

Chris Dodd

U.S. SENATOR FROM CONNECTICUT



CHRIS DODD: OUR SENATOR

Chris Dodd was first elected to the United States Senate in 1980 to replace retiring Senator and former Connecticut Governor Abe Ribicoff. Having won a seat in the House of Representatives just six years earlier as part of the Democratic wave that swept through Congress as a result of the Watergate scandal, Chris Dodd entered the Senate in January of 1981 under a very different set of circumstances. Not only had Ronald Reagan unseated Democratic President Jimmy Carter, but Republicans had taken control of the Senate for the first time in decades.

Since that election, the balance of power in Washington has shifted back and forth between both parties, with Democrats and Republicans each taking control of, and subsequently losing, the White House and Congress at varying intervals. But in spite of the relatively constant pace of change that defines political life in our nation's capital, Senator Dodd has accomplished a great deal for the people of his state and nation during his tenure in the Senate, proving to be an effective legislator regardless of which party held the reins of power. He understands the importance of reaching across party lines to find common goals and shared ideals and uses those bonds to create public policy that benefits all Americans.

Over the last thirty years, Senator Dodd has earned a well-deserved reputation as the "Children's Senator" by being a tireless champion for quality education and affordable health care for kids. He has fought tirelessly for the rights of American consumers against the unscrupulous practices of some financial institutions; for a balanced approach to U.S. foreign policy centered on partnership and diplomacy; and for the economic, environmental, and infrastructure needs of the people of Connecticut. Senator Dodd has also distinguished himself as a relentless defender of the right to vote in this country, having authored and helped pass the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, which established significant new rights, responsibilities, and resources for the administration of federal elections. He has won an impressive array of legislative victories on these and numerous other policy fronts. And he has done so precisely because of his extensive knowledge of the Senate as an institution—its rules, quirks, and key players.

Moreover, while he has always remained true to his principles, Senator Dodd has never shied away from reaching across the partisan divide to help pass critically important legislation for the people of Connecticut and the nation. Indeed, Senator Dodd has cultivated close working relationships with members of both houses, Democrat and Republican alike, throughout his five terms in office. And Senator Dodd's ability to reach across the aisle and find common ground with Senators with whom, ideologically speaking, he often has very little in common, has also played an important role in helping to advance his legislative agenda and the priorities of the Connecticut people over the years.

A key participant in nearly every major national policy debate that has taken place over the past three decades, Senator Dodd took on an even more expansive role in the Senate recently with the enactment of several major pieces of legislation that are historic in the scope of their benefits for the American people. Senator Dodd played a decisive role in making significant health care reform a reality by working to ensure passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This landmark bill will go a long way towards reducing the cost of health care in this country, preventing insurers from denying or dropping coverage to those in need, and ensuring access to quality and affordable health care for all Americans.

In addition to his successful efforts to reform our nation's health care system, Senator Dodd worked tirelessly, in the face of considerable Republican opposition, to pass the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act. This historic measure, crafted by Senator Dodd in the wake of one of the worst economic recessions our country has ever faced, creates new rules of the road for financial firms to help reign in unfair, deceptive, and abusive practices used by some banks and lenders, prevent future tax-payer funded bailouts of Wall Street firms, and return to a system where consumers feel safe and secure when making their financial decisions.

Before he began work to overhaul the rules and regulations that Wall Street firms must now live by, Senator Dodd used his role as the Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee to create robust new protections for American consumers from deceptive and unscrupulous practices used by many credit card companies. Thanks to Senator Dodd, credit card companies will no longer be able to increase your card's interest for little or no reason and with little or no notice, and consumers will be provided with clear and concise explanations of the terms they are agreeing to.

But while these most recent legislative victories are incredibly significant, it is important to remember that Senator Dodd has spent the better part of a lifetime working on these very same issues. He has been a fighter for consumers, workers, children and families since Day 1 of his service on Capitol Hill. And it is that singular dedication to improving and enriching the lives of all Americans that he will most be remembered for when he leaves office in January.

THE CHILDREN'S SENATOR

Among the many legislative battles Senator Dodd has fought over the years, he considers his work on behalf of our nation's children and their families to be among the most important and rewarding. Ever since he was sworn-in for his first Senate term in 1981, Senator Dodd has been an unrelenting crusader for the health and well-being of some of the most vulnerable members of our society. In 1983, Senator Dodd teamed up with then-Republican Senator Arlen Specter to form the Children's Caucus, Congress's only bipartisan, bicameral caucus devoted exclusively to issues that affect our nation's young people. As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Children and Families, Senator Dodd has formed partnerships with lawmakers from both parties to improve health care and educational opportunities for millions of America's children and expand the safety net for working families who have fallen on hard times.

Chief among Senator Dodd's contributions in this area was his work on the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). Having first authored this bill in 1986, Senator Dodd worked hard for seven years, overcoming two vetoes by President George H. W. Bush, until it was finally signed into law by President Clinton in 1993. Since its enactment, this groundbreaking legislation has allowed tens of millions of Americans to take up to twelve weeks of job-protected leave if they fall ill, or if they need to care for a sick relative or a new child. Senator Dodd has always believed that every American worker deserves the right to take time off of work for a family issue or to deal with a medical emergency without worrying about whether they will lose their job. By establishing national leave requirements for employers, passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act represented a historic, career-defining achievement for Senator Dodd.

Senator Dodd is also well-known for his work on children's health issues. Long before passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Senator Dodd fought hard to ensure that low-income children in this country would receive access to quality, affordable health care. In 1997, he joined his long-time friend and colleague Senator Kennedy in authoring the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), a federal-state partnership that provides health insurance coverage to uninsured children who are not eligible for Medicaid. Twelve years later, Senator Dodd helped lead the fight to pass legislation reauthorizing CHIP, after a previous reauthorization bill was vetoed by President Bush in 2008.

Senator Dodd has also demonstrated his commitment to protecting the health of our nation's children through his longstanding work on newborn health issues. In 2006, Senator Dodd joined Republican Senator Lamar Alexander in passing legislation that expands federal research into premature births and provides new educational and support services to pregnant women in order to reduce their incidence. Two years later, Senator Dodd worked with his Republican colleague Senator Orrin Hatch to author legislation that provides more effective education about the importance of newborn screening to parents and health care providers and helps states upgrade their own newborn screening initiatives.

In addition to his work on these critically important health care-related matters, Senator Dodd has made it his career's mission to help families afford safe, quality child care. During his second term in office, Senator Dodd scored a major victory for working families in this country when legislation that he authored creating the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program was signed into law. Under this law, the first of its kind since World War II, the federal government has provided billions of dollars in aid to help families responsibly balance their jobs with caring for their children by providing safe, reliable, child care options in their communities. In recognition of the historic nature of this legislation and the millions of working families who have benefited from its provisions, Senator Dodd was awarded the "Lifetime Leadership Award for Quality Child Care" by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in 2001.

That award was not the first time Senator Dodd has been recognized for his tremendous contributions to the well-being and educational enrichment of our nation's children. In fact, Senator Dodd was named "Senator of the Decade" in 1991 by the National Head Start Association for his years of work in support of the Head Start program. Senator Dodd has always believed that the key to a child's success in life is access to a top-notch, world-class education, and that early childhood learning is particularly important to the future development of all children. As a result, Senator Dodd has spent the better part of his tenure in the Senate working to ensure that Head Start, which has helped nearly 20 million American youngsters since it began in 1965, receives the federal resources it needs to continue providing a better future for our nation's children.

But Senator Dodd's efforts to ensure that America's children receive the support and enrichment they need to succeed in life extends well beyond the walls of the classroom. Senator Dodd was instrumental in the creation of the 21st Century Learning Centers program, which offers children afterschool opportunities for additional instruction in math, science, and reading. Senator Dodd believes that safe, healthy, and academically-enriching afterschool programs are absolutely critical to helping children with working parents improve their grades and stay out of trouble. And so he has worked hard to expand federal support for these programs and ensure that more American children have the opportunity to benefit from them.

AN ADVOCATE FOR ENGAGEMENT WITH LATIN AMERICA

Following his graduation from Providence College in 1966, Chris Dodd volunteered for the Peace Corps and shipped off to the tiny village of Monción in the Dominican Republic. At the time, Chris Dodd knew little about his new adoptive country and barely spoke a word of Spanish. But over the course of the two years that he served in that remote community near the Haitian border, Chris Dodd gained fluency in Spanish and developed a strong and abiding passion for Latin America.

From his support for the peace process in Northern Ireland to his efforts to bring American troops home from Iraq, Senator Dodd has fought hard over the years to ensure that U.S. foreign policy reflects our nation's core ideals of peace, human rights, and freedom. But in the foreign policy arena, Senator Dodd has perhaps left his greatest mark through his work on Latin America. As Chairman of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over Latin America policy, Senator Dodd has brought his passion for the region, first forged during his Peace Corps days, to the halls of the United States Senate.

Throughout his tenure, Senator Dodd has fought to bring Latin American issues to the forefront of our nation's foreign policy agenda. And he has worked tirelessly to ensure that engagement, diplomacy, and respect for human rights and the rule of law serve as guiding principles of U.S. policy in the region.

Senator Dodd established his reputation as the lead Congressional voice on Latin America during his first term, when the Central American nations of El Salvador and Nicaragua were both embroiled in bloody, seemingly intractable civil conflicts. In 1982, just over a year after he first arrived in the Senate, Senator Dodd sought to link the deteriorating condition of human rights in El Salvador with U.S. aid to that war-torn country, offering an amendment requiring the government of El Salvador to meet certain human rights standards as a condition of receiving U.S. military aid. In 1983, Senator Dodd applied that same formula to the civil war in Nicaragua, calling on the Reagan Administration to focus on economic rather than military aid to that country's government. Several years later, Senator Dodd was chosen to lead the Senate Central America Negotiations Observer Group, formed to monitor progress on the Guatemala City Accord, a peace agreement that sought to end the two country's civil wars and ensure reconciliation between their opposing factions.

Since then, Senator Dodd has continued working to support U.S. diplomacy and engagement in the region, emerging as a key voice in the fight against our nation's anachronistic and counterproductive policies towards Cuba. Senator Dodd has long believed that the free exchange of goods and ideas between the United States and Cuba is key to encouraging democratic governance and respect for the rule of law in that country. To help end our nation's longstanding isolationist policies towards Cuba, Senator Dodd most recently joined a number of his colleagues in introducing the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act, legislation that would lift travel restrictions on Americans wishing to visit the island.

Senator Dodd has also been a long-time advocate for improved ties between the United States and its southern neighbor, Mexico. For the better part of his career in the Senate, Senator Dodd has served as chairman of the U.S.-Mexico Interparliamentary Group. This bilateral working group, composed of federal lawmakers from both sides of the Rio Grande, meets annually to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation between our respective countries. In recognition of his efforts in this area, Senator Dodd was awarded the *Águila Azteca*, the highest decoration awarded to foreigners by the Mexican government, in 2003.

CONNECTICUT'S CHAMPION IN WASHINGTON

Senator Dodd has established a stellar reputation as a tireless leader on a number of critically important national and international issues during his more than three decades in public office. Whether it has been authoring the FMLA, helping to bring peace and respect for human rights to Central America, or shepherding some of the most significant new rules for our nation's financial institutions since the Great Depression through Senate passage, Senator Dodd has proven time and again that he possesses the tenacity and legislative prowess necessary to effect positive change for the country.

But first and foremost, Senator Dodd has always been Connecticut's champion in Washington—a stalwart advocate for the interests and needs of the state and its residents. From his time in the House of Representatives serving Connecticut's 2nd Congressional District to the present, Senator Dodd has consistently put Connecticut first, fighting to improve the quality of life in his home state.

Throughout his career in public service, Senator Dodd has worked hard to support Connecticut's defense industry, a critical asset to our national security and the backbone of the Constitution State's economy. In 1980, when he was a third-term Congressman and first-time candidate for the Senate, Chris Dodd played an instrumental role in resolving a seven-month long strike at Electric Boat (EB) in Groton that had left thousands of Connecticut residents out of work. Wading right into the middle of the bitter dispute between EB workers and their management, Chris Dodd went to the hotel in Norwich where the two parties were negotiating and worked through the night to help them to reach a compromise.

Since then, Senator Dodd has fought to ensure that Electric Boat continues to lead the world in undersea shipbuilding and design. In 1992, Senator Dodd successfully fought against President George H.W. Bush's proposal to rescind funding for the Navy's Seawolf submarine program. More than a decade later, Senator Dodd led the Connecticut Congressional delegation in securing funds to help develop the Virginia Class submarine, which eventually succeeded the Seawolf. And most recently, in 2008, Senator Dodd joined his delegation colleagues in successfully pushing the Navy to commit to a multi-year contract that would, for the first time in nearly two decades, ramp up production of submarines to two per year.

But Senator Dodd has done more than just go to the mat for Electric Boat. First in 1993 and subsequently in 2005, when Submarine Base New London, America's premier submarine training and home-porting facility, was threatened with closure by the Pentagon's BRAC process, Senator Dodd successfully led the bipartisan delegation fight to keep the base open, saving more than 31,000 Connecticut jobs. Senator Dodd has also successfully fought repeated attempts by the Clinton, Bush, and Obama Administrations over the years to cut funding for F-22 fighters, whose engines are produced by Pratt & Whitney. And Senator Dodd has worked tirelessly to secure funding for the Black Hawk helicopter, which is manufactured by Sikorsky in Stratford, Connecticut.

Today, as you drive through Connecticut, you can see Senator Dodd's lasting impact on a number of other areas in addition to Connecticut's defense industry. Senator Dodd has long been a champion of efforts to promote responsible stewardship of Connecticut's many natural treasures. He has fought tirelessly to preserve the Long Island Sound, one of the nation's most significant estuaries and a critical source of revenue for the state, for the benefit of future generations. He also led efforts to designate the Eightmile River, one of Connecticut's most untouched and pristine natural wonders, as a federally-protected Wild and Scenic River; fought to preserve the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley as a National Heritage Corridor; and worked with his colleagues in the Connecticut Congressional delegation to designate Weir Farm as a national historic site.

Senator Dodd has also worked hard to improve the state's mass transit system, joining his colleagues in the congressional delegation and state government officials to secure critical federal resources for high-speed rail service in Connecticut. Most recently, Senator Dodd helped secure nearly \$121 million to rebuild and modernize the New Haven-Springfield rail line that runs through the center of the state, allowing for high-speed, intercity commuter rail service. When completed, the Tri-City Corridor will alleviate congestion on Connecticut's highways and provide Connecticut residents with a new and more cost-effective, environmentally-sustainable transportation option.

And while Senator Dodd has always been a steadfast supporter of the projects and industries that keep Connecticut's economy humming, he has never forgotten about the people—the firefighters, nurses, doctors, teachers, and police officers that keep Connecticut strong. That is why Senator Dodd has long been a proud supporter of the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program, which has provided critically important resources to Connecticut police departments to help them hire, train, and better equip their officers. It is also why, in the summer of 2010, he joined his colleagues to help pass legislation that saved tens of thousands of teaching jobs threatened by the recession, including nearly 1,500 in Connecticut alone.

Senator Dodd has also dedicated a substantial portion of his tenure in the Senate to helping support Connecticut's firefighters. More than a year before the 9/11 attacks, he authored and helped pass the Fire Investment and Response Enhancement (FIRE) Act, to give local firefighters the ability to purchase new equipment and initiate education and training programs. Three years later, in 2003, Senator Dodd scored another significant victory for the state's career and volunteer firefighters with passage of the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER Act), which gives local fire departments the ability to alleviate critical shortfalls in professional and volunteer personnel. Since these bills were enacted, hundreds of grants worth millions of dollars have been distributed by the federal government to help Connecticut fire departments strengthen their capabilities.

Over the years, Senator Dodd has been a tireless advocate for Connecticut. He takes his obligation to represent the people of his state, their needs and concerns, very seriously. Through his more than three decades of hard work on Capitol Hill, the state has transformed dramatically for the better. And that will be his most lasting legacy.