



Cummings Passes Away from Longstanding Health Issues

Congressman Elijah Cummings (D-MD), who had represented Maryland's 7th Congressional District since 1996, passed away at age 68 from complications related to longstanding health challenges. Cummings had been in failing health in recent weeks, frequently in and out of the hospital and unable to take part in committee votes. He was a passionate defender of Democratic causes in Congress, but was also known for his strong friendships with Republicans on Capitol Hill. Following Cummings' passing, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan called for a special election to fill his seat – with a primary election scheduled for February 2020 and a general election shortly thereafter in April 2020.

Cummings was born and raised in Baltimore, the city that he represented in Congress. He was the son of former sharecroppers and graduated from Baltimore City College High School in the late 1960's. Following high school, Cummings attended Howard University and then went on to receive a law degree from the University of Maryland in 1976. He was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates in 1982 and served in that legislature until 1996, when Cummings was elected to represent Maryland's 7th district in the United States Congress. Last year, Cummings was re-elected to this position for his 12th term with an overwhelming 76% of the vote.

While the Congressman was already widely known and respected throughout Washington, he captured national attention in recent months for playing a key role in the investigations into President Trump and his administration. Cummings was the Chair of the House Oversight and Reform Committee, one of the three Congressional panels leading the impeachment inquiry into President Trump's behavior. In his role as Chair of the Oversight Committee, Cummings presided over the first public testimony by Trump's former lawyer, Michael Cohen. His committee had also been involved in clashes with the Trump administration regarding subpoenas that were challenged by the President, and took part in several investigations regarding Trump's personal finances and potential abuses at federal agencies. Additionally, Cummings was a harsh critic of Trump's immigration policy and the living conditions for migrants detained along the southern border.

The news of the Congressman's passing triggered an outpouring of kind words and condolences from many of his colleagues. U.S. Rep. Mark Meadows (R-NC), one of Cummings' closest friends on Capitol Hill, stated that "there was no stronger advocate and no better friend than Elijah Cummings...I will miss him dearly." Speaker Nancy Pelosi described him as the "North Star" in the U.S. House of Representatives. Presidential candidate Kamala Harris reacted with a tweet saying "Congressman Elijah Cummings was a fearless leader, a protector of democracy, and a fighter for the people of Maryland. Our world is dimmer without him in it." Beto O'Rourke, former Congressman from Texas who is also seeking the Democratic nomination for President, added that "Rep. Elijah Cummings was everything right about America."

In honor of Congressman Cummings, President Trump ordered that flags at the White House and all public buildings – as well as military and naval stations – fly at half-staff for 48 hours following his passing.