



“State Legislation Affecting Seniors” Assemblymember Mariko Yamada

Program Summary

Mariko Yamada represents California's 8th Assembly District, which includes portions of Solano and Yolo counties and the cities of Benicia, Davis, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, West Sacramento, Winters and Woodland.

Assemblymember Yamada chairs the Assembly Aging and Long-Term Care Committee, a position that reflects her professional background as a social worker and her longtime work advocating for seniors and persons with disabilities. She is also a member of the Assembly Committees on Agriculture; Labor and Employment; Water, Parks and Wildlife; and Veterans Affairs. In January 2011, Speaker John Perez named her Chair of the new Assembly Select Committee on Sustainable and Organic Agriculture. She also serves as a member of the Assembly Select Committees on Homelessness, Regional Approaches to Addressing the State's Water Crisis, State Hospital Safety, State School Financial Takeovers, and Workforce Development within the Developmentally Disabled Community. In the 2009-2010 legislative session, she also held a seat on the Assembly Select Committees on Foster Care, the 2010 Census, and Regional Approaches to Addressing the State's Water Crisis. As a member of these committees, she continues her work to protect vulnerable populations and those who care for them; precious farmland and open space; and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, the largest freshwater estuary in North America.

As Chair of the Aging and Long-Term Care Committee, she has held 5 oversight hearings. The topics of these hearings were: An Overview of the California Department of Aging, California's Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), California's Senior Center Infrastructure, California's Long-Term Care Ombudsmen

Program and the Crisis in the Long Term Care Workforce. These oversight hearings brought in experts from around the state to discuss the delivery of state services to seniors, caregiver issues and recommendations for future work. Assemblymember Yamada plans to continue her oversight work in the upcoming legislative session, partnering with the Assembly Committee on Public Safety, the Department of Insurance, and others.

In Assemblymember Yamada's first term, she sent 14 bills to the Governor's desk, 10 of which were signed into law. Among those chaptered were laws giving consumers access to a national motor vehicle safety database of comprehensive and up-to-date data when purchasing a used vehicle and "Taneka's Law" which clarifies that a workers' compensation claim cannot be denied based solely on a personal characteristic of the victim and a third party's hatred of that characteristic such as race, religion, or gender. Assemblymember Yamada's district office also resolved more than 450 constituent cases, ranging from helping the jobless navigate the unemployment benefits system to taking on the Medi-Cal program on behalf of residents in need.

Assemblymember Yamada has been distinguished with multiple awards in her first term in office. She received the Easter Seals Rising Star Award for her work with children with disabilities and the Solano County Child Abuse Prevention Council named her Legislator of the Year for advocating on behalf of abused children. She also received the Malcolm X Tenent Award for her long standing support of civil rights, and was honored by the Yolo County Board of Supervisors for fighting to save the Williamson Act and the San Juan-Delta way of life. Clean Water Action recently named her a "Clean Water Champion" for her leadership on water and environmental issues.

Prior to becoming an Assemblymember, Mariko served for five years on the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, representing a portion of the City of Davis and surrounding unincorporated county lands. Her education and experience as a social worker marked her as a leader on issues affecting the poor, elderly, and disabled. As a Supervisor, she became the first Chairperson of the Yolo County Commission on Aging and Adult services and helped to plan the first Aging Summit in Yolo County's history.

Mariko also worked for a decade in Washington, D.C. first with the U.S. Census Bureau 1980 Census undercount reduction "campaign" and then as an investigator with the Office of the Secretary, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Commerce. During her "D.C. days", Mariko co-produced and co-hosted "Gold Mountain, D.C.", a jazz and information show on WPFW 89.3 FM, one of the Pacifica Foundation radio affiliates. Classic R&B music remains one of her passions.

Mariko was born in Denver, Colorado on October 23, 1950 after her family's release from the Manzanar War Relocation Center, one of ten such Japanese American internment camps established during World War II. She attended inner city public schools in Denver, and in June 1972, was the first in her family to graduate from college, earning her B. A. in psychology from the University of Colorado, Boulder with an emphasis in the special mental health needs of Asian Americans. This interest brought her to Los Angeles, and in June 1974, she earned a Master of Social Work from the University of Southern California, specializing in community organizing, planning and

administration. During her time in Southern California, she also served as Assistant Deputy County Supervisor to Los Angeles County Supervisor Ed Edelman and as the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Officer for the San Diego County Department of Social Services.