

MONDAIRE JONES

b. May 18, 1987

FIRST OUT BLACK CONGRESSMAN

“Growing up poor, Black, and gay, I never imagined someone like me could run for Congress, let alone win.”

As the first out Black Congressman, Mondaire Jones uses his platform to champion equality and diversity.

Mondaire Jones became the country’s first out gay Black congressman on January 3, 2021, at the age of 33. He serves as the U.S. representative of New York’s 17th District, which comprises Westchester and Rockland counties.

Jones grew up in Spring Valley, New York, the son of a single mother who worked multiple jobs and relied on food stamps to support the family. Jones attended public high school, where he restarted the school’s chapter of the NAACP. By age 19, he was serving on the NAACP’s National Board of Directors.

Jones earned his bachelor’s degree from Stanford University in 2009 and came out in 2012. He interned in the U.S. Department of Justice during the Obama administration and received his Juris Doctor from Harvard Law in 2013. He joined the law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell in Westchester County, New York, and clerked for the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Jones ran for Congress against the Democratic incumbent in 2020, defeating her and a half dozen other candidates in the primary. He received 42% of the vote and went on to defeat his Republican opponent in the general election. With his win, Jones secured his place in history as the first out gay Black member of Congress, alongside U.S. Representative Ritchie Torres, who identifies as Afro-Latinx.

In his first year in office, Jones sued former President Trump and the Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy, for stymieing the use of mail-in ballots. He voted to impeach Donald Trump and halted the deportation of Paul Pierrilus, the last scheduled deportee under the Trump administration. Pierrilus, who was an undocumented immigrant but raised in America, would have been “returned” to a country in which he never lived.

Among other proposed laws, Jones voted for the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act and the Equality Act, which would strengthen protections against gender-identity and sexual-orientation discrimination. He supports the Green New Deal, Medicare for All, tuition-free public colleges and universities, an end to partisan gerrymandering, automatic voter registration and a host of other progressive initiatives.

Jones cofounded the nonprofit Rising Leaders, Inc., an organization that mentors underprivileged middle schoolers. In addition to the NAACP, he has served on a variety of boards, including Yonkers Partners in Education and the Civil Liberties Union, and he has worked pro bono for The Legal Aid Society.

In 2020 Queerty magazine named him one of its 50 honorees for his work toward equality.

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