

# LUIS A. ALEJO

## ATTORNEY AT LAW



Luis Alejo is a public interest attorney based in Watsonville and has been engaged in grassroots community organizing since the age of 19. He is a founding member of the Pajaro Valley Cesar Chavez Democratic Club, served as its co-chair from 2005-2007, and currently serves as its treasurer. He has also served on the Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee since 2005, has been a state convention delegate since 2005, and was chosen as the **“2006 Santa Cruz County Democrat of the Year”** and the **“2006 Democratic Party Region 9 Volunteer of the Year.”** Luis has worked on numerous school board, city council, and state assembly campaigns, and was the coordinator of the Pajaro Valley Voter Registration & Education Project in 2006, which registered over 600 voters, and distributed over 3,000 flyers about local citizenship classes to non-citizens in Watsonville.

### Education Background

- UC Berkeley (dual B.A.s)
- Harvard University (Ed.M)
- UC Davis School of Law (J.D.)

Luis graduated with honors from UC Berkeley in 1997 with dual bachelors (B.A.) degrees in political science and Chicano studies. In May 2001, he obtained his juris doctorate (J.D.) from UC Davis School of Law, King Hall, with a concentration in public interest law. In June 2003, Luis received his master’s of education degree (Ed.M) from Harvard University’s with a concentration in administration, planning and social policy. He returned to his hometown of Watsonville to work as a staff attorney for California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), a statewide non-profit legal advocacy organization that champions the rights of the poor in California. Since 2007, he has served as a staff attorney of the Monterey County Superior Court where he assists English and Spanish speaking self-represented litigants who cannot afford private attorneys.

Luis’ grandparents and parents were migrant farm workers, and he recalls his grandfather’s countless stories of how they were exposed to toxic pesticides, paid less than what they actually earned, and about the horrendous working conditions out in the fields. In 1970, his grandparents joined the farmworker organizing efforts of the United Farm Workers led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta in Watsonville, and were strong supporters throughout their lives.

Luis was previously a Jesse M. Unruh Fellow for the California State Assembly where he worked as a legislative aide for Assemblymember Manny Diaz (D-San Jose). In the 2002 legislative session, he drafted and staffed numerous bills including education, farmworker and immigrant rights legislation. He also worked as a research assistant for the Harvard Civil Rights Project in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and as a staff attorney for the law offices of California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation in Sacramento. Luis is also a former high school teacher in Watsonville, and is currently a California State Advisory Committee member of the United States Commission on Civil Rights (nominated by former California Supreme Court Justice and former Commission Vice-Chairman Cruz Reynoso).

### Commissions and Committees

- California State Advisory Committee member of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2001-present.
- Watsonville Planning Commission, 2007 – present.
- Watsonville Library Board, 2005- 2006.
- Santa Cruz Co. Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Commission, 2003-2006
- English Learner Master Plan Task Force, Pajaro Valley Unified School District, 2007.
- Watsonville General Plan Steering Committee, 2004-2006.
- Santa Cruz County Transportation Funding Task Force, 2005-2007.

### Organizational memberships

- Pajaro Valley Cesar Chavez Democratic Club
- La Raza Lawyers Association
- Santa Cruz & Monterey County Bar Associations
- NAACP of Santa Cruz County
- LULAC, Salinas Chapter
- The Student Empowerment Project
- Former vice-president & chief negotiator, Legal Service Workers, UAW 2320
- Association of Mexican American Educators, Pajaro Valley Chapter
- Cesar Chavez Holiday Campaign

### Awards & Recognitions

- 2006 Democrat of the Year – Santa Cruz County Democratic Central Committee
- 2006 Region 9 Volunteer of the Year
- 2005 UC Davis Chicano/ Latino Alumni Association – Community Achievement Award
- 2004 United Way Community Hero Award (for work in reducing racism & discrimination)
- 2002 Community Service Award - Assn of Mexican American Educators (Pajaro Valley).
- 2001 Martin Luther King Jr. Service Award. UC Davis School of Law’s highest community service award.
- 2001 California Rural Citizenship Campaign - Community Leadership Award.