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*Governor, State of South Carolina*

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## FLOYD DAVIDSON SPENCE — IN MEMORIAM

JAMES H. HODGES\*

What a daunting task to try and note the amazing accomplishments of one who will be remembered as a truly great South Carolinian. An incredible man whose determination to serve the citizens of South Carolina and the United States contributed immeasurably to the American way of life. A true gentlemen and statesman, he gave all of himself, while asking for nothing in return. A kind soul who preferred to listen rather than boast. A veteran lawmaker whose integrity and distinction among his peers were beyond reproach. This is Floyd Spence.

Congressman Spence served South Carolina and his country with honor, thoughtfulness, and unquestioning devotion for more than a half century. He touched so many lives in such a positive manner, a true testament to his character and influence. He served in many different capacities through his distinguished career. From U.S. Navy veteran to State House member to State Senator to U.S. Congressman, Floyd Spence will always be remembered not only for his amazing success but also for his innate ability to remain true to every cause on behalf of all constituents.

Congressman Floyd Spence was born on April 9, 1928, in Columbia, South Carolina, to the late James Wilson and Addie Jane Lucas Spence. A graduate of Lexington High School, he achieved All-State honors in football and participated in the 1947 Shrine Bowl game. His intense desire and love for sports led him to The University of South Carolina where he attended on an athletic scholarship. Though a knee-injury ended his days of playing football, he went on to coach the freshman football team and become the captain of the track team. This is just a mere scintilla of evidence which shows Congressman Spence's amazing determination to overcome adversity that would often befall any other individual. It was here in college that his success in elections began. He was elected: President of the Student Body, President of the South Carolina Association of Student Governments, and Junior Class President. Congressman Spence was also recognized for his amazing accomplishments: he was recipient of the Algernon-Sydney Sullivan Award as the outstanding male student and listed in *Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities*. He graduated in 1952 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English.

Shortly after his graduation from college, Floyd married Lula Hancock Drake on December 22, 1952. Together they had four sons: David, Zack, Benjamin, and Caldwell. On July, 3, 1988, he married the former Deborah Ellen Williams. A true family man, he was a devoted husband and father.

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\* Governor, State of South Carolina.

Congressman Spence's love for the military began while a teenager in high school as he enlisted as a recruit in the United States Naval Reserve. As an undergraduate, he served as the Battalion Sub-Commander of the Navy ROTC Unit. Upon his graduation from The University of South Carolina, he was commissioned an Ensign and entered active duty during the Korean Conflict. Between 1952 - 1954, he served in the USS CARTER HALL (LSD-3) and the USS LSM-397. Congressman Spence went on to serve as Commanding Officer of a Naval Reserve Surface Division and the Group Commander of all Naval Reserve Units in Columbia. In 1988, he retired from the United States Naval Reserve with the rank of Captain.

The University of South Carolina School of Law was the next stop for Congressman Spence. Once again, Floyd rose to the top of his class. He was elected Editor in Chief of the *South Carolina Law Quarterly*.<sup>1</sup> He was also elected as Chief Justice of the Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity and Vice President of the Law Federation. In 1956, Floyd graduated from law school receiving a degree of Bachelor of Laws. Upon graduation, he began the practice of law as a partner in the firm of Callison and Spence. Always devoted to his clients, Floyd continued to practice in the firm until his election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1971.

Congressman Spence began his political career in 1956, as a Democrat, in the South Carolina House of Representatives. Always an advocate for improving educational opportunities in South Carolina,<sup>2</sup> Floyd was instrumental in the building of Midlands Technical College. In 1962, he helped initiate the development of the two-party system in South Carolina by becoming the first member of the General Assembly to switch to the Republican Party. Strom Thurmond followed in his footsteps two years later. Though he switched parties, Floyd was a friend to all citizens of South Carolina and his fellow legislators. Later in 1962, he narrowly lost in his initial bid for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives. Floyd remained determined to his cause as a public servant and was elected, as a Republican, to the South Carolina Senate in 1966. In affirmation of his belief in the two-party system, State Senator Spence introduced a resolution "to create a Committee to investigate changes necessary to accommodate the two-party organization in the General Assembly."<sup>3</sup> He also served as the Senate Minority Leader and as Chairman of the Joint Senate-House Internal Security Committee.

In 1970, Floyd made his way into national politics being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. He was subsequently re-elected for fifteen consecutive

1. 8 S.C. L. Q. 1 (1955). The *South Carolina Law Quarterly* is the former name of the current *South Carolina Law Review*. Even then, Congressman Spence took no credit for his hard work and gave appreciation to those he felt deserved it: "Our appreciation is extended . . . to the writers of the herein published articles for their cooperation in making this Survey possible." Floyd D. Spence, *Editor's Foreword*, 8 S.C. L. Q. 1 (1955).

2. See H.R. 2507, 93rd Gen. Assem., 2nd Sess. (S.C. 1960). This resolution provided for the study of an Area Trade School in Lexington County. *Id.* See also H.R. 1298, 94th Gen. Assem., 1st Sess. (S.C. 1961) (proposing a resolution for the appointment of an advisory committee to research technical training).

3. S.R. 336, 97th Gen. Assem., 1st Sess. (S.C. 1967).

terms. He has often been cited as one of the strongest advocates for a strong national defense and veterans affairs. What some people do not realize is that Congressman Spence was directly responsible for introducing the bill which created the Congaree Swamp National Preserve.<sup>4</sup> His own testimony before the Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation describing the Congaree Swamp is quite telling:

For a number of years, there has been support for preservation of the Congaree Swamp. . . . The tract's best known features are its large trees, with an unusually high concentration of record and near record trees. Seventeen State record-size trees, five of which are national records or nominees, have been located within the area. Many of the trees are believed to be as old as 300 years.<sup>5</sup>

This shows Floyd's willingness to continually support the efforts of his home state, even in the midst of the business of Washington, D.C. While his schedule on a national level took more and more of his time, he made sure he came home to attend all local and county festivals.

Congressman Spence was also at the forefront of balancing the federal budget. In 1973, Floyd introduced the first bill to amend the Constitution which would balance the budget, as well as mandating a system to repay the national debt.<sup>6</sup> He believed that the constitutional amendment was necessary because Congress was unable to control its own prolific spending. Floyd enlisted support not only within his own party, but he also crossed the aisle garnering support from members of the Democratic party. A true believer of fiscal integrity, this type of conduct was indicative of the Spence model of governing, setting aside ideological differences in order to do what was best for the country.

The main tenet of Congressman Spence's thirty years of service in the House lay with asserting a strong national defense. It was often remarked in the hallowed halls of Congress that the men and women of our armed forces had no better friend than Floyd Spence. He served on the powerful House National Security Committee. From 1995 - 2001, Congressman Spence was the Chairman of the committee, which returned to its former name—House Armed Services Committee. Floyd firmly believed that Congress had the power, as mandated by the Constitution, to raise and support the military.<sup>7</sup>

During his tenure as Chairman, he provided the armed forces with the largest pay raise in a generation, increased the retirement benefits of veterans, and focused

4. H.R. 11891 & H.R. 12111, 94th Cong. (1976).

5. *Congaree National Swamp Preserve, South Carolina: Hearing on H.R. 11891 and H.R. 12111 Before Subcomm. on Nat'l Parks and Recreation, 94th Cong. 12-13 (1976)* (statement of Floyd D. Spence, Member, U.S. House of Representatives).

6. H.R. 332, 93rd Cong. (1973). *See also* EDWIN J. FEULNER, JR., *CONSERVATIVES STALK THE HOUSE: THE REPUBLICAN STUDY COMMITTEE 1970 - 1982*, 86-87 (1983) (noting Congressman Floyd Spence's desire to balance the federal budget).

7. U.S. CONST. art. I, § 7, cls. 12 - 16.

his attention to increased housing and health care. It is important to note, that while Floyd saw the complete necessity for arming our service members with the most sophisticated weapons, he also cared deeply about their general welfare and quality of life. He has always shown a strong bipartisanship when it came to maintaining our commitment to the military. To honor the unparalleled efforts of Congressman Spence, the House Armed Services Committee commissioned a portrait of him in September 2000. At the ceremony, then Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, the keynote speaker said, "Floyd, I wanted to be here tonight to say thank you for setting the standard. May it always fly as high as you have raised it."<sup>8</sup>

Congressman Spence was honored by the members of Congress for his constant efforts to bolster and support the military by naming the fiscal year 2001 defense authorization bill after him. The bill became law and was known as the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001.<sup>9</sup> Floyd's own words regarding the military are most telling:

We are a free and secure Nation today because of our military. Our military fought to give us our independence and freedom in the very first instance, in the Revolutionary War. . . . We owe it not only to our people serving today in the military, but to all of those who have gone before us and sacrificed to make the freedoms that we enjoy possible. . . .<sup>10</sup>

Floyd Spence was indeed a great man with the constant determination to never draw away from any personal challenge. He was the survivor of double-lung transplant surgery in 1988. In 2000, he was the recipient of a kidney transplant from his own son David. He had an unwavering will to live and the ability to make each day more productive than the last. His zest for life was evidenced in his love for his family. His enduring spirit is a model for all of those who face obstacles in life and his mission against adversity fortified by justified confidence in his abilities.

A man with utmost integrity, he also served for thirteen years as the Ranking Member of the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (Ethics Committee). Those who served with Floyd always note that he was a man of his word and one you could always count on when times were tough. He was a humble man who refused to waiver under pressure and a man devoted to his strong belief in God. With constituent service as *his* hallmark, his virtue and values were always placed in the best interests of South Carolinians. Floyd Spence was a man you could trust.

For those who knew Congressman Spence, they are well enriched by his caring nature, his pursuit of freedom, and his high moral character. He counseled

8. Secretary William S. Cohen, Address at the Ceremony Unveiling the Portrait of The Honorable Floyd D. Spence (Sept. 25, 2000).

9. Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 106-398, 114 Stat. 1654 (2000).

10. Congressman Floyd D. Spence, Address at the Ceremony Unveiling the Portrait of The Honorable Floyd D. Spence (Sept. 25, 2000).

Presidents about the about the steadfast need for a strong national defense, while at the same time listening to constituents who needed his assistance. He was a companion to his wife and children and a friend to citizens of this state. The most humble of men, he wielded a big stick—though he would never tell anybody. He was a public servant for over forty years who was known through the halls of Congress as a kind and gentle soul.

For those who knew Congressman Floyd Spence, the words of Senator Fritz Hollings envision our own sentiments: “He was an outstanding public servant, a dedicated South Carolinian and a longtime friend.”<sup>11</sup> Congressman Spence gave us all something to live for in his example as a resolute fighter with great respect and consideration. We were fortunate to know him as he enriched every life he touched, and we will miss him greatly.

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11. *U.S. Rep. Spence Dies*, THE POST AND COURIER (Charleston, S.C.), Aug. 17, 2001, at A1 (quoting Senator Ernest F. Hollings).

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