

SEPARATE INTERESTS TO NATIONAL AGENDAS: HISPANIC-AMERICAN MEMBERS OF CONGRESS IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA, 1945–1977

LESSON PLAN THREE



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 12



OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to accompany the contextual essay “Separate Interests to National Agendas: Hispanic-American Members of Congress in the Civil Rights Era, 1945–1977,” from the *Hispanic Americans in Congress* website, history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/HAIC/Hispanic-Americans-in-Congress/. Students have the opportunity to learn more about the Hispanic Americans who served in Congress from 1945 to 1977. Students are encouraged to analyze the role Hispanic-American Delegates, Representatives, Resident Commissioners, and Senators played in Congress during the era, as well as the ways in which they may have changed the institution.



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. History, American Government, Social Studies, Latino Studies
- Cold War, Jim Crow, Great Depression, World War II, Immigration, Korean War, Vietnam War



OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to identify the Hispanic Americans who served in Congress from 1945 to 1977.
2. Students should be able to recognize the ways in which Hispanic Americans won elective office from 1945 to 1977.
3. Students should be able to identify important issues and trends surrounding the Hispanic Americans who served in Congress during this era.



LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. What were some of the important issues and events in the United States from 1945 to 1977?
 - b. If asked to describe an average Member of Congress during this period, how would you answer?
 - c. Have there been many Hispanic Americans who have served in Congress? (Ask students to compile a quick list.) Why or why not?
2. Ask students to read the contextual essay “Separate Interests to National Agendas: Hispanic-American Members of Congress in the Civil Rights Era, 1945–1977,” either independently or in groups. Encourage students to take notes and to write down any unanswered questions they encounter during the reading.
3. Once students have completed the reading, have them answer the **Comprehension Questions**. Review the answers as a class.
4. Next have students answer the **Critical Thinking Questions**. Review the answers as a class.
5. Choose one of the options listed under the category **Main Exercise** (Cooperative or Hypothetical). If necessary, students can use the online resources listed at the end of the activity to complete the **Main Exercise**.
6. Time permitting, conduct one of the **Suggested Extended Activities**.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ON THE SURFACE

1. Who was the first Hispanic-American Member elected in this era?
2. How did Hispanic Members of this period compare with their 19th-century era predecessors? List three similarities and three differences.
3. Choose two pieces of legislation from a Hispanic Member of this era and describe their significance.
4. Define the Estado Libre Asociado of Puerto Rico. How was it formed? Identify the Members of Congress who worked to ensure its formation.
5. What were some of the major legislative issues affecting Hispanic Members during this era? Describe two issues that affected a number of Hispanic Members.



CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS DIGGING DEEPER

1. What were some of the major factors that led to increased opportunities for Hispanic Americans seeking political office? What potential obstacles did Hispanics continue to face when seeking elective office?
2. Compare and contrast the congressional careers of Manuel Luján, Jr., of New Mexico and Herman Badillo of New York (Make sure to discuss tenure, legislation, committees, legislative style/approach, and basic background such as the district in which each man served).
3. What role did Hispanic-American Members play in promoting civil rights legislation from this era? How did they balance outside pressures with the institutional pathways of Congress?
4. How do you think the experiences of Hispanic Members from this era may have contributed to the eventual formation of a caucus for Hispanic Americans?
5. What was the Chicano Movement? How did the movement originate? How did the movement affect the legislative interests of Hispanic Members and why?
6. How did World War II, the early Cold War, and the civil rights movement contribute to the formation of the Chicano Movement in the 1960s?
7. How did immigration practices for Hispanic Americans change in the Southwest before and after World War II? Create a timeline that describes some of these changes over time.



MAIN EXERCISE OPTION 1: COOPERATIVE

Working in small groups, choose a Hispanic Member of Congress from this era and follow the directions below:

- a. Read the profile for your Member.
- b. Write down any important notes.
- c. Scenario: You have been assigned the task of designing a museum exhibit to describe the life of your Member. The exhibit should include information on all aspects of his life, but should focus on the Member's congressional service.

What should be included:

- Original title of exhibit that helps explain his legacy
- 50-word exhibit label that summarizes his congressional career
- Three artifacts chosen by you that best represent the Member's legacy
- A creative teaching tool for museum visitors that covers the highlights of his career in Congress (committees, key legislation, state or district he represented, etc.)

OPTION 2: HYPOTHETICAL

1. You are a longtime staff assistant for a Hispanic Member from this era. Prepare and deliver a five-minute speech for a district event detailing the Member's career and significant accomplishments. Make sure to provide an insider's perspective on his daily activities based on your observations as a member of his staff.
2. You are a Hispanic-American Member of Congress in the 1950s at the height of the debate about the *bracero* immigration program between the United States and Mexico. You are sponsoring a bill that will enable *bracero* workers to seek legal protection from corrupt employers. Write a 300–400 word floor speech (for the House or Senate) in which you try to persuade your colleagues to support your position and encourage them to vote for you.

**SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES**

1. Design a timeline of significant events for the Hispanic-American Members of Congress who served during this era.
2. Write a 100-word obituary for one of the Hispanic Members of this era.
3. Design a campaign poster for a Hispanic candidate for Congress during this period.
4. Draft language for a resolution sponsored by a Hispanic-American Member of Congress in the 1960s on one of two hypothetical topics:
 - a. Encouraging economic or diplomatic interaction with a nation in Africa, Asia, or Latin America (choose 1 or 2 nations)
 - b. Provide funding for voter registration drives in bilingual citizens in your district or state



ONLINE RESOURCES

History, Art & Archives | U.S. House of Representatives

A collaborative project between the Office of the Historian and the Clerk of the House's Office of Art and Archives. Together, the offices serve as the House's institutional memory, and a resource for Members, staff, and the general public.

history.house.gov

[@USHouseHistory](#)

Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

bioguide.congress.gov

Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Congress.gov | Library of Congress

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

congress.gov

GPO Federal Digital System

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

gpo.gov/fdsys