

Serphin R. Maltese

Serphin R. Maltese was first elected to the New York State Senate in November 1988 on the Republican, Conservative and Right to Life Party lines. He was re-elected for ten terms on the Republican, Conservative and Independence Party lines, serving a total of 20 years, despite a 2 ½ to 1 Democrat Party enrollment advantage in the district. In the 2008 Presidential election year he lost his bid for re-election and retired from elective office. He represented the 15th Senatorial District in Queens serving 320,000 constituents.

Born in Corona, Queens on December 7, 1932, Maltese graduated from PS 63, JHS 64 and Stuyvesant High School. After his military service, he went to Manhattan College, on an awarded Regents Scholarship and the G.I. Bill and received a B.A. Degree. He was awarded a war service scholarship to Fordham Law School where he received his LL.B. and J.D. degrees. He was admitted to the N.Y. State Bar in 1963 and admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.

He is an Army 45th Infantry Division Veteran of the Korean War after previously serving in the Marine Corps Reserves at age 17. He is a life member of the American Legion, Catholic War Veterans, Korean War Veterans and the V.F.W. His active role in veterans affairs led to his appointment during his first term as Chairman of the Veterans Committee. He was also a member of the American Legion's National Legislative Council.

In 1990, he was the prime sponsor of the legislation that created the 250 bed State Veterans Nursing Home at St. Albans. He has been an active sponsor and guardian of the Veterans Home ever since. As a Senator, Serf distinguished himself as a leading advocate not only for veterans throughout the state, but also for senior citizens and the middle class. In his second term, he served as Chairman of the Consumer Protection Committee.

Prior to his election, Maltese served as a Queens Assistant District Attorney and Deputy Chief of the Homicide Bureau. His law enforcement experience led to his appointment as Chairman of the Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Correction in his third term.

Upon seeking re-election to his second term in 1990, he was opposed by Republican political bosses in Queens who objected to his independent stance on behalf of his constituents, forcing him to seek nomination by write-in vote. In one of the largest primary write-in votes in our nation's history, with no other race on the ballot, Senator Maltese won re-nomination over his opponent by an astounding 6,243 to 237 margin.

In 1969, Serf was a citywide coordinator for Senator John Marchi's mayoral bid and in 1970 he became Law Chairman and Election Law Advisor to U.S. Senator James L. Buckley in his successful historic third party victory on the Conservative-Independent Alliance party lines. He then served as Counsel to Senator Buckley then as Counsel to U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato. He was elected a New York State Reagan-Bush Elector in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections. He also served as N.Y. State Chairman of Conservatives for Ronald Reagan in 1980 and is a member of the Reagan Alumni President's Club. He served for seven years as a member of Senator D'Amato's Federal Judicial Selection Panel. He served for more than 25 years on the National Board of Directors of the American Conservative Union.

He and his wife Constance were co-founders of the N.Y. State Conservative Party in 1962. In 1965 he ran for State Senate on William F. Buckley, Jr.'s mayoral ticket. In speaking to students, he often pointed out the merits of persistence, noting his 1965 run and his Senate election victory 23 years later.

He served as Counsel to Assemblywoman Rosemary Gunning and was the Republican-Conservative candidate to succeed her in 1976, and was the Republican-Conservative candidate for the much

publicized congressional vacancy of Geraldine Ferraro in 1984 when she was selected by Mondale as his Vice Presidential running mate. After being personally endorsed by President Reagan, he ran a close race to Tom Manton despite a 3 to 1 Democrat enrollment advantage in the Congressional District, and laid the groundwork for his successful State Senate run in 1988.

In October of 1988, his personal endorsement in Queens by Vice President Bush and all major Police Benevolent Organizations made national news and was a major factor in his Senate Victory.

Serf became Executive Director of the N.Y. State Conservative Party in 1971 and Chairman of the Queens Conservative Party in 1972. He was elected to the position of State Chairman of the party in 1986, a position in which he served until his election as Senator, when he voluntarily relinquished that post.

Senator Maltese's experience in election law led to his appointment as Chairman of the Elections Committee in 1995, where he served through 2002. In 2003, he was appointed Chairman of the Cities Committee. In 2006, he was the only Senate Majority member from NY City on the Higher Education Committee. He also served in the Senate Leadership as Vice Chairman of the Majority Conference.

In keeping with his keen interest in the arts, he served as Chairman of the Committee on Arts and Cultural Affairs. His wife Constance, an acclaimed artist and pianist, was a continuous, dedicated volunteer and prime inspiration in these endeavors.

Taking pride in his Italian American heritage and prominent in his advocacy of Italian American cooperation and causes, he was knighted by Italy with the title "Cavaliere". As a renowned artist and for her splendid achievements during the Columbus Quincentennial and her award winning "Age of Navigation" portrait series, Constance was knighted by Italy and given the title "Cavaliere". Thus, Serf and Constance are one of the few couples in the world to both have that coveted distinction.

Serf was affiliated with many civic and community organizations and previously served as Counsel to the NYS Commission on the Deaf and Multiply Impaired and the Commission on Campus Disorders. Serf served for over 25 years as an Executive Board Member of the Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association and was chosen as their Alumni Director Emeritus. He was credited as the leader in the successful effort to reopen Christ the King Regional High School and has been serving pro bono as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Christ the King since 1975 and is a member of CK's Hall of Fame and also serves as Vice Chair of MVP Charter School.

He is a past president of the NY Conference of Italian American State Legislators. He served as liaison for the Columbus Countdown Quincentennial with Commendatore Anne Paolucci and is Honorary Chairman of the Associazione Culturale Italiana of N.Y. and the Italian American Professional Business Association. He has been a member of Alpha Phi Delta for over 50 years. He served as Chairman of the Queens County Republican Party for ten years and stepped aside in order to serve as a full time Senator. He was elected as a Delegate to the 2000 Republican National Convention by the largest margin in the entire City of New York.

He was recognized by St. John's University as the recipient of their prestigious President's Medal and by LaGuardia Community College with their distinguished President's Medal. He was named "Man of the Year" by the Commission for Social Justice and presented with the NY State Catholic Conference Policy Award for his courageous defense of innocent human life and furtherance of educational choice. During his tenure in office, he was the prime sponsor of 219 Maltese Bills that were signed into law. He takes pride in the fact that he was always there for his constituents and maintained an official 100% attendance record throughout his 20 years of Senate service.

Prominent among his legislative accomplishments are his 1989 legislation that provided \$175 million in funding to save Wyckoff Heights Hospital and enabled them to continue to provide quality

medical care to patients in Queens and Brooklyn and his securing major legislative grants for LaGuardia Community College, CUNY, the Cav. Peter Cardella Senior Center and Italian Charities of America. He takes pride in being the lead sponsor in the law that named the "Jackie Robinson Parkway".

Due to his years of service, experience and leadership, he was able to secure legislative grants for 240 nonprofit groups in 2008. Securing \$1 million in capital funding for the Greater Ridgewood Youth Council was an achievement of note as was their naming of the "Serphin R. Maltese Center"

As a leader for governmental reform and disclosure, upon his election in November, 1988, Senator Maltese voluntarily gave up the practice of law to serve as a full time Senator. He practiced only "pro bono" and never accepted a referral, commission or fee of any kind during his entire twenty years in the Senate.

Since leaving office he has been honored by the Diocese of Brooklyn with the "Celebration of Life Award" and by Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio with the Bishop's Good Scout Award and by the NYS Department of Labor with the "We Will Always Remember" award for honoring the memory of the 146 immigrant victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of March 25, 1911 where his grandmother and two aunts perished. He serves as President of the Triangle Fire Memorial Association.

He also received the J. Daniel Mahoney Award from the NYS Conservative Party and the leadership award from the Queens Conservative Party. He was honored by the VFW Daniels Post 2813 for "his long years of dedication to veteran's causes", by the Juniper Park Civic Association as man of the year, by the Belmonte Mezzagno Society and for "Support of the Performing Arts" by the LaRusso Dance Academy and with the Achievement Award for "Years of Outstanding Leadership and Devotion" by the St. John's University Committee. The "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Queens County Republican Party, the Sons of Union Veterans of the

Civil War Merit Award for his "continued support to perpetuate the memory of Civil War Veterans" and named by the Allied Veterans' of Ridgewood and Glendale 71st Memorial Day Committee as "Veteran of the Year".

He and the former Constance Mary DeVecchio were married for 63 years at the time of her passing away on December 7, 2018. They were married in the Old Ascension Church in Elmhurst, Queens on August 27, 1955, prior to his sophomore year at Manhattan College. Constance was a renowned portrait artist and well known for her award-winning "Age of Discovery" and "American Women" portrait series, the latter which is exhibited in connection with Women's History Month celebrations. Residents of Middle Village, Queens, they have two daughters, Andrea Maltese Spanarkel and Leslie Maltese McGill, and Serf and Constance take great pride in them and their achievements. Leslie has presented the Senator and Mrs. Maltese with two granddaughters, Sondra Elizabeth and Eva Daly, and a grandson James Francis McGill III. Andrea and Arthur added to their happiness with Genevieve Frances Spanarkel.