

The New Face of Congress **B1**



Corey Torpie

“Women like me aren’t supposed to run for office.” That was the opening line in Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign video to become a candidate for U.S. Congress. But, on 6 November 2018, she became the youngest woman ever elected to the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.

Ocasio-Cortez is definitely not a typical Representative. She’s young (just 29). She is working-class. She’s Hispanic. And she’s a woman. Before the midterm elections in November, there were 20.2 per cent women in Congress. When the new Congress starts sitting in January 2019, there will be 23%. Like most Congresswomen, she is a member of the Democratic Party.

Ordinary People vs the Political Establishment

Before being elected to Congress, Ocasio-Cortez had to win a primary election in June to become the Democratic party’s candidate for New York City’s 14th District. Her opponent was Joe Crowley, the district’s Representative for 20 years.

Crowley was the party’s natural candidate. He had lots of political experience, and a big budget.

Help

run for office (v) be a candidate in an election



High five! Meeting voters on the streets.

Corey Torpie

Ocasio-Cortez campaigned tirelessly on the streets of the Bronx.



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Business Insider estimates that Crowley had a budget of \$3 million for the primary, whereas Ocasio-Cortez only had \$200,000.

Ocasio-Cortez was working as a waitress and had never run for office before. However, she was born in the Bronx district she wanted to represent, worked and lived there. She said she was “one of us”, an ordinary New Yorker. As opposed to Crowley, who was a professional politician, and received big financial contributions from companies and rich individuals. “Who did he represent?” she asked. His contributors, or ordinary voters? She said in her campaign video, “A Democrat who takes corporate

money, doesn’t live here, doesn’t send his kids to our schools, doesn’t drink our water, or breathe our air, cannot possibly represent us.”

On 26 June, Ocasio-Cortez won the primary with a score of 57.5%. Once she became the Democratic candidate, her election to Congress was more or less assured – the 14th District is solidly Democratic.

Help

corporate (adj) related to big companies / industries

waitress (n) a woman serving the clients in restaurants



**Baby Alexandria
with her late father.**

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Born in the Bronx

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was born in 1989 in the Bronx, one of the poorest parts of New York City. Both her parents were of Puerto Rican origin, although her father was born in the U.S.A. The family moved to a suburb where the public schools were better. Ocasio-Cortez says this made her realize how unfair it is that schools are better in some zip-codes than others, so kids don't get equal chances.

Ocasio-Cortez studied at Boston University, but when she was just 19, her father died of cancer. The family had real financial problems. Alexandria and her mother had to work long hours and often two jobs. Ocasio-Cortez worked as a waitress. But she was also a community organizer, helping high-school kids and encouraging child literacy.

Getting Political

Ocasio-Cortez was interested in politics from a young age. At university, she worked for Senator Ted Kennedy's office. In 2016, she was a volunteer with the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign.

Help

suburb (n) residential area outside the city centre (normally considered nicer places to live)

literacy (n) ability to read

Puerto Rico is a Caribbean island and U.S. territory.

Population: 3.2 million (bigger than 15 of the states' populations.)

The first language is Spanish.

Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens but don't have the right to vote in U.S. elections unless they are resident in one of the U.S. states.



Ocasio-Cortez's politics are close to Sanders'. She describes herself as a Democratic Socialist. She wants universal healthcare, as President Obama tried to do, and free public university education. She supports a national minimum wage of \$15 an hour (about €13). Currently the federal minimum wage is only \$7.25, and has been the same since 2009.

Ocasio-Cortez also wants to reform immigration regulations and the prison system.

The Next Obama?

Ocasio-Cortez has quite a few points in common with former President Barack Obama. He also had a foreign-born parent, was part of a minority and also a community organizer. Most donations to his presidential campaign, like Ocasio-Cortez's for Congress, were small donations of a few dollars from individuals: lots of individuals.

But Ocasio-Cortez needs to get more political experience. She is too young to stand for the next presidential election (candidates must be 35 years old). Let her get used to being a lawmaker first, when the 116th Congress convenes in Washington, D.C., on 3 January 2019.

Help

currently (adv) at the moment

wage (n) salary, money you receive for working



Ocasio-Cortez showing how surprised and delighted she was to win the Democratic primary.

