



County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors



SUPERVISOR ERNEST E. DEBS

Term: 1958 - 1974
District: Third
Date of Birth: Feb. 7, 1904
Death: March 17, 2002

Eugene E. Debs served four terms as county supervisor. He was elected in 1958, 1962, 1966 and again in 1970.

Born in 1904 near Toledo, Ohio, Debs attended public schools in his hometown and moved to Los Angeles while in his teens to work in movies as a dance man. He appeared in silent movies and talkies. He prided himself on being a self-made man.

He gave up show business to work as a sergeant-at-arms in the state Assembly before embarking on a political career of his own.

In 1942 Debs was elected to the Assembly seat for the 56th District. He served until 1947, when he was elected to the Los Angeles City Council. He was a councilman for 11 years until 1958, when he was elected to the Board of Supervisors. He was elected to be chair of the board four times between 1958 and 1974.

During his public career, Debs is credited with pioneering legislation for the state's vast freeway system; co-authoring the bill which established the UCLA Medical Center; authoring the legislation which established California State University at Los Angeles; leading efforts to develop California's aviation industry; fostering mutually beneficial cooperation between the County and non-profit groups which created the Music Center and the County Museum of Art; providing more park lands and recreation for the County's growing population; championing to help create many senior citizen centers; and providing key support in helping to bring the Dodgers to Los Angeles.

Debs died March 17, 2002 of natural causes at his home in Indian Wells. He was 98, and was survived by his wife, Betty, and two children – David and Candi.

Sources: Los Angeles County Records; Los Angeles Times, March 19, 2002.