

# **GOP: On the Right Side of History**



## **Joseph Rainey – 1st African-American Congressman**

**Joseph Hayne Rainey** (June 21, 1832 – August 1, 1887) was an American politician. He was the first African American to serve in the United States House of Representatives, the second African American to serve in the United States Congress (Republican U.S. Senator Hiram Revels was the first), and the first African American presiding officer of the House of Representatives. Born into slavery in South Carolina, he was freed in the 1840s by his father purchasing the freedom of his entire family and himself. Revels and Rainey were both members of the Republican Party.

In 1870, Rainey was elected to the State Senate of South Carolina. He served only a short time as that year he won a special election to fill a vacancy in the Forty-First Congress of the United States.

Rainey was seated December 12, 1870 and was re-elected to Congress, serving a total of four terms. Serving until March 3, 1879, he established a record of length of service for a black Congressman that was not surpassed until the 1950s. Rainey supported legislation that became known as the Enforcement Acts, to suppress the violent activities of the Ku Klux Klan.

During his term in Congress, Rainey supported legislation to protect the civil rights of Southern black people, working for two years to gain passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1875. In May 1874, Rainey became the first African American to preside over the House of Representatives as Speaker pro tempore. (source: Wikipedia)