

## Guide to the Sonny Callahan Papers

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### **Descriptive Summary:**

Creator: Congressional Office of Sonny Callahan

Title: Sonny Callahan Papers

Dates: 1919-2004 [Bulk 1985-2003]

Quantity: 473.25 Linear Feet

Abstract: Legislative files, constituent files, voting records, newsclippings, photographs, office files, and audio and video material.

Accession: 02-09-397

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### **Biographical Note:**

Herbert Leon "Sonny" Callahan Jr. was born in Mobile, Alabama, on September 11, 1932. He is the eldest son of Herbert L. Callahan and Fannie Bell Fisher (both of Mobile). At the age of nine his father died, leaving his mother to raise the children alone. Callahan graduated from Mobile's McGill Institute in 1950. For a short time he pursued college courses at the University of Alabama-Mobile Campus (the predecessor to the University of South Alabama). As a high school student, he worked as a truck driver in his uncle's warehouse company, Finch Warehousing. After serving in the Navy during the Korean War from 1952 through 1954, Callahan returned home to Mobile and continued his employment with Finch. He rose to become president of the company at the age of thirty-two, and later chairman of the board and chief executive officer. Callahan later expanded his business interests to include real estate and insurance.

In 1970, at the age of thirty-eight, Callahan ran as a Democrat for the Alabama house seat serving Mobile County. He was reelected to the same seat in 1974 and served as the chairman of the Mobile County House Delegation. In 1978 Callahan ran (again as a Democrat) for and won election to the Alabama Senate seat representing district 34. He served in that body four years and then ran for Alabama lieutenant government against Bill Baxley, a campaign he lost. Callahan next set his sights on the U.S. House of

Representatives. He competed (this time as a Republican) for and won the right to represent Alabama's First District on November 6, 1984, taking the place of retiring Congressman Jack Edwards. He began his freshman term on January 3, 1985.

Callahan went to Washington, D.C. as a reformer. His primary goal was to cut back on the growth of the federal bureaucracy. He continued to be interested in solving the twin problems of the national debt and the deficit, supporting a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution, and controlling federal spending. His first committee assignments included the Committee on Public Works and Transportation and the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. He also served on five subcommittees: Water Resources (Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure); Surface Transportation; Coast Guard and Navigation; Fisheries, Wildlife Conservation and the Environment; and Panama Canal/Outer Continental Shelf. During his career he has also served on the Energy and Water Development Subcommittee and the Transportation Subcommittee as well as the Military Construction Subcommittee. In 1995, with the Republican sweep of Congress and Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America," Callahan became chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations. As such, he became one of the thirteen "Cardinals" in the House, an honorary title bestowed on Appropriations Subcommittee chairmen, who are some of the most influential members of the House of Representatives. In addition, during his tenure in the House of Representatives, Sonny Callahan was a member of various congressional caucuses, including the Steel, Textile, Congressional Arts, Rural, Older Americans, and Sunbelt caucuses. He also co-chaired the Forestry 2000 Task Force and the Gulf of Mexico Task Force, and belonged to the Environmental and Energy Study Conference, the Travel and Tourism Conference, and the Rural Conference. Callahan retired in January 2003 after choosing not to seek reelection in 2002.

Callahan belongs to St. Dominic's Church in Mobile and is a member of the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, the Alabama Movers Association, the Alabama Trucking Association, the Downtown Mobile Kiwanis Club, the Boy Scouts of America, the Pleasant Valley Optimist Club (of Mobile, Alabama), and the Alabama Safety Council. Callahan is married to the former Karen Reed and is the father of six children, Scott, Patrick, Shawn, Chris, Cameron and Kelly.

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**Scope and Content:**

Includes congressional office and subject files; constituent correspondence; departmental documents; files related to the operation of a congressional office; appointment books; papers related to district visits, speeches, schedules, message pads, photographs, newsclippings, and video and audio tapes. These are supplemented by Republican Party and convention materials as well as legislation, news releases, and voting records. Of particular interest are files related to Callahan's tenure with the Committee on Public Works and Transportation and the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, as well as with the Water Resources; Surface Transportation; Coast Guard and Navigation; Fisheries, Wildlife Conservation and the Environment; Panama Canal/Outer Shelf; Energy and Water Development; Military Construction; and the Foreign Operations Appropriations subcommittees.

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**Arrangement:**

Arranged into 18 series: 1. Office Files (231 linear feet); 2. Legislative Files (86 linear feet); 3. Memorabilia (0.75 linear feet); 4. Military (8 linear feet); 5. Newsclippings (15 linear feet); 6. Personal (2 linear feet); 7. Outreach (3.75 linear feet); 8. Speeches / Articles / Publications (28 linear feet); 9. Miscellaneous (11 linear feet); 10. Foreign Operations (8.5 linear feet); 11. Energy and Water (5.5 linear feet); 12. Codels and Trips (1 linear foot); 13. Operating Files (9.25 linear feet); 14. Appropriations (10.25 linear feet); 15. Subject Files (28.25 linear feet); 16. Photographs / Slides / Negatives / Contact Sheets (1.5 linear feet); 17. Video/Audio Tapes (5 linear feet); 18. Voting Record (7.5 linear feet).

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**Access Restrictions:**

This material is open to research

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**Usage Restrictions:**

None

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**Preferred Citation:**

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