

The Honorable Ronald V. Dellums
U.S. Representative of California (1971–1998)

Events: Civil Rights

Consequences of Historic Appointment

Representative Dellums reflects on how his appointment to the House Armed Services Committee affected the Congressional Black Caucus.

Interview recorded April 19, 2012

When I got appointed to the Armed Services Committee, the Congressional Black Caucus said, “If we can put Ron on the Armed Services Committee, we could put anybody, anywhere.” So they gained strength, because initially, they didn’t think it could be done, but when it was done, it reinforced the Congressional Black Caucus’ sense of its own strength and its own capabilities, because we thought that was impossible. If we could do that, we could do anything. So then they, they became much more confident in being able to say, “Representative ‘so-and-so,’ we want on this committee, or Representative ‘so-and-so,’ we want on this committee,” because our objective was to spread out and put ourselves on all of the various committees so that when we spoke with each other, that we could talk about the full range of legislative activity here, and that we had a voice in.