



Student Name:
Class Period:
Date:

Meet the Originals

Texas Originals is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on Henry B. González. Then, answer questions about it.

Henry B. González 1916–2000

Longtime congressman and civil rights pioneer Henry B. González—affectionately known by his constituents as “Henry B.”—was born in San Antonio in 1916.

González’s political career began in the fifties, when he served on the San Antonio City Council and, later, in the Texas Senate. He made his name by speaking out against segregation and fighting rate hikes by public utilities. In 1957, he and fellow senator Abraham Kazen stopped a collection of pro-segregation bills with a thirty-six-hour filibuster—the longest ever in the Texas Senate.

In 1961, González became the first Mexican American to represent Texas in Congress. There, the former boxer maintained his gruff, pugnacious style, and stubborn commitment to economic justice and equality for all Americans.

An expert on the nation’s banking system, González oversaw the 1989 savings and loan bailout in the aftermath of what was then the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. He also led efforts to overhaul public housing and increase transparency at the Federal Reserve. In principle González believed in working within the system to effect change, but in practice he pulled no punches.

González was reelected eighteen times and became the longest-serving Hispanic member of Congress. When he retired in 1999, Congressman Jim Leach of Iowa remarked that González “never had a conflict of interest. . . . His only special interest was his constituents. He never let them down.”

Check for Understanding: Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Henry B. González. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. How did Henry B. González make a name for himself early in his political career?
2. What distinction did González earn in 1961?

Going Further: Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Taking a Position.** According to the episode, “González believed in working within the system to effect change.” Do you think that is the best way to accomplish change? Why or why not?