

SOLIS, HILDA L. (1957–)

“I grew up with very few role models who looked like me, but I looked to my mother, Dolores Huerta, and Gloria Molina (Los Angeles County Board of Supervisor) for inspiration. They taught me to work hard, believe in myself and make a difference for our community.” Congresswoman Hilda Solis, interview conducted by Laura Coria.

A dynamic politician, Solis was born in 1957, in San Gabriel, California. Alumni of San Gabriel Valley public schools, Sparks Junior High School, and La Puente High School, Solis earned a baccalaureate degree at California Polytechnic, Pomona, and a master's degree at the University of Southern California. Her political career began during the Carter administration as editor in chief for the Office of Hispanic Affairs. In 1992 she was elected to represent the Fifty-seventh Assembly District, El Monte, California. Elected to the newly reapportioned Twenty-Fourth Senatorial District in November 1994, Solis also made history as the first Latina elected to the California State Senate. Six years later Solis was elected to represent the Thirty-second Congressional District of California, becoming the first Latino to serve on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and the highest ranking Democrat on the Environment and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee. She passed legislation that prioritized ways to clean up the devastated by industrial pollution San Gabriel River. Signed into law, The San Gabriel River Watershed Study Act served as a national model. She is associated also with passage of the Military Citizenship Act that makes it easier for immigrants serving in the U.S. armed forces to become naturalized citizens. For her dedication to public service, Solis has garnered numerous honors and awards.