

BREAKING

Biden honors friend, former Rep. William J. Hughes, at Stockton awards

CLAIRE LOWE Staff Writer Nov 9, 2017



Former Vice President Joe Biden reminisced Thursday about talks he would have with then-U.S. Rep. William J. Hughes about their families as they rode the train together to Washington, D.C. , when Biden served as a senator from Delaware. See a list of the other Hughes Center honorees on **A2**.

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Former Vice President Joe Biden

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GALLOWAY TOWNSHIP — As a congressman, William J. Hughes spent 20 years representing South Jersey's 2nd District, and in that time, made a huge impact in the region.

His legacy was honored Thursday evening by family, friends, colleagues, a former vice president and the policy center named for him at Stockton University.

The biannual William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy Honors are awarded for professional excellence and a commitment to public service, civility and bipartisanship. The center promotes research, analysis and policy solutions.

Presenting Hughes' lifetime achievement award at Stockton Seaview Resort was former Vice President Joe Biden.

"Bill Hughes, you're a good man," Biden told his old friend, who joined him in Congress in the 1970s.

🔗 Former VP Joe Biden to present Lifetime Achievement Award to ex-Congressman Hughes

The two would sometimes ride the train together to Washington, D.C., from Wilmington, Delaware. Before that, Biden was a presence in Hughes' first campaign.

"He became one of my heroes early on," Hughes, 85, said in an interview last month, noting Biden's work to clean up the rivers in Delaware. "I remember his ads very clearly, and that was before the environmental movement was as strong as it is today."

When he ran for Congress, Hughes asked Biden to be one of his first guest speakers at a fundraiser. Biden said he had the "good sense" to campaign for Hughes, and for 20 years, they were not only partners in Congress, but they became friends.

"I'm known for riding Amtrak," Biden said. "You do a lot of business on that commute, but a lot of the time Bill and I just spent talking about our families, getting to know one another."

Biden talked about the many legislative accomplishments the two men achieved in the House and Senate, including passage of a ban on ocean dumping and major anti-crime laws. He also talked about Hughes' integrity.

"It's a privilege to honor a man without whom I know we wouldn't be here because there would be no Hughes Center," Biden joked, adding that he is not sure his career in the Senate would have been successful without Hughes either.

Far better, he said, is that through the Stockton Policy Center, Hughes' legacy will continue to inspire good public service.

"It's only through consensus and cooperation that the U.S. will continue to function," Biden said.

On Thursday night, Hughes, who served three years as the ambassador to Panama under President Bill Clinton, was humble and proud.

"I have loved every bit of the work I've done over those years," Hughes said, thanking Biden for his words. "I remember fondly my years on Capitol Hill."

Hughes, a resident of Ocean City, came to the area from Salem County and served 10 years as a prosecutor before pursuing public office. He and his wife, Nancy, have four children, several grandchildren and a great-grandchild. While many of his family members came to celebrate, Hughes was sad to report that Nancy was not able to attend.

"She is certainly here in spirit," he said.

To Biden, Hughes said he and many others miss him being in office.

"You sound more and more presidential," Hughes said, drawing a resounding applause.

In addition to Hughes, Stockton also honored the late state Sen. Jim Whelan, who died unexpectedly this summer. New Jersey Senate President Steve Sweeney presented Whelan's wife, Kathy, with his Excellence in Civic Engagement Award.

"Jim Whelan wasn't just a big guy, he was a giant," Sweeney said.

Other honorees include U.S. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-12th; state Sen. Diane Allen, R-Burlington; Montclair State University Professor of Political Science and Law Brigid Callahan Harrison, a Stockton alumna; and recent Stockton graduate Maryam Sarhan.

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Hughes Center Honors awards honorees

Civility in Government & Politics Award

Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman, D-12th

Excellence in Civic Engagement Awards

New Jersey Sen. Diane Allen

New Jersey Sen. Jim Whelan

Distinctive Alumni Leadership Award

Brigid Callahan Harrison, Stockton class of '88 and professor of Political Science and Law at Montclair State University

Distinctive Student Leadership Award

Maryam Sarhan, Stockton class of '17 and 2016-17 Student Senate President