

Sheldon Whitehouse Bio *(Revised March 2013)*

Rhode Islanders know they can count on Sheldon Whitehouse to fight for the middle-class values that matter most to us. Sheldon believes that every child deserves the opportunities provided by a good education, and that anyone willing to work hard should be able to find a good job. He believes in the promise of Social Security and Medicare to provide a basic measure of dignity for seniors when they retire.

Sheldon has hosted more than 100 community dinners in every corner of the state to hear the concerns of Rhode Islanders. He is dedicated to helping small businesses grow, making health care affordable for every family, and fighting to break through the barricade of special interests in Washington that are blocking action on climate change. The Providence Journal described Sheldon as “a strong-willed and articulate member of the Senate on national issues and an energetic champion of Rhode Island economic and other interests.”

The examples set by people like his father, a World War II veteran and diplomat, and by great figures in Rhode Island public life, like U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell and Governor Bruce Sundlun, taught Sheldon the good that public service can do for our country and our state. Throughout his more than thirty years in public service, Sheldon has focused on the basic issues that make a real difference in people’s lives.

Sheldon understands that in tough economic times it’s harder for families to make ends meet. That’s why creating good jobs and strengthening our small businesses are his top priorities. To get more Americans back to work, Sheldon has introduced legislation to give tax credits to companies that hire unemployed workers, and to eliminate tax incentives for companies that ship jobs overseas. He is also a strong advocate for economic fairness and author of the Buffett Rule, legislation that would force multi-million-dollar earners to pay the same tax rates as middle-class Rhode Islanders.

Sheldon understands what Social Security and Medicare—the twin pillars of economic fairness and retirement security—mean to Rhode Island seniors and their families. Sheldon founded the Defend Social Security Caucus to extend the program’s solvency without jeopardizing benefits. And he fought to close the Medicare prescription drug “doughnut hole” and to eliminate fraud and abuse—again, without cutting benefits for our seniors.

Sheldon understands that in the Ocean State, our economy and our way of life depend on the health of our environment. As a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Sheldon has championed efforts to reduce carbon pollution, protect our air and water, and position Rhode Island as a leader in the clean energy economy. He founded the Senate Oceans Caucus to promote creative, bipartisan policy solutions that protect our oceans, our coasts, and the people and economies that rely on them.

A forceful voice for action on the challenges of a changing climate, Sheldon joined with Rep. Henry Waxman to form a bicameral Task Force on Climate Change to take on this important issue. Janet Larsen of the Earth Policy Institute called Sheldon “an elected official who speaks the truth.”

And Sheldon understands the burden of high health care costs on everyone in Rhode Island—from the families and seniors who seek quality care, to the doctors, nurses, and hospitals that provide it. He is a member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee, and has played a pivotal role in the crafting and implementation of President Obama’s Affordable Care Act, which is making affordable health care available to millions of Americans.

As a founder of the Rhode Island Quality Institute, Sheldon believes that rewarding good care and reducing waste in our health care system will lower costs and improve the quality of care. Thanks in part to his support for these kinds of reforms and investments in our state, Rhode Island's knowledge and health care economy is leading the nation in this effort.

Like many Rhode Islanders, Sheldon knows how devastating a cancer diagnosis can be to a family. In 2013, his legislation to improve research on the deadliest forms of cancer was signed into law.

Sheldon also works on the HELP Committee to strengthen struggling schools and prevent students from falling behind. National PTA President Betsy Landers has said, “Our nation’s families are fortunate to have a true advocate for children in Senator Whitehouse.” Sheldon is also fighting to ensure that Senator Pell’s legacy—the Federal Pell Grant program—remains strong so the next generation of Americans can turn the dream of a college education into a reality.

A graduate of Yale University and the University of Virginia School of Law, Sheldon served as Rhode Island’s Director of Business Regulation under Governor Sundlun before being recommended by Senator Pell and nominated by President Bill Clinton to be Rhode Island’s United States Attorney in 1994. He was elected Attorney General of Rhode Island in 1998, a position in which he served until 2003. On November 7, 2006, Rhode Islanders elected Sheldon to the United States Senate, where he is a member of the Budget Committee; the Environment and Public Works Committee (EPW); the Judiciary Committee; the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee; and the Special Committee on Aging. He is the chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism and of the EPW Subcommittee on Oversight.

He and his wife Sandra, a marine biologist and environmental advocate, live in Newport. They have two children.

Whether at one of his community dinners throughout the state, meetings with small business owners, or discussions at senior centers, Sheldon is listening to Rhode Islanders—and putting their ideas to work in Washington.

For the latest updates on Sheldon’s work, be sure to follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/SenWhitehouse> and “like” him on Facebook at <http://www.Facebook.com/SenatorWhitehouse>.