

# PATSY TAKEMOTO MINK

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## BASIC BIOGRAPHY

Patsy Takemoto Mink (1927–2002) was born in Hawaii. She studied in Pennsylvania and Nebraska before moving back to Hawaii to earn her undergraduate degree and eventually received her J.D. from the University of Chicago in 1951. She moved back to Hawaii with her husband, John Francis Mink, and founded the Oahu Young Democrats in 1954. In the 1950s, Mink served as both a member of the territorial house of representatives and Hawaii Senate. After Hawaii achieved statehood in 1959, Mink unsuccessfully ran for the U.S. House of Representatives. Mink campaigned for the second representative seat in 1964 and won, making her the first woman of color and first Asian American woman to be elected to Congress. Mink is best known for her support of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society legislation, as well as her advocacy for women's issues and equal rights. Mink worked tirelessly to earn support for the critical Title IX Amendment from her comprehensive education bill called Women's Education Equity Act. Mink took a break from Congress after an unsuccessful bid for the Senate, but returned to Congress in 1990 and served until her death in September 2002.



*Patsy Mink, c. 1965, Library of Congress (LC-USZ62-122137), [http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/images/mink\\_ppoc.jpg](http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/images/mink_ppoc.jpg)*

## KEY EVENTS

Women's Education Equity Act (1974),  
Surface Mining Control and Reclamation (Strip Mining)  
Act of 1975, Mineral Leasing Act of 1976

## KEY PEOPLE

Daniel Inouye, Lyndon B. Johnson, John Francis Mink

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Patsy Mink became the first woman of color elected to Congress in 1964 and was concerned with discrimination against African Americans and women. In the same year, there were concerns that the elections in the deep South should be contested because of reports of widespread voter discrimination and intimidation. Mink and other members of Congress asked for the House Administration Committee to launch an investigation into the elections and postpone the swearing in of the all-white Congressional delegation from Mississippi until the investigation was completed. Mink's efforts were unsuccessful and she wrote to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to inform him of what happened on the House floor. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act to aid fair elections became law.

## DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

- Divide students into pairs.
- Make and distribute one copy of the letter for each pair of students.
- Ask students to read the letter and answer the prompt questions together.

## LEARNING ACTIVITY

- Conduct a small lesson about the 1964 election. Highlight the following:
  - » Lyndon B. Johnson was elected to the presidency and Democrats did well overall;
  - » The Republican party saw a boost in the South, even though the GOP did poorly throughout the country.
- Ask students to assume the role of Dr. King and respond back to Congresswoman Mink's letter.



*Laura Patterson, Representative Patsy Mink announces the formation of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus at a press conference with (left to right) Representatives Don Edwards and Norman Mineta, Guam Delegate Robert Underwood, and Representatives Nancy Pelosi and Neil Abercrombie, May 20, 1994, Library of Congress (LC-RC15-1994-306), <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2015645165/>*

## FUN FACT

Patsy Mink received the highest civilian honor in 2014, the Medal of Freedom, 12 years after her death: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/hawaiiis-patsy-mink-honored-presidential-medal-freedom-n248951>.

## LOCAL CONNECTION

The Patsy T. Mink Center for Business and Leadership at the YWCA of Oahu offers courses to girls and women in order to promote training, coaching, and leadership in the areas of business and entrepreneurship. Learn more here: <https://www.ywcaohu.org/patsy-t-mink-center-for-business-leadership/>.

## LEARN MORE

### PRIMARY SOURCES

Patsy T. Mink Papers  
Library of Congress  
<http://www.loc.gov/rr/mss/mink/mink-about.html>

### SECONDARY SOURCES

Kristina Chan, "The Mother of Title IX: Patsy Mink," April 24, 2012  
Women's Sports Foundation  
<https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/education/mother-title-ix-patsy-mink/>

Patsy Takemoto Mink  
National Women's Hall of Fame  
<https://www.womenofthehall.org/inductee/patsy-takemoto-mink/>

Patsy Takemoto Mink  
United States House of Representatives  
<http://history.house.gov/People/detail/18329>

January 7, 1965

Mr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President  
Southern Christian Leadership Conference  
334 Auburn Ave., N.E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mr. King:

Thank you very much for your communication urging my support of the effort to withhold recognition from the Mississippi congressmen who were elected under the state's unconstitutional election laws.

I was vastly encouraged, however, and I am sure that you are too, at the support we received on the House floor. The original drive to withhold recognition from the Mississippi congressmen was started by a mere 16 members of the House, of which I was one. At caucuses before the opening day session, only about 30 Representatives indicated a willingness to support the drive.

The fact that we were able to muster 149 votes on the floor, in the face of a lack of support from the House leadership, is a sure indication that the justice and the simple equity of the attempt is becoming widely known and accepted. Expectations were that we would have far fewer votes when we tried to prevent the seating of the Mississippi delegation.

What happened on opening day was this: Our spokesman on the floor, Rep. William F. Ryan of New York, objected to the seating of the Mississippians, as he is entitled to do. They, and others to whom objections were raised, remained seated while the rest of us took our oaths of office. We had expected reprisal objections from the Southern group to the seating of the initial 16 members of the fight, but that move failed to materialize.

After the rest of us were sworn in, House Majority Leader Carl Albert of Oklahoma moved that the Mississippians be sworn in. Then he "moved the previous question," a parliamentary maneuver that shuts off all debate and prohibits amendments. Mr. Ryan asked for a roll call vote on the move for the previous question and more than the 87 Members required for a roll call demand stood up. However, on the roll call the motion for the previous question passed, 276 to 149 and our cause was blocked.

When was this letter written? What is significant about this year?

Who wrote the letter? Who is the recipient of the letter?

Why was Congresswoman Mink writing to Dr. King? Underline evidence from the letter to support your answer.

Summarize Congresswoman Mink's experience on the House floor: