

Extended Biographical Sketch
Congressman Danny K. Davis, Ph. D. (IL-07)

Congressman Danny K. Davis has that familiar face which is recognizable to many people in the Chicago Metropolitan area, and especially to those in the central part of the city, Westside, Southside and Western suburbs. Davis was elected to Congress in 1996, and has been a public office holder for twenty-eight (28) years as Alderman, County Commissioner and currently, U.S. Representative in Congress. By unselfishly serving the people for more than thirty years and maintaining favorable ratings, he has established himself as a popular public servant.

He ran for mayor in the 1991 primary and is mentioned as a possible candidate each time there is a mayoral election. However, he maintains that his current interests are working primarily on national issues, especially ex-offender re-entry and issues affecting African American Males in a very profound way.

Congressman Davis persona is fiery, yet quiet and conservative. His distinct personality is quite obvious to those who've made his acquaintance over the years. The striking demeanor most people recall about him is his distinct voice and self-confidence. He credits this self-assurance to the unconditional love of his paternal grandmother, parents (mother-father) and other family members bestowed upon him during his formative years. Davis chooses not to forget how their affection boosted his self-esteem, supported him throughout his life, helped launch his professional career and sustains him even now. This love made such a remarkable difference in his life that he maintains great affinity for his hometown and visits whenever he can. When his parents and others of their generation were alive, it was with regularity. He finds great pleasure in visiting with relatives and others who grew up with him in rural Arkansas.

He never forgets those who impacted his thirst for knowledge and makes frequent references to his early teachers, especially a Mrs. Beadie King who taught him in a one room schoolhouse. Of course, he now holds an earned Ph.D. and several honorary doctorate degrees from prestigious Universities.

Davis arrived in Chicago fresh out of college in 1961, armed with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from A.M. and N. College which is now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. He was a part of the last wave of Blacks who migrated from the South to Northeastern, Midwestern and Western cities throughout the country.

His transition was during the height of the Civil Rights Movement and him, and like many others during this period, greatly affected him. Davis decided to settle in Chicago as he discovered that the City was grappling with radical change. It was in the Windy City that he uncovered his purpose in life-helping people to empower themselves. As he began to work, first as a postal clerk, then teaching, he made a conscious decision to live and work on the Westside, which he considered to be a high need area.

He immersed himself into the life of the community, actively volunteering, organizing block clubs, attending community meetings and working with others to help meet needs and bring about change. He actually worked as an educator, teaching at all levels, community planner, organizer, health planner and social services administrator.

Davis seems to be well equipped for his tenacious role as a Congressman. And quite frankly, he finds joy in serving in this capacity. The deeply embedded desire he possesses to help others in their plight stirs him to act on their behalf. Through his legislative work in Washington, he continues to break through barriers that separate people.

His creativity allows him to propose solutions which are helpful to many categories of people regardless of their economic and social status. In May of 2007, Congressman Davis chaired a subcommittee hearing which highlighted mail delivery problems in Chicago. There were a number of high level Postal Officials present to listen and testify, among them was the Postmaster General of the United States, the Inspector General of the Postal Service and the Chicago Postmaster as well as elected officials, business leaders and private citizens. The fundamental issue was to find ways to improve mail delivery and boost public confidence in the U.S. Postal Service. Since that time, additional carriers have been hired, new monitoring methods have been implemented and as a result of refocusing on every aspect of mail delivery, new technologies, and new leadership has been put in place, in the substations as well as at headquarters. There has been tremendous improvement. Actions such as these, as well as others such as passage of the Second Chance Bill that gives ex-offenders a second chance at becoming productive citizens were initiated by Congressman Davis in his efforts to improve the quality of life for others.

Shifting his focus to family matters, Congressman Davis is the oldest of his siblings who are still alive. He has four sisters and one brother who have passed. He still has three sisters and three brothers who are still alive; therefore, family is very important to him.

Church has been a strong factor in Davis' life and a serious support base for his political and social activities. "I've always had a strong feeling about church because it played such an important role in my upbringing. Both of my parents were active church leaders and I actually started teaching Sunday School when I twelve years of age." "The Bible was always present in our home and was one of the early books we learned to read. We really did not have access to many books. Reading the bible aroused my curiosity and I made a game out of reading and reciting scriptures. My parents were not too excited about the fun part."

"In our family, my parents promoted a strong work ethic, especially my father who taught that work was a virtue and was one of the greatest things that one could do. We were farmers, sharecroppers; but, Thanks to my parents, we experienced a good life."

"Work is what you did in advance to the next stage of life, and while attending college, my friend Rufus Maxwell and I would often go out and pick cotton to earn money."

“There was no shame in our game; I even chopped cotton for thirty cents an hour after having graduated from college with honors.”

Davis experienced certain disadvantages growing up, but he never felt poor. His father’s firmness and pride gave him a sense of dignity, led him to believe that all things are possible and never to give up. This breeding and the role modeling of his parents and other relatives played an important part in his willingness to help others succeed in their endeavors. One of his proudest accomplishments is the establishment of the H.D. and Mazzie L. Davis Memorial Scholarship Fund which he uses to help students attend college. His love for God, the support of a caring family, (wife Vera and son’s Jonathan and Stacey), in association with committed, dedicated and progressive people and the discipline he has mastered over the years, has provided the right foundation for him to accomplish some of his dreams. Davis shares, “these are the reasons for my accomplishments both great and small and I will never forget it.”