

Congressman Tom Feeney

Biography

Congressman Tom Feeney represents the 24th District of Florida, which covers portions of Brevard, Orange, Seminole, and Volusia counties. Feeney, elected in 2002, was previously Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives and was Governor Jeb Bush's running mate in his first race for governor in 1994, narrowly losing to incumbent Lawton Chiles.

Congressman Feeney, a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, graduated in 1980 from Penn State University with a B.A. in Political Science and obtained his law degree from the University of Pittsburgh in 1983. In 1990, Feeney was elected to the Florida House of Representatives, where he served two terms before being chosen as Bush's running mate. As a young legislator, one of Feeney's primary goals was to expand choice and opportunities in kindergarten through 12th grade education. He quickly became one of Florida's leading advocates for educational choice. In August of 1992, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) voted him National Outstanding Legislative Member of the Year for his work on education reform.

In 1994, Tom accepted an invitation to join the Board of Directors of the prestigious James Madison Institute, a Florida-based research and educational organization whose mission is to keep the citizens of Florida informed about their government. He later served as director of the James Madison Institute, and in 2002 became the Institute's fifth recipient of the James Madison Award for Public Service.

In a special election in 1996, Feeney was returned to the Florida House of Representatives where he continued his activism on education and became one of the state's leading legislators on tort reform and welfare reform. His ideas on welfare reform have dramatically altered Florida's welfare system, resulting in over 500,000 Floridians leaving the state's welfare rolls and joining the workforce. Education reforms include increased spending on public education (52.5% of Florida's current budget) and a successful "A+ Education Plan."

On November 21, 2000, Tom Feeney was sworn in as Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives and in 2001 was ranked among the most effective legislators of the year by the Miami Herald. Tom Slade, past Chairman of the Republican Party of Florida said "Feeney is the most philosophically disciplined and principled member of state government that I've ever known."

In Congress, Feeney serves on the powerful Financial Services and Judiciary committees as well as the Science committee which oversees NASA, and serves as a Deputy Whip. In his first term in Congress, Feeney introduced and passed an amendment to the PROTECT Act which makes it more difficult for federal judges to issue sentences below the federal sentencing guidelines in cases involving kidnapping, violence or sex crimes against children. Additionally he co-sponsored and led a reform to the tax code which allows Florida taxpayers to deduct the amount of sales tax they pay, in lieu of deducting a state income tax. This measure corrected an eighteen year inequity in the tax code which discriminated against Floridians simply because they do not fund their state government with an income tax. Congressman Feeney also co-founded the Washington Waste Watchers, a working group formed to combat waste, fraud, and abuse in federal government.

Tom is married to the former Ellen Stewart and is the proud father of two sons, Tommy and Sean Patrick.