

Dr. James A. "Jimmy" Turman is the first holder of a doctorate to occupy the speakership. An educator who held teaching and administrative positions in Texas public education ranging from elementary through university levels, he rose to the highest civil service position in the United States Office of Education.

A native of the Fannin County community of Gober, Turman worked his way through East Texas State Teachers College, earning two degrees, a B.S. in 1948 and an M.S. in 1949. At 19, he began his career as teaching principal of Wolfe City's elementary-junior high school. At 24, he became a junior high school principal in Paris. During those years and later, he also was engaged in farming and cattle-raising businesses and was a member of the Texas Farm Bureau.

Interrupting his career, Turman volunteered for active duty with the U.S. Navy during the Korean conflict. After being released from active duty in 1954, the decorated veteran ran for state representative and defeated two opponents without a runoff. While a legislator, he enrolled at The University of Texas at Austin, where he earned his doctorate in educational administration and psychology in 1957. From 1957 to 1959, Turman was assistant to the president and assistant professor at Texas Woman's University. Concurrently, he established the TWU Foundation and served as its first director.

Turman was elected to four consecutive terms as a state legislator and was elected speaker during the 57th Legislature. During his speakership, the house chamber was air-conditioned and allocation of Capitol space for private offices for the members was begun. While speaker and chairman of the Legislative Audit Committee, Turman set up the State Employees Classification System and pushed the passage of the "University of Houston bill," mandating state support through senior and graduate-level studies. His speakership also witnessed the enactment of the general sales tax, passed during the first called session of 1961.

Though he led four opponents in a 1962 primary election for lieutenant governor, Turman was narrowly defeated in the runoff. Turman went to Washington the following year to work in the U.S. Office of Education, advancing to the position of U.S. associate commissioner. At the same time, he served as a commissioner of the Education Commission of the States, and President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed him to the Board of Foreign Scholarships. Turman served as director of the President's National Advisory Council on Extension and Continuing Education under presidents Nixon and Ford, and as a consultant to the President's Council on Physical Fitness.

Turman founded and was president and chief executive officer of two national educational management consulting corporations based in Alexandria, Virginia. Then, he worked for a Texas congressman as chief of staff and liaison to the House Budget Committee before becoming Department of Health and Human Services regional director of Refugee Resettlement in Dallas. After retiring from civil service in 1986 at the age of 58, he reentered state service as a senior research analyst in the office of the state comptroller of public accounts.

In 1990, at the age of 62, he returned to the private sector and organized Chaparral Mining Corporation, for which he served as chairman of the board, president, and chief executive officer. Turman also served on the initial National Advisory Committee of OPT IN AMERICA, a public interest organization for the "information age." He resides in Austin.