

Maxine Waters

Maxine Moore Waters (née **Carr**, August 15, 1938) is an American politician serving as the U.S. Representative for California's 43rd congressional district since 2013. A member of the Democratic Party, Waters is currently in her 15th term in the House, having served since 1991. She previously represented the state's 29th district (1991–1993) and 35th district (1993–2013). She is the most senior of the twelve black women currently serving in Congress, and she chaired the Congressional Black Caucus from 1997 to 1999.^[1]

Before becoming a U.S. Representative, Waters served in the California State Assembly, to which she was first elected in 1976. As an Assemblywoman, she advocated divestment from South Africa's apartheid regime. In Congress, she has been an outspoken opponent of the Iraq War and of Republican Presidents George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, and Donald Trump.^[2]

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Maxine Waters



**Chair of the
House Financial Services
Committee**

Incumbent
Assumed office
January 3, 2019

Deputy Carolyn Maloney

Preceded by Jeb Hensarling

**Ranking Member of the
House Financial Services
Committee**

In office
January 3, 2013 – January 3, 2019
Deputy Carolyn Maloney
Dan Kildee

Preceded by Barney Frank

Succeeded by Patrick McHenry

**Member of the
U.S. House of Representatives
from California**

Incumbent
Assumed office
January 3, 1991

Early life and education

Waters was born in 1938 in St. Louis, Missouri, the daughter of Remus Carr and Velma Lee (née Moore).^{[3][4]} The fifth out of thirteen children, Waters was raised by her single mother once her father left the family when Maxine was two.^[5] She graduated from Vashon High School in St. Louis, Missouri before moving with her family to Los Angeles, California in 1961. She worked in a garment factory and as a telephone operator before being hired as an assistant teacher with the Head Start program in Watts in 1966.^[5] Waters later enrolled at Los Angeles State College (now California State University, Los Angeles), where she received a bachelor's degree in sociology in 1971.^[6]

Early political career

In 1973, Waters went to work as chief deputy to City Councilman David S. Cunningham, Jr., then was elected to the California State Assembly in 1976. While in the Assembly, she worked for the divestment of state pension funds from any businesses active in South Africa, a country then operating under the policy of apartheid, and helped pass legislation within the guidelines of the divestment campaign's Sullivan Principles.^[7] She ascended to the position of Democratic Caucus Chair for the Assembly.^[8]

U.S. House of Representatives

Elections

Upon the retirement of Augustus F. Hawkins in 1990, Waters was elected to the United States House of Representatives for California's 29th congressional district with over 79% of the popular vote. She has been reelected consistently from this district, renumbered as the 35th District in 1992 and as the 43rd in 2012, with at least 70 percent of the vote.

Waters has represented large parts of south-central Los Angeles and the Los Angeles coastal communities of Westchester and Playa Del Rey, as well as the cities of Torrance, Gardena, Hawthorne, Inglewood and Lawndale.

Tenure

On July 29, 1994, Waters came to public attention when she repeatedly interrupted a speech by Peter King (R-NY). The presiding officer, Carrie Meek (D-FL), classed her behavior as "unruly and turbulent", and threatened to have the Sergeant at Arms present her with the Mace of the House of Representatives (the equivalent of a formal warning to desist). As of 2017, this is the most recent instance of the mace being employed for a disciplinary purpose. Waters was eventually suspended

Preceded by	Augustus Hawkins
Constituency	29th district (1991–1993) <div>35th district (1993–2013)</div> <div>43rd district (2013–present)</div>
Member of the California State Assembly from the 48th district	
In office	
December 6, 1976 – November 30, 1990	
Preceded by	Leon D. Ralph
Succeeded by	Marguerite Archie-Hudson
Personal details	
Born	Maxine Moore Carr <div>August 15, 1938</div> <div>St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.</div>
Political party	Democratic
Spouse(s)	Edward Waters (m. 1956; div. 1972) <div>Sid Williams (m. 1977)</div>
Children	2
Education	California State University, Los Angeles (BA)



Waters greeting President Bill Clinton in 1994

from the House for the rest of the day. The conflict with King stemmed from the previous day, when they had both been present at a House Banking Committee hearing on the Whitewater controversy. Waters felt King's questioning of Maggie Williams (Hillary Clinton's chief of staff) was too harsh, and they subsequently exchanged hostile words.^{[9][10][11]}

Waters was chair of the Congressional Black Caucus from 1997 to 1998. In 2005 Waters testified at the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce hearings on "Enforcement of Federal Anti-Fraud Laws in For-Profit Education", highlighting the American College of Medical Technology as a "problem school" in her district.^[12] In 2006 she was involved in the debate over King Drew Medical Center. She criticized media coverage of the hospital and in 2006 Waters asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to deny a waiver of the cross ownership ban, and hence license renewal for KTLA-TV, a station the *Los Angeles Times* owned. She said, "The *Los Angeles Times* has had an inordinate effect on public opinion and has used it to harm the local community in specific instances." She requested that the FCC force the paper to either sell its station or risk losing that station's broadcast rights.^[13] According to Broadcasting & Cable, the challenges raised "the specter of costly legal battles to defend station holdings... At a minimum, defending against one would cost tens of thousands of dollars in lawyers' fees and probably delay license renewal about three months".^[14] Waters' petition was ultimately unsuccessful.^[15] As a Democratic representative in Congress, Waters was a superdelegate to the 2008 Democratic National Convention. She endorsed Democratic U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton for the party's nomination in late January 2008, granting the New York Senator nationally recognized support that some suggested would "make big waves."^{[16][17][18]} Waters later switched her endorsement to U.S. Senator Barack Obama when his lead in the pledged delegate count became insurmountable on the final day of primary voting.^[19] In 2009 Waters had a confrontation with fellow Democratic congressman Dave Obey (WI) over an earmark in the United States House Committee on Appropriations. The funding request was for a public school employment training center in Los Angeles that was named after her.^[20] In 2011, Waters voted against the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012, related to a controversial provision that allows the government and the military to detain American citizens and others indefinitely without trial.^[21]

With the retirement of Barney Frank (D-MA) in 2012, Waters became the ranking member of the House Financial Services Committee.^{[22][23]} On July 24, 2013, Waters voted in favor of Amendment 100 included in H.R. 2397 Department of Defense Appropriations Act of 2014.^[24] The amendment targeted domestic surveillance activities, specifically that of the National Security Agency, and if ultimately passed would have limited the flexibility of the NSA's interpretation of the law to collect sweeping data on U.S. citizens.^[25] Amendment 100 was rejected 217–205. On March 27, 2014, Waters introduced a discussion draft of the Housing Opportunities Move the Economy Forward Act of 2014 known as the Home Forward Act of 2014.^[26] A key provision of the bill includes the collection of 10 basis points for "every dollar outstanding mortgages collateralizing covered securities" estimated to be approximately \$5 billion a year. These funds would be directed to three funds that support affordable housing initiatives, with 75% going to the National Housing trust fund. The National Housing Trust Fund will then provide block grants to states to be used primarily to build, preserve, rehabilitate, and operate rental housing that is affordable to the lowest income households, and groups including seniors, disabled persons and low income workers. The National Housing Trust was enacted in 2008, but has yet to be funded.^[27] In 2009, Waters co-sponsored Rep. John Conyers' bill calling for reparations for slavery to be paid to black Americans.^[28]

Rodney King verdict and Los Angeles riots

When south-central Los Angeles erupted in riots—in which 63 were killed—after the Rodney King verdict in 1992, Waters gained national attention when she led a chant of "No justice, no peace" at a rally in the midst of the riot.^[29] She also "helped deliver relief supplies in Watts and demanded the resumption of vital services".^{[30][31]} Waters described the riots as a rebellion, saying "If you call it a riot it sounds like it was just a bunch of crazy people who went out and did bad things for no reason. I maintain it was somewhat understandable, if not acceptable."^[32] In her view, the violence was "a spontaneous reaction to a lot of injustice." In regards to the looting of Korean-owned stores by local black residents, she said in an interview with KABC radio host Michael Jackson: "There were mothers who took this as an opportunity to take some milk, to take some bread, to take some shoes... They are not crooks."^[33]

CIA

Following a 1996 San Jose Mercury News article alleging the complicity of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the Los Angeles crack epidemic of the 1980s, Waters called for an investigation. Waters questioned whether "U.S.-government paid or organized operatives smuggled, transported and sold it to American citizens."^[34] The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) announced it had failed to find any evidence to support the original story.^[35] The Los Angeles Times also concluded after its own extensive investigation that the allegations were not supported by evidence.^[36] The author of the original story, Gary Webb, was eventually transferred to a different beat and removed from investigative reporting, before his death in 2004.^[37] Webb was found in his apartment with two bullet holes in his head. His death was declared a suicide. Following these post-publication investigations, Waters read into the Congressional Record a memorandum of understanding in which former President Ronald Reagan's CIA director rejected any duty by the CIA to report illegal narcotics trafficking to the Department of Justice.^{[38][39]}

Allegations of corruption

According to Chuck Neubauer and Ted Rohrlich writing in the Los Angeles Times in 2004, Maxine Waters' relatives had made more than \$1 million during the preceding eight years by doing business with companies, candidates and causes that Waters had helped. They claimed she and her husband helped a company get government bond business, and her daughter Karen Waters and son Edward Waters have profited from her connections. Waters replied that "They do their business and I do mine."^[40] Liberal watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington named Waters to its list of corrupt members of Congress in its 2005, 2006, 2009 and 2011 reports.^{[41][42]} Citizens Against Government Waste named her the June 2009 Porker of the Month due to her intention to obtain an earmark for the Maxine Waters Employment Preparation Center.^{[43][44]}

Waters came under investigation for ethics violations and was accused by a House panel of at least one ethics violation related to her efforts to help OneUnited Bank receive federal aid.^[45] Waters' husband is a stockholder and former director of OneUnited Bank and the bank's executives were major contributors to her campaigns. In September 2008, Waters arranged meetings between U.S. Treasury Department officials and OneUnited Bank, so that the bank could plead for federal cash. It had been heavily invested in Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, and its capital was "all but wiped out" after the U.S. government took them over. The bank received \$12 million in Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) money.^{[46][47]} The matter was investigated by the House Ethics Committee,^{[48][49]} which charged her with violations of the House's ethics rules in 2010.^{[50][51][52][53]} On September 21, 2012, the House Ethics Committee completed a report clearing Waters of all ethics charges after nearly three years of investigation.^[54]

"Reclaiming my time"

In July 2017, during a House Financial Services Committee meeting, Waters questioned United States Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin. At several points during the questioning, Waters used the phrase "reclaiming my time" when Mnuchin did not directly address the questions Waters had asked him. The video of the interaction between Waters and Mnuchin became viral on social media, and the phrase became attached to her criticisms of Trump.^[55]

Louis Farrakhan

In early 2018, Waters was among the members of Congress the Republican Jewish Coalition called on to resign due to her connections with Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.^{[56][57]} Between 1993 and 2006, Waters repeatedly met with and had publicity photos taken with Farrakhan.^[58]

Bombing attempt

Packages that contained pipe bombs were sent to two of Waters's offices on October 24, 2018. The packages were intercepted and are being investigated by the FBI. No one was injured. Similar packages were sent to several other Democratic leaders and to CNN.^{[59][60]}



Waters speaking to the California Democratic Party State Convention in June 2019.

Committee assignments

- **Committee on Financial Services** (Chairwoman)
 - Subcommittee on Capital Markets and Government-Sponsored Enterprises
 - Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity
 - Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

Previously, she had served on the Committee on the Judiciary.

Caucus memberships

- Chief Deputy Whip
- Founding member and Chair of the Out of Iraq Caucus
- Member of Congressional Progressive Caucus^[61]
- Member of Congressional Black Caucus (CBC); past chair of CBC (105th United States Congress)

Positions

Barack Obama

In August 2011, Waters criticized President Barack Obama, saying that he was insufficiently supportive of the black community. Waters referred to the high unemployment rate for African Americans (which was hovering around 15.9 percent at the time).^[62] At a Congressional Black Caucus town-hall meeting on jobs in Detroit, Waters said that African American members of Congress were reluctant to criticize or place public pressure on Obama because "y'all love the President".^[63]

In October 2011, Waters engaged in a public dispute with Obama, arguing that he paid more attention to the swing voters of the Iowa primaries than to equal numbers of (geographically dispersed) black voters. In response, Obama argued that it was time to "stop complaining, stop grumbling, stop crying" and get back to working with him.^{[64][65][66]}

Castro and Cuba

Waters has visited Cuba a number of times, praising Fidel Castro's moves towards democracy. She also criticized previous U.S. efforts to overthrow him and demanded an end to the U.S. trade embargo.^[67] In 1998 Waters wrote a letter to Castro citing the 1960s and 1970s as "a sad and shameful chapter of our history", and thanked Castro for providing help to those who needed to "flee political persecution".^[68]

In 1998, Waters wrote an open letter to Fidel Castro asking him not to extradite convicted terrorist Assata Shakur from Cuba, where she had sought asylum. Waters argued that much of the Black community regarded her conviction as false.^{[69][70][71]} She had earlier supported a Republican bill to extradite Shakur, who was referred to by her former name, Joanne Chesimard. In 1999, Waters called on President Bill Clinton to return six-year-old Elían Gonzales to Cuba; Elían had survived a boat journey from Cuba, during which his mother had drowned, and was taken in by U.S. relatives.^[68]

Donald Trump

Waters has called Trump "a bully, an egotistical maniac, a liar and someone who did not need to be President"^[42] and "the most deplorable person I've ever met in my life".^[72] In a 2017 appearance on MSNBC's *All In with Chris Hayes*, Waters said President Donald Trump's advisors who have ties to Russia or have oil and gas interests there are "a bunch of scumbags".^[73]

Waters began to call for the impeachment of Trump shortly after he took office. In February 2017, Waters said that Trump was "leading himself" to possible impeachment because of his conflicts of interests and that he was creating "chaos and division".^[74] In September 2017, while giving a eulogy at Dick Gregory's funeral, she said that she was "cleaning out the White House" and that "when I get through with Donald Trump, he's going to wish he had been impeached."^[75] In October 2017, she said the U.S. Congress had enough evidence against Trump to 'be moving on impeachment', in reference to Russian collusion allegations during the 2016 Presidential election, and that Trump "has openly obstructed justice in front of our face."^[76]

Waters texted an allegation on Twitter regarding the Trump White House, "Trump has made it clear—it is now the White Supremacists' House",^[77] linking President Trump to the violence that erupted at a white nationalist protest rally in Charlottesville, Virginia on August 12, 2017. Following President Trump's 2018 State of the Union address Waters released a video response wherein she addressed what most of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus see as the racist viewpoint and actions of Trump saying, "He claims that he's bringing people together but make no mistake, he is a dangerous, unprincipled, divisive, and shameful racist."^[78] Trump later retaliated against her impeachment views, calling her a "low IQ individual".^[79]

On April 24, 2018, while attending the Time 100 Gala, Waters urged Trump to resign, "So that I won't have to keep up this fight of your having to be impeached because I don't think you deserve to be there. Just get out."^[80]

On June 23, 2018, following an incident in which White House Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders was asked to leave a restaurant, Waters urged attendees at a rally in Los Angeles to confront and harass Trump administration officials who show up in public places: "...tell them they're not welcome anymore, anywhere."^[81] In response, House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi posted comments on Twitter reported to be a condemnation of Waters' remarks: "Trump's daily lack of civility has provoked responses that are predictable but unacceptable."^[82]

George H. W. Bush

In July 1992, Waters labeled President George H. W. Bush "a racist" who has "polarized the races in this country". Previously, Waters had suggested that Bush has used race to advance his policies.^[83]

Haiti

Waters opposed the 2004 coup d'état in Haiti and criticized U.S. involvement.^[84] Following the coup, Waters led a delegation along with TransAfrica Forum founder Randall Robinson and Jamaican member of parliament Sharon Hay-Webster to meet with Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide and bring him to Jamaica, where he would remain until May.^{[85][86][87]}

International lending

In August 2008, Waters introduced HR 6796, or the "Stop Very Unscrupulous Loan Transfers from Underprivileged countries from Rich Exploitive Funds Act," also known as the Stop VULTURE Funds Act. This would limit the ability of investors in sovereign debt to use U.S. courts to enforce those instruments against a defaulting country. The bill died in committee.^[88]

Iraq War

Waters voted against the Iraq War Resolution, the 2002 resolution that funded and granted Congressional approval to possible military action against the regime of Saddam Hussein.^[89] She has remained a consistent critic of the subsequent war and has supported an immediate troop withdrawal from Iraq. Waters asserted in 2007 that President George W. Bush was trying to "set [Congress] up" by continually requesting funds for an "occupation" that is "draining" the country of capital, soldier's lives, and other resources. In particular, she argued that the very economic resources being "wasted" in Iraq were those that might provide universal health care or fully fund President Bush's own "No Child Left Behind" education bill. Additionally, Waters, representing a congressional district whose median income falls far below the national average, argued that patriotism alone had not been the sole driving force for those U.S. service personnel serving in Iraq. Rather, "many of them needed jobs, they needed resources, they needed money, so they're there".^[90] In a subsequent floor speech, Waters told her colleagues that Congress, lacking the votes to override the "inevitable Bush veto on any Iraq-related legislation," needed to "better [challenge] the administration's false rhetoric about the Iraq war" and "educate our constituents [about] the connection between the problems in Pakistan, Turkey, and Iran with the problems we have created in Iraq".^[91] A few months prior to these speeches Waters became a cosponsor of the House resolution to impeach Vice President Dick Cheney for making allegedly "false statements" about the war.^[92]

Mandatory minimum sentences

Waters opposes mandatory minimum sentences.^[93]

Tea Party movement

Waters has been very critical of the Tea Party movement. On August 20, 2011, while at a town hall discussing some of the displeasure that supporters of President Obama have had with the Congressional Black Caucus not supporting the president, Waters stated, "This is a tough game. You can't be intimidated. You can't be frightened. And as far as I'm concerned, the 'tea party' can go straight to Hell ... and I intend to help them get there."^{[94][95]}

Cryptocurrency

On June 18, 2019, Waters asked Facebook to halt their plan to the development and launching of new cryptocurrency called Libra citing a list of recent scandals. She said, "The cryptocurrency market currently lacks a clear regulatory framework to provide strong protections for investors, consumers and the economy. Regulators should see this as a wake-up call to get serious about the privacy and national security concerns, cybersecurity risks, and trading risks that are posed by cryptocurrencies".^[96]

Personal life

Maxine Waters' second husband, Sid Williams, played professional football in the NFL^[97] and is a former U.S. Ambassador to the Bahamas under the Clinton Administration.^[98]

Other achievements

- Maxine Waters Preparation Center in Watts, California – named after her while she was a member of the California Assembly
- Co-founder of Black Women's Forum
- Co-Founder of Community Build
- Received the Bruce F. Vento Award from the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty for her work on behalf of homeless persons.
- Candace Award, National Coalition of 100 Black Women, 1992.^[99]

See also

- [List of African-American United States Representatives](#)
- [Women in the United States House of Representatives](#)

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External links

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- [Maxine Waters for Congress \(https://web.archive.org/web/20101009212702/http://maxinewaters.org/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20101009212702/http://maxinewaters.org/)
- [Maxine Waters \(https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/California/Government/Federal/US_House_of_Representatives/Maxine_Waters_%5BD-43%5D\)](https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/California/Government/Federal/US_House_of_Representatives/Maxine_Waters_%5BD-43%5D) at [Curlie](#)
- [Biography \(http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=w000187\)](http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=w000187) at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*
- [Profile \(https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/26759\)](https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/26759) at [Vote Smart](#)
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- [Legislation sponsored \(https://www.congress.gov/member/maxine-waters/1205\)](https://www.congress.gov/member/maxine-waters/1205) at the [Library of Congress](#)
- [Appearances \(https://www.c-span.org/person/?maxinewaters\)](https://www.c-span.org/person/?maxinewaters) on [C-SPAN](#)

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<u>U.S. House of Representatives</u>		
Preceded by <u>Augustus Hawkins</u>	Member of the <u>U.S. House of Representatives</u> from <u>California's 29th congressional district</u> 1991–1993	Succeeded by <u>Henry Waxman</u>
Preceded by <u>Jerry Lewis</u>	Member of the <u>U.S. House of Representatives</u> from <u>California's 35th congressional district</u> 1993–2013	Succeeded by <u>Gloria Negrete McLeod</u>
Preceded by <u>Donald Payne</u>	Chair of the <u>Congressional Black Caucus</u> 1997–1999	Succeeded by <u>Jim Clyburn</u>
Preceded by <u>Joe Baca</u>	Member of the <u>U.S. House of Representatives</u> from <u>California's 43rd congressional district</u> 2013–present	Incumbent
Preceded by <u>Barney Frank</u>	Ranking Member of the <u>House Financial Services Committee</u> 2013–2019	Succeeded by <u>Patrick McHenry</u>
Preceded by <u>Jeb Hensarling</u>	Chair of the <u>House Financial Services Committee</u> 2019–present	Incumbent
<u>U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)</u>		
Preceded by <u>Collin Peterson</u>	<u>United States Representatives by seniority</u> 20th	Succeeded by <u>Jerrold Nadler</u>

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