

## **Former VP Joe Biden to Present at 2017 Hughes Center Honors Recognizing Six Outstanding New Jersey Leaders**

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**Galloway, N.J.** – Former Vice President Joe Biden will be the featured presenter when Ambassador William J. Hughes receives the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award at the Hughes Center Honors on Nov. 9, 2017.

The Hughes Center Honors are awarded for professional excellence and a commitment to public service, civility and bipartisanship which reflect the life and career of Ambassador Hughes, who served as U.S. ambassador to Panama and as a U.S. congressman for 20 years.

The event, which is open to the public, will start at 5:30 at the Stockton Seaview Hotel & Golf Club.

Other honorees include U.S. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-12th, and state Senators Jim Whelan, D-Atlantic, and Diane Allen, R-Burlington. The Hughes Center will also recognize Montclair State University Professor of Political Science and Law Brigid Callahan Harrison, a Stockton alumnus, and recent Stockton graduate Maryam Sarhan.

"We are honored to have Vice President Biden participate in this prestigious event," said Edward H. Salmon, chairman of the Hughes Center Steering Committee. "His presence speaks volumes about the esteem in which Ambassador Hughes is held and about the importance of the work being done by the policy center that bears his name."

Before being elected to two terms as President Barack Obama's running mate beginning in 2008, Biden represented the state of Delaware in the U.S. Senate from 1973 to 2009.

Sharon Schulman, executive director of the Hughes Center, said the center's Steering Committee and program organizers felt strongly that his career and accomplishments easily meet the high standards represented by the Lifetime Achievement Award and held by past award recipients, former New Jersey Governors Brendan Byrne and Thomas Kean.

Hughes, 84, a former prosecutor in Cape May County, represented South Jersey's 2nd Congressional District in the House of Representatives from 1975 to 1995. His legislative accomplishments include passage of a ban on ocean dumping and major anti-crime laws. Hughes co-authored the act that preserved the New Jersey pinelands from development and separately secured Wild and Scenic River status for the Manumuskin and Menantico rivers. He worked to prevent the FAA Technical Center, which is now named after Hughes, from relocating to Oklahoma. The center stayed in Atlantic County, and developed into the nation's premier aviation testing facility.

Upon retiring from Congress, then-President Bill Clinton appointed Hughes ambassador to Panama. Hughes served as ambassador for three years, during which he oversaw the process leading to the 1999 transfer of the Panama Canal back to Panamanian control.

Schulman pointed out that when Hughes was in the House and Biden was in the Senate, they occasionally rode the Amtrak train together commuting to and from Washington.

"It's tremendous news for Stockton and the Hughes Center that the vice president has agreed to help recognize his former colleague's achievements," said Stockton University President Harvey Kesselman.

Five other honorees will receive Hughes Center Honors awards.

### **Civility in Government & Politics Award**

Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman, U.S. House of Representatives, D-12th

Prior to her election to Congress in 2014, Watson Coleman served eight consecutive terms in the N.J. General Assembly. She has fought to help women, economically and socially disadvantaged populations, and other vulnerable groups. She was the first African-American woman to serve as Assembly Majority Leader and as Democratic State Committee chair. The former Stockton University trustee is the first African-American woman to represent New Jersey in Congress.

### **Excellence in Civic Engagement Awards**

The Honorable Diane Allen, New Jersey Senate

Allen was elected as a Republican to the state Assembly in November 1995, representing the Seventh District in Burlington County. She was elected to the state Senate two years later. Allen serves on Senate committees handling issues of health, senior citizens, veterans and education. Prior to government, Allen was known as a TV news anchor, reporter and producer in Philadelphia and New Jersey. Allen also ran VidComm, Inc., her own media production company. In 30-plus years in the media, Allen has won dozens of regional and national awards.

Honorable Jim Whelan, New Jersey Senate

Whelan is a former Atlantic City councilman and mayor. As mayor from 1990-2001, he stabilized a scandal-plagued city government while overseeing economic growth related to casino gaming. He was elected as a Democrat from the 2nd District in Atlantic County to the state Assembly in 2005. Whelan was elected to the State Senate in 2007 and was re-elected twice. He has championed issues related to gaming, tourism and the economy. Whelan attended Temple University, where the former lifeguard became a nationally-ranked swimmer. He has taught in Atlantic City schools for more than 20 years.

### **Distinctive Alumni Leadership Award**

Brigid Callahan Harrison '88, professor, Political Science and Law, Montclair State University

Harrison has taught at Montclair State University since 1994. She is a frequent political commentator for ABC, NBC, CBS, FOX News, NJTV, CBS News radio, and for various NPR radio programs. She has authored several books and various peer-reviewed journal articles. Harrison received her B.A. from Stockton University in 1988, her M.A. from Rutgers University, and her Ph.D. from Temple University

### **Distinctive Student Leadership Award**

Maryam Sarhan '17, 2016-17 Student Senate President

Sarhan is a recent graduate of Stockton University, where she earned a B.A in Political Science with a Pre-law concentration. At Stockton, she served as Student Senate President and Student Trustee, and worked to advocate and empower her peers. She was also a student representative on the Hughes Center Steering Committee. Sarhan is currently based in Washington D.C. as a Congressional Fellow on Capitol Hill.

### **Ticket information**

The event is open to the public. Sponsorships are available at various levels. Net proceeds will benefit the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy Endowed Fund. To purchase tickets or for more information about the Honors, visit the Hughes Center website at:

[www.stockton.edu/hughescenter](http://www.stockton.edu/hughescenter).

**The William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy** at Stockton University serves as a catalyst for research, analysis and innovative policy solutions on the economic, social and cultural issues facing New Jersey. The Center is named for Ambassador William J. Hughes, whose distinguished career includes service in the U.S. House of Representatives, Ambassador to Panama and as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Stockton College. The Hughes Center can be found at [www.facebook.com/Hughes.Center.Stockton.College](https://www.facebook.com/Hughes.Center.Stockton.College) and can be followed on Twitter: @hughescenter.

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