

# MARK TAKANO U.S. CONGRESSMAN

b. December 10, 1960

*“I will continue to fight for equality in Congress, as all Americans deserve to be treated equally under the law.”*

**He is the first openly gay congressman in California and the first congressman of color in America.**

A Japanese-American, U.S. Representative Mark Takano is the first openly gay congressman in California and the first openly gay congressman of color in the nation.

Born and raised in Riverside, California, Takano is the eldest of four brothers. In 1942, after the United States entered World War II, the government forced Takano's parents and grandparents out of their homes and sent them to an internment camp. After the war, the entire extended family moved to Riverside, where Takano's father managed a grocery store and his mother worked part-time as a hairdresser.

In 1979 Takano graduated as valedictorian of his high school. He received a B.A. in government from Harvard University and taught briefly in Boston before returning home to attend graduate school at University of California (UC), Riverside. In 1988 he began teaching high school English in Rialto, California. In 1990 he was elected to the Riverside Community College (RCC) Board of Trustees.

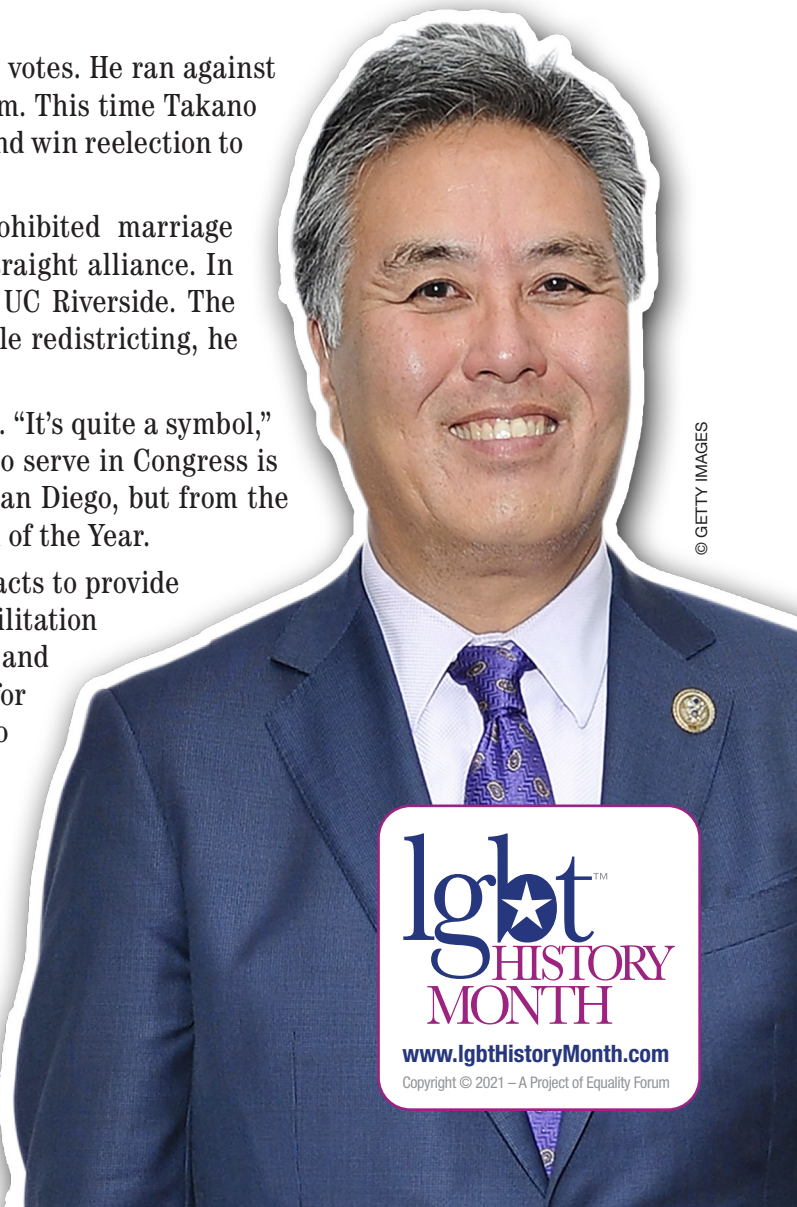
When Takano first ran for Congress in 1992, he lost by 450 votes. He ran against the same Republican in 1994 and was publicly outed by him. This time Takano lost by a more substantial margin. He continued to teach and win reelection to the RCC Board of Trustees.

In 2008 after the passage of Proposition 8, which prohibited marriage equality, Takano helped students start Rialto's first gay-straight alliance. In 2010 Takano completed his M.F.A. in creative writing at UC Riverside. The next year, inspired by his GSA students and more equitable redistricting, he announced another congressional run.

In 2012 Takano won a seat in the House of Representatives. “It's quite a symbol,” he said, “that the first openly gay person from California to serve in Congress is not from Los Angeles, not from San Francisco, not from San Diego, but from the Inland Empire.” In 2013 he was awarded LA Pride's Person of the Year.

Takano helped pass three important veterans' assistance acts to provide on-campus jobs, extend the enrollment period for rehabilitation services, and ensure that LGBT families receive veteran and survivor benefits. “Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country,” he said. “All our returning heroes deserve to enjoy the same benefits and freedoms, no matter who they love or where they live.”

Takano won reelection in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020. He serves as chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs and as a member of the Education and Labor Committee. He remains on the RCC Board of Trustees.



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