

CONGRESSMAN WILIAM F. “BILL” NICHOLS

Bill Nichols, who served as a United States Congressman from East Alabama for almost twenty-two years, was born near the rural town of Becker, Mississippi.

Several months after his birth, the Nichols' family moved to Sylacauga, Alabama. Bill Nichols would grow up there and graduate from Sylacauga High School before entering Auburn University where he was awarded a B.S. in Agronomy in 1940.

Bill Nichols decided to utilize his academic background as the Assistant County Farm Agent in Autauga County, Alabama, where he had hoped to make a career in agriculture. However, America's involvement in World War II changed his plans.

Trained in Auburn University's ROTC Program, Bill Nichols entered the Army in 1942 as a Second Lieutenant and was assigned to the 8th Infantry Division as an artillery officer. He distinguished himself in combat, seeing action in France and Germany. On November 30, 1944, during the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest, Germany, Lieutenant Nichols was critically wounded. He lost his leg because of his injuries and was removed from action until the end of the war. In 1947, the Army retired Bill Nichols at the grade of Captain. As a result of combat action, he was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

Bill Nichols returned to Sylacauga with his wife, Carolyn, and entered private business. During the years 1949 through 1967, Bill was active in civic affairs. He also rose in the corporate ranks becoming Vice President of Parker Fertilizer as well as President of Parker Gin Company.

At the urging of friends, Bill Nichols entered political life and was first elected to the Alabama House of Representatives in 1959 and then to the Alabama Senate in 1963. In recognition of his exceptional service, the Capitol Press Corps voted Bill Nichols the “Most Outstanding Member of the Alabama Senate” in 1965. In 1966, Bill won the U.S. Representative's seat from East Central Alabama. During his first term, he served on the House Agricultural Committee. Following re-election in 1968, he gained a place on the prestigious House Armed Services Committee, and through years of hard work and special effort, became a leader on that Committee.

The military has recognized his contributions by naming the Anniston Army Reserve Center in his honor. Auburn University has also recognized his many achievements by naming the ROTC Center on its campus for him. In 1989, the State Board of Veterans Affairs named the new State Veterans Home after him in recognition of the important role he played in bringing the Home to Alabama.

Bill Nichols was first elected in 1966 to the 90th Congress and served for eleven continuous terms. He had recently been elected overwhelmingly to a twelfth term at the time of his death in his Washington, D.C. office on December 13, 1988.

Congressman Nichols will be remembered for many things; but foremost for his reputation as the “Friend of the Serviceman.”