

Official Biography

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Congressman Albio Sires, elected to serve the 13th Congressional District of New Jersey in the United States House of Representatives, served two terms as New Jersey Speaker of the General Assembly from 2002 to 2006. Mr. Sires was serving his fourth term as an Assemblyman for the 33rd District in New Jersey and had been the Mayor of the Town of West New York in Hudson County since 1995, before being elected to Congress. Albio Sires is the first legislator of Hispanic origin to be named Assembly Speaker, and the first Cuban in the Nation.

As Assembly Speaker, Albio Sires led the legislative effort to create the Office of Lieutenant Governor. He was the lead Assembly Sponsor of the state law that raised the minimum wage from \$5.15 in 2005 to \$7.15 in October 2006. Mr. Sires also helped New Jersey's economy by expanding job training programs, increasing job opportunities for low-income workers, and giving tax credits to businesses that create jobs in the community.

As Speaker, Mr. Sires also created the Assembly Committee on Homeland Security and State Preparedness, wrote the law to overhaul New Jersey's Department of Motor Vehicles so that terrorists cannot obtain access to fake driver's licenses, helped local communities with the cost of homeland security, improved coordination in the event of a terrorist attack and increased homeland security funding for the state police. He also sponsored some of the toughest anti-gun laws in the state, and as Mayor of West New York, he put more police on the streets and cut crime.

Mr. Sires created the STARS I and STARS II program, which offers full county and state college tuition scholarships to thousands of students and increases tuition aid grants to families. As Assembly Speaker, he led the fight to increase funding for public education by \$760 million. He also increased funding for after-school programs that get kids off the streets and away from gangs.

As Mayor of West New York, Mr. Sires created more affordable housing units than any municipality in the State of New Jersey by fostering public-private partnerships and the use of targeted tax incentives. As Speaker, Mr. Sires created a State funded Section 8 program to offset federal cuts in affordable housing funding.

In addition, Mr. Sires protected funding for New Jersey's Senior Gold and pharmaceutical assistance programs. He fought to make New Jersey a leader in high-tech medical research by legalizing embryonic stem cell research. Mr. Sires also provided millions in new cancer research funding and passed legislation to help working families pay for their health care costs.

As Speaker, Mr. Sires served as Acting Governor at several junctures between 2002 and 2005. While serving as the state's chief executive in September 2005, he signed three new laws into effect, including measures that strengthened the state's ability to manage catastrophic medical emergencies and streamlined funding for cleanups of contaminated industrial "brownfield" properties.

Other laws sponsored by Mr. Sires were instrumental in improving emergency preparedness, protecting drinking water supplies, and encouraging the redevelopment of contaminated industrial sites.

As Mayor of West New York, Mr. Sires balanced twelve consecutive municipals budgets while maintaining and enhancing vital municipal services. As Mayor of the Hudson waterfront community, Mr. Sires has gained a reputation as a municipal executive who restructured West New York's finances and reduced crime.

A proponent of government efficiency, Mayor Sires combined forces with four other mayors to form the North Hudson Regional Fire and Rescue, the state's largest regionalized fire department.

Mayor Sires earned the "Community That Works" award from the State of New Jersey for his efforts at "providing innovative and cost-effective services through regionalization."

In April 2004, the New Jersey Conference of Mayors presented its 12th Annual Mayor of the Year Award to Albio Sires in recognition of his tireless advocacy on behalf of mayors and property taxpayers. In September 2005, the New Jersey State Bar Association and Legal Services of New Jersey awarded its William J. Brennan, Jr., Citation for Justice to Speaker Sires in recognition for his efforts in seeking equal justice for people in poverty.

Mr. Sires was born in 1951 in the Cuban town of Bejucal, where he grew up in the waning years of pre-Communist Cuba. His family fled Cuba in January 1962 with the help of relatives in America. They eventually settled in West New York, where Mr. Sires became a star basketball player at Memorial High School.

Mr. Sires earned his undergraduate degree from St. Peter's College, where he received a four-year basketball scholarship. He attained a master's degree at Middlebury College, Vermont. He also studied Spanish in Madrid, Spain.

Mr. Sires' wife, Adrienne, is a retired school administrator. He has a stepdaughter, Tara Kole, who served a U.S. Supreme Court clerkship with Justice Antonin Scalia after graduation from Harvard Law School. She now works for a private law firm in Los Angeles.

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