Biographies of the Chairmen of the Select Committee and the Committee on Science and Technology

Ranking Members of the Committee (1958-2008)

John McCormack

Select Committee, Chairman

John McCormack was born in Boston on December 21, 1891, and became an attorney in 1913. After serving in the U.S. Army during World War I, the people of Massachusetts elected him to the state house and senate. Through a special election, McCormack became a Member of the House on November 6, 1928, and rose to be the Democratic Majority Leader during the 76th Congress in 1939. After serving under Speaker Sam Rayburn since September 16, 1940, the House elected McCormack Speaker on January 10, 1962. As Majority Leader, McCormack exhibited leadership abilities that enabled him to work with Members from both parties. On March 5, 1958, McCormack introduced a resolution to create a Select Committee of 13 Members of the House to review America's science and space programs in light of Russia's launch of *Sputnik*. McCormack proved to be an ideal leader of the Select Committee and was personally involved in choosing Members and in the equally important task of hiring a professional staff who could work together in a bipartisan fashion. McCormack also was directly engaged in developing lists of witnesses that would give testimony before the Select Committee. His interests in the field extended well beyond America's space program and the hysteria generated by *Sputnik* and included a desire to have the President create a cabinet level department of science. McCormack's generation had seen America take the lead in science during the 1930s and 1940s, and he wanted to ensure it maintained that status. Chairman McCormack also established liaisons with a reluctant President Eisenhower to ensure support for the passage of the bill to create the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Once McCormack was assured that the Committee was firmly established, he stepped back from an active leadership role in 1959 and turned over the daily operations of the Committee to Overton Brooks.

Joseph W. Martin
Select Committee, Ranking Member

Best known in history as the Speaker of the House in the late 1940s and during President Eisenhower's first term in office, Martin, (1884-1968) provided an important service to the nation in the wake of the *Sputnik* hysteria raised in 1957-1958. A native son of Massachusetts, Martin was born on November 3, 1884, and worked as a newspaper reporter and publisher before moving into the world of politics. He was a lifelong Republican and held several state level offices prior to his election to Congress. From the time Martin first entered the House in 1925 through the end of the Truman administration, he was a staunch conservative, however, during the first part of the Eisenhower Administration, Martin joined the centrists in the party. He approved of the president's international policies and supported funds being spent on education. In the late 1950s, Democrats considered Martin to be a bipartisan leader and someone with the political temperament that would allow the two parties to successfully work together. In the wake of Russia's launch of *Sputnik* on October 4, 1957, Speaker Sam Rayburn and Majority Leader McCormack asked Martin to select several Republican committee leaders to serve on the new Select Committee on Astronautics and Space Exploration. Martin chose some of the most influential individuals on the Armed Services, Foreign Affairs, Judiciary, Appropriations, and Banking and Currency Committees. His knowledge of the experts needed to staff the new Committee proved critical to its ultimate success. Martin remained the Committee's Ranking Member through the 89th Congress, which ended in 1966. However, after losing his position as the House's Minority Leader on January 6, 1959, Martin became an infrequent participant in Committee activities. He encouraged James G. Fulton of Pennsylvania to act as the de facto Committee Ranking Member during Martin's remaining years on the Committee.

Overton Brooks
Chairman, 1959-1961

While on a trip to Paris in October 1957, Brooks (1897-1961) read about the Soviet Union's space coup, *Sputnik*. Brooks immediately cut his trip short and returned to the States. Elected to the House in 1936 and having an uncle who had served in the House and Senate, Brooks knew the House and had risen to be the second ranking member on the Armed Services Committee during the 85th Congress. Majority Leader McCormack chose Brooks to join the Select Committee because of his expertise. Brooks had introduced his own resolution to create a new committee weeks before McCormack's, but Brooks' proposal never came out of committee. Brooks worked on the Select Committee that created NASA and gained the support of McCormack to become the chairman of the new Committee on Science and Astronautics. When the 86th Congress convened in 1959, Brooks and the Committee were faced with the Soviet launch of *Lunik,* a satellite launched to pass by the moon. Brooks proved to be an energetic and dedicated leader who worked long hours and on weekends. As the chairman, he initially followed the methods of Carl Vinson on the Armed Forces Committee and sought to personally manage everything that came before the Committee. Brooks resisted establishing subcommittees until other Members forced him to relent. However, he only allowed the establishment of temporary subcommittees that held hearings on the space program, manpower, education, weather, and agriculture and were then disbanded. To help the Committee in its work, Brooks created a staff of authorities in several fields and even sought military advice. Since the Committee was new, Brooks tested the limits of its jurisdiction, which created testy exchanges with other leaders including Vinson. Even with all the controversies, Chairman Brooks enjoyed the unwavering support of his friend and ally, Speaker John McCormack.

George F. Miller
Chairman, 1961-1973

George Miller (1891-1982) graduated from St. Mary's College in 1912 in civil engineering. During World War I, he served as a U.S. Army lieutenant in the artillery, and in the late 1930s, he entered politics. Miller was elected to the House in 1944, representing Oakland, California. Miller became the third ranking member of the Committee on Science and Astronautics in 1959 and was one of the few Members to have an engineering background. Like Brooks, Miller had served on the Armed Forces Committee and disliked Carl Vinson's management style. When Miller became chairman, he preferred to work in a more inclusive manner. His operating philosophy was to get things done in a professional manner and not in a flurry of activity just to make newspaper headlines or improve his political position on the Hill. Chairman Miller saw the need to create subcommittees that would allow Members with particular interests and expertise to focus on specialized areas of science and space. In the 88th Congress, Miller named Emilio Daddario the chairman of the new Science, Research and Development Subcommittee, which would become the most influential subcommittee during the early years of the Committee. Miller's use of more personal dialogue when dealing with NASA officials, which included lunches and informal meetings instead of impromptu, high-pressure hearings, contributed enormously to the success of the agency's programs. Chairman Miller also favored the adoption of the metric system and continued to support the workings of the Panel on Science and Technology created in 1959, which sought expert input from NASA, NBS, and NSF. Miller looked for opportunities to create a better understanding between scientists and Congress and improve educational standards in mathematics and science. Chairman Miller led the Committee until he was defeated in his 1972 reelection campaign.

Olin E. (Tiger) Teague
Chairman, 1973-1979

One of the more popular members of the House, "Tiger" Teague (1910-1981) came to the Hill in 1946. Teague, who fought in Europe commanding an infantry battalion, spent two years in a U.S. Army hospital recovering from wounds. He received the Silver and Bronze Stars, and the Purple Heart, all with clusters for his distinguished service. With his military background, Teague was eminently qualified to be chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee from 1963-1972. Teague joined the Committee on Science and Astronautics at its inception in 1959 and chaired the Manned Space Flight Subcommittee, which investigated the Apollo 1 fire. Because of his political temperament, Teague was able to conduct a thorough and fair investigation that helped NASA move ahead with its lunar landing program. Upon being elected chairman of the Committee in 1973, Teague hired Jack Swigert, Command Module pilot of Apollo 13, as the Committee's executive director. Teague wanted to improve the Committee's relationship with the agency and better understand NASA's programs in the post-Apollo era. The chairman successfully led a bipartisan group of shuttle supporters against strong opposition on the Committee. Teague also pushed the space agency to establish more outreach programs, build a visitor's center at Cape Canaveral, and educate the people concerning the values of space exploration. After President Nixon eliminated the office of science advisor, Chairman Teague and Ranking Member Charles Mosher worked together and persuaded President Gerald Ford to reinstate the office in 1975. During his final years in office, Teague confronted another divisive issue with the Clinch River Breeder Reactor. Teague fought hard to build a consensus both in the Committee and House on the controversial reactor program that raised serious and ongoing questions concerning the nation's energy policy, nuclear security, and the environment.

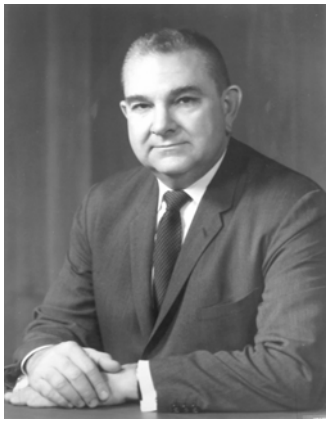
Don Fuqua
Chairman, 1979-1987

Don Fuqua was elected in 1962 from a Democratic stronghold in northern Florida, and he enthusiastically supported President John Kennedy's vision for the space program. Fuqua served in the Medical Corp during the Korean War and after graduating from the University of Florida, he managed a farm. Fuqua joined the Committee his first year and became a member of the Manned Space Flight Subcommittee. While on that subcommittee, he participated in numerous hearings on NASA's Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo manned space programs. One of the more difficult hearings dealt with the 1967 fire on Apollo 1 that killed three astronauts. Fuqua had interviewed a number of astronauts just prior to the fire and they assured him that they understood the inherent risks in the space program. Fuqua concurred with the Committee's final report that identified a number of major flaws, which had to be corrected before NASA could return to space. In 1973 Fuqua became the chairman of the Manned Space Flight Subcommittee and provided important leadership of the shuttle program. He also oversaw the joint American and Soviet space effort that helped reduce Cold War tensions with the successful Apollo-Soyuz program in 1975. By the late 1970s, Fuqua worked closely with Chairman Teague concerning the shuttle and the Clinch River Breeder Reactor. As chairman of the Committee, Fuqua dealt with the 1979 energy crisis and worked to improve education in the sciences. He launched a two-year review of the country's science policy in order to develop strategies for the future. In his last term as Chairman, Fuqua unhappily faced a second oversight investigation of NASA in the aftermath of the destruction of the space shuttle *Challenger* during launch on January 28, 1986. He called for a full set of hearings that would investigate the problems at NASA leading up to the disaster and ensured that NASA would institute measures to guarantee the continuation of a safe and successful shuttle program.

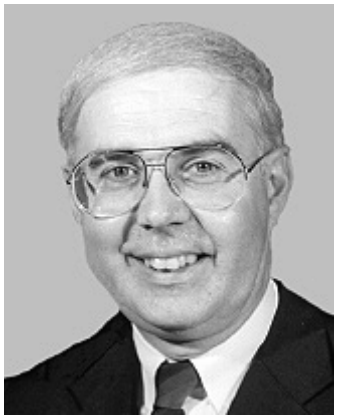
Robert A. Roe
Chairman, 1987-1991

Robert Roe, born in 1924, served in the U.S. Army during World War II and entered New Jersey state politics in 1956. He became a prominent leader in the state and the fight for the passage of important water projects. Educated as an engineer and considered a tireless worker, Roe won a special election to the House in 1969. He joined the Committee on Science and Astronautics during the 92nd Congress in 1971. Initially, Roe did not take a strong interest in the Committee until the space shuttle *Challenger* disaster in January 1986. The following year the House leadership selected Roe to be chairman, at which time he became much more engaged in Committee activities. Roe strongly supported the shuttle program. He also pressed NASA to expand its satellite programs to study the planets. As Chairman, Roe led the Committee in its oversight investigations concerning the Hubble Space Telescope's flawed lens. Roe also sought the active involvement of private industry in space technology as part of the Reagan era effort to reduce the size of government. He wanted companies to research and develop their own programs and explore what advances space-based projects might offer. Roe expanded the Committee's efforts to protect the environment and worked to establish a National Toxic Waste Center under the auspices of the Environmental Protection Agency. He fought to stop the dumping of sludge into the ocean, and Roe led the Committee to promote bills dealing with monitoring the quality of indoor air, radon gas, and child nutritional studies. With Albert Gore's departure from the Committee in 1986, Roe enthusiastically continued Gore's work to study the implications of the ozone hole over the Antarctic. In the field of energy and with his background in engineering, Roe supervised the Committee's oversight duties and worked to pass the Superconducting Super Collider Project Authorization Act in 1990 during his last term as chairman in the 102nd Congress.

George E. Brown, Jr.
Chairman, 1991-1995



Born into a Quaker family, George Brown (1920-1999) served in the U.S. Army during World War II and graduated from the University of California in 1946 with a degree in industrial physics. Brown also worked for the city of Los Angeles during the 1940s and 1950s before entering into politics. Elected as a Democrat to the House in 1962, he served four terms before making an unsuccessful run for the Senate. Brown returned to the House on January 3, 1973, and served until his death on July 15, 1999. Although an opponent of many military projects, he was a strong supporter of the space program, protection of the environment, and promotion of alternative energy sources. After he first joined the Committee at the beginning of his second term in 1965, in the 94th Congress, Brown became chairman of the Environment and the Atmosphere Subcommittee. During his first term as chairman, Brown led his subcommittee in 15 hearings dealing with NOAA and EPA, renewable energy programs, water quality, dumping waste in the ocean, solid waste management, national climate change issues, and atmospheric and ozone studies. Chairman Brown supported non-petroleum fuels for cars and trucks and the research and development of electric and hybrid technology for vehicles. With his interest in engineering, Brown also strongly promoted technological advancements in aviation and the exploration of space. As chairman, he wanted to develop partnerships between the government and the private sector to create new scientific and technological projects that would benefit the lives of average citizens. After the Republicans gained control of the House in 1994, Brown became the ranking member. He took on the role of the loyal opposition, but Brown still supported NASA's unmanned satellite projects and rose in opposition to the costly space station.

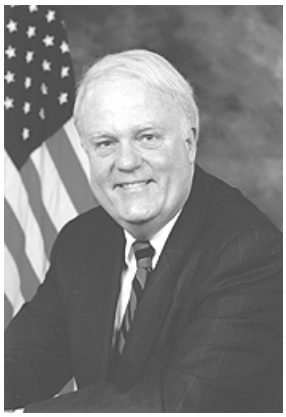


Robert S. Walker

Chairman, 1995-1997

Born in northwestern Pennsylvania in 1942, Robert Walker taught in a public school upon graduating from the University of Delaware. After serving six years in the National Guard, he entered the world of politics. In 1976, the people in the district east of Harrisburg, PA, elected him to the House as a Republican. Walker joined the Committee on Science and Technology and used his early years to become an expert in the rules and operations of the House. Walker had risen to the position of ranking member on the Committee during the 102nd and 103rd Congresses (1991-1995) and led fellow Republicans in frustrating many of the legislative efforts of Chairman George Brown. During this same period, Walker joined Newt Gingrich and formed a coalition that succeeded in gaining a majority in the House during the 1994 elections. When the 104th Congress convened, Walker became chairman of the Committee and renamed it the Committee on Science. The Republican leadership wanted to improve efficiency in the House and mandated that each Committee have a maximum of four subcommittees. Walker also reduced the number of hearings from 174 in the preceding Congress to just 78 while increasing the number of bills passing through the Committee. Walker focused his efforts on six areas: promote non-commercial federal research and development; oversee the relevance of programs; order government laboratories to work on projects only they could manage; cut funds to programs in the private sector; carefully control groundbreaking projects; and ensure all research and development projects be technically within the realm of the possible. Walker's interest in hydrogen energy, climate change, and earthquake studies were major issues that held center stage during the 104th Congress. In 1996, NASA awarded Walker the Distinguished Service Medal, which was the first time this award was given to a sitting Member.

F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.
Chairman, 1997-2001



F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., was born in Chicago, Illinois, in 1943. He graduated in 1965 from Stanford University and received a Jurist Doctorate from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1968. In the 1970s, Sensenbrenner served in the state legislature until elected to the House in 1978 as a Republican. After his party gained control of the House in 1994, Sensenbrenner pressed his colleagues to adopt the policy that they would live by the laws and regulations they required the rest of the nation to follow. In 1997, he became chairman of the Committee on Science and continued the Committee's history of bipartisanship while expanding its oversight duties. He followed his Republican predecessors' overall philosophy as to the guidelines the Committee would follow and carefully oversaw the use of public funds. He wanted government laboratories to focus on projects that only the government could accomplish and let private laboratories work on commercial endeavors. Sensenbrenner increased the amount of legislation passed out of the Committee and strongly supported NASA's space programs. However, he questioned the executive branch concerning the joint American-Russian space station and the expenditure of taxpayer money when America's partner appeared not to be fulfilling its obligations. Sensenbrenner also sought to provide opportunities to the private sector in the space program and supported the launching of satellites with the capability to aid mining, timber, and agricultural interests. During his first Chairmanship and having jurisdiction over climate change and environmental issues, Speaker Gingrich selected Sensenbrenner to lead the House delegation to the Kyoto conference in 1997. Upon his return, Sensenbrenner held hearings on the proposed standards and used the forum to raise questions concerning the impact of implementing the accords on the American economy and the lack of international cooperation.

Sherwood L. Boehlert

Chairman, 2001-2007

In 1982, the people in upstate New York elected Sherwood Boehlert as a Republican to the House. Born in Utica in 1936, Boehlert served in the U.S. Army for two years before graduating from Utica College with a BA in 1961. Boehlert joined the Committee as a first-term Member and supported environmental issues and efforts to curb acid rain. During his work on the Committee, other Members considered him to be bipartisan and a consensus builder. His first assignment was with the Science, Research, and Technology subcommittee, and he worked with them on genetic engineering, earthquake studies, education, and fire prevention issues. During the 100th-102nd Congresses as ranking member on the Science Subcommittee, Boehlert strongly opposed the Superconducting Super Collider program because of cost issues. Boehlert rose in seniority in the Committee, and after Sensenbrenner left at the end of the 106th Congress, Boehlert became the chairman in 2001. The Committee faced several major issues in the wake of September 11, 2001, and Boehlert wanted to make science and technology important tools in the war against terror. As chairman, he held extensive hearings into the collapse of the World Trade Center in New York City and the part fire played in the ultimate failure of the structural elements and fasteners used in the building. He guided the Committee in its crucial role in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and supported their science and technology programs. Shortly after the beginning of the 108th Congress, Chairman Boehlert faced the sad and complex duty of reviewing NASA's operations and investigating the space shuttle *Columbia* disaster. Before retiring from the House at the end of the 109th Congress, Boehlert also worked with NASA on whether to extend the Hubble Space Telescope project and lent his support to President Bush's proposed mission to return to the moon and eventually send a manned craft to Mars.

Bart Gordon
Chairman, 2007-Present

In 1984, Bart Gordon was elected to succeed Albert Gore, Jr., in the House of Representatives. Gordon was born in 1949, and after graduating from Middle Tennessee State University with honors and from law school at the University of Tennessee, he opened a private law practice in 1974. In the late 1970s and 1980s, he served the Democratic Party at the state level. Gordon joined the Committee as a freshman in the 99th Congress and sat on the Transportation, Aviation, and Materials and the Space, Science, and Applications Subcommittees. His interests on these committees included working with NASA's shuttle program and Russia's participation in joint space projects. Gordon also focused on mine safety, air traffic control, and high-speed rail transport. In 1987, Gordon left the Committee upon appointment to the exclusive Rules Committee but returned in 1995 for the 104th Congress. In the next three Congresses, he served as ranking member on the Space and Aeronautics Subcommittee, which conducted hearings into solar power, the shuttle program, asteroid threats, and NASA's future goals. Gordon became the Committee's ranking member during the 108th Congress and in the 109th Congress focused on scientific integrity issues, the off-shoring of U.S. jobs and establishing health-based guidelines at NIST and EPA for the clean up of illegal methamphetamine labs. Gordon assumed chairmanship of the Committee in 2007 and spearheaded passage of the America COMPETES Act, which creates thousands of highly qualified K-12 science teachers; expands support for graduate students and early-career researchers; authorizes a doubling of key agencies' basic research budgets; and establishes an Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy to mobilize the scientific enterprise to help solve the nation's energy security problem. The Committee also made significant contributions to the 2007 Energy Bill with nine bills included in the comprehensive legislation.

Ranking Members on the Committee on Science and Technology

Joseph Martin (R-MA)
1959-1967

James Fulton (R-PA)
1967-1973

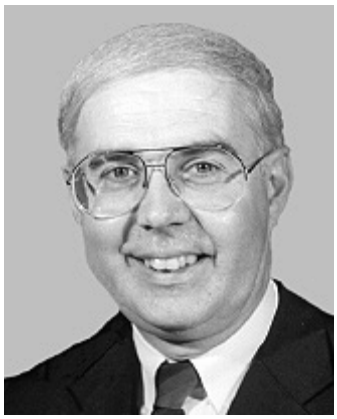
Charles Mosher (R-OH)
1973-1977

John Wydler (R-NY)
1977-1981

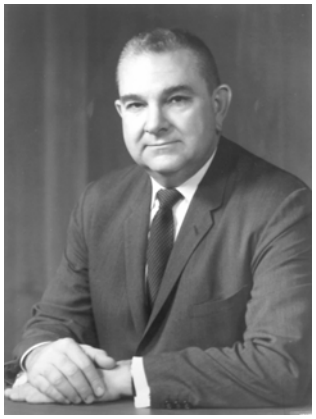
Ranking Members on the Committee on Science and Technology

Larry Winn (R-KS)
1981-1985

Manuel Luján (R-NM)
1985-1989



Robert Walker (R-PA)
1989-1995



George Brown (D-CA)
1995-1999

Ranking Members on the Committee on Science and Technology

Ralph Hall (D/R-TX)
1999-2003 & 2007-Present

Bart Gordon (D-TN)
2003-2007