

Dennis Chavez

1888–1962

UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE 1931–1935

UNITED STATES SENATOR 1935–1962

DEMOCRAT FROM NEW MEXICO

The first Hispanic Democrat elected to the U.S. Senate, Dennis Chavez changed the face of New Mexican and national politics. Over his 31-year career, Chavez never strayed far from the New Deal liberalism that first won him election to national office. Through ambitious public works legislation, Chavez modernized the country's infrastructure and national defense systems. But it is perhaps his civil rights agenda, which broadened the idea of American citizenship, that Chavez is best remembered for. As Representative Henry B. González of Texas said, “the fact that a man with a surname such as Chavez was able to contribute as magnificently as the Senator did will forever be an inspiration to those of us who cannot escape our names.”¹

The third of eight children, Dionisio (Dennis) Chavez was born in early April of 1887 or 1888 to David Chavez and Paz Sanchez Chavez in Los Chavez, Valencia County, New Mexico.² Chavez's father maintained a small farm in the Rio Grande Valley and worked for neighboring ranches when the need arose. As there was no school in town, the younger Chavez tended the family's sheep and cattle with his father. David Chavez had been appointed the Republican Party's precinct chairman and was also a justice of the peace.³

During Chavez's childhood the railroad came to central New Mexico, forever transforming the territory by bringing new people, ideas, and jobs to the region. In 1895, seeking new opportunities and an education for their children, Chavez's parents moved the family to a section of south Albuquerque known as Barelas. Chavez's father took a job with the railroad and enrolled Dennis in the nearby Presbyterian Mission School, where he learned English. Dennis later transferred to St. Mary's Elementary School and then attended Albuquerque's public schools.⁴

In the seventh grade Chavez withdrew from school to help support his family. He worked as a delivery boy for

Highland Grocery, creating a minor scandal in 1903 when he refused to serve a group of railroad workers who had been hired to break a labor strike. Three years later, Chavez began working as an engineer for the city of Albuquerque, eventually rising to assistant city engineer.⁵ In 1911 Chavez married Imelda Espinosa. The couple had three children: Dennis, Jr., and daughters, Gloria and Ymelda.

As a youngster, Chavez became a Democrat because he blamed Republicans for the low standard of living in the American Southwest. “Republicans were in control of everything,” he later remembered, “and under them, English-speaking communities had schools, Spanish-speaking communities had none.”⁶ “My relatives and everyone I knew were Republicans,” he said in 1948, “but I became a Democrat before I could vote because I disapproved of the inequalities condoned by the Republican Party.”⁷ At the time, Chavez's political leanings tended to cut against the grain, as many *Hispanos*—including Octaviano Larrazolo, who became the first Hispanic U.S. Senator—were leaving the Democratic Party. Although Anglo Democrats had begun taking steps to limit *Hispano* political involvement, Chavez, as his campaign literature later said, “saw in the Democratic party a political philosophy that placed human rights above property rights.”⁸

Shortly into his tenure with the city of Albuquerque, Chavez became active in state politics. In 1908 he spoke in support of then-Democrat Octaviano Larrazolo, an unsuccessful candidate for Territorial Delegate, and two years later he worked as a translator for Democrat William McDonald, a successful gubernatorial candidate.⁹ In 1916 Chavez ran for the clerkship of Bernalillo County while he rallied support for other Democratic nominees across the state. Though Chavez lost, Democrat Ezequiel C. de Baca won the governorship, and Democrat Andreus A. Jones was elected to the U.S. Senate. In appreciation, de Baca





appointed Chavez state game warden, but Chavez lost the patronage job when the governor died a few months later. For the next year, Chavez worked as an editor, a court interpreter, and a partner in an engineering firm until he was offered a legislative clerkship in Senator Jones's Washington office. In 1917 Chavez moved his young family to Washington, D.C., and enrolled in night classes at Georgetown University Law School. After graduating in 1920, he returned home to Albuquerque, where he began practicing law.¹⁰

Chavez was successful in defending organized labor and as a defense counsel in high-profile murder cases, and he used his popularity as a springboard into elected office. Two years out of law school, Chavez won a seat in the state house of representatives in 1922. Though Chavez served only one term, his progressive agenda made him a rising star in the Democratic Party.¹¹ Frequent speaking engagements kept his name in the public arena, and in 1930 Chavez formally filed as a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives. During the campaign, Chavez kept his platforms simple and in line with the Democratic agenda: He supported a higher tariff, advocated more-aggressive veterans' legislation, called for federal aid for transportation, and sought state ownership of public lands.¹² In a crowded Democratic field at the nominating convention (New Mexico had no direct primary at the time), Chavez won his party's nod on the second ballot.¹³

His candidacy was well-timed. State Republicans were reeling from internal divisions, and the onset of the Great Depression had undercut the GOP's national agenda.¹⁴ New Mexico's At-Large seat in the U.S. House of Representatives required a statewide campaign, and Chavez stumped in both English and Spanish from the traditionally Democratic, heavily Anglo counties of eastern New Mexico to the predominantly *Hispano* and Republican jurisdictions of north and central New Mexico. He spoke about water and labor rights and chastised Republicans for their inability to raise wages, lower unemployment, and direct relief to the state. Chavez garnered crucial endorsements from pro-labor groups and major newspapers and from the influential

Club politico independiente de Nuevo Mexico.¹⁵ His Republican opponent, incumbent Representative Albert G. Simms, spoke widely on the tariff and Prohibition, but failed to court the numerous swing votes of the state's Independent-leaning Republicans.¹⁶ On Election Day, Chavez won, with nearly 56 percent of the vote; nationally, Democrats won control of the House of Representatives by a narrow margin.¹⁷

In the 72nd Congress (1931–1933), Chavez had a heavy workload for a first-term Member, serving on committees that fit with his interests: Public Lands, Irrigation and Reclamation; World War Veterans' Legislation; Public Buildings and Grounds; Indian Affairs; and War Claims.¹⁸ Exhausted, Chavez wrote to a friend, "If you think that being a Congressman is a sinch [*sic*], please get over it. . . . I have to work long hours everyday; sometimes at night and even on Sundays."¹⁹ During his first term Chavez allocated much of his time to constituent services, filing for pensions and introducing private relief bills. Although Chavez was instrumental in acquiring property for schools in the state, his biographers consider his most ambitious achievement to be the modification of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), a federal program that made loans to banks to bolster failing businesses and municipal treasuries.²⁰ Under Chavez's direction, the RFC refinanced its loans to a number of Southwestern irrigation projects. Chavez later augmented his agenda for agricultural relief by sponsoring a freeze on payments for government loans to fund irrigation projects.²¹

Chavez's legislative interests complemented the increasingly popular notion that the federal government was responsible for the country's financial health and its general quality of life. Federal initiatives had begun to strengthen New Mexico's economy, and as Chavez prepared for his re-election campaign, he linked his fortunes with those of presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt and his running mate, Speaker of the House John Nance Garner of Texas, one of Chavez's allies.²² Still widely popular, Chavez received an additional boost in the 1932 campaign when New Mexico's Progressive Party fused with the statewide Democratic ticket.²³ With



nominal opposition, Chavez captured 29 of New Mexico's 31 counties, winning by nearly 42,000 votes.²⁴

The national Democratic tide that swept the 1932 election made Chavez an influential Member of a large House majority. With his new seniority, Chavez assumed greater responsibility in his preferred policy areas. During the 73rd Congress (1933–1935), Chavez sat on the Public Lands Committee and the Indian Affairs Committee and chaired the Committee on Irrigation and Reclamation.²⁵ As the son of a rancher, Chavez knew firsthand the difficulties of farming the arid Southwest, and he used his chairmanship to address water-use legislation, refusing to tackle new bills until the committee finished existing projects.²⁶ One of his biggest legislative efforts culminated in the passage of the Pueblo Lands Bill, which compensated Pueblos and Anglos for the land and the access to water they had lost because of confusing or undocumented property titles.²⁷

Chavez became increasingly popular in his district as his support for President Roosevelt's series of economic programs, called the New Deal, brought jobs to the Southwest; by the mid-1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) had employed nearly 34,000 New Mexicans. Chavez's popularity almost catapulted him to the U.S. Senate after New Mexico's senior Democratic Senator, Sam Bratton, resigned in 1933.²⁸ Ultimately Chavez was not appointed to the Senate, but New Mexico's governor agreed to back him for a seat on the state's Democratic National Committee and in his anticipated challenge to New Mexico's Republican Senator, Bronson Cutting, in the 1934 election.²⁹

In the House, Chavez strengthened New Mexico's ties to the national administration, supporting projects for new roads and federal subsidies for bean growers. In September 1934 he was chosen as the Democratic candidate to challenge the incumbent Senator Cutting.³⁰ The owner of the *Santa Fe New Mexican* and the state's leading Progressive, Cutting had seen his power wane in recent months. His support for the New Deal had angered Republicans, and a recent quarrel with President Roosevelt had soured his relationship with Democrats. But both

Chavez and Cutting were popular among Hispanic voters, and the two ran on similar platforms, touting their New Deal successes and the federal money directed to the state.³¹ Observers called the race "topsy-turvy" because Cutting, a Republican, often seemed more liberal than Chavez, who was a Democrat.³² Chavez lost "the most sharply contested election in New Mexico's history," as it was later characterized, by only 1,284 votes.³³ Chavez challenged the election results, citing widespread voter fraud, and petitioned the Senate for a recount.³⁴ Cutting returned to New Mexico to prepare his defense, but on his way back to Washington, he was killed in a plane crash over Missouri. Five days later, New Mexico governor Clyde Tingley appointed Chavez to fill Cutting's vacant seat.³⁵ As the new Senator took the oath of office on May 20, 1935, five of Cutting's Progressive colleagues walked out: Hiram Johnson of California, George Norris of Nebraska, Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, Robert La Follette of Wisconsin, and Henrik Shipstead of Minnesota.³⁶

In one biographer's opinion, Chavez used his first year in the Senate to lay the groundwork for a successful campaign in 1936. His work ethic, combined with his calculated use of state and federal patronage, helped Chavez create "an airtight political machine" back home.³⁷ In Washington, his record proved to be exceedingly liberal: He supported strengthening the Agricultural Adjustment Act and the Social Security Act, backed numerous pro-labor bills, and spoke out on behalf of women's rights. His ability to win appropriations for building projects made him hugely popular; Chavez, along with the rest of the New Mexico delegation, had secured nearly five million dollars in federal funds by the end of 1936.³⁸ The country's economic woes dominated the 1936 election, and Chavez defeated his Republican challenger, Miguel A. Otero, Jr., with nearly 56 percent of the vote.³⁹

Chavez's early Senate career was not without controversy. In 1938 a federal grand jury indicted 73 people in New Mexico for "graft and corruption" in the management of New Mexico's Works Progress Administration (WPA).⁴⁰ Among the accused were Chavez's sister, son-in-law, nephew, secretary, and close Democratic operatives.



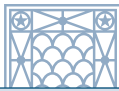
Additional reports regarding “the greatest scandal ever uncovered in the State,” revealed that 17 of Chavez’s relatives worked for the WPA, which one Republican-leaning newspaper called “the Chavez family relief association.”⁴¹ Though juries found all Chavez’s relatives to be innocent, the episode haunted him during later elections.⁴² In 1940, while the WPA issue was still fresh, Chavez survived a close Democratic primary (the first direct primary in New Mexico’s history) against three-term Democratic Representative John J. Dempsey but then crushed his Republican challenger in the general election.⁴³ The issue resurfaced in 1946 when Republican Patrick J. Hurley, who had been Secretary of War under President Herbert Hoover, courted the military vote, characterizing the election as “War Veterans vs. Payroll Veterans.” But despite attacks on Chavez’s long association with the New Deal, and the WPA scandal, Chavez won the race by about 3 percent.⁴⁴

Though Chavez lost the veteran vote in 1946, World War II had been a transformative period for him. From the outset, he supported the Neutrality Acts of 1935, 1936, and 1937. The war movements in Europe, Chavez told the Senate in 1937, were “but heralds of a New World catastrophe.... Our role in the event of such a disaster should be well defined. Such a war will not be our war; we must not be dragged into it.”⁴⁵ As the country mobilized, Chavez straddled a fine line: Although he backed measures to ensure domestic security, including Roosevelt’s call for a larger navy and air force, and supported the Selective Service and Training Act, he opposed the adoption of lend-lease legislation.⁴⁶ After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Chavez supported U.S. involvement in World War II and began working for veterans’ benefits, especially for the many New Mexican prisoners of war in the Pacific Theater. For two years Chavez directed communication between his constituents who had relatives in the South Pacific and the Navy and War Departments, and although Chavez failed to pass a bill promoting low-ranking officers and enlisted men by one grade for every year of their captivity, he was praised across New Mexico for his efforts.⁴⁷

Early in the war, Chavez, then a junior member of the

Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs, pushed to strengthen the country’s ties with Latin America.⁴⁸ In 1943 he was appointed chairman of the Subcommittee on Senate Resolution 26, an ad hoc five-member group investigating the federal government’s relationship with Puerto Rico. After hearings that winter, the subcommittee concluded that Puerto Rico’s population had outpaced its ability to provide for its residents.⁴⁹ Many critics, on and beyond Puerto Rico, faulted America’s nebulous colonial policy, but few observers could point to a single solution. Chavez called the situation “baffling.”⁵⁰ The island’s long-term and temporary problems could “only be met in one way,” Chavez said, “with a full knowledge that the people are American citizens and not foreigners.”⁵¹ Chavez, like many in Puerto Rico, sought to update the country’s insular policy and supported phasing out presidential appointments and implementing measures for the direct election of Puerto Rican governors.⁵²

Building on the momentum from his investigation of Puerto Rico, Chavez moved to codify recent executive orders ensuring the right to work and sought to create a Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to monitor the public and the private sectors for discriminatory hiring practices. This issue was of particular concern to Chavez’s *Hispano* constituents, since, as he said in 1944, “Many of our people in the Southwest have been discriminated against economically.”⁵³ On June 23, 1944, Chavez introduced legislation to establish the FEPC (S. 2048), and was appointed chairman of an Education and Labor subcommittee to oversee the bill’s consideration. Though the 78th Congress (1943–1945) adjourned before voting on the bill, Chavez re-introduced it (S. 101) shortly into the 79th Congress (1945–1947) and immediately ran into stiff opposition.⁵⁴ Numerous states, including Chavez’s, had already rejected fair-employment bills, and Chavez received no support from New Mexico’s senior Senator, Carl Hatch, when Southern Senators blocked the legislation.⁵⁵ Chavez’s final plea to “divest our way of every element of bigotry and hypocrisy” made little difference; his bill died in the Senate on February 9, 1946.⁵⁶ “This is only the beginning,” Chavez said disappointedly on the floor. “We cannot have [the country]



divided. We cannot have one country for the South and another country for the other States of the United States.”⁵⁷

Despite his frustration, Chavez continued to believe that direct federal action could improve the country's living conditions, especially in his native Southwest. In 1949 he became chairman of the Committee on Public Works, assuming partial control over the nation's infrastructure. Created by the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, the Public Works Committee oversaw flood control and river improvement; water power and pollution; buildings and grounds owned by the federal government; and the upkeep of federal highways and post roads.⁵⁸ A decade of war mobilization had put many building projects on hold, and when Chavez assumed the chairmanship, government surveys estimated that upwards of \$100 billion would be needed to improve schools, roads, sewers, hospitals, airports, and parks.⁵⁹ Chavez's chairmanship of Public Works and his high rank on Appropriations helped him to authorize and fund such projects.⁶⁰

As chairman, Chavez outlined a series of long-term committee goals. He looked favorably on bills that incorporated multiple concerns, and sought matching appropriations schedules. Chavez learned early on that the key to a successful bill was “merely a tightening up for economy purposes without policy change.”⁶¹ With his increasing influence, Chavez set about solving the Southwest's water problem. Under his leadership, the committee investigated land reclamation along the Rio Grande, water access in central Arizona, flood control in Idaho and Nevada, and completed hydroelectric projects in Washington. The construction of the Jémez Dam, just north of Albuquerque, in 1950 was a signal accomplishment for Chavez, now New Mexico's senior Senator. “For years I have envisioned the time when the Rio Grande would be harnessed for its entire path through New Mexico,” he said during a visit to the project. “I wish to say that I am proud of having fathered the Middle Rio Grande project as you see it today.”⁶²

As the national budget adjusted after World War II, Chavez's faith in New Deal federalism suddenly seemed outdated. Coupled with Republican Dwight Eisenhower's

victory in the presidential election, all signs pointed to a resurgent nationwide conservatism. In 1952 Chavez survived another close re-election campaign against his old foe Republican Patrick J. Hurley, winning by roughly 2 percent.⁶³ Hurley challenged the election results, and though the Senate's Rules and Administration's Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections recommended that Chavez be unseated, the full Senate voted in March 1954 to allow Chavez to retain his Senate membership.⁶⁴

After Chavez survived the contested election, his dual appointments on the Appropriations and Public Works Committees solidified his legacy as one of the Senate's leading liberals. Early in his career, Chavez, like most junior Senators, had had a large committee load. Before the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, he sat on Foreign Relations (74th and 75th Congresses); Indian Affairs (74th–79th Congresses); Irrigation and Reclamation (74th–79th Congresses); Post Office and Post Roads (74th–79th Congresses); Public Buildings and Grounds (74th–76th Congresses); Appropriations (76th–79th Congresses); Education and Labor (77th–79th Congresses); and Territories and Insular Affairs (77th–79th Congresses).⁶⁵ But as he gained seniority, Chavez was assigned to fewer and more-powerful committees.

Early in the Cold War, Chavez moved to protect America's international military supremacy. As chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense Spending in the late 1950s, Chavez fought against attempts to cut funding for national security. “The Russians are bending every effort to catch up and, if possible, over take us in the development of modern military forces,” he noted.⁶⁶ The political instability in East Asia reaffirmed Chavez's commitment to creating modern defense systems, and he directed many of the jobs that resulted to the Southwest.⁶⁷ Research on missile defense and nuclear energy drove new employment at Holloman Air Force Base, Kirtland Air Force Base, White Sands Proving Grounds, and the areas surrounding Albuquerque.⁶⁸

But for Chavez, foreign threats mattered less than America's civil liberties. Chavez was one of the first Senators to question the political expediency of claims that



the U.S. State Department had fallen under communist influence. Referring to accusations leveled by Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, Chavez warned that fear mongering threatened America's intellectual freedom. "I contend that once men are tried for the heresy of thinking a democracy is robbed of its intellectual yeast," he said in May 1950.⁶⁹ "It matters little if the Congress appropriates hundreds of millions of dollars to check the erosion of the soil if we permit the erosion of our civil liberties, free institutions, and the untrammelled pursuit of truth." In the end, Chavez told his Senate colleagues, "A man is ... measured by what he does in relation to his times, and the fact that we do our assigned duty adequately may not be enough; sometimes we must step out and sound the alarm." Four years later Chavez, along with 66 other Senators, voted to censure McCarthy for having impeded "the constitutional processes of the Senate."⁷⁰

Chavez suffered from declining health in the late 1950s. After surviving stomach cancer and then throat cancer, he died of a heart attack on November 18, 1962. President John F. Kennedy remembered Chavez as "a leading advocate of human rights," and Lyndon Johnson, a close Senate colleague, said, "His heart was always with the lowly and those who needed help."⁷¹ Throughout his career, Chavez was "a good public servant and that's about the highest thing you can say about a man," said former President Harry Truman, also a close friend of Chavez's.⁷² Four years later, the state of New Mexico donated a bronze sculpture of Chavez to the National Statuary Hall Collection in the U.S. Capitol.

FOR FURTHER READING

Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, "Dennis Chavez," <http://bioguide.congress.gov>.

Diaz, Rosemary T. "El Senador, Dennis Chavez: New Mexico Native Son, American Senior Statesman, 1888–1962," (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 2006).

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Vigil, Maurilio and Roy Lujan. "Parallels in the Career of Two Hispanic U.S. Senators." *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 13 (Winter 1986): 1–20.

MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

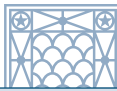
Library of Congress, Manuscript Division (Washington, D.C.). *Papers*: In the Clinton Presba Anderson Papers, c. 1938–1972. Persons represented include Dennis Chavez.

University of New Mexico, Center for Southwest Research (Albuquerque). *Papers*: c. 1921–1963, 383 linear feet. The Dennis Chavez Papers cover many aspects of his political career. The collection includes Chavez's personal and congressional correspondence, records pertaining to legislation and committee activity, maps, photographs, and memorabilia. Topics include New Mexico and national politics, natural resources, American Indian affairs, national defense, Latin America, and labor.

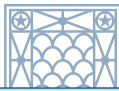
Yale University (New Haven, CT). *Papers*: John Collier Papers, c. 1922–1968, 52.25 linear feet. Persons represented include Dennis Chavez.

NOTES

- 1 *Congressional Record*, House, 88th Cong., 1st sess. (31 January 1963): 1536.
- 2 There is some confusion about Dennis Chavez's birthdate. The *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* lists Chavez's birthdate as April 8, 1888, but Rosemary T. Diaz's study states that Chavez was born April 7, 1887. According to the same study, Chavez himself claimed he was born April 4, 1888, and stood by that date throughout his life. See Edward Lahart, "The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress, 1930–1934" (M.A. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1958): 2; Roy Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era, 1933–1945," (Ph.D. diss., University of New Mexico, 1987): 5; *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774–2005* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2005): 812; Rosemary T. Diaz, "El Senador, Dennis Chavez: New Mexico Native Son, American Senior Statesman, 1888–1962," (Ph.D. diss., Arizona State University, 2006): 40–46.
- 3 Diaz, "El Senador": 42–43.
- 4 Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 6–7.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 9–10.
- 6 As quoted in Diaz, "El Senador": 95. Chavez once said of a local Republican operative and friend of his father's: "I saw him abuse citizens in a way that would have meant a fist fight if nothing else if he had treated me in the same way." Quoted in Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 13, see also pp. 8–9; Rosemary T. Diaz, "El Senador": 43.



- 7 *Congressional Record*, Senate, Appendix, 80th Cong., 2nd sess. (2 February 1948): A1007.
- 8 As quoted in Lahart, “The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress, 1930–1934”: 11.
- 9 Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era”: 11.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 13–15.
- 11 Lahart, “The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress, 1930–1934”: 21–22.
- 12 As quoted in Lahart, “The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress, 1930–1934”: 31–32.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 36–37; Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era, 1933–1945”: 41.
- 14 Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era”: 35. A political scientist argues that the liberalism of the 1930s arrived later in New Mexico than it did elsewhere in the country. See Jack E. Holmes, *Politics in New Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1967): 198–213.
- 15 Lahart, “The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress, 1930–1934”: 40–43; Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era”: 43, 45.
- 16 Lahart, “The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress, 1930–1934”: 43–44; Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 173–174.
- 17 There is some discrepancy regarding the number of votes Chavez received. State election results show Chavez winning by little more than 17,000 votes. The number used here is the official figure recorded by the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. See “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>. For state results, see Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 177.
- 18 *Congressional Directory*, 72nd Cong., (December 1932): 205; Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 180.
- 19 As quoted in Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 184.
- 20 Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 181–184; Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era”: 63–65.
- 21 Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era”: 66–68; Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 183–184.
- 22 Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 189.
- 23 Lahart, “The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress”: 75–76.
- 24 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>.
- 25 Garrison Nelson et al., *Committees in the U.S. Congress, 1789–1946: Member Assignments*, vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2002): 190.
- 26 Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 192.
- 27 House Committee on Indian Affairs, *Payment of Claims to Indian Pueblos*, 73rd Cong., 1st sess., 1933, H. Rep. 123, 3; *Congressional Record*, House, 73rd Cong., 1st sess. (15 May 1933): 3434–3439.
- 28 Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 198; Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era”: 85–87.
- 29 Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era,” 100–103. See also Lahart, “The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress, 1930–1934”: 90–94.
- 30 Democrat Carl Hatch, who had been appointed to Bratton’s seat, was quite popular, leaving Chavez to challenge Cutting, the only non-Democrat in the Senate from New Mexico. Lahart, “The Career of Dennis Chavez as a Member of Congress, 1930–1934”: 96–99, 106–107.
- 31 Cutting wrote the Republican platform, which included particulars not seen in the Democratic agenda, namely a government takeover of Federal Reserve banks, Social Security, and wartime arms production. See Arthur Sears Henning, “Cutting Fights Hard to Retain Seat in Senate,” 21 October 1934, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 9. For more on the 1934 election, see Richard Lowitt, *Bronson M. Cutting: Progressive Politician* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992): 274–285.
- 32 Arthur Sears Henning, “Cutting Fights Hard to Retain Seat in Senate,” 21 October 1934, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 9.
- 33 “New Deal Battles Cutting, Early Ally,” 5 November 1934, *Washington Post*: 2; “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>. There is some discrepancy in the historical record concerning the number of votes. The U.S. Senate Historical Office claims that Cutting won by 1,261 votes. See Anne M. Butler and Wendy Wolff, *United States Senate: Election, Expulsion and Censure Cases, 1793–1990* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1995): 356. For more information on the 1934 contest in the Senate, see Lowitt, *Bronson M. Cutting*: 285–310.
- 34 “Chavez Declares He Is U.S. Senator,” 16 November 1934, *Washington Post*: 2; “Chavez Files Cutting Election Contest; Fraud, Unlawful Use of Money Charged,” 26 February 1935, *New York Times*: 1.
- 35 Butler and Wolff, *United States Senate*: 356–357. “Chavez Named for Cutting’s Seat in Senate,” 12 May 1935, *Chicago Tribune*: 5; “Chavez Is Named to Cutting’s Seat,” 12 May 1935, *New York Times*: 2; Bliss Isely, “Senator Chavez, Cutting’s Successor, Scion of Pioneers,” 19 May 1935, *Washington Post*: B4.
- 36 Having gone to the Supreme Court, progressive William Borah of Idaho, too, missed Chavez’s swearing-in. Though he did not walk out with the others, Borah told the press he was there “in spirit.” “Progressives ‘Cut’ Chavez in Senate,” 21 May 1935, *New York Times*: 13; “6 Walk Out As Chavez Takes Cutting’s Seat,” 21 May 1935, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 2. As quoted in Lowitt, *Bronson M. Cutting*: 310.



- 37 Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 136, 140, 146.
- 38 Roy Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the National Agenda, 1933–1946," *New Mexico Historical Review* 74 (January 1999): 60.
- 39 "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>; "Chavez Wins by 20,000," 6 November 1936, *New York Times*: 2; Diaz, "El Senador": 232–235.
- 40 See Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 248.
- 41 "73 Leaders in New Mexico Politics Are Indicted for WPA Violations," 21 October 1938, *New York Times*: 1; Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 252–253. During the 1930s, the *Chicago Tribune* took a hard line against Roosevelt and the New Deal. See Donald A. Ritchie, *Reporting from Washington: The History of the Washington Press Corps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 7–10; Joseph Ator, "Senator Chavez Gets 17 Kin on Public Pay Roll," 29 October 1938, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 4.
- 42 "Sets WPA 'Fraud' Trial," 24 November 1938, *New York Times*: 32. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that 45 of the 73 would stand trial. See "U.S. Puts 45 on Trial Tomorrow in Relief Scandal in N. Mexico," 29 January 1939, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 21; "Link 2 Relatives of U.S. Senator to WPA Scandal," 2 February 1939, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 8; "Six More Convicted of W.P.A. Corruption," 30 March 1939, *Los Angeles Times*: 5; "Jury Acquits Nine in W.P.A. Politics Case," 15 April 1939, *Los Angeles Times*: 2. Many people, including the defense attorney, believed the trials were a smear campaign against Chavez that was orchestrated by his former ally, Governor Tingley. See Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 275.
- 43 The Associated Press called the primary "one of the most hotly contested battles of State political annals." "Chavez and Dempsey Close in Senate Race," 16 September 1940, *New York Times*: 9. Dempsey returned to the House of Representatives in the 82nd Congress (1951–1953) and served four consecutive terms until he died in office in 1958. For more on the direct primary, see Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 219–220; and Holmes, *Politics in New Mexico*: 198–218. "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>.
- 44 Walter M. Harrison, "Arthritic St. George Has Chavez on Skewer," 27 October 1946, *Washington Post*: B1. Hurley petitioned the Senate Campaign Investigations Committee to look into Chavez's victory, but to no avail. See "Hurley Asks Investigating Chavez Vote," 14 November 1946, *Washington Post*: 2; "Chavez Retains New Mexico Seat," 8 November 1946, *New York Times*: 17; "Election Statistics, 1920 to Present," <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>.
- 45 Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 404; *Congressional Record*, Senate, 75th Cong., 1st sess. (10 August 1937): 8602; "Chavez Scores Nazis Before Senate Group," 13 May 1938, *New York Times*: 14.
- 46 Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the National Agenda": 61–62.
- 47 Ibid., 63–65; *Congressional Record*, Senate, 78th Cong., 1st sess. (2 December 1943): 10207–10213.
- 48 In 1938 he authored a bill permitting the United States to erect radio towers in Southern California to broadcast anti-fascist messages to Latin America. Despite a hearing before the Interstate Commerce Committee, Chavez's measure failed to pass during the 75th or the 76th Congress (1937–1941). See Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 404–412, 415. On the Chavez–McAdoo bill, see "U.S. Radio Station Asked to Further Pan-Americanism," 4 March 1938, *Washington Post*: X5; "To Act on Federal Radio Station," 10 May 1938, *New York Times*: 6; "U.W. Radio and 3,000 Students Urged to Link South America," 12 May 1938, *Christian Science Monitor*: 5; "On Capitol Hill," 19 May 1938, *Washington Post*: X2; "Bill Asks Pan-American Radio," 28 April 1939, *New York Times*: 38.
- 49 "Puerto Rican Aid Sought," 30 October 1942, *The Sun*: 9; Paul W. Ward, "Ickes Opposes Plan to Probe Puerto Rico," 19 November 1942, *The Sun*: 1; "Senators Question Tugwell in San Juan," 14 February 1943, *New York Times*: 28; Senate Committee on Territories and Insular Affairs, *Economic and Social Conditions in Puerto Rico*, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, S. Rep. 628.
- 50 Chavez Subcommittee to William A. Brophy, unknown date, 9-8-68 (Part No. 4)-Government-Organic Act-Amendments-Advisory Committee to the President-General, Box No. 861, RG 126, National Archives, College Park. The island's appointed governor was critical of U.S. colonial policy and faulted preceding national administrations for not clarifying the country's constitutional obligations toward Puerto Rico. See "Tugwell Hints Puerto Ricans Nearing Revolt," 27 September 1943, *Atlanta Journal Constitution*: 8; William D. Carter, "Tugwell Blames Lack of Policy for Troubles of Puerto Rico," 27 September 1943, *Washington Post*: 15. For the New Deal and anti-imperialism, see Robert David Johnson, *Ernest Gruening and the American Dissenting Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998): 113–152.
- 51 "Chavez Demands End of Tugwell 'Guinea Pig' Rule," 23 February 1943, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 9.
- 52 "Puerto Ricans Hail Prospect of Self Rule," 10 March 1943, *Christian Science Monitor*: 3.
- 53 "Spanish-Americans Ask Fair Play, Says Chavez," 19 October 1944, *Los Angeles Times*: 12.
- 54 Hearings before a Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor, *Fair Employment Practices Act*, 78th Cong., 2nd sess. (30, 31 August and 6, 7, 8 September 1944). See also Lujan, "Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era": 515; "Negro Group Prays before Senators," 1 September 1944, *New York Times*: 15. For the committee report, see Senate Committee on Education and



- Labor, *Prohibiting Discrimination in Employment Because of Race, Creed, Color, National Origin, or Ancestry*, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1945, S. Rep. 290.
- 55 *Congressional Record*, Senate, 79th Cong., 2nd sess. (8 February 1946): 1154–1155; *Congressional Record*, Senate, 79th Cong., 1st sess. (6 January 1945): 80; Lujan, “Dennis Chavez and the Roosevelt Era”: 522–524; “Senators Approve Extension of FEPC,” 24 May 1945, *New York Times*: 14.
- 56 “Anti-Bias Measure Backed by Chavez,” 20 March 1945, *New York Times*: 12.
- 57 *Congressional Record*, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd sess. (9 February 1946): 1219.
- 58 Garrison Nelson, ed., *Committees in the U.S. Congress, 1947–1992*, vol. 1, (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 1993): 117.
- 59 Jay Walz, “Public Works Backlog Is Put at \$100 Billion,” 17 July 1949, *New York Times*: E7; Garrison Nelson, ed., *Committees in the U.S. Congress, 1947–1992*, vol. 2: (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1993): 117.
- 60 In 1950, Chavez was chairman of the Appropriations subcommittee on Labor-Federal Security. See Jerry Kluttz, “The Federal Diary,” 2 June 1950, *Washington Post*: M19.
- 61 “Senate Group Cuts Road Aid \$120 Million,” 25 February 1950, *Washington Post*: B5. As Diaz writes, Chavez “turned the focus toward the completion of major projects, project operation and maintenance, and potential expansion needs for existing projects.” For a full summary of Chavez’s committee overhaul, see Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 307–309.
- 62 For a summary of Chavez’s water-use legislation and congressional activity, see Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 264–268; *Congressional Record*, Senate, Appendix, 81st Cong., 2nd sess. (10 May 1950): A3489. For more on Congress’s role in water policy, see Paul Charles Milazzo, *Unlikely Environmentalists: Congress and Clean Water, 1945–1972* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).
- 63 “Election Statistics, 1920 to Present,” <http://history.house.gov/institution/election-statistics/election-statistics>; Jeffery A. Jenkins, “Partisanship and Contested Elections in the Senate, 1789–2002,” *Studies in American Political Development* 19 (Spring, 2005): 72; Butler and Wolff, *United States Senate: Election, Expulsion and Censure Cases*: 399–400.
- 64 Butler and Wolff, *United States Senate: Election, Expulsion and Censure Cases*: 401–402; William S. White, “Senate Unit Votes to Unseat Chavez,” 17 March 1954, *New York Times*: 1; “New Mexico’s Senator,” 23 March 1954, *Washington Post*: 10; William S. White, “Chavez Sustained in Senate as All Democrats Back Him,” 24 March 1954, *New York Times*: 1; “Chavez Election Is Upheld; Grand Jury Scores Hurley,” 26 September 1954, *New York Times*: 1.
- 65 For a list of committees, see Nelson et al., *Committees in the U.S. Congress, 1789–1946*, vol. 3: 190.
- 66 As quoted in Philip Potter, “Defense,” 22 June 1956, *Baltimore Sun*: 1.
- 67 Allen Drury, “Senators Weigh Cut in Military,” 4 April 1955, *New York Times*: 17; “Battle Opens over Boost in Defense Fund,” 22 June 1956, *Chicago Daily Tribune*: 2.
- 68 Diaz, “*El Senador*”: 285–287.
- 69 *Congressional Record*, Senate, 81st Cong., 2nd sess. (12 May 1950): 6974.
- 70 Ibid., 6969. See also “New Senate Drive to Fight M’Carthy,” 15 May 1950, *New York Times*: 51; William S. White, “Budenz Uses Catholic Church as a ‘Shield,’ Chavez Says,” 13 May 1950, *New York Times*: 1; “Ten Senators Urge Repeal of Red Law,” 2 October 1950, *New York Times*: 7. For the censure vote, see *Congressional Record*, Senate, 83rd Cong., 2nd sess. (2 December 1954): 16392.
- 71 “JFK Calls Chavez Death ‘Great Loss,’” 20 November 1962, *Washington Post*: B5; “Shock and Sorrow Expressed at Death,” 19 November 1962, *Santa Fe New Mexican*: 1.
- 72 “Truman Calls Sen. Chavez ‘Great Man,’” 19 November 1962, *Los Angeles Times*: 19.