



National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center
Houston, Texas 77058

Biographical Data

BILL NELSON (SENATOR) PAYLOAD SPECIALIST

PERSONAL DATA: A fifth-generation Floridian, Bill Nelson was born in Miami on Sept. 29, 1942. He has been married to his wife, Grace, since 1972 and has two grown children, Nan Ellen and Bill Jr.

EDUCATION: Educated in Melbourne's public schools, Bill Nelson is a graduate of Yale University and the University of Virginia Law School. He was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1968.

EXPERIENCE: Bill Nelson was a Captain in the United States Army, serving in the reserves from 1965 to 1971, and was on active duty from 1968 to 1970.



His public service career began in 1972, with his election to the Florida Legislature.

During his three terms, he helped enact the nation's first state law to protect consumers from computer fraud and advocated for responsible growth management laws.

Elected to the U.S. Congress in 1978, he served six terms representing Orlando and the Space Coast and became an early advocate for a balanced federal budget.

In January 1986, Nelson spent six days orbiting Earth as a payload specialist aboard space shuttle Columbia. That experience gave him a new perspective on the Earth's fragile environment and a greater appreciation of the importance of our nation's space exploration program.

In 1994, Nelson was elected to the Florida Cabinet as state Treasurer, Insurance Commissioner and Fire Marshal. During his six years in the post, he earned his reputation as a common-sense problem solver and strong consumer advocate by fighting to keep insurance rates affordable for homeowners, cracking down on life and burial insurance sales abuses that targeted the elderly and minorities, and forcing European insurers to honor unpaid Holocaust-era claims.

Nelson was elected to the U.S. Senate in November 2000, after serving six years as a member of the Florida Cabinet. He currently serves on the Senate Commerce, Armed Services, Budget, Foreign Relations, Intelligence, and Aging committees and is recognized as the leading congressional expert on NASA.

As a member of the Senate's Commerce Committee, Nelson has taken on the cause of privacy by supporting measures to protect consumers from identity theft and working on legislation to stop unsolicited e-mails that plague individuals and businesses.

In his role on the Senate's Armed Services Committee, Nelson has worked tirelessly for the families of Florida's men and women serving overseas by addressing their concerns about basic equipment needs, such as the lack of body armor, and the hardships facing many from extended tours of duty. He's also opposed efforts to reduce the military's aircraft carrier fleet as our nation continues to fight the global threat of terrorism.

Other priorities Nelson has championed during his tenure in the Senate include: preventing oil drilling off Florida's coast; ensuring veterans and their spouses get the benefits they deserve and have access to quality health care; and,

fighting for a meaningful Medicare prescription drug benefit for seniors that allows the government to negotiate lower drug prices from pharmaceutical companies. In the wake of the 2004 hurricane season, he worked to secure adequate federal relief for storm victims and reform the federal agency charged with assisting people after disasters.

SPACE FLIGHT EXPERIENCE: STS-61C Columbia (January 12-18, 1986) launched from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida, and returned to a night landing at Edwards Air Force Base, California. During the six-day flight the seven-man crew aboard Columbiadeployed the SATCOM KU satellite and conducted experiments in astrophysics and materials processing. At mission conclusion Bill Nelson had traveled over 2.1 million miles in 96 earth orbits and logged over 146 hours in space.

JULY 2008

This is the only version available from NASA. Updates must be sought direct from the above named individual.