

*excerpted from Capitol Women: Texas Female Legislators, 1923-1999,  
by Nancy Baker Jones and Ruthe Winegarten,  
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## **Anita Dorcas Carraway Hill**

House	65th thru 72nd Legislatures (1977 - 1991) Democrat until 1979, then Republican - Garland
District	33-D, 101
Committees	Business and Commerce (Vice Chair); Government Organization; Local and Consent Calendars; Business and Industry; Judicial Affairs (Vice Chair); Cultural and Historical Resources (Vice Chair); State, Federal, and International Relations
Dates	August 13, 1928 - 2003
Birthplace	Chatfield
Family	Harris Hill (died), two children
Education	Texas Women's University (BA, 1950)
Occupation	Journalist, Chemist

Anita Hill was the first female legislator in Texas to change parties while in office. In 1979 contending that the Democratic Party had become too liberal for her conservative views, Hill switched to the GOP. Her husband, then secretary of the Dallas County Democratic Party, resigned his seat to help her campaign. The move was symptomatic of the inevitable shifts across party lines that occurred in Texas during the 1970s and 1980s as the Republican Party gained ground, providing a home for conservatives who formerly had no choice but the Democratic Party. Although Anita Hill had been a Democrat since 1966, she had supported Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign in 1964.<sup>1</sup>

Hill was first elected to the House as a Democrat on August 5, 1977, in a special election runoff to fill the unexpired term of Representative Kenneth Vaughn, for whom she had worked as a legislative aide.<sup>2</sup> She ran advocating the repeal of state taxes on utilities and remained interested in utilities legislation throughout her tenure. Her first experience as a legislator was the 1978 summer special session, called to consider a variety of tax issues, during which she and fellow Dallas County representative Lanell Cofer observed legislators playing with paper airplanes and fire rubberbands at one another.<sup>3</sup>

Hill introduced legislation regarding penalty and sentencing alternatives for those convicted of sexual abuse of children; fire safety and building standards for nursing and convalescent homes; funding for gifted and talented students; punishment for bad check writers; restrictions on the sale of motor fuel in places where alcohol was served or sold; types of behavior by public school students that could result in expulsion; and sealed-bid procedures for acquisition of property by counties. She also supported seat belt and child safety seat regulations; job safety regulations; retaining "blue laws" that prohibited stores from opening on Sundays; worker compensation; sunset legislation; and a minimum wage. She opposed availability of abortion services, horse racing, and a state lottery. After she and her brother took responsibility for an aged aunt with few financial resources, Hill was inspired to sponsor legislation making more low-income people eligible for Medicaid. After retiring from the legislature, Hill said one of her major achievements

was regulation that toughened standards in nursing homes.<sup>4</sup>

In 1981 Hill experienced discrimination for the first time in her life, she said, when the private Citadel Club in Austin's Driskill Hotel ejected her after she entered for a lunch with Garland officials and her legislative delegation. "We're just not set up to handle women at noon," said attorney and club president Clint Small. Besides, he added, "a gaggle" of women sounded like "magpies" and are distracting to males. Hill said the experience made her angry, embarrassed, and more sympathetic to the experiences of blacks and Mexican Americans. "I am just upset enough to look at things very differently," she said.<sup>5</sup>

This event stirred up public discussion: the ten other women in the legislature, led by Wilhelmina Delco, quickly passed a resolution stating that no member of the House would attend a function excluding another member, thereby starting a boycott against the Driskill. Hill herself, saying she did not believe in boycotts, did attend one luncheon in the Driskill's regular dining room. She then said she would not return until the Citadel was gone. She later wrote about the experience for the *Dallas Morning News*, saying that any facility that allowed nonmembers to enter for a fee relinquished the right to discriminate against other nonmembers. "State government should not conduct business with a business that supports discrimination," she concluded. When the Senate sergeant-at-arms, assuming Hill was not a legislator, attempted to remove her from the Senate floor a month later, Hill laughed. Although she did not describe herself as a feminist and identified more with African Americans and Mexican Americans than with women as a result of the Citadel incident, Hill nevertheless concluded years after leaving the House that women members were more sensitive to the needs of individuals than to special interest groups.<sup>6</sup>

The death of Hill's husband in 1989, combined with her desire to spend more time with her children and grandchildren, led to her decision not to run for reelection in 1992.<sup>7</sup>

#### Notes

1. *Dallas Morning News*, September 13, 14, 1979; *Dallas Times Herald*, September 13, 14, 1979; Anita Hill, "Questionnaire," prepared and administered by Nancy Baker Jones and Ruthe Winegarten, 1997.
2. Hill, "Questionnaire."
3. *Dallas Morning News*, August 6, 1977, July 17, 1978.
4. *House Journal of Texas*, 69th Legislature, Regular Session, 1985, pp. 244-245; *House Journal of Texas*, 70th Legislature, Regular Session, 1987, p. 53; *Dallas Times Herald*, December 23, 1981; Hill, "Questionnaire."
5. *Dallas Times Herald*, February 10 and 12, 1981.
6. Ibid.; *San Antonio Light*, February 15, 1981; *Dallas Morning News*, March 11, 1981; Hill, "Questionnaire."
7. *Dallas Times Herald*, October 25, 1991.