



RICHARD J. DURBIN

United States Senator

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

In 2004, Durbin was elected Minority Whip and was elected in December 2006 to the post of Assistant Majority Leader (Majority Whip), the Senate's second highest ranking position. His election to leadership marked only the fifth time in history that an Illinois Senator has served as a Senate leader.

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.

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 1990s. 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, and tax credits for long-term care insurance, child care and college tuition.

In 2000, Durbin served as co-chair of the Democratic Platform Committee and also was co-chair of the Atlantic Conference, sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. He is a 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.

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

Web site: www.durbin.senate.gov