

Murphy worked with five governors as Speaker, though his relationships with them varied widely. For example, Murphy found Governor Jimmy Carter's hands-on governing style to be a nuisance. "He'd send me handwritten memos just about every day," Murphy remembered, "and I would wad them up and throw them in the waste basket." But the Speaker was always willing to put aside differences to achieve common goals.



Murphy with President and Mrs. Carter in Murphy's office  
*Courtesy of the Murphy Collection at the University of West Georgia*



"Shotgun Wedding"

*Courtesy of the Boyd Collection at the University of West Georgia*

Murphy had an especially contentious relationship with fellow Democrat Zell Miller. In 1976, Miller was elected Lieutenant Governor, which made him the leader of the Georgia Senate. "It was like a sibling rivalry," Miller explained, "If it hadn't have been for Miss Shirley [Miller] there getting between us, the two of us would have killed each other several times."

When Murphy became Speaker in 1974, the House membership was overwhelmingly Democratic, white, and male. But a rapidly changing Georgia meant a rapidly changing legislature. Over time more African Americans, women, and Republicans gained seats in the House. One of Murphy's great strengths was his ability to continually adapt to these changes in order to maintain his leadership position and to build successful coalitions.



Murphy with Governor Roy Barnes  
*Courtesy of the Murphy Collection at the University of West Georgia*



Murphy with members of the Black Caucus  
*Courtesy of the Murphy Collection at the University of West Georgia*

Murphy appointed women and African Americans to chair important House committees. Murphy was less interested in people's gender or skin color than in their party loyalty, their effectiveness, and their willingness to work in what the Speaker believed were the best interests of Georgia.