

## Congresswoman Laura Richardson

U.S. House of Representatives (California 37<sup>th</sup> District)

Congresswoman Laura Richardson's path to the nation's Capitol is often described as an "American" story. Ms. Richardson's maternal great-grandparents were opportunity bound immigrants from Ireland and Germany; her fraternal great-grandparents came by way of slavery and bondage. Both families found their way to Schenectady, New York --- where Laura Richardson's parents were born.



Given that Congresswoman Richardson's mother is Caucasian and her father African American; both were disowned in the 1950's by their families for their marriage. This led to Ms. Richardson's father joining the Army and later, her family moving to California.

With the nation's racial turmoil in the 60's, Congresswoman Richardson's parents divorced when she was only two years old. Based on these challenging personal family experiences and witnessing the civil rights movement, at the age of six, Congresswoman Richardson decided her first choice of profession would be public service. Working since the age of 12, hard work and limited resources was the only life Ms. Richardson knew.

After trying out for women's basketball team in the 1980 Olympics, graduating from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), with a degree in Political Science, working 14 years in the private sector at Xerox Corporation and then receiving her Masters in Business Administration from the University of Southern California (USC), Laura Richardson reaffirmed her desire to use her skills to help others.

In 2000, Ms. Richardson joined the Long Beach City Council where she served the fifth largest city in the State of California. Relying on her educational background, Ms. Richardson uncovered a two decade old, \$100 million plus budget deficit, established fiscal policies, chaired the first-ever Budget Oversight Committee and delivered over \$40 million dollars of development in traditionally underserved communities.

In 2006, Laura Richardson won a seat in the State Legislature where she immediately stepped into the Assistant Speaker Pro Tem leadership position. She was recognized as the first South Bay representative, freshman, and African- American woman to hold this prestigious role. Additionally, Ms. Richardson earned the much coveted committee assignments of Transportation and Infrastructure, Health and Human Services and Government Organization (alcohol, tobacco and gaming).

In 2007, after six short months in the Assembly, Laura Richardson went on to succeed 16 candidates in a special election and was elected to her first term in the United States House of Representatives to represent California's culturally and economically diverse 37<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. She is currently a member of the House Committees on Transportation & Infrastructure and Homeland Security and in January, after less than two and a half years in office, was named the Chair of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, Response, which as part of its responsibilities has oversight over FEMA and many public safety grants.

Congresswoman Richardson set a record of distinction in having served all three levels of government: local, state and federal all in the span of less than one year. As noted in the Los Angeles Sentinel newspaper, Laura Richardson's "meteoric rise" has been nothing short of amazing.