

Rep. Speier Biography



Congresswoman Jackie Speier (pronounced SPEAR) is a fearless fighter for women’s equality, LGBTQ rights and the disenfranchised who has dedicated her life to eliminating government corruption while working to strengthen America’s national and economic security. She was named to *Newsweek’s* [list](#) of 150 “Fearless Women” in the world and one of “Politico’s 50” most influential people in American politics for bringing the Me Too reckoning to Congress.

She proudly represents [California’s 14th Congressional District](#), stretching from the southern portion of San Francisco through San Mateo County to East Palo Alto, and serves on the [House Armed Services Committee](#) (HASC) and as the Chair of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, on the [House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence](#) and on the [House Committee on Oversight and Reform](#), where she serves on the Subcommittees on Environment and Government Operations. Speier is also Co-Chair of the [Democratic Women’s Caucus](#) (DWC), the [Congressional Armenian Caucus](#), the Bipartisan Task Force To End Sexual Violence, and the Gunviolence Prevention Task Force.

Fighting for Women’s Rights

In October 2017, Congresswoman Speier brought the Me Too movement to Congress by sharing her own experience of misconduct when she was a Congressional aide. Her legislation, the *ME TOO Congress Act*, became the basis of the bipartisan *Congressional Accountability Act (CAA) Reform Act* that was signed into law in December 2018. When Speier first started working on Congressional sexual harassment in 2014, she was told by a fellow colleague that even anti-harassment training would never

see the light of day. Today, thanks to the CAA Reform Act and a related resolution, anti-harassment training is mandatory; survivors are no longer forced to undergo mandatory counselling, mediation, and cooling-off periods; and workers can't be silenced with forced non-disclosure agreements. Moreover, interns and fellows have the same protections as permanent staff; employees can be heard in anonymous and regular climate surveys; and Members must personally cover the costs for their harassing behavior, not taxpayers. As a result of these efforts, employees also now have legal representation and counseling through the Office of Employee Advocacy, so that the U.S. House of Representatives is no longer exclusively providing counsel to Member offices accused of misconduct.

The CAA Reform Act went into effect in June 2019 and has already made tremendous progress in people's lives. However, Congresswoman Speier's work is not finished. She will be introducing additional legislation with her colleague Congressman Bradley Byrne to further bolster protections for staff and hold Members accountable for their discriminatory behavior.

She also continues to advocate for fundamental reforms to end the epidemic of sexual assault in the military and on college campuses, and she is leading the fight against sexism in the fields of science and technology and academia overall. And she is at the forefront of efforts to increase constitutional protections against sex discrimination through ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and to end gender-based discrimination in the pricing of goods and services through the passage of the Pink Tax Repeal Act.

During her 18 years in both chambers of the California Legislature, Congresswoman Speier had more than 300 bills signed into law by both Republican and Democratic governors. Speier secured justice for women and children with a series of bills that led to the collection of more than \$2 billion in delinquent court-ordered child support payments. She authored a measure that gave the state the nation's strongest financial privacy law and was integral to the passage of California's Gender Tax Repeal Act in 1996.

Eliminating Government Waste, Fraud, Abuse, and Corruption

Crusading for the safety, health, and rights of all Americans is one of Congresswoman Speier's driving core principles; from getting tough on big banks to ending taxpayer bailouts, and from eliminating wasteful and fraudulent government spending at all levels to serving as a check on the federal government in the fight against corruption. She is equally dedicated to keeping housing and student loans affordable; protecting private information from cyberwarfare and cyberespionage as well as the dissemination of nonconsensual pornography, or so-called "revenge porn"; and stopping abusive practices like so-called "gay conversion therapy" and discrimination against our transgender military servicemembers. She is also a champion for funding and research for traumatic brain injury, Alzheimer's, breast cancer, and gun violence prevention. That includes her dedication to preventing children's deaths caused by unsafe products and preventable tragedies like the 2010 San Bruno explosion that took the lives of eight people in her District.

Strong on National Defense

As Chair of the HASC Subcommittee on Military Personnel and a member of the House Intelligence Committee, Congresswoman Speier is committed to keeping the United States secure from terrorists and hostile nations and honoring and supporting our veterans, military servicemembers, and their

families. That means ensuring that American troops have the right equipment to do their jobs and save taxpayers' money by fighting for improved cyberdefenses and sound management practices at the Pentagon.

On these committees, and in her previous assignments, she has led numerous congressional investigations and hearings to protect the public by exposing a lack of oversight and enforcement of our laws and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). That includes violations of UCMJ's codes of conduct for the use of nonconsensual pornography against servicemembers and wasting billions of taxpayers' dollars on disastrous programs like the F-35 and LCS. She has passed numerous amendments through the National Defense Authorization process to reduce sexual violence within our military and aid survivors, address misconduct by senior officers, and increase transparency about how our wars are funded and fought.

Prior to Congress

Speier first ran for Congress in 1979, facing a crowded field in a special election for a seat formerly held by Congressman Leo J. Ryan, for whom Speier had served as a legislative aide.

The special election was called after Ryan was shot to death in Jonestown, at the compound of the People's Temple, a cult in Guyana that had previously been based in Ryan's District. Speier traveled with Ryan on that trip in 1978 in an attempt to rescue some of the cult's 900 members. She was left nearly lifeless on the airport tarmac after being shot five times at point blank range with an assault rifle.

Speier underwent multiple surgeries after the tragedy and while recovering she realized she had a choice to make: Did she want to be a victim or did she want to be a survivor?

Speier chose to be a survivor, noting that "looking death in the face can make you fearless."

Speier received her B.A. in Political Science from the University of California at Davis and her J.D. from UC Hastings College of the Law. Along with her husband, Barry Dennis, and her children, Jackson and Stephanie, she is a proud fan of the San Francisco Giants, the Golden State Warriors, and a lover of all things California. She enjoys any activity that allows her to spend time with her family, including their much-loved puppy Emma.