

**Michael Thurmond** has distinguished himself as an attorney, an author, a lecturer and a public servant.

In 1986, he became the first African-American elected to the Georgia General Assembly from Clarke County since Reconstruction. During his time in the legislature, he was the only African-American legislator elected from a majority white district. While serving in the General Assembly, Thurmond authored major legislation that has provided more than two hundred million dollars in tax relief to the state's senior citizens and working families.

Following his tenure in the General Assembly, Thurmond was called upon to direct Georgia's historic transition from welfare to work. He created the innovative "Workfirst" program, which has helped over 90,000 welfare-dependent Georgia families move into the workforce, saving more than one hundred million tax dollars that have been reinvested in child care, training and other support services

In 1997, Thurmond became a distinguished lecturer at the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. The following year, he was elected Georgia Labor Commissioner. In doing so, he became the first non-incumbent African-American to be elected to state-wide office in Georgia.

Under Thurmond's leadership, the Labor Department has undergone a significant transformation in customer service and efficiency. Unemployment offices have been transformed into state-of-the-art career centers focused on getting jobless Georgians back to work as quickly as possible. The success of Thurmond's approach is reflected in Georgia's number one national ranking in helping the unemployed get back to work.

Thurmond's latest book, "Freedom: Georgia's Antislavery Heritage, 1733-1865," was awarded the Georgia Historical Society's Lilla Hawes Award and the Georgia Center for the Book listed "Freedom" as one of "The 25 Books All Georgians Should Read."

Thurmond graduated with honors from Paine College with a Bachelor's degree in philosophy and religion and later earned a juris doctorate from the University of South Carolina School of Law. In 1991, he completed the political executives program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

Thurmond is a member of the Ebenezer Baptist Church West of Athens. He and his wife Zola are the proud parents of a daughter, Mikaya.