GARY ACKERMAN

Gary Ackerman, educator-turned-entrepreneur before being elected 15 times to the United States Congress, retired from public service in January 2013.

Ackerman, the son of a New York City cab driver, grew up in the City's housing projects and went on to leave a legacy of interacting with world leaders, handling tough issues at home and hot spots around the globe.

Born in Brooklyn and representing the country's most diverse constituencies in Queens and Long Island's North Shore, Ackerman led on key issues from North Korea to Kashmir, Gaza to Iran, Ethiopia to China. He served as Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, Vice Chair of the House Committee on International Relations, the Chair of the Panel on Asia and the Pacific, among others.

Representative Ackerman became the first person allowed to cross the DMZ dividing the Korean Peninsula after meeting with the North's founding dictator Kim Il Sung. Those discussions were the beginning of what was to become the Basic Framework Agreement in which the North ceased (at least at that time) their march towards a nuclear bomb. A founder and Chairman of the House Caucus on India, Ackerman successfully steered through the Congress the US-India Civil Nuclear Energy Agreement.

The Congressman was also a senior member of the powerful Financial Services Committee, where he held seats on both the Subcommittee on Capital Markets and Government Sponsored Enterprises, as well the Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit. Known for his bipartisan common sense approach, he stressed pro growth along with transparency in the attempt to bring reasonable regulatory reform to the nation's markets. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the lawmaker was tasked with the responsibility of shepherding the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act (TRIA) through the House. Diplomatic skills came in handy in one of the few bipartisan efforts that proved successful.

Congressman Ackerman is President Emeritus of the International Conference of Jewish Parliamentarians, and served as the
Congressional Delegate to the United Nations. Ackerman was a very effective Representative for his district and the country and his influence was felt around the world. His respect in the Jewish, Arab and Asian worlds is universal. In the heat of the 'Arab Spring,' he negotiated the release and brought home a constituent who had been languishing in an Egyptian prison. He authored legislation ranging from protecting babies with AIDS to authorizing the postage stamp with the firemen and the flag after the World Trade Center attack.

After personally witnessing the famine in Ethiopia, the Congressmen devised and executed Children For Children, empowering New York's students (and then the nation's) to raise the money for the grain to save the children of Africa. The successful unfunded and no-overhead project caught the attention of 20/20, and ABC (Barbara Walters, Tom Jarriel and Hugh Downs) aired a full hour special, "Try to Make a Miracle", on the students and the Congressman. Raising more money than anything prior for famine in Africa, TV Guide would later say the resulting program was so powerful it's the one "program that should not, must not, cannot be missed."

A graduate of Brooklyn Tech High School and Queens College, he taught math, social studies and journalism in NYC's junior high schools. Following the birth of his first child in 1969, Ackerman petitioned the Board of Education for unpaid paternity leave, a right then given only to women seeking unpaid maternity leave. Denied, Ackerman, in a groundbreaking federal case, scored a victory for gender equality winning the precedent setting case before the newly empowered Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Ironically, 25 years later as a member of the House-Senate Conference Committee, Ackerman signed the conference report on the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act.

In 1970 Ackerman founded what was to become Queens' largest chain of community newspapers where he served as publisher and editor-in-chief, and founded Multi Media Advertising Inc. He was elected to the New York State Senate in 1978, and to Congress in a special election in 1983 where he has served his constituents for 30 years. Gary and his wife Rita live in Roslyn Heights New York. They have three children and four grandchildren.