Thom Tillis

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# Thom Tillis

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* *In 2014, Tillis won election to the United States Senate after defeating Democratic incumbent Kay Hagan in the general election.*

Thomas Roland Tillis (born August 30, 1960) is an American politician and businessman who is the junior United States Senator from North Carolina, serving since 2015. A member of the Republican Party, he was previously the Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives.

In 2006, Tillis was elected to the North Carolina House of Representatives representing the 98th district, which included parts of Mecklenburg County. In 2011, he was elected Speaker of the North Carolina House of Representatives. In 2014, Tillis won election to the United States Senate after defeating Democratic incumbent Kay Hagan in the general election.

# Early life and education

* *Tillis was born in Jacksonville, Florida, the son of Margie and Thomas Raymond Tillis, a boat draftsman.*

Tillis was born in Jacksonville, Florida, the son of Margie and Thomas Raymond Tillis, a boat draftsman. He was the oldest boy among six children with three older sisters. His family moved around 20 times when he was in school, and Tillis never attended the same school in back-to-back years, living in New Orleans and Nashville, among other places.

Following his 1978 graduation from high school, Tillis left home to get a job, telling The Charlotte Observer that he and his siblings "weren't wired to go to college." He would eventually go back to school, attending Chattanooga State Community College and receiving a bachelor's degree in technology management from the University of Maryland University College in 1997.

# Business career and local politics (1980–2003)

* *In 1998, Tillis moved his wife and two children from Fairfax, Virginia to Cornelius, North Carolina, a northern suburb of Charlotte, saying he was "sick of commuting".*
* *Wang eventually hired Tillis to work in their Boston office.*
* *Tillis began his political career in 2002 in Cornelius, where he lived, as he pushed for a local bike trail and was elected to the town's park board.*

Tillis's first major job after high school was at Provident Life and Accident Insurance Co in Chattanooga, Tennessee, helping computerize records in conjunction with Wang Laboratories, a computer company in Boston. Wang eventually hired Tillis to work in their Boston office. He spent two and a half years there, before being transferred back to Chattanooga, and then Atlanta.  
In 1990, he was recruited to work for accounting and consulting firm PriceWaterhouse. His client was Charlotte's NationsBank Corp, which in 1998 became Bank of America Corp. In 1998, Tillis moved his wife and two children from Fairfax, Virginia to Cornelius, North Carolina, a northern suburb of Charlotte, saying he was "sick of commuting".

PricewaterhouseCoopers sold its consulting arm to IBM in 2002; Tillis retained the title of "partner" when joining IBM, as did many PricewaterhouseCoopers consulting partners, although such a position had not previously existed at IBM. Tillis began his political career in 2002 in Cornelius, where he lived, as he pushed for a local bike trail and was elected to the town's park board. He ran for town commissioner in 2003 and tied for second place in the voting.

  
*State Rep. Tillis (2011)*

# North Carolina House of Representatives

* *After a two-year term as town commissioner, Tillis ran for the General Assembly in 2006.*
* *In January 2013, Tillis was unanimously re-elected Speaker of the House by the Republican Caucus.*
* *The House Republican Caucus selected Tillis to be the next Speaker over Paul Stam.*
* *Tillis formally left IBM in 2009.*

After a two-year term as town commissioner, Tillis ran for the General Assembly in 2006. He defeated incumbent John W. Rhodes in the Republican primary, and went on to win the election, since no other candidate had filed in the general election. Tillis ran unopposed in three subsequent reelection bids, in 2008, 2010 and 2012. Tillis formally left IBM in 2009. He was campaign chairman for the House Republican Caucus in 2010. In that year's elections, Republicans won a majority in the House for the first time in almost 20 years. The House Republican Caucus selected Tillis to be the next Speaker over Paul Stam. When the legislative session opened on January 26, 2011, he was elected the fifth Republican Speaker of the North Carolina House in the state's history.

In May 2011, Governing magazine named Tillis one of 17 "GOP Legislators to Watch" selected on the basis of such perceived qualities as leadership, ambition, and political potential. In the 2012 elections, the Republican Party added nine seats to its majority, winning 77 of the 120 House seats. In January 2013, Tillis was unanimously re-elected Speaker of the House by the Republican Caucus. The state house overseen by Tillis enacted a complete restructuring of the state's tax code, including a reduction of personal and business income taxes, elimination of the estate tax, and a cap on the gas tax. It passed legislation to sunset existing state rules and regulations and limit new regulations to a ten-year duration, unless renewed by the state government. Under Tillis's leadership, the state house also passed voter-identification legislation that was struck down by a federal appeals court for unconstitutionally "target[ing] African Americans with almost surgical precision."

# U.S. Senate

# Committee assignments

* *Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry  
  Subcommittee on Jobs, Rural Economic and Energy Innovation  
  Subcommittee on Livestock, Dairy, Poultry, Marketing and Agriculture Security  
  Subcommittee on Nutrition, Specialty Crops, Food and Agricultural Research*
* *Committee on Armed Services  
  Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities  
  Subcommittee on Personnel  
  Subcommittee on Seapower*

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Subcommittee on Personnel  
Subcommittee on Seapower

Committee on the Judiciary  
Subcommittee on Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights  
Subcommittee on the Constitution  
Subcommittee on Immigration and The National Interest  
Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law

Committee on Veterans' Affairs

Special Committee on Aging

# 2014 election

* *In the Republican primary election on May 6, 2014, Tillis captured the Republican nomination for his U.S. Senate candidacy by a comfortable margin – 45.68% to his nearest challenger's 27.15%.*
* *Tillis paid $25,000 to Cambridge Analytica in 2015.*
* *Tillis was announced the winner of the close 2014 Senate race at approximately 11:30 PM on November 4, 2014.*

In keeping with an earlier promise that he would serve only four terms (eight years) in the state house, Tillis announced that he would not run for re-election to the legislature again. Instead, he chose to run for U.S. Senate in the 2014 election against first-term incumbent Democrat Kay Hagan. In Tillis's Republican primary bid, he received endorsements from former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, then-North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory, and former Presidential candidate Mitt Romney. Tillis's primary candidacy was also endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

During his primary election campaign, Tillis skipped four candidate forums in an effort to avoid lesser known rivals in the crowded primary, and in attempt to cement his image as the "inevitable nominee". However, he participated in several televised debates with the four major Republican primary candidates. According to the National Journal, Tillis was criticized during the Republican primary campaign for raising money for his Senate campaign from groups lobbying the state house, which is allowed because he is running for federal office.

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Tillis was announced the winner of the close 2014 Senate race at approximately 11:30 PM on November 4, 2014. Tillis carried 48.82 percent of the vote, the lowest winning total in North Carolina history for a U.S. Senate candidate.

During the campaign, Tillis paid $30,000 to Cambridge Analytica, a data analysis firm. The North Carolina Republican Party paid the firm $150,000 during the campaign. Cambridge Analytica touted its role in the Tillis 2014 campaign on its website and listed the race as a case study. Tillis paid $25,000 to Cambridge Analytica in 2015. In March 2018, Facebook banned Cambridge Analytica following reports that the firm had illicitly obtained information about Facebook users. Questions were raised as to whether the Tillis campaign benefitted from Cambridge Analytica's illicit activities and whether Cambridge Analytica's role in the 2014 Senate race was important enough to swing the close election.

# Political positions

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# Immigration

* *In March 2019, Tillis said about Trump's national emergency declaration, "I cannot justify providing the executive with more ways to bypass Congress.*
* *Tillis faced pressure from Trump and other conservatives to support the national emergency declaration, with conservatives floating the idea of a primary challenge against Tillis in 2020.*

Following Trump's cancellation of Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ("DACA") executive order, Tillis announced his intention to propose legislation to allow illegal immigrants, who arrived before January 1, 2012 and are under the age of 16 ("Dreamers"), legal status and allow them to remain in the US for five years with a pathway to citizenship. The proposal would grant high school graduates without a serious criminal record conditional immigration status for a five-year period. During that time, if they earn a higher-education degree, serve in the military or stay employed, they could apply for permanent residency and, eventually, citizenship. About 2.5 million DREAMers would be eligible.

In March 2019, Tillis said about Trump's national emergency declaration, "I cannot justify providing the executive with more ways to bypass Congress. As a conservative, I cannot endorse a precedent that I know future left-wing presidents will exploit to advance radical policies that will erode economic and individual freedoms." Tillis faced pressure from Trump and other conservatives to support the national emergency declaration, with conservatives floating the idea of a primary challenge against Tillis in 2020. In a reversal that surprised many in its timing and scope, Tillis voted the following week in favor of Trump’s national emergency declaration on the creation of a southern border wall, which allows Trump to take funding from other government functions in order to spend them on a border wall.

# Environment

* *In 2018, Tillis said that human activity was a contributing factor to climate change.*
* *In 2014, Tillis said that climate change is not a fact, and in 2015, voted against an amendment that said human activity is a contributor.*
* *According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Tillis has received over $260,000 from oil, gas, and coal interests since 2012.*

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In 2017, Tillis was one of 22 senators to sign a letter to President Donald Trump urging the President to have the United States withdraw from the Paris Agreement. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Tillis has received over $260,000 from oil, gas, and coal interests since 2012.

In February 2019, in response to reports of the EPA intending to decide against setting drinking water limits for perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) as part of an upcoming national strategy to manage the aforementioned class of chemicals, Tillis was one of twenty senators to sign a letter to Acting EPA Administrator Andrew R. Wheeler calling on the agency "to develop enforceable federal drinking water standards for PFOA and PFOS, as well as institute immediate actions to protect the public from contamination from additional per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)."

# Guns

* *In response to the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting, Tillis voted for two Republican-backed bills, neither which passed the senate.*
* *Tillis has an "A+" rating from the National Rifle Association (NRA).*
* *As of 2017, Tillis was the fourth most funded recipient by the NRA, totaling $4,418,012 in donations.*
* *In 2014, the NRA endorsed him for his senate run.*

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In response to the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting, Tillis voted for two Republican-backed bills, neither which passed the senate. One bill would have expanded background checks and the other would have delayed gun sales for 72 hours for individuals on the terrorist watchlist while they were investigated by federal authorities. He also rejected two Democratic-sponsored bills, including the Feinstein Amendment which would have banned any individual on the terrorist watchlist from purchasing a gun and a second that would have required background checks at gun shows and during online sales.

# LGBT rights

* *The possible contradiction between this vote and his earlier stances have led some to criticize Tillis as being both "for and against" same sex marriage.*
* *Following the 2014 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing same sex marriage, Tillis announced that he would oppose the ruling in his role as Speaker.*

In 2012, then-Speaker Tillis supported a constitutional amendment to define marriage as occurring between one man and one woman. This measure ultimately passed. Following the 2014 U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing same sex marriage, Tillis announced that he would oppose the ruling in his role as Speaker. This stance was relatively unique among major elected North Carolina Republican officials at the time, as even then-Governor Pat McCrory accepted the ruling.

In 2015, shortly after his inauguration to the Senate, Tillis voted in favor of an amendment to a non-binding resolution that would allow same-sex married couples living in states that don't recognize same-sex marriage to access to government resources. The possible contradiction between this vote and his earlier stances have led some to criticize Tillis as being both "for and against" same sex marriage.

# Net neutrality

* *Tillis opposes net neutrality.*

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# Russia probe

* *Tillis called on the Senate Intelligence committee "to move on."*
* *Tillis's comment came shortly after Charlie Kirk (of the pro-Trump advocacy group Turning Point USA) warned Tillis about the consequences if he would not support Trump Jr.*
* *In May 2019, amid a potential primary challenge, Tillis opposed the decision of the Senate Intelligence committee, chaired by his fellow North Carolina Republican Senator Richard Burr, to subpoena Donald Trump Jr. to testify in front of Congress about his involvement with Russians during the 2016 presidential campaign.*

In April 2018, following the FBI raid on the hotel room and offices of Trump's personal attorney, Michael Cohen, Tillis, together with Cory Booker, Chris Coons, and Lindsey Graham, introduced new legislation to "limit President Trump's ability to fire special counsel Robert Mueller". Termed the Special Counsel Independence and Integrity Act, the legislation would allow any special counsel, in this case Mueller, receive an "expedited judicial review" in the 10 days following being dismissed to determine if said dismissal was suitable. If negative, the special counsel would be reinstated. At the same time, according to The Hill, the bill would "codify regulations" that a special counsel could only be fired by a senior Justice Department official, while having to provide reasons in writing.

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# Trade

* *In January 2018, Tillis was one of thirty-six Republican senators to sign a letter to Trump requesting he preserve the North American Free Trade Agreement by modernizing it for the economy of the 21st Century.*

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# Foreign policy

* *In October 2017, Tillis condemned the genocide of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar and called for a stronger response to the crisis.*
* *Tillis criticized President Erdoğan's wide-ranging purges of political opponents following a failed July 2016 coup in Turkey.*

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# Personal life

* *Tillis, and his wife Susan, currently live in Cornelius, North Carolina, and have two children, Lindsay and Ryan.*
* *Tillis' brother, Rick, is a state representative in Tennessee.*
* *Tillis was released from the hospital the same day.*
* *Tillis had previously been twice married to and divorced from a girlfriend from high school.*

Tillis, and his wife Susan, currently live in Cornelius, North Carolina, and have two children, Lindsay and Ryan. Tillis had previously been twice married to and divorced from a girlfriend from high school. Tillis' brother, Rick, is a state representative in Tennessee.

On May 17, 2017, while participating in a three-mile race at Anacostia Park in Washington D.C., Tillis collapsed and was taken to an area hospital by ambulance. He had become overheated and dehydrated. Tillis was released from the hospital the same day.

# Electoral history

# References

# External links

* *Senator Thom Tillis official U.S. Senate website*
* *Thom Tillis at Curlie*

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Appearances on C-SPAN