
BIOGRAPHY

Bill Frist

23rd United States Senate Majority Leader United States Senator from Tennessee (1995-2007)

Born on February 22, 1952 in Nashville, Tennessee, Bill Frist was raised with a passion for helping people. His earliest memories are of his father leaving the dinner table -- with his black doctor's bag in hand -- to make his nightly rounds at the hospital. This sense of service has been the driving force in Bill Frist's life.

It should have been no surprise when Frist enrolled in Princeton University to devote his career to medicine. However, while at Princeton, he also developed an interest in medicine beyond its everyday practice. He spent his junior and senior years specializing in health care policy at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

This led him to a summer internship with veteran Tennessee Congressman Joe Evins in Washington, D.C. The "Dean" of the state's congressional delegation told the young intern that should he ever want to serve in Congress, he should first excel in a profession other than politics.

Frist noted the advice and, after graduating from Princeton in 1974, pursued a medical degree at Harvard Medical School. He graduated from Harvard with honors in 1978 and spent the next six years in surgical training at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston and Southampton General Hospital in England.

In 1985, Frist accepted the position of senior fellow and chief resident at the Stanford University School of Medicine. There he learned about heart transplantation from the field's leading pioneer, Norman Shumway. Bill Frist had found his niche.

After completing his surgical residency, Frist decided to take his expertise back to his hometown of Nashville. In 1986, he became director of the Vanderbilt University Medical Center's heart and lung transplantation program. He also joined Vanderbilt's faculty and the Nashville Veterans Administration Hospital as a staff surgeon.

Frist immediately began building on his vision for an innovative facility that would bring together transplant specialists and scientists from a range of disciplines. In 1989, he founded and became surgical director of the multi-organ Vanderbilt Transplant Center. Today the center is one of the premier transplant facilities in the United States.

During his twenty years in medicine, Bill Frist performed over 150 heart and lung transplant procedures -- including the first lung transplant, the first pediatric heart transplant and the first combined heart-lung transplant in the Southeast. He also wrote over 100 articles, chapters and abstracts on medical research and co-wrote Grand Rounds in Transplantation with a fellow physician -- J. Harold Helderman.

Bill Frist had risen to the top of the medical profession at a remarkably young age. And he was devoting his life to what he loved the most -- helping people. But Frist believed he could do even more for medicine, for patients and, eventually, for the people of Tennessee and the United States of America.

In 1989, Frist wrote and published *Transplant: A Heart Surgeon's Account of the Life-and-Death Dramas of the New Medicine*. His goal was to dispel myths about transplantation and encourage people to become organ donors. He lectured nationally on the subject and led a successful campaign to return the organ donor card to the back of the Tennessee driver's license.

Frist then began exploring the idea of seeking public office. In 1990, he met with Howard Baker and talked with the former Tennessee Senator and Senate Majority Leader about the benefits and burdens of public service. Baker told Frist that Congress would provide the best forum for his talents, expertise and ambitions.

Frist kept up his public involvement, writing newspaper columns about healthcare policy and chairing a statewide task force on Medicaid reform. In 1992, after another meeting with Baker, he began traveling Tennessee and talking with people about a possible run for the United States Senate. Frist officially launched his campaign in 1994.

After defeating five opponents in a hard-fought primary, Frist faced a popular three-term senator who was also in line to become the next Democrat majority leader. The campaign unfolded as a battle between a career politician and a populist outsider. Bill Frist won by a resounding thirteen points and became the first practicing physician elected to the Senate since 1928.

Six years later Senator Frist won reelection with 66 percent of the vote and the largest margin of victory in a statewide election in the history of Tennessee. During that time, he also co-wrote his third book -- *Tennessee Senators 1911-2002: Portraits of Leadership in a Century of Change* -- with J. Lee Annis, Jr.

As a United States Senator, Bill Frist emerged as one of the leading voices on health issues in America today. He fought hard to strengthen Medicare, provide seniors with better access to prescription drugs, and make health care more affordable and available to every American.

Frist's expertise in infectious diseases also enabled him to take on one of the greatest threats to the health and security of our nation -- bioterrorism. During the October 2001 anthrax attacks, the national spotlight shined on Frist as the calming voice to a frightened country. He quickly worked to pass landmark legislation to bolster America's defenses against bioterrorism. He then wrote his fourth book -- *When Every Moment Counts* -- to help families prepare for future attacks. The Senator donated all profits to a local preparedness charity in Tennessee.

As a member of the Foreign Relations committee and former ranking member of the African Affairs subcommittee, Bill Frist championed increasing funding for global HIV/AIDS. He has also proposed legislation that would create the first federal framework for the care, treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS around the world.

And as he did with bioterrorism, Frist has taken the fight against global HIV/AIDS beyond the Senate chamber. At least once a year, he travels to Sub-Saharan Africa not only to see the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS, but to operate on and care for those afflicted with the deadly disease and other illnesses. This February with his wife Karyn by his side, he is returning to Africa on medical missionary work.

America's children have been another top priority for Senator Frist. He strongly supported President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act -- which provided regular testing, local control, more federal funding and greater accountability and flexibility to our education system. Reducing childhood obesity, halting childhood vaccine shortages and fighting drug abuse have been the focus of Senator Frist's efforts to improve the health of our children.

The Senator's colleagues also chose him to serve in several leadership positions. In 1999, he had the honor of serving as a deputy whip. One year later he took the reins of the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), which is charged with helping elect Republican candidates to the United States Senate. Under Senator Frist's leadership at the NRSC the Republican Party regained control of the Senate Majority. Weeks after regaining control of the Senate, Senator Frist was chosen by his colleagues to fill the position of Senate Majority Leader, which he did for four years until his retirement last year.

Anyone who knows Bill Frist knows nothing means more to him than his family. He calls his wife, Karyn, and three sons, Harrison, Jonathan and Bryan, his "foundation in life."

Upon fulfilling his pledge to the people of Tennessee to serve only two terms in the Senate, Bill Frist returned to Nashville, TN with his wife Karyn to live in the home he grew up in.

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