

SÁNCHEZ, LORETTA (1960–)

One of seven children of Mexican immigrant parents Loretta Sánchez was born in Anaheim, California. As a child she attended a Head Start program and may hold the distinction of being the first Head Start graduate ever elected to the Congress of the United States. She earned a degree in economics from Chapman College, and an M.B.A. in finance from American University in Washington, D.C. In 1990 Sánchez successfully fought state officials to have a freeway sound barrier built in her Anaheim neighborhood. A community activist, she raised funds for several agencies, particularly those that brought educational opportunity to disadvantaged Latino students. Crossing party affiliations in 1992, the now Democrat, Sánchez ran for Anaheim City Council, in 1994, and for Congress in 1996. Amassing strong support among women and Hispanics, Sánchez won the Forty-sixth District of California, becoming a national figure, and the only Democratic member of Congress from Orange County, California, a traditional Republican stronghold. Promoting education reform, women's and labor issues, in November 2002 Sánchez was elected for the newly created Forty-seventh District, and her sister Linda Sánchez was elected to represent the Thirty-ninth Congressional District. They became the first pair of sisters to serve in the U.S. Congress. In the 109th Congress, 1st session, Sánchez is the ranking female member on the House Armed Services Committee and the second ranking member of the Committee on Homeland Security.