

WILLIAM J. HUGHES, LONG-SERVING N.J. CONGRESSMAN AND FORMER AMBASSADOR TO PANAMA, DIES AT 87

Ocean City, NJ (October 30, 2019) – The Honorable William J. “Bill” Hughes, who represented New Jersey’s 2nd Congressional District for 20 years and later became United States Ambassador to Panama, died October 30 at his home in Ocean City, NJ. He was 87.

The announcement was made by his family. Additional details are not immediately available.

Ambassador Hughes was first elected to Congress in 1974 as one of 48 new Democrats who were swept into the House of Representatives in the wake of the Watergate scandal. Hughes was subsequently reelected to his seat, often by large margins, and served in that position longer than any other previous incumbent. After retiring from Congress in 1995, Hughes was appointed by President Bill Clinton as United States Ambassador to Panama, a post he held until October, 1998 leading up to the historic turnover of the Panama Canal to Panamanian control.

During his tenure in Congress, Hughes was a member of the House Judiciary Committee, where he chaired the Subcommittee on Crime (1981–1990) and the Subcommittee on Intellectual Property and Judicial Administration (1991–1994). Hughes also served on the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, which had jurisdiction over numerous issues of importance to his coastal district.

As chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime (1981–1990), Hughes successfully pushed for the enactment of numerous anti-crime bills including the Hughes Amendment to ban fully automatic firearms, and additional measures that became the government's principal means to combat drug trafficking, money laundering, terrorism, child pornography and computer fraud.

Other major legislative achievements include his successful 1975 amendment to ban ocean dumping of sewage sludge, and enactment of legislation to preserve the New Jersey Pinelands. He also served as the Chairman of the Select Committee on Aging.

The William J. Hughes Technical Center in Pomona, was named in honor of the late Congressman in recognition of his efforts to keep the facility in Southern New Jersey and build it into nation's premier air transportation system laboratory. The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton University is also named in honor of the Ambassador in recognition of his distinguished career of public service.

Ambassador Hughes’ wife of 61 years, Nancy Hughes, predeceased him in January of 2018. The couple had made their home in Ocean City for almost their entire adult lives. They are survived by his four children Lynne Hughes, Barbara Hughes Sullivan, Tama Hughes and William Hughes, Jr, 10 grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Hughes’ passing will leave a huge void in the lives of all those who he touched during his long and honorable career.