



Image courtesy of the Member

Linda T. Sánchez 1969–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE 2003–
DEMOCRAT FROM CALIFORNIA

Recognized by her colleagues and the national media as a leading voice for working families, judiciary, and trade matters, Linda Sánchez has served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 2003. When she won her bid to become a United States Representative from Los Angeles County, she not only earned a seat in Congress, she also made history; Linda and her older sibling Loretta Sanchez, who was first elected to the U.S. House in 1996, became the first sisters to serve simultaneously in Congress.¹ Re-elected to the U.S. House four times, Sánchez is a strong advocate for California's working families. She is committed to reducing crime, making schools safe, providing quality education, and decreasing unemployment. She holds the distinction of being the first Latina to serve on the House Judiciary Committee and the Committee on Ways and Means.

The sixth of seven children, Sánchez was born on January 26, 1969, in Orange, California, to immigrant parents from Mexico. Her father, Ignacio Sandoval Sánchez, worked as a mechanic at a plastics and rubber plant, and her mother, Maria Socorro Macias, taught elementary school. Sánchez and her parents challenged the gender typecasts of their culture that encouraged boys to attend college and girls to marry and have children. Maria Sánchez, who decided to attend night school to further her education, cultivated Linda's refusal to accept the status quo by suggesting that she work to change societal inequalities.² When reflecting upon the importance that her family and parents had in her life, Sánchez commented, "In every Latino family, there's a sense of 'We need to stick together.' It's us against the world." She went on to add, "But I think in our particular family, that's even stronger because our folks expected great things from us. They wanted us to take advantage of all the opportunities they never had."³ Heeding her parents' advice and her mother's example, Sánchez enrolled in the University of California, Berkeley, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish literature with an emphasis in bilingual education. After working her way through school as a bilingual aide and an ESL instructor, she earned her law degree from the University of California, Los Angeles.

After law school, she practiced law in the areas of appellate law, civil rights, and employment law. Committed to political activism, she worked extensively on her sister Loretta's 1996 and 1998 campaigns.

After the 1998 election, Sánchez worked for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 441 and the National Electrical Contractors

Association (NECA) as a compliance officer on public works and prevailing wage issues. Representative Sánchez has been a proud, active member of IBEW Local 441 since 1998. Prior to coming to Congress, Sánchez served as the first Latina to head a countywide central labor council when she was named Executive Director of the Orange County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.⁴

Motivated by a desire to serve her community, Sánchez decided in 2002 to run for Congress in a newly created district encompassing southeast Los Angeles County. Sánchez joined a tight race as one of three Latino contenders in a field of five.⁵ She won the Democratic primary on March 5, 2002, and went on to defeat Republican Tim Escobar in the general election with 55 percent of the vote.⁶

During her first term, Sánchez served on the Judiciary, Government Reform, and Small Business Committees and became a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. She has held seats on the Education and Labor and Foreign Affairs Committees. In the 111th Congress (2009–2011), she served on the powerful Ways and Means Committee. She currently serves on the Veterans' Affairs and Judiciary Committees, and is the Ranking Member of the House Ethics Committee.

As the only freshman Democrat to earn a seat on the Judiciary Committee during the 108th Congress (2003–2005), Sánchez remarked, "Having worked with laws in the courtroom, I've really seen how legislation impacts people."⁷ Sánchez sponsored measures to improve school safety and to assist women, minorities, and veterans establish small businesses. In 2008, as chairwoman of the Commercial and Administrative Law Subcommittee, Sánchez led an investigation into the politicization of the Justice Department and another investigation into the firing of nine U.S. attorneys during the George W. Bush administration.⁸

Sánchez and her husband, James Sullivan, are the proud parents of Joaquín Sánchez Sullivan, who joins his Sullivan brothers: Brendan, Jack, and Seamus.

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, "Linda T. Sánchez," <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

NOTES

- 1 Chelsea J. Carter, "L.A. Representative's Sibling Wins Primary; Sisters May Become First to Serve in House Together," 7 March 2002, *San Mateo County Times*.
- 2 "First Person Singular: Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.)," 25 April 2004, *Washington Post*: W09.
- 3 Roxanne Roberts, "House Mates," 12 December 2002, *Washington Post*.
- 4 "Linda Sanchez for Congress," <http://www.lindasanchez2002.com/about.shtml> (accessed 6 November 2002); "New Members Guide: Linda Sanchez," 18 November 2002, *The Hill*.
- 5 Richard Marosoi, "Battle Shapes up in Latino District," 19 February 2002, *Washington Post*: 1.
- 6 "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," Office of the Clerk, <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>.
- 7 "CQ Member Profile, 108th Congress: Linda Sanchez," <http://www.cq.com> (accessed 5 March 2004).
- 8 "Official Biography of Congresswoman Linda Sánchez," <http://lindasanchez.house.gov/index.php/about-linda> (accessed 6 December 2011).