

= Niki Tsongas =

Nicola Dickson " Niki " Sauvage Tsongas (/ ?s????s / ; born April 26 , 1946) is an American politician and the current U.S. Representative for Massachusetts 's 3rd congressional district . From 2007 to 2013 she represented Massachusetts 's 5th congressional district , the district her husband Paul Tsongas served prior to being elected to the United States Senate . She is a member of the Democratic Party . Following John Kerry 's appointment as Secretary of State , she was widely expected to run in the 2013 special election for the Senate seat once held by her husband ; she put such speculations to rest when she announced her endorsement of Representative Ed Markey instead .

= = Family , education , and career = =

Tsongas was born Nicola Dickson Sauvage on April 26 , 1946 , in Chico , California . Her mother Marian Susan (née Wyman) was an artist and copywriter , and her father Colonel Russell Elmer Sauvage was an engineer in the United States Army Air Forces who survived the attack on Pearl Harbor . Tsongas graduated in 1964 from Narimasu American High School in Japan while her father was stationed at Fuchu Air Force Base . Tsongas spent one year at Michigan State University , then transferred to Smith College in Northampton , Massachusetts , and graduated in 1968 with a Bachelor of Arts in religion . After college she moved to New York City , where she took a job as a social worker for the Department of Welfare . Tsongas earned her Juris Doctor from Boston University and started Lowell 's first all @-@ female law practice .

Tsongas interned in Arlington , Virginia , for presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy during summer 1967 ; at a party while there she met Paul Tsongas , then an aide to Republican Congressman Brad Morse . In 1969 , she married Paul ; they had three daughters : Ashley , Katina , and Molly . A politician , Paul served in the House from Massachusetts 's 5th congressional district from 1975 to 1979 , and the Senate from 1979 to 1985 . After being diagnosed with non @-@ Hodgkin lymphoma , Paul resigned from Congress . Tsongas moved their family from Washington , D.C. , back to Massachusetts to care for Paul as he underwent treatments . After seemingly being cured of his disease , in 1992 Paul ran for the Democratic Party nomination for President ; he came in third behind former California Governor Jerry Brown and eventual winner Bill Clinton . Paul 's cancer later returned ; he died of pneumonia and liver failure on January 18 , 1997 .

Prior to her election to the House , Tsongas worked as the Dean of External Affairs at Middlesex Community College , as a Board Member of Fallon Community Health Plan and served on the Lowell Civic Stadium and Arena Commission , which oversees several sites including the Tsongas Arena . In 2001 , Representative Marty Meehan appointed Tsongas to head a foundation to provide education funding for children of the victims of the September 11 attacks .

= = U.S. House of Representatives = =

= = = Elections = = =

After Marty Meehan resigned in 2007 to serve as Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Lowell , Tsongas ran in the special election . Tsongas defeated four other candidates to win the Democratic primary with 36 % of the vote . During her initial campaign Tsongas received endorsements from The Boston Globe , the Boston Herald , and the Lowell Sun . During the general election , former President Bill Clinton , who defeated her husband for the Democratic nomination in 1992 , campaigned for her . At an event in Lowell Clinton remarked : " Congress will be a better place because she is there . " Tsongas won the special election against Republican Jim Ogonowski with 51 % of the vote on October 17 ; she became the only female Representative from Massachusetts , and the first female representative from Massachusetts since the retirement of Margaret Heckler in 1983 , who became Secretary of Health and Human Services under Ronald

Reagan .

After running unopposed in 2008 , in 2010 Tsongas faced Republican Jon Golnik , a small businessman and former Wall Street currency trader . During the campaign Tsongas attacked Golnik 's history as a Vice President of AIG , which Golnik called hypocritical , as she had stock in AIG and other large corporations . Tsongas defeated Golnik with 52 % of the vote . Following redistricting after the 2010 census , Tsongas ran for re @-@ election in the reconfigured Massachusetts 's 3rd congressional district in 2012 . In a rematch , she again defeated Golnick .

= = = Tenure = = =

A major issue in her initial election was whether the two candidates would vote to override President George W. Bush 's veto of an expansion of the State Children 's Health Insurance Program . Tsongas said she would vote to override , and it was reported Ogonowski would uphold the veto . Hours after being sworn into office on October 18 , Tsongas voted to override , but the vote failed to achieve the necessary two @-@ thirds majority .

As a candidate in 2007 , Tsongas promised to withdraw troops and end the Iraq War . The first bill she introduced aimed to do this by implementing a timetable for withdrawal from Iraq ; however , the bill died in committee . In 2010 , Tsongas along with other women in Congress , including House Speaker Nancy Pelosi , visited Afghanistan to oversee the war effort . Upon returning , Tsongas spoke of the need for the involvement of women in rebuilding of government .

Tsongas is an advocate for universal health care and supports a public health insurance option . In 2010 she voted for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act . In 2012 Tsongas joined a Republican @-@ led effort to repeal a 2 @. @ 3 % sales tax on medical @-@ device manufacturers , which passed the House 270 ? 146 ; 36 other Democrats voted for it . Tsongas is pro @-@ choice and received a 100 % approval rating from Planned Parenthood in 2008 . A supporter of LGBT rights , Tsongas cosponsored the Respect for Marriage Act to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act ; and voted for the Don 't Ask , Don 't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 , which allows homosexuals to serve openly in the armed forces .

Following Anthony Weiner 's sexting scandal , Tsongas was the only Representative from Massachusetts to call for his resignation , saying that " it would be appropriate for [him] to step down . " In the 2012 Massachusetts Senate election , Tsongas was the first major Democratic politician to endorse the winner , Elizabeth Warren , whom she called " a fighter for middle class families " . Following President Barack Obama 's designation of John Kerry as United States Secretary of State , there was much speculation that she would run for his seat , which her husband had previously held . Though Tsongas briefly considered a run , she responded she would best be able to serve the people of Massachusetts by continuing to serve in the House , and instead endorsed fellow Representative Ed Markey .

On January 23 , 2013 , Tsongas introduced the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Act (H.R. 412 ; 113th Congress) , a bill that would amend the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act to designate certain segments concerning the Nashua River in Massachusetts for study for potential addition to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System . Tsongas discussed the river 's history and past pollution problems in her testimony about the bill . She argued that the study would allow stakeholders to work together to " ensure that it remains a great place for canoeing , fishing , and enjoying the outdoors . "