

## Congressman “Kika” De La Garza, 1927-2017

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Washington, DC – Eligio “Kika” De La Garza, the first Mexican-American to represent the Rio Grande Valley of Texas in the U.S. House of Representatives has died at age 89. A Latino leader of legendary proportions, De La Garza served in Congress from 1965 to 1997. A tenure that spanned Presidencies from fellow Texan Lyndon Johnson to that of Bill Clinton. During his service, De La Garza earned a reputation as a forceful chairman of the powerful House Agriculture Committee.

Among his many achievements while serving in Congress, De La Garza helped co-found the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. “I am very saddened to learn of Kika de la Garza’s passing,” said **Rep. Joaquin Castro**, Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Chair in a press release. “His life was one of committed service – first in the Navy and Army, then in the Texas Legislature, and later in the U.S. Congress. He worked tirelessly to make life better for Texans, pushing for greater educational opportunity and federal support for farmers and ranchers. De la Garza consistently stood up for marginalized people in our nation and supported historic civil rights legislation that propelled important progress in our society. A son of the Valley, he deeply understood U.S.-Mexico relations and helped foster closer, more constructive ties between our nations. Kika de la Garza was one of the exceptional Texans whose work inspired me to pursue a career in public service. Our state and nation benefitted tremendously from his lifetime of service and sacrifice.”

Among those expressing condolences and testimony, noted by Suzanne Gamboa on NBC Latino, were Congressman Filemon Vela and former President Bill Clinton. Congressman Vela tweeted that he served as an intern for Congressman Kika De La Garza and was saddened by the loss.

Former President Bill Clinton tweeted that “Kika De La Garza was a good man...valued friend, & a champion for opportunity and social justice.”

Former White House aide Moe Vela posted this on Facebook “It is with tremendous sadness that the world bids farewell to the indomitable former Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Kika De La Garza. Kika served our region of south Texas in Congress for many many years and made a difference in the lives of so many. He was an inspiration and role model to me when I first came to Washington DC to serve in the Clinton Administration at the Department of Agriculture. His was a life well-lived and his legacy will live on.”

“Congressman de la Garza envisioned a Latino community that was more empowered, educated and civically engaged. He brought his vision to life through decades of action and leadership,” said CHCI President and CEO **Domenika Lynch**. “As a co-founder of the CHCI who was dedicated to developing the next generation of Latino leaders, Congressman de la Garza’s legacy will be honored every time we graduate a young Latino leader from our leadership programs.”

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