



# RICHARD J. DURBIN

## United States Senator

Dick Durbin (Democrat) is the 47th U.S. Senator from Illinois and the first Illinois Senator to serve on the Senate's powerful Appropriations Committee in more than a quarter of a century. Elected to the U.S. Senate in 1996 and re-elected in November 2002, Durbin filled the seat left vacant by the retirement of his longtime friend and mentor, U.S. Sen. Paul Simon.

Durbin was elected to the Senate's second-highest ranking Democratic leadership post — Democratic Whip (Assistant Minority Leader) — in December 2004, after serving as assistant Democratic floor leader since 2001.

The House author of landmark legislation to ban smoking on commercial airline flights, Durbin also has fought to protect children from the harmful effects of tobacco. For his work, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the American Lung Association. He also has worked to increase federal funding to prevent childhood asthma, increase immunizations and expand medical research.

On other health matters, Durbin has led the effort to ban ephedra, a dangerous product sold as a nutritional supplement, and worked to consolidate and modernize the federal food safety system under one agency. He pushed to increase the share of federal funding dedicated to combating AIDS worldwide and has been a leader in promoting organ/tissue donation. Senator Durbin also has proposed a plan to give small businesses affordable choices among private health insurance plans and expand coverage for their employees.

A staunch supporter of gun safety, Durbin introduced legislation that holds adults responsible if they fail to lock up their firearms and the guns are subsequently used by a child to kill or injure another person. He also teamed up with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and local law enforcement agencies to launch an initiative to make Illinois the first state to voluntarily trace every gun recovered from a crime scene.

Durbin has been a champion of Illinois farmers and has worked to promote ethanol use. In 1998, he secured passage of a provision extending the ethanol tax incentive to 2007. In 2000, he helped secure funding for an ethanol research pilot plant near the Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville campus, a project he has promoted since the early-'90s. The full deductibility of health insurance costs for the self-employed, including farmers, has been a career-long passion for Durbin and culminated in a victory in 2003.

Durbin's tax cut agenda includes tax credits for small businesses buying health insurance for low-income workers, estate tax relief for family-owned small businesses and farms, tax incentives to promote charitable giving, and tax credits for long-term care insurance, child care and college tuition.

In 2000, Durbin served as co-chairman of the Democratic Platform Committee and was chairman of the Atlantic Conference, sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. He also is founding member of the Senate Global AIDS Caucus.

Durbin was born Nov. 21, 1944, in East St. Louis. He attended Georgetown University where he received his bachelor's degree in foreign service and economics in 1966 and his J.D. degree in 1969. He was first elected to Congress in November 1982 to represent the 20th Congressional District.

Senator Durbin and his wife, Loretta, reside in Springfield. They have three children and one grandchild.

**Web site:** [www.durbin.senate.gov](http://www.durbin.senate.gov)