



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 7, 2014

Rep. Jones Beats Establishment Candidate in N.C. Primary

U.S. Rep. Walter B. Jones, Jr. (shown, R-N.C.), a 20-year incumbent whose conversion from military “hawk” to anti-interventionist drew opposition from the GOP establishment, beat back a well-financed challenge from a former Bush White House and Treasury Department communications aide in Tuesday’s Republican primary election in the Third District of North Carolina. The unofficial returns showed Jones, often criticized for his opposition to both foreign aid and wars of choice, defeating Taylor Griffin 51 to 46 percent, with 91 percent of the vote tallied. A third candidate, Albin “Big Al” Novinec, received four percent. Griffin, 38, had the backing and financial support of the Emergency Committee for Israel, an organization taking aim at Jones’s opposition to foreign aid, and Ending Spending Fund, a political action committee that ran ads portraying Jones as a liberal despite his long record of conservative stands on fiscal and social issues. The two groups spent nearly a combined \$1 million in support of Griffin, the [News & Observer](#) in Raleigh reported.



Jones, 70, is the son of the late Democratic congressman Walter B. Jones, Sr. and was a Democrat himself before he changed parties and won election to the Third District seat as a Republican in 1994. Like most of his colleagues he supported most U.S. military missions, and early in 2003 his support for the Iraq War was so strong that that he and fellow GOP Congressman Bob Ney of Ohio led a successful effort to rename French fries “Freedom fries” in the House cafeteria as a protest against French opposition to the war. (The name was changed back in 2006.) When the invasion and occupation of Iraq turned up none of the “weapons of mass destruction” that the Bush administration claimed was the main reason for going to war, Jones turned against the continued U.S. troop presence there, calling for a withdrawal as early as 2006 and again in 2008.

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On January 12, 2007, he introduced a resolution requiring that, absent an attack, or a demonstrably imminent attack, by Iran upon the United States or its armed forces, the president must receive specific authorization from Congress before using military force against Iran. The resolution was removed from a military spending bill for the war in Iraq by then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.). After President Obama conducted an air war over Libya without congressional authorization in 2011 and hinted strongly at an intention to take military action against the Damascus regime in the Syrian civil



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war in 2012, Jones introduced a similar resolution calling on Congress to regard waging war without congressional approval as grounds for impeachment.

During the Bush administration (2001-2008) Jones's opposition to the war in Iraq and threats of war against Iran cost him promotions in committee assignments. Some believed it might also hurt him in his district, where there is a heavy military presence, including the 240 square-mile Marine Corps complex at Camp Lejeune. The base, according to its website, is home to "an active duty, dependent, retiree and civilian employee population of approximately 170,000 people." The base generates an estimated \$3 billion in commerce each year from payrolls and contracts. But the congressman's adherence to the constitutional principle that the Congress, and not the president, should decide whether or not the nation goes to war is apparently more troubling to his congressional colleagues than to the voters in his district, who have continued to reelect the 10-term congressman.

In the primary campaign just concluded, most voters were apparently not fooled by efforts to confuse loyalty to the GOP leadership with devotion to conservative principles. Votes by Jones in opposition to sanctions against Iran and foreign aid to Israel proved to be ammunition for his opponents, who cited a Washington magazine that rated Jones the "most liberal" House Republican, based on "key votes" in 2011. It was an odd designation for a representative who has consistently opposed new or expanded federal programs, including ObamaCare, Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, and the prescription-drug benefit add-on to Medicare. Jones has also been a steadfast opponent of abortion, same-sex marriage, and citizenship for illegal aliens. He has scored a perfect 100-percent rating from the American Conservative Union four times, missing it twice more by just one vote.

It was win one, lose one overall for the establishment Republicans in the Tar Hill State, as Thom Tillis, endorsed by 2012 Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney and likely 2016 contender Jeb Bush, won the U.S. Senate primary, outpolling Greg Bannon, a tea party favorite endorsed by Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul; and Mark Harris, a pastor and social conservative who had the endorsement of former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee. Tillis exceeded the 40-percent share of the vote he needed to avoid a runoff, capturing 46 percent of the ballots. Bannon was second with 27 percent, while Harris drew 17 percent.

Photo of Rep. Walter Jones, Jr. (R-N.C.): AP Images



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