

**House History:**

Elected 1994; won fourth term in 2000 with 68 percent

13th District:

Texas Panhandle and parts North Texas, including the cities of Amarillo and Wichita Falls

Hometown: Clarendon

Born: July 15, 1958, Clarendon

Religion: Presbyterian

Family:

Wife, Sally Thornberry; two children

Education:

Texas Tech University, B.A. 1980; University of Texas, J.D. 1983

Career:

Lawyer; cattleman; State Department official; congressional aide

Political Highlights: No previous office

Committees:

House Armed Services Committee
House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

Office Address:

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Washington, D.C. 20515

Rep. William M. "Mac" Thornberry (R-Texas)

13th District, Panhandle -- Amarillo; Wichita Falls

Thornberry, elected in the watershed GOP year of 1994, is a Republican through and through. But even those opposed to his views describe him as a serious man — thoughtful, earnest and unassuming about finding ways the government can work better, especially on national security issues.

Thornberry backed Republicans on 96 percent of the votes in the 110th Congress (2007-08) in which they diverged from Democrats. He wants lower taxes, more controls on immigration, more domestic energy production and more defense spending. He traces his conservatism to his upbringing on the cattle ranch that has been in his family for more than 70 years. "Someone in the federal government was telling us what to do on a farm seven miles down a dirt road outside a town of 2,000 people," he said.

From his seat on the Armed Services Committee, Thornberry consistently has advocated for a strong defense while also seeking to protect his district's military bases and plants. He made a bid in December 2008 to serve as the panel's ranking Republican, but lost to John M. McHugh of New York, who had more seniority. He also serves on the Select Intelligence Committee, where he is the top Republican on the Technical and Tactical Intelligence panel.

Thornberry has played a major role in reviewing how well spy agencies are responding to terrorism. Months before Sept. 11, 2001, he drafted a bill to create a new department to oversee homeland security. The idea became fashionable after the attacks, and in 2002 his measure became the foundation for legislation that created the new Department of Homeland Security. GOP leaders in 2003 rewarded him with a seat on the new Homeland Security Committee, giving him oversight of the new department as it was built from the ground up. After the department was launched, Thornberry saw another one of his ideas become reality in 2005 with the creation of an assistant secretary for "cybersecurity."

By then, Thornberry had moved from the Homeland Security Committee to Intelligence and was chairman of that panel's new oversight subcommittee during the 109th Congress (2005-06). The subcommittee was established to monitor effectiveness of the law uniting U.S. intelligence functions under one director, and in 2006 it issued a report concluding the law's implementation had been a "mixed bag," in Thornberry's words. He found fault with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence's approach to implementing the overhaul, and concluded the DNI should be focusing on high priorities such as information-sharing.

He has focused on developing what he calls "metrics" that can be used to measure progress on improving intelligence capabilities. He points, for example, to the ability to quantify the increase of Arabic language experts in the intelligence community. "We get these verbal assurances that you could replay year after year without the kind of hard measures we need," he said.

Thornberry has dug just as deep into the details of the Pentagon and its effectiveness. He is among those who say U.S. military power, for all its importance, is of limited utility in winning wars like the one against terrorism.

He served on a bipartisan Smart Power Commission in 2007 that drew up recommendations for winning the war with both lethal and non-lethal approaches. In 2008, Thornberry advocated adding a provision to the fiscal 2009 defense authorization bill that would improve coordination of the Defense Department's strategic communications. "We cannot beat terrorists with bullets alone," he said in a statement.

Thornberry was a strong supporter of President George W. Bush's conduct of the Iraq War, backing Bush even as much of the public turned against the administration's approach to the war. His support didn't end when Bush left office; when President Obama released memos in April 2009 detailing the harsh interrogation of terrorist detainees under the previous administration, Thornberry shied away from saying the detainees had been tortured. "I think people are too free with the use" of the word, he said on MSNBC. "I recommend folks go on the Internet and read these memos because you will get a real feel for the carefully controlled, doctor-supervised circumstances under which these things were used."

Thornberry also backed Bush on the \$700 billion financial sector rescue law in fall 2008, switching his vote to "yes" after opposing an earlier version. "A former minister in my home church used to say that 'Sometimes you have to put aside your principles and do what's right,'" he said after the second version passed.

Thornberry has an interest in agricultural issues, as his district is among the nation's leading producers of cotton, wheat and peanuts. He has a keen interest in federal subsidies for those crops and supported the successful override of Bush's veto of the 2008 reauthorization of agriculture and nutrition programs, which the president said contained too much spending.

Thornberry is still in the ranching business with his brothers and owns a one-third stake in the Thornberry Brothers Cattle Partnership. He is a proponent of property owners' rights and says federal laws and regulations impinge unduly on farmers' land-use decisions.

But most of Thornberry's formative professional experiences were in Washington, D.C. He worked for five years as an aide on Capitol Hill after graduating from the University of Texas law school in 1983. He was a legislative aide to Texas GOP Rep. Tom Loeffler, then was chief of staff for Rep. Larry Combest, another Texas Republican. In 1988, he was deputy assistant secretary of State for legislative affairs in the Reagan administration, where he got to know the inner workings of the House.

Thornberry took a break from politics in 1989 to work in an Amarillo law firm while helping run his family's cattle ranch, but he was soon back in it, this time running for office. In 1994, he challenged Democratic incumbent Bill Sarpalius, who had become vulnerable in the conservative district because of his support for raising taxes as part of President Clinton's 1993 budget plan. Thornberry played up his family's close ties to the land and beat Sarpalius with 55 percent of the vote. He has won re-election easily since, taking nearly 78 percent of the vote in 2008.