Modern Political Collections recently received the papers of Congressman Floyd Spence, who represented South Carolina’s Second District from 1971 until his death in 2001. Approximately 220 linear feet of materials have been received, including books, memorabilia, photographs and audiovisual materials, speeches, and papers relating to legislative matters, particularly Spence’s work on national defense issues.

Spence was instrumental in the development of the modern Republican Party in the state. In 1962, as a member of the General Assembly, Spence announced he was becoming a Republican, making him the first elected official in South Carolina to break ranks from the dominant Democratic Party. His bid for the U.S. Congress that year was unsuccessful, but his candidacy foreshadowed a change in the state’s political climate — one which saw the Republican Party becoming a viable political entity in South Carolina.

Spence eventually was elected to Congress as a Republican in 1970, and became known for his advocacy of a balanced budget amendment, his work on the House Ethics Committee, and his unwavering support for a strong military. Spence rose to national prominence as the three-term chairman of the House Armed Services Committee from 1995 to 2000.

An online exhibit relating to Spence’s life and career is available at the Modern Political Collections website, located at http://www.sc.edu/library/socar/mpc/exhibit/spence/.

From Caroliniana Columns, the newsletter of the University South Caroliniana Society
Fall Issue, 2004