



Hugh T. Farley

New York State Senator 1977 to 2016

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BIOGRAPHY

Hugh T. Farley, Republican - Conservative - Independence, was born in Watertown, New York. He grew up in Indian Lake in Hamilton County and graduated from high school in Watertown. Senator Farley received his Juris Doctor degree from the American University School of Law in Washington, D.C. He also holds a Bachelor of Science with honors from the University at Albany, and is a graduate of Mohawk Valley Community College, which honored him with its Alumni Merit Award.

Senator Farley served in the U.S. Army in Germany. He taught high school in Syracuse and in Maryland. In 1965, Dr. Farley was appointed to the faculty of the School of Business of the University at Albany where he advanced to Full Professor and Law Area Coordinator. In 2000, he was named Professor Emeritus of Business Law. He has been nominated several times for the Outstanding Teacher Award at that institution. In 1983, Dr. Farley received the University Distinguished Service Medal in recognition of his service to the University and to public higher education.

Senator Farley is Past President of the Northeastern Business Law Association, and has been a leader on many significant councils at the University at Albany, including the University Senate. Among his professional memberships are the Schenectady County Bar Association, the New York State Bar Association, the Maryland State Bar Association and the Bar of the Supreme Court of the United States. He is the author of Continuing Education texts in Business Law.

First elected to public office in 1970, Senator Farley served as a Councilmember and, later, Town Council Majority Leader, in the Town of Niskayuna. In his first run for State office, he soundly defeated an incumbent in the race for State Senate in 1976, and has been subsequently reelected every two years with overwhelming margins.

Named in 1979 as the first Chair of the Senate Aging Committee, Senator Farley authored many significant laws benefiting senior citizens, including the nation's first hospice law, the law creating a program of respite care for the elderly, the prohibition of mandatory retirement policies, and repeal of the State income tax on the first \$20,000 of pensions and annuities. He was the Senate sponsor of the Community Services for the Elderly Law, which has been a model for other states. Senator Farley's concern for the elderly and other vulnerable citizens has continued. In 1997, he was named Catholic Legislator of the Year, recognizing his contributions in human services. Senator Farley led efforts which, in 2002, established a Volunteer Physicians Project in Schenectady, offering free basic medical care to uninsured citizens.

In January 1985, Senator Farley was appointed Chair of the Senate Committee on Environmental Conservation. In his first year, he was successful in revitalizing the State Superfund Program. He subsequently sponsored the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act, which provided \$1.45 billion for hazardous waste site cleanup, land acquisition, historic preservation, and urban cultural parks. Senator Farley's environmental accomplishments include major laws to provide strong criminal penalties for the illegal release of hazardous substances, to regulate the bulk storage of hazardous substances, and to strengthen and enhance the State's water pollution control program.

As Chair, he led the Committee in issues concerning solid and infectious waste, groundwater, and the protection of rivers and lakes. He consistently promoted the wise management of the State's natural, wildlife, and marine resources, and was named Legislator of the Year in 1986 by the New York State Conservation Council.

In 1989, Senator Farley became the Chair of the Senate Banks Committee. He quickly established a national reputation supporting the innovations and responsiveness of the dual banking system. He also gained national media attention for his efforts to attack the financing of the criminal drug trade by addressing the problem of money laundering.

In Albany, he initiated several landmark banking laws, including the 1997 "wild card" law, which helps maintain the viability of the state banking system by ensuring that the state charter is competitive with the federal bank charter. Hailed as crucial to maintaining the strength of the dual banking system in an era of rapid change and innovation, Senator Farley's law was continued and expanded in subsequent years.

Senator Farley also developed significant laws which protect homeowners against problems with mortgage escrow accounts, and which require banks to implement safety measures for automated teller machines. Senator Farley joined with advocates for the elderly in developing laws to protect senior citizens from "predatory lending" and from "deed theft." In 2008, he sponsored the law which strengthened the regulation of subprime mortgages, encouraged lenders and borrowers to work together to prevent foreclosures, and cracked down on fraudulent mortgage practices. He has also sponsored laws to strengthen the regulation of budget planners, investment advisers, mortgage bankers and brokers, and commercial check cashers.

As Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Libraries, Senator Farley sponsored virtually every piece of major library legislation from 1978 through 2008. He was a member of the Governor's Commission on Libraries and an elected delegate to the White House Conferences on Libraries in 1979 and 1991. During his stewardship, State aid to libraries increased and new forms of library services, including school library systems and hospital library programs, were established.

In 1995, Senator Farley was appointed to be the Majority Whip. Senator Farley has been instrumental in leading a number of legislative reforms, particularly the use of conference committees. He was a member of the first conference committee organized in the New York legislature in 1995, resulting in the adoption of the 65 miles-per-hour speed limit on interstate highways in the State. He also served on the first-ever budget conference committees which, in 1997, opened the budget process to greater public input and discussion. In recent years, he has been Senate Chair of the General Government / Local Assistance budget conference committee.

In 2011, he was appointed to the Conference leadership position of Chair of the Senate Majority Program Development Committee.

Senator Farley has also developed a reputation as a staunch defender of personal privacy rights. In response to concerns raised by his college students, he sponsored a 2000 law which prohibits schools and colleges from using Social Security numbers as student identification numbers. He was a member of the Senate Majority Task Force on Privacy Invasion, which proposed several other legislative protections. Another of Senator Farley's concerns is the effective and efficient delivery of government services, providing taxpayers with the greatest value for their tax dollar. In 2005, he developed an omnibus law eliminating redundancy and reducing costs in the production of government documents. In 2006, he passed another law enhancing the ability of citizens to use electronic mail when submitting formal comments on proposed rules and regulations.

As a former local government official, Senator Farley has been particularly sensitive to local needs, especially the plight of small cities. He developed and sponsored the Schenectady Metroplex law, acclaimed as model legislation offering declining industrial cities new life through a unique mix of public and private cooperation. Through his efforts, downtown Schenectady has experienced a rebirth, and is now headquarters to four State agencies -- the Division of the Lottery, the Racing and Wagering Board, the Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities, and the Department of Transportation (Region 1) -- as well as the home office of MVP Health Plan and The Senator Hugh T. Farley Zone Five Regional Law Enforcement Academy. He was named a "Patron," the City of Schenectady's highest award for public service and civic contributions, in 1998.

Senator Farley gained a national reputation through his position as Chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Interstate Cooperation and his representation of New York State in a number of national organizations, including the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and the Council of State Governments (CSG). In prior years, he served as Chairman of CSG, Chairman of the CSG Eastern Region, President of the National Republican Legislators Association, and Vice Chairman of the State-Federal Assembly of the NCSL. He was named 1989 Legislator of the Year by the National Republican Legislators Association.

In 2016, as the then second longest serving Senator in New York State history, Senator Farley retired and sought not to seek re-election to an historic 21st term. He was heralded by both constituents and colleagues as a man who served with honor and integrity, operating throughout his career as a true public servant.

The Senator is married to the former Sharon Rose of Syracuse, New York. They have three children: Susan (who is a partner in the Colonie Intellectual Property law firm of Heslin, Rothenberg, Farley and Messitti), Robert (who is a Senior Counsel to the NYS Senate Majority Leader and who served for 16 years as a Schenectady County Legislator and was both Chairman and Minority Leader of that body), and Margaret (who is a teacher in New Jersey).