

Role profile sheet

Role: Senator Laura Richardson — California State Senate, District 35 (Democrat)

POLI 109 Legislative Simulation **Basic Information**

Full Name (street address & city optional): Laura Richardson

District/State Assembly or Senate: California State Senate, District 35

Political Party: Democrat

Age: 64 (b. April 14, 1962, in Los Angeles)

Gender: Female

Race / Ethnicity: Biracial (father was Black; mother white); consistently referred to in press coverage as African American. Currently the highest-ranking African American woman in the California State Senate.

Family & Background

Married with children? Past professions (non-political)? Spouse's education and occupation?:

Married?: Has been. Formerly married to former Long Beach Police Chief Anthony Batts (she signed her name Laura Richardson-Batts while married). It does not appear she is currently married. Lives in San Pedro.

Education: B.A. in Political Science from UCLA (class of 1984); MBA from USC Marshall School of Business (1996)

Past professions (non-political): Worked at Xerox Corporation for 14 years (1987–2001), in a business capacity. Self-identifies in past biographies as a small-business owner.

Political Career

Past professions (political): Long Beach City Council, 2000–2006 (re-elected without a challenger in 2004). Southern California regional director for Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante while serving on city council. California State Assembly, 55th District, 2006–2007; was Assistant Speaker pro Tempore — first African American legislator and first South Bay legislator to hold that position. Congresswoman, U.S. House of Representatives, CA-37, 2007–2013 (after winning a special election in 2007 to fill the vacancy left by the late Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald). She served on the House committees for Homeland Security and Transportation & Infrastructure and was a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Current job/position: California State Senate, District 35. Elected November 2024 and sworn in on December 2, 2024.

Ethics Investigation/Reprimand?: In 2012, the House Ethics Committee found that she had strong-armed staffers to perform campaign work for her and interfered with the committee's ethics investigation into those allegations. She was reprimanded by the full House and fined \$10,000. She ran for reelection in the newly drawn CA-44 against Democrat Janice Hahn in November 2012 and lost.

Legislative Committees (Past/Current)

Assistant Majority Leader (Senate Democratic Leadership Team). Formerly Assistant Majority Whip.

- Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 5 — Corrections, Public Safety, Judiciary, Labor, Transportation
- Senate Standing Committee on Appropriations
- Senate Standing Committee on Banking and Financial Institutions
- Senate Standing Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review
- Senate Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Communications
- Senate Standing Committee on Governmental Organization
- Senate Standing Committee on Insurance
- Senate Standing Committee on Transportation
- Joint Committee on the Arts; Joint Legislative Budget Committee

Tenure & Election

How long in current position: ~1½–2 years; first term in the California State Senate (sworn in December 2, 2024).

Percent of vote in last election: Richardson received 50.6% of the vote (122,862 votes) against her Democratic challenger Michelle Chambers, who received 49.4% (120,144 votes), in the November 5, 2024 general election. Essentially an intraparty election decided by about 2,700 votes out of over 243,000 cast.

Policy Profile

What the lawmaker is known for (policy concerns/issues): Budget, corrections, public safety, and labor (she chairs the Senate Budget subcommittee that oversees appropriations for corrections, courts, and transportation). Transportation and port-related issues/logistics — she sits on the Transportation Committee, and the district is home to the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, Los Angeles International Airport, and major logistics corridors; recently active on a legislative package dealing with wildfire-preparedness bills. In 2025, SB 652 (authored by Senator Richardson, signed into law that year) strengthened laws related to public safety standards. Cast by the press as a 'moderate Democrat.'

Prominent donors (supporter/client lobbying groups): California African American PAC (\$5,500 in 2024). California Professional Firefighters Association (\$2,500 in 2024). California Chamber of Commerce and California Black Women's Collective Institute provided behest/gift-level support (lunches, dinners) rather than direct contributions.

Ideology

Economic: Business background (worked at Xerox for 14 years before entering politics and self-identifies as a small-business owner in past biographies). Cast as a moderate Democrat by the press. Sits on banking, insurance, and appropriations committees.

Social: African American women in leadership. She and her staff have emphasized her casework for constituents involving disability and Social Security benefits.

Environmental: Joined Senate leadership's 'Golden State Commitment' package of wildfire-safety standards and recovery-assistance bills in 2025. The district contains ports, oil refineries, and busy warehouse development in Wilmington and Carson. It is reasonable to

assume environmental/air-quality issues are a concern for her district, if not a defining feature of her legislative career.

District Demographics (2020 Census, current district boundaries)

District Name: California State Senate District 35

Total population: 953,821

Hispanic or Latino of any race: 59.35% (566,137)

Black or African American (non-Hispanic): 21.92% (209,044)

White (non-Hispanic): 7.78% (74,219)

Asian (non-Hispanic): 7.16% (68,261)

Two or more races (non-Hispanic): 2.43% (23,200)

Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Other Race (non-Hispanic): ~1.4%, combined

Urban vs. Rural: Highly urban district; one of the more densely populated districts in California.

District Politics

Political lean: Highly Democratic district — press coverage during the 2024 election cycle put Democratic registration at just over 60% of all active registrations. Republicans and no-party-preference voters split the remainder. Ballotpedia marks SD35 as a 'Safe Democratic' seat. The November 5, 2024 election was an intraparty race between Democrat Laura Richardson and Democrat Michelle Chambers; no Republican candidate ran for this seat. Richardson won 50.6% of the vote to Michelle Chambers's 49.4%.

Issues salient to district constituents: Environmental/health impacts from port activity, rail, and refinery pollution (heavily concentrated in the Wilmington and Carson areas); jobs/economic opportunity related to the ports, LAX, and the logistics sector; public safety/policing; and housing affordability/cost of living.

Do constituents tend to favor liberal or conservative positions on most issues?: From available data, constituents likely lean more progressive on economic and social issues relative to state averages, mirroring the district's heavy Democratic registration and majority Latino/Black population. The main area that could break from a purely progressive read is environmental-justice/port-pollution regulation, which functions more as a local (or statewide) concern tied to goods movement and industrial concentration along the I-710 corridor and the ports.

Sources

Ballotpedia pages for "Laura Richardson" and "California State Senate District 35"; Wikipedia articles "Laura Richardson" and "California's 35th senatorial district"; Senator Laura Richardson's official website (sd35.senate.ca.gov — District page with Census data and press releases on committee assignments); CalMatters Digital Democracy legislator profile; Los Angeles Sentinel coverage of 2025–26 Senate leadership picks and committee assignments; and

U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year estimates accessed via wtfvote.us and datausa.io (for Compton, Inglewood, and Wilmington).