

## February 5, 2009 - Murtha Celebrates 35 Years Representing Western PA in the U.S. House of Representatives

WASHINGTON, D.C. &ndash; Today (February 5, 2009), Congressman John P. Murtha (D-Johnstown) commemorates a milestone. He celebrates the 35th anniversary of taking the oath of office to represent the people of Western Pennsylvania in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Excerpts from Murtha's book, "From Vietnam to 9/11," on running for office:

Ever since I was a young boy, I had two goals in life-I wanted to be a colonel in the Marine Corps and a member of Congress. I'm not sure what instilled those goals in me;My interest in politics started when I was ten years old and I heard President Roosevelt address the nation. His "fireside chats" were major events in our household, and we would all gather around the radio.

I had no game plan or strategy to enter politics, just a desire to do so. My decision to enter politics was actually a very mundane event. I received a phone call one evening from the chairman of the Democratic Party in Cambria County and he said he wanted to talk to me. When I arrived at his office, he said, "Jack, we need a candidate to run against the incumbent congressman in the Twelfth District and we think you'd be a good candidate." It was that simple.

I accepted the challenge and the next day I was out campaigning. The incumbent was a Republican, John P. Saylor, who had represented the district for over twenty years. I lost the election (1968). I enjoyed the challenge of politics, though, and the interaction with people during the campaign. I decided to run for a seat in Pennsylvania's House of Representatives and won (1969). A few years later Congressman Saylor died in office, and in early 1974 I decided to run for Congress again in the special election held to fill the vacant seat.

The February special election was covered by the national press. In the midst of the Nixon Watergate scandal, Murtha's race was seen as a bellwether for the Democrats chance in the upcoming November midterm elections. Former Vice President Walter Mondale, and current Vice President Joseph Biden, came to Pennsylvania to campaign for Murtha. With a total of 120,000 votes cast, Murtha won by 122 votes.

Murtha became the first Vietnam combat veteran elected to the U.S. Congress. A long and distinguished career of public service soon followed (for a detailed biography please visit our website, [www.murtha.house.gov](http://www.murtha.house.gov)).

Of the nearly 10,650 men and women who have served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1789, only 80 have served longer than Congressman Murtha (he just recently surpassed former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott in service).

“It has been both a privilege and an honor to continue serving the hard-working people of Western Pennsylvania,” commented Murtha.

“A lot has changed in Pennsylvania over the past thirty-five years. We saw

the decline of our coal and steel industries, and the emergence of a new diversified economy built on good paying health care, defense, manufacturing, tourism, and high-tech jobs. We built roads, hospitals, community centers, and parks.

We began long-term investments in our locks and dams, our police departments, and our sewage and water infrastructure. The challenges we face today are enormous, and certainly there is much good work to be done. I’m confident that, just as we’ve done over the past thirty-five years, we will continue to improve our quality of life here in Western Pennsylvania and throughout our nation.”

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