



Image courtesy of the Member

## *Tammy Duckworth* 1968–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE 2013–2017  
UNITED STATES SENATOR 2017–  
DEMOCRAT FROM ILLINOIS

Senator Tammy Duckworth is an Iraq War veteran, Purple Heart recipient, and former Assistant Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). She was among the first Army women to fly combat missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Duckworth served in the Reserve Forces for 23 years before retiring from military service in 2014 at the rank of lieutenant colonel. She was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2016 after representing Illinois's Eighth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives for two terms.<sup>1</sup>

Duckworth earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Hawaii and a Master of Arts in international affairs from George Washington University. Following graduation, Duckworth moved to Illinois to pursue a PhD in political science at Northern Illinois University. She worked at NIU's School of Nursing, researching public health and environmental causes of cancer and later worked for Rotary International.

In 2004 Duckworth was deployed to Iraq as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot for the Illinois Army National Guard. On November 12, 2004, her helicopter was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade, and Duckworth lost her legs and partial use of her right arm.

Duckworth spent the next year recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, where she quickly became an advocate for her fellow soldiers and testified before Congress about caring for veterans and wounded warriors. Following her recovery, she became director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs. She worked to create a tax credit for employers who hired veterans, establish a first-in-the-nation 24/7 veterans' crisis hotline, and develop innovative programs to improve veterans' access to housing and health care.

In 2009 President Barack Obama named Duckworth as Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs. In that role, Duckworth coordinated a joint initiative with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to end veteran homelessness. She also created the Office of Online Communications to improve the VA's accessibility and worked to address the unique challenges that Native American and female veterans face.

Since her recovery, Duckworth has resumed flying as a civilian pilot and fulfilled a promise she made at Walter Reed by completing several marathons. In her spare time, she volunteers at local food pantries and enjoys couponing and flea markets. In 2015 Duckworth completed her PhD in human services at Capella University.

In the House, Duckworth advocated for working families and job creation, introducing bills such as the Friendly Airports for Mothers Act to ensure new mothers have access to safe and clean lactation rooms in airports, which passed the Senate with bipartisan support. She introduced the In the Red Act to reduce student debt, the Get the Lead Out Act to keep America's drinking water safe, and bipartisan legislation to help close the skills gap and help people find good-paying jobs. Duckworth also co-sponsored the No Budget, No Pay Act, which would ensure members of Congress get paid only if they pass a budget.

She served on the House Armed Services Committee and the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, where she was Ranking Member of the Transportation and Public Assets Subcommittee. She introduced and helped pass several important policies on these committees, including the Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act to help reduce suicide among veterans and improve VA mental health services and the Troop Talent Act, which helps returning veterans find jobs in the private sector. She also cut waste and fraud at the Pentagon and throughout government, including passing a common-sense provision to reduce redundancy in armed forces uniforms that the nonpartisan U.S. Government Accountability Office found will save taxpayers more than \$4 billion over five years.

In the Senate, Duckworth serves on several committees that give her an important platform to advocate for Illinois's working families and entrepreneurs: Environment and Public Works; Energy and Natural Resources; Commerce, Science, and Transportation; and Small Business and Entrepreneurship. As Senator, she advocates for practical, common-sense solutions needed to move the country forward such as rebuilding crumbling infrastructure, keeping water systems safe and lead-free, growing manufacturing jobs while supporting minority-owned small businesses, investing in communities that have been ignored, and making college more affordable. Duckworth continues her lifelong mission to support and protect veterans while ensuring America stands fully behind the troops its sends into danger overseas.

Duckworth lives in Hoffman Estates with her husband, Bryan, an Army cyber warrant officer, and their daughter Abigail.

## NOTES

- 1 "About Tammy," on Senator Tammy Duckworth's official website, accessed June 1, 2017, <https://www.duckworth.senate.gov/content/about-tammy>.