



Swearing In Through the Years

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support, obey and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of this Commonwealth and that I will discharge the duties of my office with fidelity."
— oath of office, Pennsylvania Constitution

Swearing-in day, held the first Tuesday in January, kicks off a new legislative term every two years. Members take their oath of office, a Speaker is elected, and an undeniable air of excitement and possibility permeates the Capitol as freshman and veterans alike hope to make the most of the opportunity to serve their districts. Over the years, many Members have reflected on that special day and shared some of their most memorable moments with us during their oral history interviews.

Representative Chris Ross, Chester County, 1997 – 2016



"My second one I had my service dog that we were training with me ... He got a little scared during the run up to the actual swearing-in, so he climbed up onto the seat next to me and ... I didn't have the heart to kick him back down under the desk and I suddenly saw Matt Ryan look around and look at me and see the dog and I thought,

'Oh boy, I'm in big trouble right now.' He didn't say anything and then afterwards I talked to him and he said, 'Oh look, if I'd commented and given you a hard time about that, my wife,' who was swearing him in, Pat Jenkins, 'she would have kicked me out of the house.' They had black labs. This was a chocolate lab, so he was a big fan of them. But that was kind of a cute moment."

Representative Mike Hanna, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, and Lycoming Counties, 1981 – 2019

"My dad, he was here for all of them until the last one... He told me that the one he enjoyed the most was the day that we instead of just having flowers and having a real wonderful swearing in — we had the political intrigue of whether John Perzel was going to be elected or whether Bill DeWeese was going to be elected, and of course it ended up being Denny O'Brien... He said, 'That was absolutely the best swearing in ever.' He said to have a situation where, for the first time, we didn't know the outcome, and to be there and watch it unfold — he said that was just the greatest thing ever."

Representative William R. Robinson, Allegheny County, 1989 – 2002

"It was like, for me, a rebirth; to replace Leroy Irvis and to be able to serve in the oldest legislative body of its type in the world and my family there, I just felt great."



Swearing-in Day Photographs from Our Collections



Left: Frances Weston, Philadelphia County, 1981-1990

Right: Joseph Preston, Jr., Allegheny County, 1983-2012; Gordon Linton, Philadelphia County, 1983-1993; David P. Richardson, Philadelphia County, 1973-1995



Left: Robert O'Donnell, Philadelphia County, 1974-1993 and David Wright, Armstrong, Clarion, Jefferson, and Venango Counties, 1977-1996

Right: Elinor Z. Taylor, Chester County, 1977-2006



Left: H. Jack Seltzer, Lebanon County, 1957-1980 and Matthew J. Ryan, Chester and Delaware Counties, 1963-2003

Right: Jeffrey W. Coy, Cumberland and Franklin Counties, 1983-2004 and Allen Kukovich, Westmoreland County, 1977-1996



Left: Despite the typical festivities, sometimes the day takes on a more serious tone as well. On January 2, 1951, following the organization of the House and Senate, a joint session of the legislature convened. Governor James Duff spoke on topics including preparation for atomic bomb attacks and other civil defense measures — which were at the forefront of many Americans' minds as the United States entered the Korean Conflict just five years after the end of World War II.

Oral Histories Through Zoom

The House Archives has been conducting oral histories with former House Members since 2004. So far the Archives has conducted over 165 interviews, asking Members to recall their time in office by sharing their favorite memories about campaigning, issues they were passionate about, and the relationships they formed. These interviews are a valuable resource for researchers interested in Pennsylvania's legislative history. Oral histories provide a unique source of information that can't be gained through more traditional primary resources such as newspapers and government documents.

In the past, the House Archives had primarily conducted these interviews in the studios at the State Capitol. However, this year forced us to get more creative in collecting these valuable stories. Through our Zoom account, we can now record interviews with Members from anywhere. Former Members have talked to us from their district and Capitol offices, as well as in the comfort of their own home. It doesn't get more convenient than that!

If you have not participated in the Oral History Project, now is the time. If you have a computer, we can walk you through it. And if you don't have a computer, we are also able to record the interview over the phone. If you would like more information about how you can easily share your story with us, please call us at 717-783-3866 or email us at records@pabmc.net.



Above: House Archives Director Jesse Teitelbaum interviews Representative Harry Readshaw about his life and political work.



Above: House Archives Research Analyst Martavis Washington interviews Senator Judy Ward about her experiences in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives.

To view transcriptions of interviews with former House Members, visit our website at: <http://www.house.state.pa.us/BMC/archives/oralHist.cfm>.

Longest Serving Member

The longest serving Representative in the history of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Thomas R. Caltagirone, was first elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1976, and served the 127th District in Berks County for the next 44 years! During his tenure, Caltagirone served as the Chair of several committees including Judiciary and Urban Affairs, had countless legislative successes, and secured billions in funding for his district.

Caltagirone takes the title as longest serving Member after overtaking Representative Mark Cohen, who served for 42 years, 5 months, and 21 days. Representative Norman Wood served for 42 years.



"I hope when people remember me and my career in the legislature, they remember I was always willing to compromise for the best interest of the commonwealth and that I put pragmatism above politics."

Recent Additions to the Archives

- Marvin Weidner, R — Bucks, 1967-1980
- Richard A. Geist, R — Blair, 1979-2012
- Jay Wells III, R — Allegheny, 1971-1974
- Jeffrey W. Coy, D — Cumberland, Franklin, 1983-2004
- William C. Kortz II, D — Allegheny, 2007-2020
- Thomas P. Murt, R — Montgomery, Philadelphia, 2007-2020
- Stephen E. Barrar, R — Chester, Delaware, 1997-2020
- Mike Turzai, R — Allegheny, 2001-2020
- Garth Everett, R — Lycoming, 2007-2020



- James R. Roebuck, Jr., D — 1985-2020
- Marcy Toepel, R — Montgomery, 2010-2020
- Marcia M. Hahn, R, — Northampton, 2010-2020
- Matthew M. Gabler, R — Clearfield, Elk, 2009-2020
- Albert H. Masland, R — Cumberland, 1993-2000
- Harry Readshaw, D — Allegheny, 1995-2020

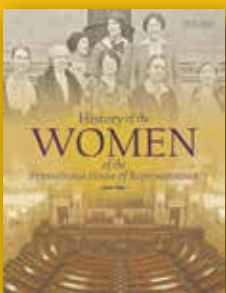
Top Right: briefcase, planner, photographs, and correspondence from the Marvin Weidner Collection.

Left: Framed Tour de 'Toona items from the Richard A. Geist Collection hung in the House Archives.

Bottom Right: Jeffrey W. Coy photograph with President William Jefferson Clinton.



Women of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives Book



The House Archives is proud to announce the release of [History of the Women of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives](#). Produced in conjunction with the Office of the Speaker, the Women's Caucus, the Democrat Legislative Publications Office, and the Republican Print Shop, this book contains a biography of each of the women elected to the House, beginning with the first eight in 1922.

The book is available for you to enjoy for free on the House Archives' website: <https://www.house.state.pa.us/BMC/archives/publications/HistoryOfWomenInPAHouse.pdf?tsmp=20201218>.