

Ex-Congressman Hughes to be honored for South Jersey legacy

CLAIRE LOWE Staff Writer



William Hughes, former US Ambassador and Congressman who is receiving the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award at the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy on Nov. 9. Oct. 12, 2017 (Craig Matthews / Staff Photographer)

Craig Matthews / Staff Photographer

GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — At 85, William J. Hughes has had a lifetime of accomplishments.

The Ocean City resident served 20 years in the U.S. House of Representatives and another three years as an ambassador to Panama. Prior to that, he spent a decade as a prosecutor.

His legacy has been honored time and again with buildings, centers, scholarships, streets and even a beach. For South Jersey, "Bill" Hughes is an icon.

In that vein, Stockton University will present Hughes with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Hughes Center Honors on Nov. 9, presented by his longtime friend, Vice President Joe Biden.

Hughes' son, Bill Hughes Jr., 50, was not surprised his dad was being honored because, he said, his dad is "quite an amazing guy."



Hughes Center Honors Nov. 9 at Stockton Seaview

"He's not only been a tremendous role model for my sisters and for me, he's also been one of my best friends," said Hughes Jr., of Northfield.

Growing up during his dad's tenure in Congress exposed the younger Bill Hughes to some "amazing times" and influenced his own life goals. Hughes Jr., a lawyer, ran for Congress in 2014 in an attempt to unseat longtime U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo.

[🔗 Ambassador Hughes honored during gala](#)

"When I was a kid, before my sisters graduated, I played at the White House with Amy Carter, who was my age at the time," Hughes Jr. said. "To a kid, growing up in that for my sisters and for me, it was something for us at the time that was normal, but looking back upon it you appreciate how extraordinary it was."

Hughes' daughter Lynne Hughes, of Ocean City, said her father and mother always instilled in her and her siblings that family comes first.

"That gave each of us a solid foundation. They taught us by example that you do what is right and the rest of it will do for itself," Lynne Hughes said.

She said her father had the same persona in both public and private life, and passed on a sense of service to his children.

[🔗 Three from South Jersey tapped by Christie for administrative law judge](#)

"I'm just so proud of both my parents. It's nice to have the recognition; that he can see it. He's worked really hard," Lynne Hughes said.

Raised in Salem County, Hughes graduated from Penns Grove High School and attended law school at Rutgers University. Sixty years ago, Hughes and his wife, Nancy, moved to the Gardens section of Ocean City, where they raised their family, three daughters and a son.

"That was always our home, even though I was in Washington for 21 years," Hughes said.

It was a job as a law clerk that brought him to the island. He served as a prosecutor in Cape May County before eventually becoming president of his own firm, Loveland, Hughes and Garrett in Ocean City. In 1975, Hughes was elected to Congress, serving New Jersey's 2nd District.

[🔗 Hughes Center to honor five New Jerseyans](#)

When asked what his biggest accomplishment was, Hughes didn't hesitate.

"My family," he said.

Legislatively, though, Hughes said he is proud of his work to ban ocean dumping — a 17-year pursuit — which played a big role in his decision to run for office.

"At that point, everybody and their brother — the large municipalities like New York City, northern New Jersey communities, Philadelphia, Camden — all were dumping sewage, sludge, chemicals, medical waste in the ocean," Hughes said.

Hughes also campaigned on and was able to keep the FAA Tech Center from being relocated to Oklahoma.

He said he also worked on the House Judiciary Committee, often partnering on criminal legislation with then-Sen. Joe Biden.

"I think Joe Biden and I worked on close to 50 crime bills. Some of the major crime initiatives are with us today," Hughes said, listing laws that dealt with automatic and assault weapons, money laundering, forfeiture regulations and anti-terrorism.

Hughes said many things have changed in Washington from the time he served until now. He was always surprised by the amount of time a candidate spent campaigning and fundraising, but now, Hughes said, the amount of money in politics "borders on obscene."

[🔗 Longport woman to receive Hughes Center honor](#)

"Unfortunately, it raises questions about your responsiveness to your constituency when you have a lot of special interest groups that are basically financing elections today," Hughes said.

He also criticized the lack of bipartisanship at the Capitol.

"There was an understanding of the need for compromise. Compromise in some sectors today is not an acceptable word. You can't really legislate unless you have the give-and-take between people who realize there's another point of view out there," Hughes said.

Hughes said he was "honored and flattered" to be honored by the policy center named for him at Stockton University.

"In fact, I tried to talk them out of it. I was overruled on this one. I thought there were others that I felt would have been very appropriate," Hughes said.

The awards are not annual. Two years ago, the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy honored former Gov. Tom Kean.

LOOK BACK PHOTO GALLERY: Congressman Bill Hughes

Longtime congressman Bill Hughes will be honored by Stockton University with its Lifetime Achievement Award.



William Hughes, center, at a celebration event in 1984 at the Flanders Hotel in Ocean City.

Press archive

This year, in addition to Hughes, those recognized include Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, state Sen. Diane Allen, the late state Sen. Jim Whelan, alumna and Montclair University professor Brigid Callahan Harrison and alumna Maryam Sarhan. The event is being held at the Stockton Seaview Hotel and Golf Club.

Hughes Center Executive Director Sharon Schulman said it was the perfect time to honor Hughes, who remains active in the community, sitting on local and regional boards of trustees.

"We all felt there is nobody that embodies civility and good government better than Ambassador Bill Hughes. So we plotted behind his back," Schulman said. "We just wanted to do it while he's hale and hardy and active."

"I enjoy the community work," Hughes said.

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PHOTO GALLERIES

SEEN at Gala Honoring Ambassador William Hughes in Margate
Nov 3, 2016

ABOUT THE HONOREES

Civility in Government & Politics Award

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

Before her election to Congress in 2014, Watson Coleman served eight consecutive terms in the state 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 also the first African-American woman to represent New Jersey in Congress.

Excellence in Civic Engagement Awards

State Sen. Diane Allen

Allen was elected as a Republican to the state Assembly in November 1995, representing the 7th 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.

State Sen. Jim Whelan (posthumous award)

As Atlantic City mayor from 1990-2001, Whelan 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 championed issues related to gaming, tourism and the economy. He attended Temple University, where the former lifeguard became a nationally ranked swimmer. He taught in Atlantic City schools for more than 20 years.

Distinctive Alumni Leadership Award

Brigid Callahan Harrison '88, professor of political science and law, Montclair State University

Harrison, of Longport, 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 bachelor's degree from Stockton University in 1988, her master's degree from Rutgers University and her Ph.D. from Temple University.

Distinctive Student Leadership Award

Maryam Sarhan, 2016-17 Student Senate President

Sarhan is a recent graduate of Stockton University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in political science with a pre-law concentration. At Stockton, she served as Student Senate president and student trustee. 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.

Claire Lowe

I began covering South Jersey in 2008 after graduating from Rowan University with a degree in journalism. I joined The Press in 2015. In 2013, I was awarded a NJPA award for feature writing as a reporter for The Current of Hamilton Township.