BIOGRAPHY OF A MEMBER OF CONGRESS

To give you an insight into the congressional career, I would like you to write a short biography of a member of Congress. Specifically you must:

Choose any member, except a freshman, of the 111th Congress and write an approximately 600-word biography about him or her. You really should do the bulk of research using The Almanac of American Politics 2008 or Politics in America 2008. They can be found in many libraries, including our own. You can learn more about members by checking references to them in the New York Times and Washington Post annual indexes. You can also find some interesting data on web sites that have campaign finance data, too. Be careful if you use member web sites, however. They do not present objective analysis of the member’s work and politics!

In the first half of your biography, include pertinent information about all of the following: The member’s political career (that is, how long has he/she been in Congress? Did they hold office before?), committee assignments, party responsibilities, affiliations with outside groups and internal caucuses, policy interests, electoral successes and failures, and campaign finance activities.

In the second half (approximately 300 words), I’d like to see some analysis of the member. Explain:

(1) How the member should be characterized ideologically. Also explain positions he/she has on critical issues—that is, his/her voting record.
(2) The member’s chances of successive reelection in the long term. Why do you say what you do?
(3) The member’s chances for advancement in the party, committee system, in state or national politics.
(4) The demographic, economic, social, and political groups that support the member.

The assignment is due on February 23. You will be deducted a grade for each day that the assignment is late (i.e. a B+ becomes a B etc.).