

African Women of Excellence



Congresswoman Karen Bass

Congressmember Bass serves on the House Committee on Foreign Affairs where she is Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights and International Organizations. As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, Congressmember Bass is also working to craft sound criminal justice reforms as well as protect intellectual property right infringements that threaten the economic health of the 37th District.

She was selected by Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi to serve on the prestigious Steering and Policy Committee, which sets the policy direction of the Democratic Caucus, as Organization, Study and Review Chair. Congressmember Bass is also playing a leadership role in the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), where she serves as Secretary for the 114th Congress.

On Africa, Congressmember Bass acted swiftly during her first term to bring legislators, advocacy groups and international leaders together to extend the third country fabric provision of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Prior to serving in Congress, Congressmember Bass made history when the California Assembly elected her to be its 67th Speaker, catapulting her to become the first African American woman in U.S. history to serve in this powerful state legislative role.

Congressmember Bass started and ran the Community Coalition, a community-based social justice organization in South Los Angeles that empowers residents to become involved in making a difference. Through her leadership at the Community Coalition, Congressmember Bass worked to address the drug and violence epidemic and to engage community residents in addressing the root causes of injustice.

She grew up with three brothers in the Venice/Fairfax area of Los Angeles and is the only daughter of DeWitt and Wilhelmina Bass. She graduated from Hamilton High School, Cal State Dominguez Hills, and the University of Southern California's School of Medicine Physician Assistant Program.