



## Ed Roybal, giant in LA Latino politics, to receive Presidential Medal of Freedom

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Long before Antonio Villaraigosa, Gloria Molina and Richard Alatorre, there was Edward R. Roybal. The man who broke through the white power structure that controlled Los Angeles in 1949 to win a seat on the city council and served 30 years in Congress will receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom Award, posthumously, [the White House announced Monday](#).

The award is the nation's highest civilian honor.

"The late Congressman Edward Roybal is among our most beloved Mexican-American heroes," said Representative Ruben Hinojosa of Texas, who chairs the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, an organization Roybal co-founded in 1976.

Roybal was born in New Mexico but grew up in Boyle Heights. He attended Roosevelt High School, graduated from UCLA, and earned a law degree from Southwestern University. He died in 2005. His daughter is [Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard](#), who represents Southeast Los Angeles County.

After serving in the U.S. Army during World War Two and as a public health educator for the California Tuberculosis Association, Roybal ran for city council in 1947. When he lost, he created the Community Service Organization, or CSO. It was a pivotal and brilliant political move.

“As president of the organization, Roybal led a crusade against discrimination in housing, employment and education,” [according to the Library of Congress website](#). The CSO also held voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives in East Los Angeles - and helped lift Roybal to victory two years later.

Within a year, he was at the center of controversy. Roybal was the lone vote on the council against a "Subversion Registration" ordinance, which required Communists and “other subversives” to register with the police. He served on the council until 1962.

Roybal, a lifelong Democrat, lost a bid for California Lieutenant Governor in 1954 and lost again when he ran for LA county supervisor in 1958.

But the Eastside elected Roybal to Congress in 1962, the first Latino elected from California since the 1879 election of [Romualdo Pacheco](#). In 1967, he authored the first bilingual education bill to provide local school districts money for special teaching programs, according to the Library of Congress. He also co-authored bills funding Meals on Wheels, medical care for the elderly and military veterans.

“He was a relentless civil rights advocate whose work continues to make a difference in the lives of many Latinos and people of color today,” Hinojosa said. “Enough cannot be said about the contributions the late Congressman made - from his work at the local level in Los Angeles to his time on the House Appropriations Committee where he championed federal funding for the most underserved communities.”

In addition to the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, [Roybal founded the National Association of Latino Elected Officials](#).

President Obama presents the Medal of Freedom Awards to Roybal and 18 other Americans during a ceremony at the White House on November 24.

[Here’s a list of the other recipients.](#)

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