

Biography of Senator Jeff Merkley

As Oregon's U.S. Senator, Jeff's goal is to make Washington work for working Americans. He is fighting to create good jobs for working Oregonians, protect consumers from predatory practices, and ensure that all Oregonians have access to high-quality, affordable education.

Jeff is the son of a millwright and the first in his family to attend college. Born in the timber town of Myrtle Creek, Oregon, Jeff has spent his career fighting to increase opportunities for working families.

After earning an undergraduate degree from Stanford and graduate degree in Public Policy at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Merkley worked as a national security analyst at the Pentagon and at the Congressional Budget Office.

In 1991 Jeff returned to Oregon to lead Portland's Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit that empowers low-income families through homeownership. Jeff went on to serve as president of the World Affairs Council in Portland before entering the Oregon House of Representatives in 1998. He became Speaker of the House in 2007.

As Oregon's House Speaker, Jeff led the most productive legislative session in decades. The legislature increased education funding, expanded access to affordable prescription drugs, passed landmark environmental and energy legislation, established domestic partnerships, cracked down on predatory payday and title lending, and created Oregon's first ever Rainy Day fund.

In the U.S. Senate, Jeff continues to stand up for working families. He fights to create living-wage jobs and to push back on unfair trade policies that ship Oregon's jobs overseas. He has worked to make college more affordable and make retirement more secure for seniors. A true reformer, he led an historic coalition to fix the broken Senate by breaking up the gridlock, making it more responsive to the concerns of working families.

Jeff serves on the Senate Committees on Appropriations; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; Environment and Public Works; and Budget.