

JOHN A. PÉREZ

b. September 28, 1969

SPEAKER OF THE CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLY

“Yes I’m gay, and I’m a politician. It’s a descriptor. I don’t think it’s a definer.”

Describing John Pérez, Assemblywoman Fiona Ma said, “He’s someone who sends a signal to the nation that being gay is no longer a barrier to greatness.”

John A. Pérez is the openly gay speaker of the California Assembly. He is the first GLBT person of color to hold such a position and only the third out leader of a legislative body in United States history.

Pérez was born in working-class Los Angeles, the son of Felipe, a Mexican immigrant who was disabled from a workplace accident, and Vera, who directed a community clinic. At age 14, Pérez became politically active, motivated by government cuts in disability payments to his father and in government subsidies to his mother’s clinic.

After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley, Pérez spent several years as a labor organizer in Southern California. He served as political director for the United Food and Commercial Workers in Orange County.

Before he held an elective office, Pérez was actively engaged in public service. He was integral in founding California’s statewide GLBT organization, now called Equality California. Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush appointed him to the President’s Advisory Council on HIV and AIDS. Pérez served as a gubernatorial appointee to a panel charged with reforming California’s initiative system and as a mayoral appointee to the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency.

Pérez was elected to the California Assembly in 2008, winning 85 percent of the vote in his Los Angeles district. Two years later, he was selected as speaker by members of the Democratic Party and formally elected by the Assembly. Assemblywoman Fiona Ma said, “He’s someone who sends a signal to the nation that being gay is no longer a barrier to greatness.”

Pérez is a fan of classical music, art museums and the Los Angeles Dodgers.



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