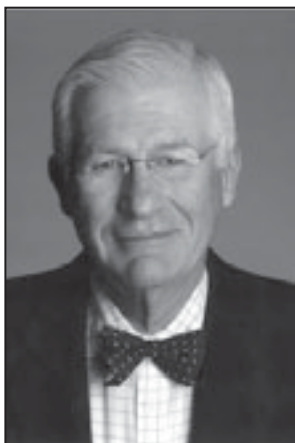


Courtesy • Truthfulness • Responsibility

The Honorable Thomas J. Bliley, Jr.



Too often, I think, people come to Washington and get carried away with the trappings of office. Stick with what got you here.

—Tom Bliley

Thomas J. Bliley, Jr., is a longtime public servant, most prominently representing Virginia in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1981 to 2001. Today, after three decades in public service, Tom serves as a senior government affairs advisor in the Washington office of Steptoe & Johnson, LLP. His career is a classic among Washington stories.

Tom is a lifelong Virginian. Born in Chesterfield, Virginia, during the Great Depression, Tom attended Catholic schools growing up. Faith was important to the Bliley family. Tom grew up with many heroic relatives who unselfishly gave their entire lives to God's service within the Catholic Church: Tom's uncle as Prior of a Benedictine Abbey and two of his aunts as nuns, one a Benedictine, and the other a Sister of Charity.

Following high school, Tom received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Georgetown University in 1952, and then he chose to give himself unselfishly to public service and took a commission with the United State Navy for several years, rising to the rank of Lieutenant. In 1955, Tom married Mary Virginia. Together they have two children and four grandchildren.

Upon his return from naval service, Tom joined his family business, working in the funeral home that his father had established. Eventually, he became its president. In 1968, Tom made the most important professional decision of his life: he again entered public service, as the Vice Mayor of Richmond, Virginia. After just two years, he was elected Mayor of Richmond, and went on to serve in that capacity for seven years. His term encountered significant character-testing challenges, including the desegregation of Richmond's school system. While keeping taxes low and preventing onerous regulation on business during his term, Tom navigated tough political waters. His good character and willingness to listen to his constituents helped the city thrive.

In 1980, Tom's call to public service came again. Perhaps to the chagrin of Mary, his wife of now over fifty years, Tom ran for the seat in the Seventh District of Virginia in the U.S. House of Representatives. Tom's win was historic: he was the first Republican to win his district outright since Reconstruction. He won convincingly and has been a stalwart Washington supporter of conservative values ever since. Indeed, Tom's principles and his district's preferences have not always lined up. Tom is pro-life, while more than 65 percent of his district remains staunchly in favor of abortion rights. Nevertheless, Tom has always followed Edmund Burke's sage advice for representatives:

“As your Member of Parliament, I owe you my industry, but if I sacrifice my judgment for your opinion, I have not served you well.”

Tom started and ended in historic ways in the House. He was known for his pleasant demeanor and his gentlemanly manners. He also stood out by wearing his trademark bow ties. In Congress, he quickly gained a reputation for his abilities as a legislator. While still a Republican freshman, he was appointed to the powerful Energy and Commerce Committee, which exercises jurisdiction over energy, health care, telecommunications, consumer protection, and the environment. Tom was soon to make his mark in all these areas.

After a dozen years of service as a backbench Republican under Demo-

cratic rule, Tom joined forces with Newt Gingrich and other conservatives to become architects of the Republican takeover of the House in 1994. The historic election in that year could not have been possible without the perseverance of Tom and his colleagues.

The shift from Democratic to Republican control had a big impact on Tom's life. He was named Chairman of the Commerce Committee, the oldest committee in the House. The ensuing six years brought a whirlwind of legislative achievement. This era occurred under a Democratic president—Bill Clinton—offering more evidence of Tom's excellent talent at teamwork and bipartisanship. Here are some examples of what Tom accomplished by practicing principled politics:

- The Telecommunications Act of 1996. Tom's vision to unleash the market forces of the nation's telecommunications industry is widely heralded as one of the key boosts to the economy in the late 1990s and an essential force in promoting the Internet as an everyday experience for most Americans.
- The State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). In 1998, Tom played a critical role in ensuring that all children were provided health insurance. As a father of adopted children, he has a special sensitivity to the needs of uninsured, needy children. SCHIP reauthorization was one of the first public laws that President Obama signed into law in 2009.
- The Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. After over six decades of stifling regulation, particularly in light of new technological developments, Tom led the fight to repeal and replace the Glass-Steagall Act that separated commercial from investment banking with a more commonsense, modern regulation. Upon passage, Tom was an outspoken advocate for robust enforcement of banking oversight by appropriate regulatory authorities.
- Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN). Tom's leadership led to the enactment of the ESIGN Act in June 2000. ESIGN brought interstate commerce into the Internet age, allowing vendors and financial services companies to conduct business efficiently and reliably.

Tom left Congress in 2001. He had agreed to a House rule limiting him to six years as Chairman. One of his former staff members, Eric Cantor, succeeded him; Cantor now serves as Minority Whip in the House, and is a ris-



ing star in the Republican Party. Tom leaves a legacy of integrity, which has at its foundation, his absolute commitment to truthfulness. Tom has always felt that this was his strength in serving his constituents. Once at a meeting back in Tom's district, a constituent came up to him and remarked, "I have supported you on every vote for ten years, but you voted for [a particular bill], and I will never support you again." With a bit of disarming humor, Tom replied, "Sir, if you disagreed with only one vote in ten years, I think I have served you well. By the way, I see you have a wedding band. Have you agreed with your wife on everything for ten years?"

Since his departure from the House, Tom has served as a government relations advisor for a vast array of clients. He continues to play a significant role in the public policy process—on Capitol Hill, in the Federal Communications Commission, and in other regulatory agencies. Tom remains active in Richmond community affairs, including numerous board and commission memberships. He enjoys time with his family, a good golf game, and a well-deserved martini from time to time.