

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

**Events: Civil Rights**

**First African-American Member on the House Armed Services Committee**

Representative Dellums describes an important meeting with Speaker of the House Carl Albert of Oklahoma, and his historic appointment to the House Armed Services Committee.

*Interview recorded April 19, 2012*

Walked in the meeting, Carl Albert says, “We got all of the members of the CBC on various committees, but we couldn’t do anything for Ron.” So that’s when we started to talk, and I would nudge Lou Stokes and he would, “Mr. Speaker, it’s a matter of principle.” There’s Bill Clay, “And if you don’t put the brother on the committee, we’re going to denounce this as a racist institution. We’re going to call a press conference.” So you got the nice guy going, “This is a matter of principle. Ron Dellums knows these issues.” Bill Clay saying, “It’s about fairness and justice,” right? So at a certain point, Carl Albert got up and he said, “I’m going to see if I can get this name reconsidered.” At that moment, I knew I had won. So we walk out, and I said, “It’s over.” Lou Stokes said, “You really think so?” I said, “The fact that the Speaker said they were going to reconsider it, it’s done.” Okay? An hour and a half later, I get this phone call: I’m the first African American appointed to the House Armed Services Committee—incredible thing.