

Biography of
THE HONORABLE CECILE BLEDSOE
ARKANSAS STATE SENATOR



CHAIR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & LABOR
SENATE DISTRICT 3

Senator Cecile Bledsoe of Rogers ranks first in seniority in the Senate and represents District 3. It encompasses the eastern part of Benton County, including Rogers, Pea Ridge, Garfield and Avoca. Senator Bledsoe is chair of the Senate Committee on Public Health, Welfare and Labor and a member of the Senate State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee. She is also a member on the Senate Interim Committee on Children and Youth Committee, Senate Rules, Resolutions and Memorials, an ex officio on the Arkansas Legislative Council and Joint Budget and a member on Legislative Joint Auditing Committee and is on several subcommittees.

She was first elected to the legislature in 1998 and served for six years in the House of Representatives. At the time that was the maximum length of time a House member could serve, under the Arkansas term limits amendment.

In 2008 she was elected to the Senate and was sworn in on the first day of the 2009 session. That's when she officially became a member of the Senate Committee on Public Health, Welfare and Labor. The committee assignment was a natural fit, because of her experience running a surgical clinic. In 2013 she became the chair of Public Health during a period in which the position was under tremendous pressure. Senator Bledsoe tries to keep the playing field level, with the constant goal in mind of making sure that health care is accessible and affordable.

Senator Bledsoe also served on the Health Reform Legislative Task Force that recommended structural changes to the Arkansas Medicaid system, which is one of the most controversial political issues at the Capitol. She is usually in the middle of the discussion when legislation is filed to change the scope of practice of physicians, nurses, therapists and other medical providers.

Senator Bledsoe is a faithful co-sponsor of pro-life bills. She supports and co-sponsors tax cut measures, such as the legislation cutting income taxes by \$100 million a year for middle class families, which also lowered capital gains taxes.

Senator Bledsoe sponsored the act that amended the definition of "Public Utility" to clarify that service stations will not be classified as public utilities. The result was that they were able to sell electricity for charging of battery-operated vehicles and hybrid electric vehicles. This removed potential obstacles to retail service stations that charge electric vehicles for a fee.

She helps secure grants and appropriations for volunteer fire departments, non-profits and civic organizations, as well as the Fayetteville Veterans Home. Senator Bledsoe was the lead sponsor of the Telemedicine Act of 2015, as well as legislation creating a diabetes action plan for Arkansas.

In 2019, she has been supporting "Stop the Bleed," a campaign supported by emergency medical personnel and the Health Department to train more people how to apply tourniquets when they've been injured. More than half the legislature attended a training session that she helped organize.

Senator Bledsoe has helped secure grants and appropriations for several fire departments, city and community organizations, Northwest Arkansas Community College, and the Fayetteville Veterans Home.

She has received numerous accolades during her time in the legislature: the Arkansas Medical Society selected Senator Bledsoe for their "Legislator of the Year Award" and she was recognized as a "Distinguished Legislator" by the Arkansas Municipal League. Senator Bledsoe received the Family Council Action Committee Statesman Award and the Arkansas State Chamber's Leadership Award. She is active in the community and has served on numerous boards and commissions.

She's a former vice president and assistant office manager of the Surgical Clinic, and a graduate of the University of Georgia with a bachelor's degree in journalism. Senator Bledsoe is from Brunswick, Georgia, and has lived in Rogers for 40 years, with her husband of 46 years, Dr. Jim Bledsoe. They have three children and they attend Cross Church in Rogers. In spite of her busy workload, she finds time to be with her 10 grandchildren.