

UC SANTA BARBARA

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'Challenges and Triumphs'

What better way to bookend decades of service to California's Central Coast than to close the chapter where it all began?

Newly retired U.S. Congresswoman Lois Capps, who first came to the region in 1964 when her husband, Walter Capps, was recruited to join the faculty at UC Santa Barbara, has donated her official papers to the campus. They will be housed in the UCSB Library Department of Special Research Collections.

"Retiring from Congress is bittersweet," Capps said in gifting her political records to the university. "I have loved serving the Central Coast and I have many fond memories from my time in Washington on behalf of my community. But while my decision to retire was a hard one, one of the easiest decisions was to donate my official papers to UC Santa Barbara. This fantastic school has played such an important part in my family's life. In 1964, my husband, Walter, and I moved across the country to Santa Barbara so that he could teach at UCSB, and it was here where we raised our family and found our calling to public service. My family and I will forever be grateful to the UCSB community for its support and friendship over the many years.

"Representing the people of the Central Coast in Congress was the most rewarding job of my life," added Capps, who earned a master's degree in education from UCSB. "These archives — nearly 20 years' worth — will tell the story of my and Walter's tenure, and the challenges and triumphs we have had as a region and a country throughout my time in office. I hope they will be of use to students and researchers

for years to come.”

Capps’s papers — some 130 boxes in total from her offices in Washington, D.C., San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara — will reside at UCSB with her husband’s faculty papers and materials from his own brief time in office. Walter Capps passed away in 1997, nine months into his first term in Congress; Lois Capps succeeded him by winning a special election in 1998, and retained the seat ever since. She announced in 2015 that she would not seek reelection in 2016.

“The UCSB Library is honored to preserve and manage former Congresswoman Lois Capps’s papers, which will support generations of students and scholars interested in her 20 years of leadership and service,” said University Librarian Denise Stephens. “We are deeply grateful to Lois Capps for this gift, which will help advance UCSB Library as a destination for research on California history and politics.”

The records will be added to the library’s small-but-growing collection of political papers, which also include those of veteran California legislator John Vasconcellos and of political journalist and Ronald Reagan biographer Lou Cannon. UCSB also holds some records from former Assemblyman Das Williams (now Santa Barbara County Supervisor) related to his work on AB-3, the bill creating a community services district for Isla Vista.

“Congressional papers are usually composed of legislative files from bills that a congressperson was promoting or co-authoring, and also document committee work, basic outreach and publicity efforts, daily schedules and travel records,” explained Danelle Moon, head of special research collections at UCSB. “Typically they’ll also include election-related materials pertaining to campaigns, what the issues were, speeches that were made on the circuit — that kind of material is really rich for historical scholarship purposes.”

According to Moon, Capps’s files also include many photographic materials as well as digital images (being captured by the special research collections team) of some of the hundreds of awards and commendations the congresswoman received over her years in office. The latter tells quite a story itself, Moon said, speaking to Capps’s focus on education, healthcare and environmental issues.

In the fall of 2016, Moon traveled to Washington, D.C., to begin collaborating on the records transfer with Capps and her staff. With Capps now officially out of office, and

new legislators sworn in, the papers are beginning to arrive at UCSB, where the special research collections team will begin to review and process the holdings.

“It’s really exciting to be working with Lois Capps and we’re very pleased to have her papers here at the UCSB Library,” Moon said. “She is such a fascinating person and has certainly been a great legislator for this region. We’re really looking forward to adding these significant papers to our collection.”

The Department of Special Research Collections, located on the third floor, mountain side, of the UCSB Library, is open to the public.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.