

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings made the following [statement](#) on the House floor on February 16, 2012, honoring William H. "Bill" Gray, III for his countless contributions to education and the Black American community:

M. Speaker, I rise today in honor of a true public servant, educator, community activist, spiritual leader, and my dear friend, William H. "Bill" Gray, III. For nearly five decades, Bill has served the Philadelphia community, African American community, and the American people as a whole in numerous capacities. From education and the ministry to government and the business world, his influential leadership continues to this day.

Bill was born on August 20, 1941 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He is the second child of the late Dr. William H. Gray, Jr. and Hazel Yates Gray, and has an older sister, Marion. Bill attended Franklin and Marshall College, where he earned a B.A. in 1963, and received a master's degree in divinity from Drew Theological Seminary in 1966 and a master's degree in theology from Princeton Theological Seminary in 1970. He has served as a faculty member and professor of history and religion at St. Peter's College, Jersey City State College, Montclair State College, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Temple University. The heir to a legacy of education leaders, his father served as the president of two Black colleges, Florida A&M University and Florida Memorial College. Furthermore, Bill's mother was a dean of Southern University and his grandfather a professor at another historically Black college.

Hailing from a family of ministers as well as educators, Bill began his service in the ministry in 1964, when he pastored his first church, the Union Baptist Church of Montclair, New Jersey. For 35 years, he was pastor of the 5,000-member Bright Hope Baptist Church in Philadelphia, as were his father and grandfather before him since 1925. In 1970, Bill became a community activist while living in Montclair, after winning a housing discrimination suit against a landlord who denied him an apartment because of his race. He founded the non-profit Union Housing Corporation in Montclair to build affordable homes for low- and moderate-income tenants and co-founded the Philadelphia Mortgage Plan, an organization that helped people in low-income communities obtain mortgages. In 1971, he married Andrea Dash, a marketing consultant. They raised three sons: William IV, Justin, and Andrew.

From 1979 to 1991, Bill served in the U.S. House of Representatives. During his 12 years in Congress, he remained a staunch supporter of education. As the first African American to chair the House Budget Committee in 1985, Bill was a leading advocate for strengthening America's education system. He went on to break further barriers as Chairman of the Democratic Caucus

in 1988 and as Majority Whip later that year, becoming the highest-ranking African American ever to serve in Congress. In May 1994, Bill served as the Special Advisor to the President on Haiti. In that role, he assisted the President in developing and carrying out policy to restore democracy to Haiti, and received the Medal of Honor from Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1995.

In 1991, Bill became the president and chief executive officer of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), America's oldest and most successful Black higher education assistance organization. During his tenure, he led the United Negro College Fund to new fund-raising heights while increasing educational assistance to minority students and support of historically Black colleges and universities. In particular, Bill spearheaded a number of bold initiatives to relocate UNCF's headquarters to the Northern Virginia area; develop a new technology center to link UNCF offices and member colleges electronically and thereby facilitate the sharing of scholarship and donor information; and develop the Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute to compile and analyze data on a host of issues affecting African American students from kindergarten through graduate school.

After retiring in 2004, Bill's contributions to public policy were far from over. He went on to serve as Chairman of the Amani Group and, beginning in 2009, Co-Chairman of the consulting and advisory firm GrayLoeffler, LLC. Today, Bill chairs Gray Global Strategies, Inc., a global business consulting and government affairs strategies firm. He also sits on the board of directors for several companies, including Dell, Inc., JPMorgan Chase, Pfizer, and Prudential Financial. Bill's many years of public and community service have earned him numerous awards and distinctions, such as the prestigious Franklin Delano Roosevelt Freedom of Worship Medal. In December 2009, he was listed in Ebony magazine as one of the 100 "Most Important Blacks in the World in the 20th Century." Additionally, Bill has also been awarded more than 65 honorary degrees from America's leading colleges and universities.

M. Speaker, as we celebrate Black History Month, it is my distinct honor and privilege to recognize one of our own, former Congressman Bill Gray, for his tireless dedication to advancing education and opportunity in this country. His pioneering efforts have paved the way for future generations of American government, business, and community leaders. Bill's leadership and strength of character are a true inspiration to us all. I am so pleased to pay tribute to my dear friend, and wish him great success for many years to come.

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