

## **Ranking Member Mark Takano**

For more than twenty years, Mark Takano has worked to improve the lives of Riverside County residents, both as an elected official and as a teacher at Rialto High School.

Born and raised in Riverside, Mark's commitment to public service began at an early age. His family roots in Riverside go back to his grandparents who, along with his parents, were removed from their respective homes and sent to Japanese American Internment camps during World War II. After the war, these two families settled in Riverside County to rebuild their lives.

Mark attended La Sierra High School in the Alvord Unified School District, and in 1979 he graduated as the school's valedictorian. Mark attended Harvard College and received his bachelor's degree in Government in 1983. As a student, he bused tables to help make ends meet. During his senior year, he organized a transcontinental bicycle ride to benefit the international development agency Oxfam America.

Upon graduation, Mark returned home to Riverside and began teaching in the Rialto Unified School District in 1988. As a classroom teacher, Mark confronted the challenges in our public education system daily.

In 1990, Mark was elected to the Riverside Community College District's Board of Trustees. At RCC, Mark worked with Republicans and Democrats to improve higher education for young people and job training opportunities for adults seeking to learn a new skill or start a new career. He was elected Board President in 1991 and helped the Board and the District gain stability and direction amid serious fiscal challenges.

In 2012, Mark became the first openly gay person of color to be elected to Congress.

Mark Takano represents the people of Riverside, Moreno Valley, Jurupa Valley, and Perris in the United States House of Representatives and is a member of the Education and Labor Committee. In 2019, Mark was elected Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and has continued in that role through the end of the 117th Congress.

Under his Chairmanship during the 116th and 117th Congresses, the Committee successfully passed several pieces of landmark legislation in his efforts to improve care and benefits for our nation's veterans. In 2019, the monumental Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act was signed into law to finally provide VA care and benefits to veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in the waters around Vietnam. After starting the Women Veterans Task Force in the 116th Congress, Chairwoman Julia Brownley's Deborah Sampson Act was signed into law as the most comprehensive legislation for women veterans in over a decade. Chairman Takano's Veterans' COMPACT Act was also signed into law at the end of the 116th Congress to further the Committee's work to meaningfully reduce suicide by addressing key preventative factors. In 2022, Chairman Takano's Honoring our PACT Act – the largest expansion of VA benefits in decades – was signed into law, expanding benefits and care to over 3.5 million toxic-exposed veterans.

During his time as the top Democrat on the Committee, Ranking Member Takano made reducing veteran suicide, addressing the effects of toxic exposure, and fostering a welcoming VA for all his top priorities.