

# Daniel Inouye

by ReadWorks

Daniel Inouye was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, on September 7, 1924. He represented the state of Hawaii in the U.S. Senate for 50 years. Daniel was the first Japanese American ever to serve in Congress. He is considered one of the most influential politicians of the late 20th century.

Growing up, Daniel originally planned to study medicine and become a surgeon. In 1942, he put his plan on pause. He tried to enlist in the military. However, he was turned away because he was Japanese American. Many Americans questioned the patriotism and dedication of Japanese Americans to the United States after Japan launched a surprise attack on Hawaii. Basically, they doubted the loyalty of American citizens of Japanese descent.

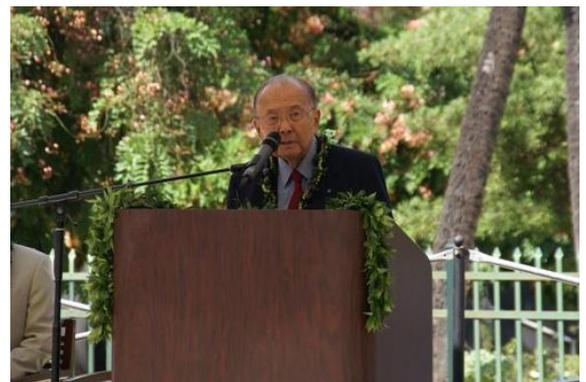
A year later, the U.S. Army changed its mind. So Daniel left school to join the army and fight in World War II. His unit, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, was composed entirely of men with Japanese ancestry. It became one of the most decorated military units in U.S. history. During a campaign in Italy in 1945, Daniel was severely wounded. His right arm had to be amputated. Without his right arm, his dream of becoming a surgeon was dashed. Daniel soon returned home, but despite his heroic efforts in the war, he (and other minority veterans) still faced discrimination.

Daniel retired from the army as a captain in 1947, and then he studied political science. He earned a law degree in 1952 and started practicing law soon after.



Daniel K. Inouye, U.S. House of Representatives from Hawaii's At-large district, head-and-shoulders portrait. 1960. Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2011645224/>.

*This is a photo of Daniel Inouye in 1960 when he was serving in the U.S. House of Representatives.*



*This is a photo of Daniel Inouye speaking at the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii. This happened when he was serving in the Senate.*

Daniel practiced law for a short time before turning to politics. Daniel began his political career by serving in Hawaii's Territorial House of Representatives. After a few years, he became a senator in the territory. At the time, Hawaii was still a territory of the United States.

When Hawaii achieved statehood in 1959, Daniel was elected to be one of the first representatives from the state in the U.S. Congress. He first served in the House of Representatives. Then, he served in the Senate from 1962 until his death in 2012.

During Daniel's nine terms in the Senate, he served on many committees. He earned a reputation for his persistence in publicly supporting efforts based on his political beliefs. Daniel was a strong supporter of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. His support stemmed from his experience as a Japanese American growing up in Hawaii's diverse community. In 2010, he assumed the role of president pro tempore of the Senate. This made him third in line to the presidency and the highest-ranking Asian American politician in U.S. history.

Daniel was extremely popular in his home state of Hawaii. The international airport in Honolulu is even named after him. Remarkably, he never lost an election during his political career. Even after his death, his legacy lives on.