



Image courtesy of the Member

Ben Ray Luján

1972–

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE 2009–
DEMOCRAT FROM NEW MEXICO

Ben Ray Luján won election to the U.S. House of Representatives from his hometown district in northern New Mexico in 2008, continuing a family tradition of public service highlighted by his father, a speaker of the New Mexico state house. The younger Luján has become a vocal advocate for American Indian and Hispanic communities as well as for alternative energy and technology industries. “We need to out-educate and out-innovate the rest of the world in order to grow our economy and put people back to work,” Luján has said.¹

Ben Ray Luján was born June 7, 1972, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Carmen and Ben Luján. The family—the future Representative, his brother, and their two sisters—lived in the small community of Nambé, about 20 miles north of Santa Fe. His mother worked in the local schools, and his father was an ironworker before entering politics.² Following his graduation from Pojoaque High School in 1990, Luján attended the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. After working in human resources at an Albuquerque racetrack and casino, Luján entered public service as deputy state treasurer in 2002. A year later, he became director of administrative services and chief financial officer for the New Mexico department of cultural affairs. In 2004 he was elected to the state public regulation commission, a watchdog for utilities and insurance companies, and served as its chairman. Three years later, Luján completed his bachelor’s degree in business administration at New Mexico Highlands University.³

Luján began his campaign for the U.S. House in December 2007 after incumbent Democratic Representative Tom Udall announced his bid for the U.S. Senate. The seat, which includes Santa Fe and most of northern New Mexico, had been held by a Democrat for all but one year since its creation in 1982.⁴ In a six-way primary campaign, Luján defeated his closest Democratic competitor by nearly 16 percent before capturing the November 2008 general election with 57 percent of the vote.⁵ Luján was unopposed in the 2010 Democratic primary and won re-election that fall with 57 percent of the vote.⁶

In the 111th Congress (2009–2011), Luján served on the Homeland Security and Science and Technology Committees. He was also a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), the Native American Caucus, and the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition.⁷ He introduced legislation to train workers for jobs in sustainable energy industries, and he has sought to help consumers lower their utility costs by improving access to solar panels and

other energy saving devices. Similarly, Luján has worked to strengthen “net-metering,” a practice energy companies use to reimburse consumers for the wattage they produce at home. He has also sponsored legislation that would create an environmental research park at Los Alamos National Laboratories, which is located in his district.⁸ “With investments in renewable energy,” Lujan said during his first term, “we can create jobs in a variety of industries across New Mexico.”⁹ In October 2009, *Hispanic Business Magazine* named him one of the 100 most influential Hispanics in the country.¹⁰

Luján served on the Natural Resources and Science, Space, and Technology Committees during the 112th Congress (2011–2013). He continued his advocacy for the Los Alamos National Laboratory and alternative energy development. Luján was also elected second vice chair of the CHC, was co-chair of the Technology Transfer Caucus, and continued his membership with the Native American Caucus and Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition.¹¹ “I am humbled my colleagues have entrusted me with this position,” Luján said after being elected to the CHC’s leadership. “I look forward to working on issues of importance to the Hispanic community including empowering students through educational opportunities, strengthening small businesses and our middle class, and looking out for our seniors and veterans.”¹²

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, “Ben Ray Luján,” <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

NOTES

- 1 “Official Biography of Congressman Ben Ray Luján,” http://lujan.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=54 (accessed 30 April 2012); *Congressional Record*, House, 112th Cong., 1st sess. (16 February 2011): H988.
- 2 Jessica Dyer, “Immigration among Differences; Nominees Agree on Little in Dist. 3,” 10 October 2010, *Albuquerque Journal*: 1.
- 3 Kate Nash, “Luján: Happy to Follow N.M. House Speaker Dad, Points to Work on Public Regulatory Commission,” 18 May 2008, *Santa Fe New Mexican*: A8.
- 4 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>.

- 5 “Canvass of Returns of Primary Election Held on June 3, 2008,” State of New Mexico, <http://www.sos.state.nm.us/sos-2008PrimResults.html>; “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>.
- 6 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>.
- 7 *Congressional Directory*, 111th Congress (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2009): 176.
- 8 Michael Coleman, “House OKs Landmark Energy Bill,” 27 June 2009, *Albuquerque Journal*: A1; Steve Terrell, “U.S. House: Luján Poised to Make Mark,” 8 September 2009, *Santa Fe New Mexican*: A1; *Politics in America, 2012* (Washington, D.C.: CQ-Roll Call, Inc., 2011): 654; Michael Coleman, “Rep. Lujan Chalks up Victory for Labs,” 3 August 2009, *Albuquerque Journal*: A6.
- 9 “Around Northern New Mexico,” 30 June 2009, *Albuquerque Journal*: 5.
- 10 Carol A. Clark, “Luján Named amongst Influentials,” 9 October 2009, *Los Alamos Monitor*, <http://www.lamonitor.com/content/lujan-named-amongst-influentials> (accessed 30 April 2012).
- 11 *Congressional Directory*, 112th Congress (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2011): 177; Congressional Hispanic Caucus, “Caucus Membership,” <http://chc-gonzalez.house.gov/membership> (accessed 2 May 2012).
- 12 Congressional Hispanic Caucus, “Congressional Hispanic Caucus Elects Leadership for the 112th Congress,” 18 November 2010, <http://chc-gonzalez.house.gov/press-release/congressional-hispanic-caucus-elects-leadership-112th-congress> (accessed 2 May 2012).