

THE PULSE OF THE CITY IS POWERED

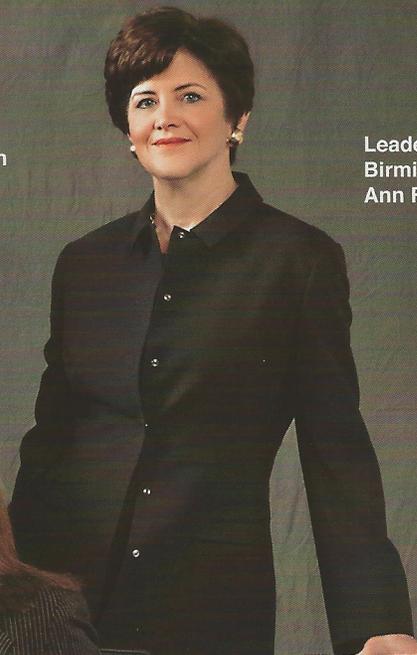
Isabel Rubio of the
Hispanic Interest
Coalition of Alabama



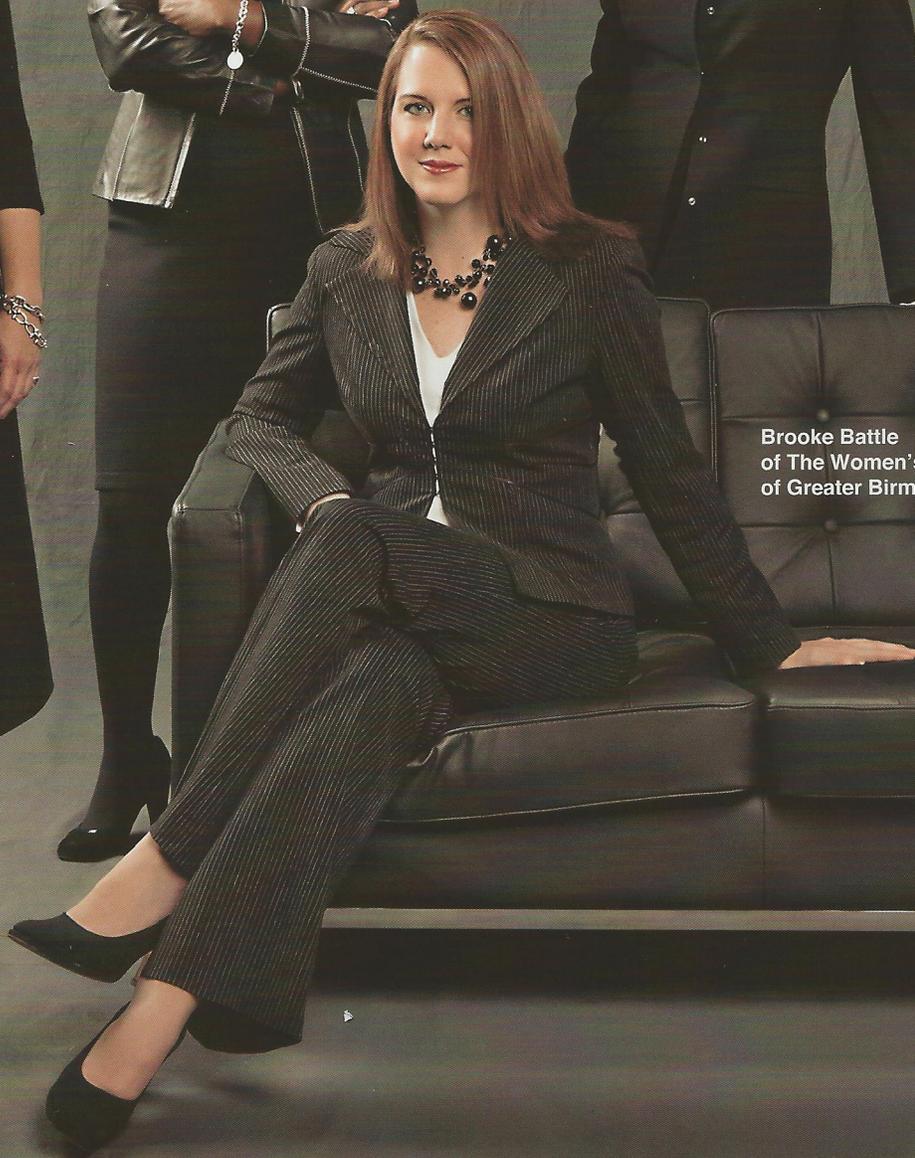
Congresswoman
Terri Sewell



Leadership
Birmingham's
Ann Florie



Brooke Battle
of The Women's Fund
of Greater Birmingham



THE HOME FRONT

For Congresswoman Terri Sewell the opportunity to help her constituents in the 7th Congressional District is the ultimate homecoming.

By Joe O'Donnell

Elected U.S. Representative for the 7th District of Alabama on November 2, 2010, with 72% of the vote, Terri A. Sewell is one of the first women elected to Congress from Alabama in her own right, as well as the first black woman to ever serve in the Alabama Congressional delegation.

The 7th Congressional District includes parts of the cities of Birmingham

and Tuscaloosa, as well as the counties of Alabama's Black Belt - the heart of which is Terri's hometown of Selma.

The first black valedictorian of Selma High School, Terri attended Princeton University, graduating cum laude in 1986. Terri was awarded a Marshall/Commonwealth Scholarship and received a Masters degree with first class Honors from Oxford University in 1988. She is a 1992 graduate of Harvard Law School where she served

as an editor of the Civil Rights Civil Liberties Law Review.

After graduation, Terri served as a judicial law clerk to the Honorable Chief Judge U.W. Clemon, U.S. District Court, Northern District of Alabama, in Birmingham. Terri began her legal career at the prestigious law firm of Davis, Polk & Wardwell in New York City, where she was a successful securities lawyer for more than a decade. Upon returning home to Alabama in 2004, she has made a significant impact both professionally and through her community activities.

Prior to her election to Congress, Terri was a partner in the Birmingham law office of Maynard, Cooper & Gale, P.C. where she distinguished herself as one of the only black public finance lawyers in the State of Alabama.

Terri is the daughter of retired Coach Andrew A. Sewell and retired librarian Nancy Gardner Sewell, the first black City Councilwoman in Selma, Alabama.

To say the least, Terri Sewell has a most impressive resume. But for the congresswoman, the many firsts and honors that have come her way started back home in Selma.

"I have had some powerful women in my life. My mother is just so brilliant and a great role model—the epitome of a public servant/servant leader. She was the first African American to sit on the city council in Selma. I watched her wait to start her advanced degrees until we came of age. The moment I went off to Princeton, she started her masters program. I am where I am because my mom did not have the opportunity to get here. She is so smart, but she could not go to Princeton because that opportunity was just not open to her.

"But the expectations she hoisted on me. I never for a moment thought that I could not do something because I was black or a



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woman. I never saw my race and gender as a barrier to success because she never saw it as that. She is a librarian and I am a librarian’s daughter so I am always full of quotes and mantras. ‘So a person thinks so is he.’”

“I had to think I could become a member of congress or a lawyer or an Ivy League grad way before I had the opportunity to do any of those things. My community nurtured me. What influenced me to run for congress was I knew I had the skill set as bond lawyer, but I also had the background. Who is going to fight harder for the district than someone who is from here.

“Some days I run on fumes, but I am daily reminded of the needs of the district and the need for me to be an advocate.”

Growing up the daughter of a strong woman, Terri Sewell understands the value of the female perspective. “The voices of women benefit the community, every aspect from church and school to business and electoral politics. Being a native of Alabama, sometimes we have a traditional view of what it means to be a mother or a woman so that we don’t tend to think of ourselves as the candidate or the CEO. I heard one person say it best: Women wait to be asked to run and men run.

“I know that having a diversity of voices makes for better legislation and better representation of our community. I am proud and humbled to represent my home district. The last time I lived and worked in Washington I was a student intern in the office of Richard Shelby, who held this congressional seat at that time. It is a full circle moment for me to have the opportunity to represent my home district in Congress. It is a huge responsibility to represent your home. My mom and dad are still in Selma. My aunts still live in the district.”

Sewell’s election enables her to live out a core belief in the halls of power in the na-

tion’s capital. Namely that having women at the table when decisions are made are good for all of us.

“We are blessed in the current Congress to have that full array of voices. When women are at the decision making table, issues of family and children get addressed and the life experiences of those women influence the policies that come out of that discussion. That is a great thing. While we may disagree about approach, we all want the same objective. We want constituents to have access to quality healthcare. We want our children to have access to good public schools. So children can have the best chance in life. To me finding the common ground is the hope of a gridlocked Washington DC political establishment,” Sewell says

“My message to young girls and women is don’t wait to be asked and if you are waiting to be asked I am asking you right now: You can make a difference in your community. At end of day it is about making sure the multitude of voices are heard. We have to get off the sidelines and know that the decisions that are being made about issues that effect our everyday lives are being made without us—if we don’t participate.”

Thus far, Sewell’s Congressional career has been filled with the triumphs of helping her constituents navigate their way to access the federal government. “I am able to help my constituents, maybe a veteran trying to access benefits, for example, I am their conduit.

“We don’t have time or luxury of waiting. Congress

is a place where seniority matters, but I am not shy in giving my opinion because the people I represent cannot wait to be heard. I believe what we lack in economic prosperity we more than make up for in heart, spirit and fight. Providing access to resources and opportunities is my main objective,” Sewell says.

In Birmingham, Sewell says, she sees the power of women arrayed all around her. “I feel like I am in awesome company here in Birmingham. We may not be large in number but we are a powerful force. We play such important roles,” Sewell says. She finds in women the unique qualities of nurturers and multi-taskers, negotiators and mediators, and organizers.

“The challenge for women is the work/life balance. That is a real challenge especially in the South where we have traditional notions of families and the Southern men we marry have expectations of us. We can have it all but not always at the same time. My mother was absolutely right about that.”



Congresswoman Terri Sewell