



The First Black Members of Congress

NAME: _____

Read the information below and study the portrait “The First Black Members of Congress.” Choose one person to learn about using the links on this handout. Then create a one-paragraph campaign speech for him. Include one detail about his background, one personal quality and one way he will improve his country.

The United States Constitution sets forth the laws and rights that are most important to our country. An amendment is a change or addition to the Constitution. After the Civil War, three major amendments were passed:

- **The 13th Amendment**, approved in 1865, ended slavery in the United States.
- **The 14th Amendment**, approved in 1868, gave citizenship to all people born in the U.S., including former enslaved people.
- **The 15th Amendment**, approved in 1870, gave Black men the right to vote.

Once Black men were able to vote, they worked to elect members of their own communities to public office. From 1869–1899, more than 20 Black men—mostly former enslaved people—were elected to the United States Congress. Their presence in government did not last long, though, due to resistance among many white people and discrimination against Black people in the voting process. Women would not win the right to vote until 1920, and a Black woman would not be elected to Congress until 1969—a full century after the election of the first Black man.

Learn about the first Black congressmen using these sources. (If an article is long or challenging, scan for the facts you need rather than trying to read the entire page.)

Black Americans in Congress

<https://history.house.gov/People/Search?filter=1>

BlackPast

<https://www.blackpast.org>

5 Former Slaves Turned Statesmen

<https://www.history.com/news/5-former-slaves-turned-statesmen>



The First Black Members of Congress (continued)



SOURCE: *The First Colored Senator and Representatives—in the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States.* Color film copy slide. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/ppmsca.17564>.