Clerk Iris Y. Martinez was sworn into her first term in the Illinois State Senate on January 8, 2003 to represent the people of Illinois’ 20th Legislative District. Her election marked the first time a Latina had been elected to the State Senate in Illinois history. She made history once again by serving as Assistant Majority Leader from 2007-2008, a position never before held by a Latina. Martinez was named Majority Caucus Whip in 2013 and became Assistant Majority Leader again in 2018.

As a state senator, Clerk Martinez used her position to advocate for affordable housing, expanding health care access, and ensuring seniors and the disabled populations receive proper care. She is a strong champion for Illinois’ children; working on initiatives to keep children safe and annually hosts a Family Wellness and Back to School Fair, where hundreds of children received health screenings, dental checkups, immunizations, and backpacks filled with school supplies every year.

A tireless advocate of programs designed to improve the quality of education for youth in Illinois Clerk Martinez fought for the Grow Your Own Teacher initiative, an effort that placed 1,000 teachers in low-income, hard-to-staff Illinois public schools by offering forgivable student loans to paraprofessionals, parents and other community leaders who wish to become teachers. She also supported the Annual Golden Apple Scholar Program, which places highly qualified teachers in the state’s hard-to-staff schools.

Clerk Martinez’s involvement with the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus, including previously serving as a Co-Chair, gave her a platform to work on initiatives of importance to minorities. She championed a law allowing people who a not comfortable speaking or understanding English, as well as those who have trouble hearing, to be aided by an interpreter in the court room. Another law she spearheaded ensured that all health care facilities treating Medicaid patients in managed care plans must develop and implement language services.

On November 3, 2020 Iris Y. Martinez made history by being elected the first Latina Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, the largest of 24 judicial circuits in Illinois as well as one of the largest unified court systems in the United States. She has also served as past President of the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL), and is currently the 4th Congressional District State Central Committeewoman for the Democratic Party of Illinois, City of Chicago’s 33rd Ward Democratic Committeeperson, and Chairwoman of the Hispanic Caucus for the Democratic National Committee.

Clerk Martinez was born and raised in Chicago’s West Town community. She resides in the city’s Albany Park neighborhood and has a daughter, Jacklyn Nicole.

The Background on Clerk