

U.S. CONGRESSMAN
JIMMY GOMEZ
Proudly Serving California's 34th District



COMMEMORATING A LANDMARK MOMENT FOR AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS

HONORING MENDEZ V. WESTMINSTER AT THE LOS ANGELES U.S. COURTHOUSE

In celebration of civil rights trailblazers and during this year's Hispanic Heritage Month, Congressman Jimmy Gomez will be introducing legislation to rename the Los Angeles U.S. Courthouse in honor of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez and their activism that culminated in the landmark 1946 case that led to the end of segregation in California schools and paved the way for *Brown v. Board of Education*. The courthouse sits just blocks from where the historic Mendez case was originally decided and would be the first courthouse named after a Latina. This effort is supported by the Mendez family, including Felicitas and Gonzalo's children Sylvia, Gonzalo Jr., and Jerome.



THE MENDEZ FAMILY'S FIGHT FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

After their daughter, Sylvia Mendez, and her brothers were rejected from attending a whites-only school because of their Mexican appearance and ancestry, Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez organized communal efforts to end segregation in California schools through the landmark case *Mendez, et al vs. Westminster School District of Orange County, et al.*



Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez joined with the Ramirez, Estrada, Guzman, and Palomino families to challenge segregation in court and won their case in 1946, leading California to enact a law that made it the first state to officially desegregate its public schools. That law was signed by Governor Earl Warren, who just seven years later wrote the opinion of the Supreme Court as Chief Justice in *Brown v. Board of Education*, ending school segregation nationwide.

CELEBRATING TRAILBLAZERS

Mendez v. Westminster and the Mendez family have been commemorated through numerous awards, recognitions, and public facilities, including:

- A stamp issued by the United States Postal Service in 2007, commemorating *Mendez v. Westminster*.
- The Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded to Sylvia Mendez at a 2011 White House ceremony.
- Multiple schools across the country named after the Mendez Family, from Los Angeles, Santa Ana, and Berkeley in California to Dallas, TX and High Point, NC.
- The Mendez Historic Freedom Trail and Monument, which opened on December 1, 2022, in Westminster, California.



REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Our public institutions should reflect the rich diversity that is the history and strength of our nation. However, of the over 200 named United States courthouses across the country, only 20 are named for people of color and 6 named in honor of a woman. The Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez U.S. Courthouse would be the first to be named for a Latina and only the eighth commemorated in honor of Hispanic Americans.



THE LOS ANGELES US COURT HOUSE

Rep. Gomez's legislation would designate what is now the Los Angeles U.S. Courthouse as the Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez U.S. Courthouse. The Courthouse opened in 2016 at 350 W. 1st Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012, just blocks from the historic Spring Street Courthouse where the original *Mendez v. Westminster* case was decided. The Spring Street Courthouse is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and no longer functions as a federal courthouse.



ABOUT CONGRESSMAN JIMMY GOMEZ

Congressman Jimmy Gomez proudly represents California's 34th Congressional District, one of the country's most diverse and culturally rich districts. In the 118th Congress, Congressman Gomez sits on the Committee on Oversight and Accountability. He serves as an Assistant Whip of the Democratic Caucus and Deputy Whip for the Congressional Progressive Caucus (CPC). Congressman Gomez is the Founder and Chair of the Congressional Dads Caucus and Congressional Renters Caucus. He is a member of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), and Future Forum.