math and science teacher, then left to run a small plant nursery business with his wife, Ginny.

In 1972, after several years of volunteering in local politics, Joe's friends urged him to run for Pennsylvania state representative. He won the seat, and after serving in the state house for 24 years, in 1996 he ran for an open seat in U.S. Congress and won.

A champion for the family and traditional values, Representative Pitts played a crucial role in steering the U.S. House of Representatives in a conservative direction. During his 20-year tenure, he did so most notably by chairing the Values Action Team from 1998–2016. This team advocates for pro-family legislation in the House. When reflecting on Mr. Pitts' role, Speaker Paul Ryan called him the "conscience of our Congress" and stated that conservatives as a whole would miss "his commitment to the defense of life and our conservative principles."

"He's one in a million," Pitts' former chief of staff (1997 - 2002) Bill Wichterman confirmed. "Congressman Pitts is interested in policy, not headlines. He does not seek to exalt himself but is willing to let others take credit for his good work. He is a man of deep and abiding integrity, genuinely humble, unfailingly civil and kind to all – including his political opponents."

During his time in Congress, Mr. Pitts was also a champion of human rights, particularly religious freedom, at home and abroad. In 1996, during his first term, he founded a caucus to advocate for religious prisoners suffering at the hand of foreign governments called the Religious Prisoners Task Force. In 2000 he pushed for Congress to authorize the Congressional China Commission, and in 2001 he was appointed to serve on it to monitor the country's compliance with international human rights standards. He also co-chaired the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission from 2015 - 2016 and held numerous hearings to investigate and publicize religious freedom violations, indentured servitude in foreign countries, and even genocide.

"The fact that he prioritized international human rights during his tenure – issues that seldom yield a political benefit – remains a testament to his character and faithfulness as a servant," Legislative Director Carson Middleton stated.

Chief of Staff Monica Volante added, "[His] faith has been the impetus for his work on behalf of the unborn, families, and the persecuted and displaced around the world."

In 1999, because of the time he spent as an electronic warfare officer in the Air Force, Mr. Pitts founded the Electronic Warfare Working Group to better educate Congress on the needs of the electronic warfare community. The same year, he also became a commissioner on

the Helsinki Commission, where he helped monitor 57 OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation of Europe) member countries for compliance with the Helsinki Act.

In 2010, Representative Pitts' primary legislative role shifted when he accepted the role of Chairman for the Energy & Commerce Committee's Health Subcommittee. For six years he used this platform to fight for the lives of the unborn and battle against President Obama's healthcare law. He also led the charge to emphasize the evolving role of medical devices and medical imaging technology in the medical industry and worked to reform the Medicare and Medicaid programs so they could be fiscally sustainable. In all, Congressman Pitts helped to pass 48 health-related bills into law (as of 9/13/16).

Mr. Pitts' impact was not limited to his legislative accomplishments. His extraordinary leadership extended to the way he conducted his personal office. "He works hard but without neglecting family or over-burdening his staff," former Chief of Staff Wichterman attested.

This document reflects the achievements and legacy of Congressman Joseph Pitts during his 20 years in the United States House of Representatives. May God bless him for his vigorous and selfless work on behalf of the 16th Congressional District of Pennsylvania and the United States of America.



PENNSYLVANIA'S 16TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During Congressman Pitts' tenure in Congress, he loyally served the people of Pennsylvania's 16th Congressional District. The following is a limited list of his accomplishments in the district.

1. Facilitated the move of Glaxo, Smith, and Kline to Marietta.
2. Worked closely with the Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA) and the Berks Area and Reading Transit Authority (BARTA) to provide maximum flexibility in the use of federal funds.
3. Obtained federal transportation funding for numerous infrastructure improvements throughout the 16th congressional district, including the new Route 30/41 by-pass around the town of Gap.
4. Opened and processed over 45,000 congressional inquiries (cases) on behalf of constituents.
5. Provided prescription drug coverage to senior citizen constituents and additional resources for veterans.
6. Worked very closely with the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT), and Amtrak to make substantial improvements to the Keystone Corridor as it passes through the district. These improvements included cement ties allowing for higher speeds and major improvements and renovation of the Elizabethtown and Lancaster RR stations.
7. After 9/11 worked closely with the Lancaster Airport Authority (LAA) to maintain Essential Air Service (EAS), allowing for commercial airline service.
8. Organized a high-level conference with key Members of Congress, agency and department heads, doctors, and other health professionals to discuss how to bring new and innovative health care products to the market more efficiently.
9. Through legislative leadership, worked to provide protections for children who use the internet.
10. Actively fought and mobilized citizens against a proposed casino in downtown Lancaster.
11. Hosted conferences on women's health and business opportunities.
12. In conjunction with the Small Business Administration, hosted several working sessions on exporting, starting a new business, and selling to the federal government.

13. Due to an excellent Service Academy Program, put hundreds of fine young men and women in the various academies.
14. Had a Youth Advisory Council that allowed him to stay in touch with high school students and provide them learning opportunities.
15. Organized and hosted several Human Rights Conferences.
16. Working closely with then-US Attorney Pat Meehan, facilitated the development of the US 222 anti-heroin Corridor Initiative.
17. Worked closely with the Lancaster County Court of Common Pleas to establish a Veteran's Court.
18. Organized and hosted a summit on gangs in Chester County.
19. Facilitated the establishment of a new Lancaster County emergency communications system by negotiating compromises by various stake-holders.
20. Organized a series of "Hope Summits" on topics relevant to constituents.
21. From 1998 until 2006, hosted bi-annual Ambassador Visits where he brought Ambassadors and other high-ranking embassy personnel to Pa. District 16 for four days.
22. Worked closely with the Amish community to protect their way of life and allow them to live amongst other citizens, but separately.
23. Aggressively advocated for the city of Reading, Pa. to be awarded a City Revitalization and Improvement Zone (CRIZ) by the state of Pa.
24. Worked closely with various stake-holders to prevent the School District of Reading from being taken over by the Pa. Department of Education.
25. Facilitated and coordinated efforts to preserve and protect the Revolutionary War Brandywine Battlefield.
26. Worked closely with various groups to pass legislation protecting the White Clay Creek.
27. Aided local preservation groups in preserving Wheatland, the home of President James Buchanan.

