



## GOVERNMENT LEADER OF THE YEAR

# FAST START, BRIGHT FUTURE

## Brooks Takes Experience, Abilities to Congress

By Tom Schuman

Susan Brooks takes part in a tour at Telamon in Carmel (top left), speaks at a Vistage leadership event in Indianapolis and participates in a homeland security hearing in our nation's capital.



Being a freshman is never easy – whether it’s going off to college at age 18 or descending upon our nation’s capital as a new member of Congress. In each case, some don’t make the transition successfully, many eventually find their way and a precious few stand out from the very beginning.

You can place Susan Brooks into the latter category. For her, college life was in Oxford, Ohio at Miami University (before earning her law degree at Indiana University). Her transition to politics came in 2012, winning an ultra-competitive seven-way Republican primary in District 5 (long-time incumbent Dan Burton dropped out of that race) and the general election that fall with 58% of the vote.

- Brooks, a Fort Wayne native, admits to a few first-year similarities:
- She lives part-time in a Washington, D.C. apartment, with college furniture inherited from her recently graduated daughter.
  - She takes the metro to work now, and she walked to



Part of the responsibilities for Brooks include (clockwise from top left) meeting with Frankton Jr./Sr. High School students on tour in Washington, D.C., addressing an Indiana Chamber policy committee meeting with fellow Indiana Rep. Larry Bucshon, catching up with Colts Coach Chuck Pagano at training camp in Anderson University (Brooks took her dad, a former high school football coach, to his first pro camp) and receiving endorsements from Indiana Chamber President and CEO Kevin Brinegar (left) and Jack Howard of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

- class at Miami – no car in either location.
- Initial anxieties: “When you go to work in the Capitol, it’s a very confusing layout – the tunnel system under the Capitol, the tunnel system between the three House office buildings. Just finding your way around is kind of like going to college and finding your way around campus.”
  - New experiences: Included would be “making sure you have enough time to get to your hearing or meeting or to the floor to take votes. We will stand in line when we get over to the Capitol to get on elevators to go up to House floor. Sometimes there will be 20 people packed in elevators – like college freshmen. We laugh about it.”
  - Learning and studying: “The transition from high school to college – how to be a good student, how to be effective in college; there’s very much that learning curve in Congress also. I’ve come from a pretty active work world. Thank God, I did have incredibly fast-paced jobs leading up to this, but I did not anticipate the pace of this job. The studying that goes on at night before the next day’s meetings, hearings, speeches. You can’t study too far out because of packed days.”

House colleague Cathy McMorris Rodgers, who was first elected in her Washington state district in 2004, was impressed with Brooks during a campaign visit in 2012. McMorris Rodgers offered primary support and attended an event in Brooks’ district in the fall that year.

“Susan is a total class act. You immediately see her as someone who has tremendous experience, grace under pressure and someone you can trust,” McMorris Rodgers says. “Susan has distinguished herself among the freshmen class. She is someone who is going to provide important leadership for America for many years.”

### Making a career choice

Political leadership was never on the Brooks agenda. The daughter of a teacher and football coach (Homestead High School), her mother also worked in the school system. Tennis, volleyball, cheerleading and choir were among her early pursuits.

Brooks acknowledges an early interest in medicine, but admits “chemistry was not my best friend.” Her “fairly argumentative” nature as the oldest of three children led her parents to suggest being an advocate – potentially a lawyer. Brooks later shadowed

an attorney in Fort Wayne (and she notes that his children now run that family firm). A political science and sociology major at Miami, she completed a summer internship as an Allen County juvenile probation officer.

“That really opened my eyes to a whole new world,” states Brooks, emphasizing the final three words. “I found it all very fascinating, a way to combine my interest in the law with actually helping people. That’s part of the reason why I went the criminal defense route.”

Thirteen years in criminal defense law were followed by 14 years of varied public and private sector positions (see below). While she did not realize it at the time, all were experiences that helped prepare her for when others came knocking at her door in early 2012.

“I was approached about running for Congress. I was loving what I was doing at Ivy Tech (general counsel and short-term workforce training), and this was never anything I truly considering doing,” Brooks shares. “This was when Congress had the impasse on that Super Committee that could not come up with a budget deal.

“I was questioning: ‘What was going on out in Washington and why can’t we get

people who can sit and work on these really challenging issues facing the country?’ I was very concerned about the people representing us in Washington, D.C. Some young people in the Republican Party contacted me and asked if it was something I might consider.

“The districts were being redrawn and people were jumping in against Congressman Burton – who now supports me; he was one of the first people to call and congratulate me and we had a wonderful transition,” she continues. “They had to really convince me how different the district was ... as to whether or not I could actually win. How could I possibly win when there were already a lot of people in the race?”

Win she did. And she hasn’t slowed down since.

### All about the committees

The “victories” started with committee assignments. Brooks asked for and received placement on the Committee on Education and the Workforce (coming off her four-year stint at Ivy Tech Community College) and the

Committee on Homeland Security (as deputy mayor of Indianapolis in 1998-1999, part of her focus was on police, fire and emergency response activities). She also is chairing the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications.

Her third request was agriculture. Instead, she was assigned to ethics, which investigates the conduct of House members. (Brooks was U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana from 2001-2007). In addition, earlier this year she was the only freshman asked to serve on the House Select Committee on the Events Surrounding the 2012 Terrorist Attack in Benghazi.

McMorris Rodgers laughed when asked if she and others were able to initially secure committee roles that so closely aligned with their previous work, before commenting, “We’re all a product of our experiences, and Susan brought some tremendous experiences to Congress.”

Phase two is taking that prior knowledge and blending it with the new roles in an effort to pass legislation – something easier said

than done in today’s partisan atmosphere in Washington. Brooks, however, has some early achievements:

- The Cooperative and Small Employer Charity Pension Flexibility Act introduced by Brooks frees rural electric cooperatives, private schools and other groups from burdensome federal pension requirements. More than 1,500 Indiana employees benefit, as well as the organizations that were threatened with having to curtail services due to increased pension costs.
- Much-needed improvements to the historically inefficient workforce training system were signed into law in late July. A Brooks’ amendment to the SKILLS Act (also known as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) permits local workforce investment boards to reserve a portion of their state funds to implement “pay for success” models.

“It’s the first time in decades that our very cumbersome workforce system is being streamlined and made more flexible ... rather than the federal government saying, ‘Here’s



Brooks listens to testimony during a Committee on Education and the Workforce hearing, answers media questions with colleagues Jackie Walorski and Joe Donnelly following a field hearing in Carmel on emergency preparedness and discusses public service with eighth-grade students from Orchard Country Day School.



your money and you have to use it this way,'” Brooks explains. “My amendment allows those programs showing the most results to be rewarded.”

Tom Snyder, Ivy Tech president, did not know Brooks prior to bringing her on board. In addition to strengthening the in-house legal capabilities at the community college, she helped develop what eventually became the school’s Corporate College (with an emphasis on training capabilities).

“Susan is an incredibly good listener in terms of business needs,” he explains. “She was a business advocate when she was here and she’s taken that position as she’s moved on to Congress.

“She’s had two bills passed in a Congress that has a reputation for not getting bills passed. I think Susan is an example that if you get the right people in Congress, they get past institutional barriers and get things done.”

### Not across the goal line yet

But not all the frustrations can be avoided. Another Brooks bill has passed the House, but awaits Senate action (the House had passed more than 350 bills prior to the August recess with most languishing in the other chamber). In addition, her Computer Science Education Act (first introduced with Colorado Democrat Jared Polis in June 2013) is still moving through the House process.

- The Social Media Working Group Act of 2014 evolved from the subcommittee Brooks chairs. “After Hurricane Sandy, people were communicating and helping fellow citizens through social media like they (the Red Cross) had never seen before. We realized that not only did emergency response organizations need to become proficient in using social media, but our first responders needed to become more proficient.” The legislation adds private sector innovation to

an existing Department of Homeland Security working group.

- On the Computer Science Education Act, Brooks notes, “Right now, computer science is not listed as a core academic subject in our K-12 system, so K-12 schools do not use their federal education dollars on computer science related classes. We’re falling behind in the world in students interested in computer science, in teachers interested in teaching computer science. It’s not a mandate to K-12, but it gives schools flexibility.”

Brooks says the latter bill has achieved more bipartisan support than any education legislation this year. It’s the approach she, along with her freshman class colleagues from 2012, has attempted to take from day one.

Of the approximately 70 House members voted into office two years ago – including Indiana colleagues Luke Messer, president of that class, and Jackie Walorski – Brooks declares, “People want us to try and be different because they are so fed up and angry about the gridlock.”

### Crossing the divide

A number of factors keep the two sides apart. Brooks lists the following: Everyone on the first flight home once the last votes are cast for the week, the hectic workday pace, the partisan division in the setup of the House chamber itself and a lack of getting to know each other outside of work. “It is rare that we have much interaction with the other side.”

How does one change that?

Brooks started a bipartisan freshmen women’s dinner, with the group getting together on fly-in (first work day of the month) evenings. Messer and his counterparts on the Democrat side have scheduled some dinners, speakers and discussion groups. Even a women’s softball



## Congratulations, Susan Brooks

Faegre Baker Daniels applauds public servants making a meaningful difference in our world, and we congratulate our friend, Congresswoman Susan Brooks, as the Indiana Chamber of Commerce’s Government Leader of the Year.

**FAEGRE BAKER  
DANIELS**

USA ▾ UK ▾ CHINA

FaegreBD.com



Brooks enjoys constituent visits (at Telamon in Carmel during the August recess) and learning more about the businesses in her district.

game against the media that raises money for young cancer survivors (Brooks had a cheering role the first year due to a broken wrist) is a way to get to better know colleagues from both sides of the aisle.

Sarah Evans Barker, longtime judge of the U.S. District Court of Southern Indiana, is not surprised by the outreach or early successes for Brooks. The two have a relationship that dates to Barker being the guest speaker and Brooks the designated student spokesperson at Brooks' law school graduation. It also includes Brooks serving as a criminal defense lawyer while Barker was U.S. attorney.

"I knew her because she would be on the other side of cases we had. I always admired her lawyering ability," Barker states. "She was very easy to work with."

Barker became a trusted confidante as Brooks considered various career opportunities. "I always gave her encouragement because I thought she was one of the best and brightest." The advice didn't include the potential run for Congress due to ethical issues, but Barker was among the first to learn of Brooks' decision.

The judge says that lawyers in general, and Brooks in particular, are the ones to bring about the long-sought collaboration.

"I think it's a quintessential lawyerly skill. Lawyers are always trying to work through litigation issues and problems with opposing counsel in a civil, collegial way and that requires an understanding of the other side so you can move toward that side if appropriate," she details. "This is what lawyers do. We know how to manage the adversarial relationships so that something good comes out of it."

"Susan brings the same outlook, same approach, and same dedication and good humor to every responsibility she is given – and people trust her for that. She is who she is. It's a wonderful fact about her and wonderful description of her."

# Introducing **SMART BUSINESS BANKING**

from First Financial Bank

## Start with a *core account*

With a low balance to open and no monthly fees\*, your core account includes complimentary services that make business banking smart and easy.

### SMART BUSINESS BANKING

#### Core account:

#### Business Checking

\$100 minimum balance to open and NO monthly fee\*

#### Complimentary:

- 200 Transactions
- Online/Mobile Banking
- e-Statements
- Bill Pay

Add tools to meet your needs:

From cash management to employee banking and loyalty rewards, choose what's right for you and your business.

Proudly serving communities throughout Indiana:

- |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|
| Indianapolis | Fort Wayne   |
| Crown Point  | Schererville |
| Hammond      | Highland     |
| Lafayette    | Bloomington  |
| Columbus     |              |

# first

first financial bank



[BankatFirst.com/SmartBusiness](http://BankatFirst.com/SmartBusiness)

\*\$100 minimum balance to open.

A per-transaction fee of \$.35 may apply for each transaction exceeding 200.



“It’s the first time in decades that our very cumbersome workforce system is being streamlined and made more flexible ... rather than the federal government saying, ‘Here’s your money and you have to use it this way.’ My amendment allows those programs showing the most results to be rewarded.”

### Striving for more progress

Despite being the only freshman on the committee, Brooks was called upon to question some of the initial witnesses as the latest Benghazi investigation began in mid-September. Most of the work, she anticipated prior to the first hearing, would take place outside of the public view.

The goal is not only to provide answers as to what transpired in 2012, “but what we are doing as a federal government, and administration, to make sure these people we are deploying around the world have what they need in security,” she outlines.

Brooks hears a wide variety of concerns in the Connect with your Congresswoman one-on-one events she has conducted throughout her district. She describes constituents as “war weary” and “frustrated with the President ignoring Congress.”

Asked about difficult votes thus far, Brooks cites her first month in office and the issue of Hurricane Sandy funding. Three options on the table divided Republicans, with the full \$60 billion request ultimately approved. Despite her subcommittee chairmanship, Brooks voted for \$32 billion with assurances that more money would be

available later if needed.

In discussing lessons learned during her first term, finances are just one of the topics.

“I don’t think we pay enough attention to the national debt,” Brooks contends. “I have learned that I have to be a bit more patient than I was when I started. Getting things accomplished is a much more difficult task than I thought.

“The best example would be my computer science education bill. We have 100 bipartisan co-sponsors,” she continues. “It’s all about adding computer science in the classroom and we need to do that, yet it’s a bit hung up right now – and that’s challenging to me. It just seems to make so much sense for our students and the workforce.”

Brooks doesn’t want the spotlight. She simply clamors for results.

At her apartment complex, away from Capitol Hill, “most of the (younger) residents have no clue (what I do). I’m never there; I leave every weekend. When I come in with suitcases, they probably think I’m a mom coming to visit. I like it that way.”

Spoken like a freshman destined for even greater success.

## Hall of Fame: 25 Years of Excellence

### Business Leader of the Year

2013: Steve Ferguson, Cook Group, Bloomington  
 2012: Scott Dorsey, ExactTarget, Indianapolis  
 2011: Jean Wojtowicz, Cambridge Capital Management Corp., Indianapolis  
 2010: Mike Wells, REI Investments Inc., Carmel  
 2009: John Swisher, JBS United, Sheridan  
 2008: Tony George, Indianapolis Motor Speedway, Indianapolis  
 2007: Niel Ellerbrook, Vectren Corporation, Evansville  
 2006: Mac McCormick, Bestway Express, Inc., Vincennes  
 2005: David Frick, Anthem Blue Cross & Blue Shield, Indianapolis  
 2004: Jerry Semler, OneAmerica Financial Partners, Indianapolis  
 2003: Doug Bawel, Jasper Engines & Transmissions Exchange, Jasper  
 2002: Bob Koch, Koch Enterprises, Inc., Evansville  
 2001: Marilyn Moran-Townsend, CVC Communications, Fort Wayne  
 2000: Chris Murphy, 1st Source Corp./1st Source Bank, South Bend  
 1999: Bill Cook, Cook Group, Bloomington  
 1998: Ian Rolland, Lincoln Financial Group, Fort Wayne  
 1997: Patricia Miller, Vera Bradley Designs, Fort Wayne  
 1996: Randall Tobias, Eli Lilly & Co., Indianapolis  
 1995: John Hillenbrand II, Hillenbrand Industries, Batesville  
 1994: Frank Walker, Walker Information, Indianapolis  
 1993: Don Wolf, Hardware Wholesalers, Fort Wayne  
 1992: Dane Miller, Biomet, Warsaw  
 1991: Van Smith, Ontario Corp., Muncie  
 1990: Dick Wood, Eli Lilly & Co., Indianapolis

### Government Leader of the Year

2013: Former U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar  
 2012: Rep. Jerry Torr & Sen. Carlin Yoder  
 2011: Rep. Brian Bosma & Sen. David Long  
 2010: Tony Bennett, State Superintendent of Public Instruction  
 2009: Stan Jones, former Indiana Higher Education Commissioner  
 2008: Former Gov. Joseph Kernan & Chief Justice Randall Shepard  
 2007: Fort Wayne Mayor Graham Richard  
 2006: Gov. Mitch Daniels  
 2005: Sen. Earline Rogers & Rep. Jerry Torr  
 2004: Sen. David Ford & Rep. Brian Hasler  
 2003: Rep. B. Patrick Bauer & Rep. Brian Bosma  
 2002: Sen. Larry Borst  
 2001: Gov. Frank O’Bannon & Dr. Suellen Reed  
 2000: Rep. Jeff Linder  
 1999: Rep. Bob Behning  
 1998: Sen. Teresa Lubbers  
 1997: U.S. Rep. Lee Hamilton  
 1996: U.S. Rep. David McIntosh  
 1995: Rep. Michael Smith & Sen. Thomas Weatherwax  
 1994: Rep. Paul Mannweiler  
 1993: Sen. Morris Mills  
 1992: Hon. Thomas Barnes  
 1991: Sen. Joseph Harrison  
 1990: U.S. Sen. Richard Lugar

### Community of the Year

2013: Bedford  
 2012: Indianapolis  
 2011: Kokomo  
 2010: Terre Haute  
 2009: Valparaiso  
 2008: Noblesville  
 2007: Anderson  
 2006: Evansville  
 2005: LaPorte  
 2004: Muncie  
 2003: Warsaw  
 2002: Marion  
 2001: Greater Lafayette  
 2000: Jeffersonville  
 1999: Fort Wayne  
 1998: Rochester  
 1997: Batesville  
 1996: Elkhart  
 1995: Indianapolis  
 1994: Kendallville  
 1993: St. Joseph County  
 1992: Columbus  
 1991: Muncie  
 1990: Bluffton