

John Reid Edwards

Doctor of Laws

John Edwards took his seat in the United States Senate on January 6, 1999, as the 51st person to represent North Carolina in that august body. Few freshman senators have made such a favorable impression so quickly. *The Wall Street Journal* recognizes him as one who “impresses colleagues in behind-doors deliberations,” and the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call* includes him on a list of members of Congress who have made a mark for themselves in a very short period of time. Senator Patrick Leahy has called him the best debater the Senate has seen in twenty-five years. After engaging Senator Edwards in floor debate another colleague remarked, “My rule now is never yield to Senator Edwards.” In his first term Edwards’ principal legislative interests have centered on patient protection, better schools, personal privacy, fiscal integrity of Social Security and Medicare, and campaign finance reform.

Senator Edwards grew up in Robbins, a small town in Moore County. As a student at North Moore High School he excelled in both academics and athletics. Upon graduation he enrolled in Clemson University, where he played freshman football. He transferred to North Carolina State University in his sophomore year, graduating with a B.S. with Honors in Textiles. Edwards completed his formal education at Carolina’s School of Law, where he earned his J.D. with Honors (1977) and was inducted into the Order of the Coif legal honorary society. He is the 19th Carolina alumnus to represent North Carolina in the U.S. Senate.

After serving a year as law clerk to United States District Court Judge Franklin T. Dupree, Jr., John Edwards began his practice of law in Nashville, Tennessee. In 1981 he joined the Raleigh firm of Tharrington, Smith & Hargrove and rapidly became one of the nation’s most outstanding trial lawyers. In 1992 he and law school classmate David Kirby formed their own firm, Edwards & Kirby. Edwards was named one of eight Lawyers of the Year by *Lawyers Weekly USA* in 1996, is listed in the publication *Best Lawyers in America*, and has been selected as a member of the Inner Circle of Advocates.

John Edwards met his wife, Elizabeth, when both were in law school. They were married in 1977 and have had four children. Their first-born, Wade, died in 1996 at the age of 16. Their daughter Catherine is a student at Princeton. Two younger children live at home: three-year-old Emma Claire and one-year-old Jack.

Senator and Mrs. Edwards retain close ties to Carolina. He serves on the executive leadership board of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, and she is a member of our Board of Visitors.