

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Appoints Its First Latina Chair



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The United States Commission on Civil Rights has confirmed President Biden’s appointment of [civil rights lawyer](#) and educator Norma V. Cantú as the new Chair by unanimous vote. The Commission’s latest appointment makes her the first Latina to serve as Chair of the Commission. She succeeds Catherine E. Lhamon, who served as the Chair of the commission for four years.

Commenting on her latest appointment, she said, “I am looking forward to advancing the mission of the Commission on civil rights matters facing our Nation today, in collaboration with my esteemed colleagues on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.”

She serves as Professor of Education and Professor of Law at the [University of Texas at Austin](#). She specializes in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and education law. During the Clinton administration, she served as the Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights for eight years from 1993 to 2001. She was also a member of the Biden-Harris Transition’s “Agency Review Team” for education. She also served on the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education’s Board of Directors.

During her role as the Assistant Secretary of Education for Civil Rights, she supervised about 850 members working towards implementing the government’s policy for civil rights in American Education. Her other achievements during her tenure as the Assistant Secretary include disposition of more than a third of the cases based on voluntary corrective actions without adversarial proceedings, increasing the resolution of illegal discrimination complaints by 20% during the first two years of her tenure, and by her last year at the office, the number of cases resolved every year has increased by another 20%.

She also worked for fourteen years at the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund where she served as the Regional Counsel and Education Director. During this role, she litigated a variety of prominent cases related to disability rights, educational funding, access to special services for English-language learners, racially hostile environments, and student disciplinary policies.

She completed her JD from Harvard Law School at the age of 22 and graduated summa cum laude from the University of Texas-Pan America when she was 19 years old.

