

= Peter Aduja =

Peter Aquino Aduja (19 October 1920 ? 19 February 2007) was the first Filipino American elected to public office in the United States . He was elected as a representative in the Hawaii Legislature in 1954 .

Born in the Philippines , Aduja emigrated to Hawaii in his youth , and then served in the United States Army during World War II . After World War II , he worked as a teacher , before becoming one of the first Filipino lawyers in Hawaii . After two years in elected office , he worked for the Hawaiian Department of Attorney General , and served two years as a judge , until being elected to the Hawaii House of Representatives . Aduja died in Las Vegas in 2007 .

= = Early life = =

Aduja was born in Ilocos Sur in the Philippines and emigrated with his family at the age of eight to Hilo , Hawaii . He was raised in nearby Hakalau , Hawaii , while his father worked on a sugarcane plantation as a sakada . He attended Hilo High , where he was the student body president and an Eagle Scout , graduating with the class of 1941 as salutatorian . After high school , he went on to the University of Hawaii to major in government and history ; while attending university Aduja worked as a timekeeper at Pearl Harbor . In 1944 , he joined the United States Army , and along with 50 other individuals volunteered for the 1st Filipino Infantry Regiment .

Following World War II he married Melodie " Lesing " Cabalona (died 2002) . He taught on the island of Hawaii , at Naalehu Intermediate School , before attending Boston University , where in 1951 he earned a law degree . In 1953 , along with Ben Menor (later a justice on Hawaii 's Supreme Court) , Aduja took the bar examination , and both became Hawaii 's first Filipino lawyers .

= = Political career = =

In 1954 , Aduja was elected to the Territorial House of Representatives , becoming the first Filipino to be elected to public office in Hawaii and the United States . He represented one of three seats of the island of Hawaii . In 1956 , he spoke on behalf of the Republican Party at the ILWU territorial convention in Hilo . After a single term in office , he went on to work for the Department of Attorney General . In 1959 , he ran for State Senate from Oahu , a year when fellow Republican William F. Quinn was elected as the state 's first governor , and lost . From 1960 to 1962 , he was a district court judge , resigning from the bench in June 1962 . After two years out of the public sector , in 1966 , he was elected again to public office , this time as a member of the Hawaii House of Representatives . His district included Kailua , the North Shore , and Kahuku . While a member of the Hawaii House of Representatives , he was a delegate at the Hawaii State Constitution 's 1968 constitutional convention . Aduja departed the Hawaii House of Representatives in 1974 , and returned to the public sector in his final position as a member of the City of Honolulu 's Kaneohe Neighborhood Board , which he was on from 1986 until 1994 .

= = Later years = =

In 1991 , Professor Dan Boylan wrote that Aduja was one of three important Filipino politicians in Hawaii during the beginning era of Filipino politics in Hawaii . Along with Alfred Laureta and Ben Menor , and a few others minor individuals , they were the few Filipinos in elected office or in significant public office in Hawaii in the mid @-@ 20th century . On 19 February 2007 , he died while on vacation in Las Vegas . Governor Linda Lingle declared 29 March 2007 to be Peter A. Aduja Day . Aduja was survived by two children and two grandchildren ; one of whom is Melodie Aduja , a former Hawaii state senator .