



For Congresswoman Cheri Bustos, it has always begun with listening.

That's why on just about any given Saturday, you can find her walking the aisles of one of the many grocery stores across the 17th Congressional District, in what she calls "Supermarket Saturdays." From cities like Moline, Rockford and Peoria, to smaller communities like Canton, Kewanee and Galena, she walks the aisles to ask folks what's on their minds, what they want her to know, what they want her to fight for or fight against. And she wants to know about them personally:

Have they been able to take their family on a vacation in the last year?

When their kids graduate, are they going to be able to find a job in their hometown?

Since Cheri was first elected, she has gone out on "Cheri on Shift" job shadowing stops. During those visits, she has walked in the shoes of hardworking men and women from all over our community. Sure, she's learned how to drive a forklift, spot weld on cars and even process carp from the Mississippi River—but what she really values most about these interactions is having the opportunity to ask workers about their hopes and dreams: whether their pay is keeping up with their bills, and what's holding back our businesses from expanding. She listens for their insight, their ideas and their input so she can bring their voices to Washington.



Listening is something that comes naturally to Cheri. As one of the only former journalists in Congress, Cheri spent nearly two decades listening to and writing about the struggles and the amazing accomplishments of everyday people across her community. While she's hung up her press pass, she still uses her pen to fight for the values that unite us as Midwesterners - creating more good-paying jobs, bringing down the cost of health care, investing in our schools and fighting wasteful spending and hurtful government practices.

Now in her third term in Congress, Cheri is the only member of elected Democratic House Leadership from the Midwest. In that role, she serves as a Co-Chair of the Democratic Policy and Communications Committee. She also serves as a Senior Whip in the Democratic Caucus. In both of these roles, she is a relentless advocate for steering the Democratic agenda to address the very real economic challenges millions of Americans struggle with at the kitchen table each night.

Cheri has also remained committed to serving as a Watchdog in Washington. At a time when many hardworking families are tightening their belts, she's relentlessly worked across the aisle to ensure Illinoisans' hard-earned tax dollars are put to good use. Her efforts have resulted in legislation decreasing improper payments from Federal agencies, strengthening the oversight of government charge cards and ensuring Federal agencies maximize their space and manufacturing capacity before outsourcing work. Cheri is also a founding member of the bi-partisan Reformers Caucus which exclusively focuses on reforms to Congress and the legislative process.

As a member of the House Agriculture Committee, Cheri played an important role in helping develop and pass the first long-term Farm Bill in years during her first term in office. Today, she is again working to pass a truly bipartisan Farm Bill. She kicked off this effort during her 21st Century Heartland tour to better understand the needs of our family farmers. Sitting around kitchen tables, in barns and garages across the 17th Congressional District, she asked hundreds of our farmers and agricultural producers what worked for them in the last Farm Bill and what they need from a new one.

Cheri also serves on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. After meetings with local stakeholders, workers and transportation experts, Cheri worked with members of both parties to pass the first long-term highway bill in more than a decade. This bill brought billions of dollars back to Illinois to help put hardworking men and women back to work rebuilding our roads, bridges, rail lines and inland waterways. She is now working on the current transportation bill.

Through all her work, Cheri remains devoted to this: "We were born with two ears and one mouth, so we can listen twice as much as we speak."

Cheri knows that if we want to put hardworking families first once again, we need Washington to spend a lot more time listening to the Heartland.

Additional background about Cheri's life before Congress:

Born in Springfield, Illinois, Cheri Callahan Bustos comes from a long line of farmers and teachers and grew up in a family that loved sports and their community.

The granddaughter of a hog farmer and a nurse and the daughter of a social worker and a newsman, Cheri was the youngest of three children.

Her dad would go on to work in public service and Major League Baseball. Her mom would go on to be a preschool teacher. She is proud of her agricultural roots.

She followed her dad into the news business. While covering the police beat as a reporter in the Quad-Cities, Cheri met a rookie cop named Gerry Bustos who she fell in love with and married. With Gerry, who now serves as the Sheriff of Rock Island County, they raised three sons and they now have two grandchildren, all of whom proudly call Illinois home.

Throughout her career in journalism, Cheri used her pen to help her community. She uncovered numerous stories of corruption and greed in government, winning awards for her work on behalf of the public interest.

After a career in investigative journalism, Cheri worked in health care before, during and after the passage of the Affordable Care Act, for one of the nation's largest non-denominational, non-profit health care systems. There, she helped families access affordable coverage and worked to improve the quality of health care available in the community.

Cheri has long been active in her community and served on numerous nonprofit boards and as the President of The Women's Connection, which was at the time one of Illinois' largest women's membership organizations. In 2007, Cheri's commitment to public service and desire to further give back to the community led her to run for local office.

Cheri was elected to serve on the City Council in East Moline for two terms and made her top priority economic development. She led the removal of downtown blight and the development of the largest construction project in downtown East Moline in generations: a nonprofit health clinic.

In 2013, she was sworn into her first term in Congress, representing the hardworking families of the 17th Congressional District. And she hasn't stopped fighting for them ever since.

Cheri earned her Bachelor's Degree in government and politics from the University of Maryland, College Park, and a Master's Degree in Public Affairs Reporting from the University of Illinois at Springfield. She also attended Illinois College in Jacksonville, where both her parents and son graduated. An accomplished basketball and volleyball player, Cheri was inducted into the Illinois College Sports Hall of Fame in 1994.