

Congressman Cliff Stearns



Cliff Stearns was elected in 1988 to the U.S. House of Representatives, his only elected office. He was born in Washington, D.C., attended Woodrow Wilson High School, and then attended George Washington University (GWU), graduating with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

He participated in U.S. Air Force ROTC on scholarship at GWU and was honored as the Air Force ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate. Following graduation, he served four years in the U.S. Air Force as an aerospace engineer in satellite reconnaissance during the Vietnam War.

He left the service with the rank of Captain, and then worked in the private sector before starting his own business by purchasing a motel. He sold his first property, moved to Florida, and started a successful motel/restaurant business in the Ocala/Gainesville area.

Active in his community, Stearns was president of the Kiwanis Club, on the Board of Directors for the Boys & Girls Club, on the Board of Directors for Munroe Regional Hospital, and on the board of the Ocala Chamber of Commerce. Because of his community involvement, he was urged to run for Congress.

Stearns is highly regarded for his extensive record on fiscal responsibility. In 2010, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce again honored Stearns for his consistent support of economic growth, reduced federal spending, and tax relief. In 2008, he was one of only 39 House Members to receive an "A" rating from the National Taxpayers Union. In addition, other fiscal watchdog groups such as Citizens Against Government Waste and Americans for Tax Reform routinely honor him.

In November 2010 Stearns ran for the Chairmanship of the House Energy and Commerce. Although not selected to Chair the full Committee, he was chosen to Chair the powerful Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee, which provides accountability and transparency of the Federal Government. During the election, conservative groups endorsed Stearns. For more information on these groups and to read what they had to say [click here](#).

For the 112th Congress, Stearns is the Chairman of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee in the Energy and Commerce Committee. As Chairman, he will act to rein in excessive federal regulations, to hold all federal agencies accountable to the American public, and to increase transparency in the private sector. He is leading the investigation into Solyndra and is closely monitoring the Administration's regulatory reform agenda to promote economic growth and job creation.

In addition, he serves on the Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, and the Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing and Trade.

In the previous Congress, Stearns was the Republican Leader on the Communications, Technology and the Internet Subcommittee (formerly the Telecommunications and the Internet Subcommittee). Stearns was active on the Subcommittee in reforming antiquated laws that hinder the development and expansion of new products and services. In addition, he was a leader in opposing Internet regulation (net neutrality). Stearns was also a strong advocate for privacy and is working with his Democrat counterpart on enacting consumer privacy legislation.

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From 2001 until 2007, Stearns was Chairman of the Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection Subcommittee. On this panel, Stearns led efforts to expand consumer protection by enhancing cyber-security, consumer privacy, and data-security. He also was a strong advocate for ensuring that international trade agreements are fair and protect domestic intellectual property rights.

In addition, he helped to create the Do-Not-Call List to protect consumers from unwanted telephone solicitations and the House approved legislation he amended to combat the abuse of spyware, which is software that allows a third party to monitor the computer use of individuals without their knowledge.

Throughout his tenure, Stearns has served on the Veterans Affairs Committee. He led the Veterans' Health Subcommittee as Chairman and remains a leading advocate for increasing funding for the VA. For years, Stearns pushed for establishing a VA cemetery in the Jacksonville area that recently opened. Stearns actively supports the VA's CARES plan, which is developing a new Regional Health Care Facility in Marion County that will open this year and the expansion of the VA Hospital in Gainesville with a new 230-bed patient tower. The dedication of this patient tower was in September 2011.

In addition, his legislation to improve veterans' access to long-term care, the Veterans Millennium Health care & Benefits Act; and the language from his VA Health Care Personnel Act to increase pay for VA health professionals; were signed into law.

He is a member of the Energy and Environment Subcommittee in the Energy & Commerce Committee and a member of the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Caucus, a bi-partisan forum for discussing and disseminating information about renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

Stearns' paper on developing clean-coal technology and applying coal-to-liquid technology was published in December 2008 in the Stanford Law & Policy Review.

He champions programs at College of Central Florida in Ocala, Santa Fe College in Gainesville, and the University of Florida in Gainesville.

He helped to establish the Upward Bound program at the University of Florida, and succeeded in restoring funding for that program. He was instrumental in expanding UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Services (IFUS). Stearns secured funding for UF's research on combating citrus disease, developing technology to benefit seniors, and reducing our reliance on imported energy.

The College of Central Florida has benefited from Stearns' efforts that include an Equine Studies Program, the Information Technology Center, and equipment and teacher training.

He also obtained funding for a planetarium and the Fine Arts Education building at Santa Fe College.

As the representative for Cecil Field (formerly a Navy master jet base closed under the Defense Base Closure and Realignment [BRAC] Commission), Stearns actively promotes the expansion of commercial activities at the former base. He is instrumental in gaining grants for converting Cecil and for training students in the Jacksonville area in aviation technology.

After years of controversy, he forged a consensus among state, local, and federal officials to return the Cross Florida Canal Lands to the state of Florida, resulting in an 80,000-acre greenway and \$32 million in repayments to six Florida counties.

Stearns is Co-Chairman and Co-Founder of the U.S. Air Force Caucus, leading congressional delegations of Caucus members to Afghanistan in 2009 and to Iraq in 2005. He is also Co-Chairman and Co-Founder of the Congressional Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Caucus, and Co-Chair of the Horse Caucus.

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Stearns lives with his wife Joan in Ocala; they have three adult sons. He is extremely accessible to constituents. Returning to his home in Ocala often, he has held over 550 town meetings across north central Florida.

Family

Born: Washington, D.C.

Residence: Ocala

Family: Cliff, Joan, Emily, Doug, Amy, Mackenna, Bundy, and Scott



Education

Woodrow Wilson High School, Washington, D.C.

George Washington University; B.S. Electrical Engineering

Air Force ROTC Distinguished Military Graduate

Congressman Cliff Stearns

Military

Captain - U.S. Air Force
Aerospace Engineer / Satellite Reconnaissance
Meritorious Service Commendation Medal

Business

Data Control Systems Incorporated
CBS Incorporated
Kutola Advertising Agency
Images 70 / Wilson Height Welch
Stearns House Incorporated

Committee Assignments

[Energy & Commerce Committee](#)

- [Republican Leader - Telecommunications & the Internet Subcommittee](#)
- [Commerce, Trade & Consumer Protection Subcommittee](#)
- [Energy and Air Quality](#)

[Veterans Affairs Committee, Deputy Republican Leader](#)

- [Health Subcommittee](#)

Congressman Cliff Stearns Accomplishments

[List of Recognition and Awards](#)

What People Say About Cliff Stearns

"Long before his career in Congress, Stearns had a keen interest in serving others. Congressman Cliff Stearns is a shining example of a Floridian. He has been president of the Kiwanis Club, which focuses on community service. Rep. Stearns was also on the Board of Directors for Boys & Girls Club, as well as for Munroe Regional Hospital."

"He is a vocal advocate for increasing funds for Veterans Affairs, and authored the Veterans Millennium Healthcare & Benefits Act."

"In addition, the Florida legislator is passionate about higher education, sponsoring programs at Central Florida Community College in Ocala, Santa Fe College in Gainesville, and also the University of Florida in Gainesville. I graduated from a community college (Valencia Community College) myself, and then transferred to the University of Central Florida, so his dedication to both two-year and four-year colleges is one I truly admire and applaud."-- **Laura Tellado, has spina bifida and is raising awareness of the disease on her blog Holdin' Out for a Hero** (April 2010)

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"Veterans such as Cruce are the reason that U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Ocala, pushed so hard for the development of The Villages Outpatient Clinic. 'I first spoke to the VA about establishing a new facility for this area in 2003, and in 2008 I attended the groundbreaking for this state-of-the-art facility. I am very excited that the new facility is slated to open in August and I look forward to thousands of veterans benefiting from the care and services that it will provide.'" - **The Villages Daily Sun** (March 15, 2010)

"The Chamber is proud to present Representative Stearns with the Spirit of Enterprise Award on behalf of businesses large and small. In the face of unprecedented economic challenges and in the midst of an election cycle, this Congress made some historic and courageous decisions that impacted the lives of every American. The Spirit of Enterprise Award identified those lawmakers that truly stepped up to the plate and demonstrated real leadership in making this country a place where business can continue to grow and create jobs." - **Thomas Donohue, President & CEO, U.S. Chamber of Commerce** (March 26, 2009)

"Thank you for your strong support for the Jeffersonian ideal of a smaller government that permits the free enterprise system to flourish. Through your votes on issues such as reducing taxes, workplace regulations and other economic matters, you have demonstrated your commitment to our nation's prosperity and economic well-being." - **Jonathan Eisen, Senior Vice President, International Foodservice Distributors Association** (July 24, 2008)

"Cliff Stearns, R-Ocala, was critical to the project (new outpatient VA clinic in South Marion County) 'because everyone saw the need for this clinic in the area.'" - **Mary Kay Hollingsworth, Department of Veterans Affairs** (June 15, 2008)

After encouraging the students to stay in school until they had completed at least a two- or four-year college degree, Stearns opened the floor for questions... "He inspired me to consider politics," said Juliun Kinsey, 16, a junior at the Professional Academies Magnet at Lofton studying business and entrepreneurship. "I liked the points he brought up," said Fredrick Caldwell, a 17-year-old junior from the early college program at Robert E. Lee High School in Jacksonville. - **Gainesville Sun Article** (February 2, 2008)

Sharing ideas with politicians can be like shouting inside a sound-proof booth. But U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Ocala, who represents part of Westside Jacksonville, has come up with a booklet with the ideas of his constituents that he calls "Your Good Ideas." Stearns gets a gold star for seeking input from his constituents and doing more than just paying lip service to listening. - **The Florida Times-Union** (December 12, 2007)

Congress -- Spend, spend, spend -- "If you think Congress has even a modicum of good sense, consider this: The U.S. Senate recently passed a transportation bill that included \$2 billion in 'earmarks' -- local projects inserted by members. Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Ocala, voted to eliminate waste in 42 of 50 votes studies. That's 84 percent, one of the best records in Congress. This nation needs more people like Stearns in office. - **The Florida Times-Union** (September 18, 2007)

Three Cheers -- Stearns stands out -- "Members of Congress were poor stewards of the public's money last year, says Citizens Against Government Waste. One exception was Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Ocala. Of the House vote analyzed by the group, its Web site says, Stearns voted against pork-barrel spending 91 percent of the time. He qualified as a 'Taxpayer hero.'" - **The Florida Times-Union** (July 16, 2007)

"U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns received an 'A' from the National Taxpayers Union for his fiscal responsibility, the highest rating in the Florida delegation and one of only 48 members in the House. The federal government has a spending problem. Too few of the members are willing to keep the budget in balance without raising taxes." - **The Florida Times-Union** (April 2, 2007)

"For example, Ocala Republican Congressman Cliff Stearns, a longtime champion of veterans issues, called conditions at Walter Reed unacceptable and an outrage... 'Congress must ensure that our troops get the best care possible for the injuries they received defending our freedoms.' We could not agree more with both points." - **Editorial, Ocala Star-Banner** (March 9, 2007)

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"The era officially ended (steroids in baseball) in March 2005, in hearings before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection of the House of Representatives (Stearns, Chairman). But the legal ramifications, inside and outside baseball, continue." - **Howard Wasserman, FindLaw Legal News** (March 24, 2006)

"Congressman Cliff Stearns is one of the more frugal members from our area." - **Channel 9 News Investigates** (Orlando, WFTV, Feb. 27, 2006)

"Rep. Stearns' pro-taxpayer score was one of the best in the entire House. By consistently voting to reduce federal spending, taxes, and debt, Cliff Stearns has truly earned the title, 'Taxpayers' Friend.'" - **John Berthoud, President, National Taxpayers Union** (Feb. 23, 2006)

"Cutting waste is a politically difficult task because almost every program has an active constituency that profits from the status quo. But Rep. Stearns recognizes that the federal government must set priorities. He has taken a long-term view of the nation's fiscal problems and makes a serious effort to tackle the enormous debt being left to future generations." - **Tom Schatz, President, Citizens Against Government Waste** (September, 2005)

North Central Florida is full of veterans, and Stearns built a strong reputation as their advocate -- a reputation that remains formidable. - **Chuck Floyd, Chairman of the Alachua County Democratic Party** (May 15, 2004)

"Stearns' philosophy on the federal budget is pretty simple: don't spend more than you have, don't increase the budget more than the cost of living and don't give government workers bigger pay raises than the average taxpayer. Sure sounds a lot like accountability and fiscal responsibility." - **Ocala Star Banner** (January 24, 2004)

"U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns has been honored by the nation's largest wartime veterans organization and a coalition of 142 other groups. Representative Stearns was elected by the people and truly listens to his constituents here in Florida." - **American Legion** (March 4, 2003)

"Cliff Stearns has shown his colors to the taxpayers of Florida and those living all across America...Florida taxpayers need not worry where Rep. Stearns' interests lie. Stearns represents taxpayers, not raptorial government spending lobbies that swarm around his office building in Washington." - **Grover Norquist, President, Americans for Tax Reform** (February 28, 2002)

"U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns listens with horror as a parade of witnesses describes the accounting mess that helped ruin Enron. As one of the most senior members of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, (he) is demanding answers about the 'complete failure and meltdown of fundamental responsibilities and oversight' in the Enron Corp. case." - **Orlando Sentinel** (February 10, 2002)

"Cliff Stearns, long a strong advocate for veterans...told us that keeping veterans issues on the front burner is an ongoing battle. We have long supported Stearns' proposal that veterans be allowed to receive treatment from their regular physician or local hospital..." - **Ocala Star Banner** (December 7, 2001)

"Recently, Rep. Cliff Stearns...introduced the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Personnel Act. For the sake of our veterans...and the overworked VA medical personnel, [I] wholeheartedly urge the passage of this important legislation." - **Washington Times** (July 10, 2000)

"Over the years the National Guard has depended on his reliable support... The National Guard has no better friend in Congress than Cliff Stearns." - **Presentation of the Charles Dick Medal of Merit by the National Guard Association of the United States** (September 6, 1998)

Working in Congress

Congressman Cliff Stearns

Leadership: Stearns is the Ranking Republican on the Telecommunications and the Internet Subcommittee. Stearns is active through the Telecommunications Subcommittee in reforming antiquated laws that hinder the development and expansion of new products and services.

As Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee's Commerce, Trade & Consumer Protection (CTCP) Subcommittee, Stearns worked to expand consumer protection by enhancing cyber-security, consumer privacy, spyware control, and international trade agreements dealing with telecommunication service agreements. Still a member of the CTPC Committee, Stearns is continuing to push for consumer privacy, data security, curbing identity theft, and protecting consumers from buying cars with undisclosed damage. In addition, he is Co-Chairman and Co-Founder of the U.S. Air Force Caucus, leading a congressional delegation to Iraq in 2005; Co-Chairman and Co-Founder of the Congressional Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) Caucus; and he is a senior member of the Veterans Affairs Committee.

Commerce: Stearns was a leader in creating the Do-Not-Call list to protect consumers from unwanted commercial telephone calls at their homes. President Bush signed Stearns' legislation curbing frivolous lawsuits against the firearms industry into law in October 2005. In addition, the House approved the legislation he amended to combat the abuse of spyware, which is software that allows a third party to monitor the computer use of individuals without their knowledge. In 2005, the House approved Stearns' proposal to protect consumers from 'price gouging' for fuel during emergency situations. He is also looking carefully at international trade agreements to ensure that America's intellectual property rights and competitive advantage in high tech products and services are protected.

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Veterans Affairs: Stearns is a leading advocate for increasing funding for the VA. For years, Stearns pushed for establishing a VA cemetery in the Jacksonville area, and his proposal was enacted leading to a new VA cemetery opening this year. Stearns actively supports the VA's CARES plan, which calls for a new Regional Health Care Facility in Marion County this year and expansion of the VA Hospital in Gainesville.

He was Chairman of the Veterans Health Subcommittee from 1997 to 2000 and its Vice Chairman from 2001 to 2002 and since 2005. His Veterans Millennium Health Care & Benefits Act, H.R. 2116, was signed into law in 1999. The health provisions will improve access to long-term care for disabled veterans and expand the VA's obligation to provide alternatives to nursing home care. In 2000, the provisions from H.R. 5109, the Veterans Affairs Health Care Personnel Act authored by Stearns, were combined with other veterans proposals and enacted as S. 1402. The health-care personnel provisions guarantee annual pay raises for VA nurses, revises and increases the rates of special pay for VA dentists, and includes pharmacists among those exempt from special salary caps. He succeeded in placing VA health clinics in Ocala and Leesburg. In September 2005, the House approved Stearns' resolution commemorating the 60th Anniversary of V-J (Victory in Japan) Day.

Helping Older Americans: Stearns voted to reform Medicare with a voluntary prescription drug benefit, one that gives beneficiaries choices in meeting their health care needs. Stearns' legislation was signed into law to expand choices for beneficiaries with disabilities (Cash & Counseling program). He is also committed to the long-term solvency of the Social Security system and supports using Social Security dollars only to pay benefits. Earlier in his tenure, he led the effort to overturn regulations limiting seniors-only housing and pushed for additional funding and programs to meet the medical needs of seniors.

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Looking Out for School Children: In the 108th Congress, President Bush signed Stearns' Asthmatic School children Treatment and Education Act (ASTHMA), encouraging children's right to carry their inhalers on their person. And, in the 109th, the House passed Stearns' amendment funding training for Head Start Employees to provide for the unique needs of children with disabilities and their families.

Serving Florida: Stearns is leading an effort to give Florida permanent control over its offshore resources after current moratoria on offshore drilling expire. He has championed programs at College of Central Florida in Ocala, Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, and the University of Florida in Gainesville, and obtained funding for these schools to expand and enhance their programs.

After years of controversy, he forged a consensus among state, local, and federal officials to return the Cross Florida Canal Lands to the state of Florida, resulting in a 77,000-acre greenway and \$32 million in repayments to six Florida counties.

As the representative for Cecil Field, Stearns actively promotes the expansion of commercial activities at the former base. He is instrumental in gaining grants for converting Cecil and for training students in the Jacksonville area in aviation technology. He also worked with the U.S. Attorney General to bring the Federal "Weed & Seed" program, which funds community-based efforts to combat crime and poverty, to several Florida cities.

Accessibility: He is extremely accessible to constituents. Returning to his home in Ocala often, he has held over 550 town meetings across North Central Florida.