

House Republican Press Release

August 20, 2007
Press Office: 860-240-8700

A Digression, unfortunately.



By State Representative John J. Ryan

Before heading back to our discussion on the doings of the Banks Committee of the General Assembly this year, we pause to take note of a major loss to our Connecticut Legislature that occurred this Monday. Rep. Dick Belden of Shelton, the long-time Deputy Minority Leader at Large, died suddenly at 73. Not only was Dick the longest serving Member (first elected in 1975) in the history of the General Assembly, he was likely the last Republican serving in the House who had served as a Deputy Speaker.

As a visibly shaken Gov. Jodi Rell said on Monday, having just learned the sad news, “Dick Belden was my mentor.” A good friend of Darien’s R.E. van Nostrand, the last Republican Speaker of the House, Dick was not only widely known as “The Dean of the House”, but was that exceedingly rare legislator who rose quickly into leadership positions and was not shy about assertively expressing his views to colleagues, but was universally respected, liked and admired by colleagues, commissioners and constituents.

His official bio stated that he was well “known as a committed fiscal conservative, and consistently used his office and appointed positions to fight wasteful government spending and control Connecticut’s bonded debt” – indeed, he served for many years on the powerful State Bond Commission which oversees the allocation of hundreds of millions of dollars in bond monies each year for state-funded projects. A few of his prominent posts were many years of service as the Ranking Member of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, and a director of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority.

But Richard O. Belden was much more than those [impressive] positions. Not a lawyer, his expertise on parliamentary procedure was so legendary and extensive, it was once said (on the record, no less) by a legislator that “I know this is the correct Motion, because Belden told me it was”. Not at all a “professional politician” he retired after 38 years in numerous management positions from Sikorsky Aircraft, never expressed much interest in serving as anything other than the State Representative from the 113th District, but somehow still had time to be a long-time trustee of his church, a corporator of the local hospital, of the Lower Naugatuck Valley Boys and Girls Club, and worked with too many other organizations to list. Not a stuffed shirt, he was proud of his Air Force service, his American Legion membership, and would rather talk about his family than

“politics”, having celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary just last year. Hardly, a know-it-all, it has been opined that he “probably had more common sense than most of the rest of the folks in the State Capitol put together”.

Unfortunately, service in government continues to become a less and less attractive role in our society, as the process becomes more strident, more stressful, noisier, more time-consuming, and more partisan. Dick Belden’s decades of effective, determined, good-humored (without self-promotion) service reminds us of what legislative office can be.

As always please feel free to contact me with your concerns and issues. As your state representative, it is my job, and my priority to represent you and to make sure that your needs and concerns are addressed at the capitol. You can write to me at Room 4200, Legislative Office Building, and Hartford, CT 06106-1591, send me e-mail at John.Ryan@housegop.ct.gov or call my office toll-free at 1-800-842-1423.