Image courtesy of the Member

Susan A. Davis

1944–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE
DEMOCRAT FROM CALIFORNIA
2001 –

SUSAN DAVIS, A MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER, served her San Diego community in the California legislature before upsetting an incumbent to win a seat in the U.S. House in 2000. "I'm probably one of the most apolitical people," Davis told the *San Diego Union-Tribune* during her first House election campaign. "I do this because I see it as a public service. When I can make some changes, even simple things, it's all worth it."[1]

Susan Carol Alpert was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on April 13, 1944, the younger of two daughters raised by Lithuanian immigrant parents. Her pediatrician father moved the family to Richmond, California, when she was young. She earned a B.A. in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley in 1965 and an M.A. in social work from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1968. In college she met Steven Davis, a physician. They married, lived in Japan for two years, and settled in San Diego, where they raised two sons, Jeffery and Benjamin. Susan Davis worked as a community producer for a San Diego public television station. She also became politically active, serving as president of the local League of Women Voters. Davis was elected to the San Diego board of education in 1983, serving until 1992. For three years she also served as executive director of the Aaron Price Fellows Program, designed to teach multiethnic high school students leadership and citizenship skills. She won election to the California assembly and served from 1994 to 2000. Davis chaired the women's caucus and the government efficiency and economic development committee and also created and co-chaired a select committee on adolescence.[2]

In 2000, after being recruited by California Representative Nancy Pelosi, Davis launched a campaign to unseat three-term incumbent Republican Brian Bilbray in a competitive San Diego district in which Bilbray had won less than 50 percent in two of his prior campaigns. Davis was unopposed for the Democratic nomination and ran a highly effective door-to-door campaign. In a race that had about 10,000 votes siphoned off by Libertarian and Natural Law candidates, Davis defeated Bilbray by a four-point margin with 50 percent of the vote. In her subsequent two re-election campaigns, Davis won by comfortable margins over 65 percent in the reapportioned district which encompassed much of her previous suburban San Diego constituency.[3] In the 107th Congress (2001–2003) she was appointed to the Armed Services and Education and the Workforce committees. She served one term on the Veterans' Affairs Committee during the 108th Congress (2003–2005).

Davis introduced a number of bills in the U.S. House, based on her previous legislative experience. Two health care bills—the Women's Obstetrician and Gynecologist Medical Access Now Act (2001) and the Second Opinion Coverage Act (2002)—were directly influenced by patients' rights bills that Davis crafted in the California assembly. The former allowed women in health maintenance organizations (HMOs) to skip bureaucratic paperwork by visiting their OB-GYNs without first seeking a referral from their primary care physician. The Second Opinion Bill would require HMOs to pay for patients facing major medical treatments to get another opinion from a specialist inside or outside their plan. Another of her bills would provide more timely health care coverage for hospitalized veterans. In 2002, based on her experience with her father's late-life care needs, Davis authored the Long-Term Care Support and Incentive Act, which provided a tax credit and insurance deductions for seniors and their caregivers. "By encouraging people to plan ahead for the future and purchase long-term care insurance, we can ensure that seniors live dignified and independent lives," Davis said on the House Floor.[4]

Congresswoman Davis's legislative interests also extended to issues that directly affected Californians: environment, energy, and the military, with a major naval presence in her San Diego district. From her seat on the Armed Services Committee, she introduced the Military Pay Gap Act of 2002, to phase out pay inequities between the private sector and the military by 2013. Davis noted that men and women in the military "understand that a lifestyle of service entails a certain amount of sacrifice. In exchange for all their sacrifices, they have a simple request: that their nation make a commitment to them that parallels their commitment to the nation."[5] During the height of the California energy crisis in the summer of 2001, Davis introduced the Renewable Energy Act for Credit on Taxes, which provided for federal tax incentives further allowing homeowners to choose systems that were less reliant on fossil fuels and fossil fuel, generated electricity.

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the U.S. Congress, "Susan A. Davis," http://bioguide.congress.gov

NOTES

1 Dong-Phuong Nguyen, "Davis Left Suburban Comforts to Make a Difference for Others," 5 November 2000, *San Diego Union-Tribune*: B1; see also, Mark Murray, "The Newly Elected: California 49th House District: Susan Davis," 8 November 2000, http://nationaljournal.com/members/campaign/2000/profiles/Cali49.htm (accessed 26 November 2000).

2 *Politics in America, 2004* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Inc., 2003): 157; *Congressional Directory*, 108th Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2003).

3 "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," http://clerk.house.gov/members/electionInfo/elections.html.

4 *Congressional Record*, House, 107th Cong., 2nd sess. (19 March 2002): 387; *Congressional Record*, House, 107th Cong., 2nd sess. (4 September 2002): 1490; *Congressional Record*, House, 107th Cong., 1st sess. (5 April 2001): 552.

5 *Congressional Record*, House, 107th Cong., 2nd sess. (21 June 2002): 1131.