

About Mike

Improving our Education System

Helping all students receive a high quality education has always been my passion throughout my career in the school system.

Learn about the [major education reforms](#) I've worked on.

[OVERVIEW]

U.S. Congressman Michael Honda has represented the 15th Congressional District of California in the U.S. House of Representatives for a decade. In Congress, Rep Honda is a member of the powerful House Appropriations and Budget Committees, Chair Emeritus of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Co-chair of the Democratic Caucus' New Media Working Group, House Democratic Senior Whip and the original author of the Equity and Excellence Commission now housed in the US Department of Education.

Mike's district includes Silicon Valley, the birthplace of technology innovation and now the country's leading developer of green technology. Mike has dedicated his life to public service and is lauded for his work on education, civil rights, national service, immigration, transportation, the environment, and high-tech issues.

Serving as a California State Assemblymember, Santa Clara County Board Supervisor, San Jose Planning Commissioner, San Jose Unified School Board Member, Peace Corps Volunteer in El Salvador, and with over 30 years in education as a teacher, principal and school board member, Mike's commitment to serving the people of California's 15th district is unwavering and unparalleled.

[BACKGROUND]

Mike was born in California, but spent his early childhood with family in an internment camp in Colorado during World War II. □ Mike's father served in the Military Intelligence Service, while his mother, who is still living, served as a fulltime homemaker. □ His family returned to California in 1953, becoming strawberry sharecroppers in San José's Blossom Valley.

"I remember the Japanese-American internment camp through my parents' stories. We were in and out of the camp for four years. Between the ages of one and almost five, I lived at Camp Amache, a Japanese-American internment camp in southeast Colorado during World War II,

ironic given my father's service in the US Military Intelligence Service. One of the first lessons I learned was that being Japanese carried a negative connotation in America. □ My parents raised me talking about the injustices of camp, how it was a violation of the Constitution, and how Japanese Americans had been mistreated. I've since followed in their footsteps by advocating for social justice and publically serving communities that do not have a voice. The reason we were sent to camp is because no one in Washington said no. I'm here in Congress to make sure that never happens again to any community in America."

[SERVICE]

In 1965, Mike answered President John F. Kennedy's call for volunteer service, enrolled in the Peace Corps for two years in El Salvador and returned fluent in Spanish and with a passion for teaching.

"Having answered President John F. Kennedy's call for Peace Corps recruits in the 1960s, my time in El Salvador taught me so much about the world and about myself. I went into the Peace Corps as a college student one-credit shy of graduation and with little direction; I emerged with the confidence that my emotional, psychological and physical limits had been pushed, plied and ultimately surpassed. I went into the Peace Corps driven by the shame of my youthful lack of direction; I emerged determined to do something about the pervasive poverty surrounding me. I went into the Peace Corps speaking one language; I emerged speaking another: Spanish, a gift that introduced me to a new world, gave me a new way of understanding new cultures and helped me connect to constituents in California.

At the crux of Peace Corps is the concept of service – service to our neighbors, near or far, in desperate need of a helping hand – an “ethos” that ultimately inspired me to serve in Congress. That is why I am calling for a Peace Corps that is bigger, better and bolder. If America makes this a priority, we not only help the global poor become more self-sufficient, stable and secure — which in turn makes our country more secure — but we simultaneously increase goodwill toward the United States through this development-based diplomacy.”

[EDUCATION]

Mike earned Bachelor's degrees in Biological Sciences and Spanish and a Master's degree in Education from San José State University. In his career as an educator, Mike was a science teacher, served as a principal at two public schools, and conducted educational research at Stanford University.

“In light of my 30-year career as an educator and almost 10 years in the U.S. Congress, it surprises people to learn that I struggled as a student. I was shy to speak up. I failed classes. Perhaps that's why I pursued a career in education. My empathy with English-language learners -- and the unique obstacles they face -- inspired me to get involved. I've learned that we as educators must do more to encourage students and provide each child with the education he/she deserves. That is why I created the Educational Opportunity and Equity Commission, now housed within the U.S. Department of Education. The Commission is initiating a national dialogue on the topic of educational equity. I fought hard to establish it because our education finance structure is outdated and relies on misleading factors like average daily attendance, average costs for “regular” students, and concentrations of low-income, special-education and English-language-learner students. This Commission focuses our country's full attention on the needs of each child in order to reverse our low education rankings globally. Repeatedly ranking near the bottom of the world's 30 richest nations in educational achievement, the future of our nation's economic competitiveness is at stake. Working with the Commission, I aim to fix this once and for all.”

[LOCAL OFFICIAL]

In 1971, Mike was appointed by then-Mayor Norm Mineta to San Jose's Planning Commission. In 1981, Mike won his first election, gaining a seat on the San José Unified School Board. In 1990, Mike was elected to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors, where he led efforts to acquire and preserve open space in the county.

“As the Chair of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors and the head of the County’s General Plan Review Committee and later the Parks and Trail Master Plan Committee, I had the privilege of leading a committed and diverse group of individuals who represented the municipalities, environmental groups, park users, business interests and property owners. □ Together we forged plans that would shape and preserve the visual landscape of Santa Clara County for future generations.

One CA-15th District open space legacy I’d like to leave behind as a Member of Congress is to open Mt Umunhum to the public. In securing \$3.2 million in federal funding for the cleanup and restoration of Mt Um, which once housed the Almaden Air Force Station, I want to provide Santa Clara County and Silicon Valley with unparalleled views of the Pacific Ocean, San Francisco and the Sierra Nevada. Once restored, Mt Umunhum, which is home to mountain lions, golden eagles, frogs and other species, will provide critical conservation corridors and contiguous habitat for endangered species. Mt Umunhum is culturally significant too, as one of the few mountains locally that retains its native moniker: The root name - "umun," meaning hummingbird - was ubiquitous among South Bay indigenous peoples. For all these reasons, I look forward to supporting the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space and Silicon Valley leaders as we start restoration and preparations for public access in 2013.”

[FEDERAL APPROPRIATOR]

Mike served in the California State Assembly from 1996 to 2000. In 2000, Mike was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and serves on the Appropriations Committee, with postings on Commerce, Justice, and Science, and Legislative Branch Subcommittees. As an Appropriator, Mike focuses on directing funding towards affordable healthcare, educational programs, worker training, port and border security, law enforcement and the safety of our neighborhoods, health care for our veterans and recovery from natural disasters.

“Given Santa Clara County’s unemployment rate and the economic crunch facing the state of California, if there is federal funding available, I will make sure my constituents are receiving it. That is why, over the past ten years, as an Appropriator I’ve brought hundreds of millions of dollars back to my district to help county, city and local leaders provide job training, educational programs, social services, and affordable housing. These dollars keep my district afloat throughout this recession, while preparing the solid foundation for successfully weathering uncertain times. These funds reassure my constituents that their tax dollars are being efficiently and effectively returned to their communities in visible and meaningful ways.”

[ISSUES: AAPIS, IMMIGRATION, HEALTHCARE]

Mike is currently the Chairman Emeritus of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC) after spending seven years as Chairman. He continues his past work of coordinating with his colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucuses to champion the causes of under-represented communities by promoting social justice, racial tolerance, civil rights and voting rights. Additionally, as Co-Chair of the House LGBT Caucus, Mike authored immigration legislation to reunite all families, regardless of orientation.

“As chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, and as a Japanese-American born to migrant workers, I know firsthand the incredible and countless contributions made in this country by Asian American and Pacific Islander immigrants (AAPIs), as well as the frustration felt by our communities. Their stake in the immigration debate is substantial. Among our country’s 12 million undocumented immigrants, AAPIs account for 12 percent of all undocumented immigrants, despite comprising only 5 percent of the population. What is equally disconcerting is that AAPIs sponsor 39 percent of all family-based immigrants, and nearly half of the family members in visa backlogs are relatives of AAPIs (which is why I authored Reuniting Families Act legislation to address unreasonably long waits).

Asian Americans’ stake in healthcare reform is equally significant. AAPI communities face daunting cultural and language barriers due to lack of multi-lingual healthcare services, limited prognostication and treatment due to poor data collection, and unique health challenges such as Hepatitis B. President Obama’s healthcare reform efforts help end the persistent health disparities that leave millions in poorer health. The task is not small and demands strategies on all fronts, including a more diverse workforce, strengthened ethnic institutions, and improved evaluation and accountability measures. We must do it quickly; the health of our nation and our economy depends on it.”

[DEM LEADER, NEW MEDIA LEADER]

In the 112th Congress, Mike was reappointed to House Democratic Senior Whip by then House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD). Senior Whips are a select group of Members and Democratic Caucus opinion leaders tasked with strategic planning on how issues impact targeted Members and developing strategies to ensure legislative success, one of which was to co-found and co-chair the Democratic Caucus New Media Working Group.

“Democrats have been at the forefront of using new media in politics for more than a decade and we intend to stay on the cutting edge. The Democratic Caucus New Media Working Group, which I co-chair, continues the proud Democratic tradition of using the Internet to include the voices of working and middle class Americans. By ensuring that Democrats are being innovative with their websites and with tools like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, we hope to reach out to Americans who might not otherwise be heard.”

The New Media Working Group gives our colleagues the tools they need to reach out to their constituents through the many avenues that new media offers. The American public expects and deserves a government that uses these tools to give them opportunities to participate in all levels of the political process. This year I was honored to receive my 5th Mouse Award from the Congressional Management Foundation (CMF) recognizing the best websites in Congress. As the only Member in Congress to receive a website award from CMF each year, I owe my success to the values of innovation and hard work, exemplified well by my 15th District, which propel me to be at the forefront of the new media wave.”

[TECH LEADER]

"Representing Silicon Valley, the technology capital of this country, I am working hard to restore our region's leadership nationally and globally in technological advancement and innovation, which is why I authored legislation to enhance Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education and to invest in nanotechnology and green technology research and development. Additionally, I'm working hard to close the gap between regulators and innovators. In addition to launching the Democratic Caucus New Media Working Group, I am facilitating meetings between members of the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and Members of Congress from such varied interests as the Congressional Task Force on Competitiveness, the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus to help them learn about the role that Silicon Valley can play in economic growth and the green economy of the future."

Mike is widowed and has two grown children. His wife, Jeanne, was a teacher at Baldwin Elementary School in San José before her passing in 2004. His son, Mark, is an aerospace engineer and Michelle, his daughter, is a public health educator in San Jose with three young boys.