

Former U.S. Representative William F. (“Bill”) Clinger, Jr. (R-PA) of Naples, FL and Chautauqua, NY, passed away on May 28, 2021. Born on April 4, 1929 in Warren, PA to the late William F. Clinger, Sr. and Lella May Hunter Clinger, Clinger graduated from the Hill School in Pottstown, PA in 1947 and earned a Bachelor’s degree in English from The Johns Hopkins University in 1951. In 1951 he also married his beloved wife Julia “Judy” Whitla, who predeceased him in 2016. He served as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy from 1951-1955 before returning to Warren, where he was an executive at the New Process Co. from 1955-1962. During these years, he and Judy started their family and, as a young father, Bill entered law school and earned his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Virginia in 1965, where he was on the editorial board of the Virginia Law Review.

The family returned to Warren, where Bill was in private law practice for 12 years at the firm of Harper, Clinger, Eberly & Marti. Bill was active in his community during those years, serving as chairman of the Kinzua Dam Dedication Committee, president of the Warren Library Association, and as a delegate to the 1968 Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention and the 1972 Republican National Convention. In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford appointed Bill to serve as Chief Counsel of the U.S. Commerce Department’s Economic Development Administration.

Following President Ford’s defeat in the 1976 election, Bill returned to Warren and launched a long-shot bid to unseat an incumbent Democratic Member of Congress in the 1978 mid-term election. He won that race, and was subsequently re-elected eight times by the voters in his northwestern Pennsylvania congressional district, usually by overwhelming margins. During his 18 years in Congress, he earned a reputation as an effective legislator and principled consensus-builder who was highly respected on both sides of the political aisle.

In 1997, after Republicans captured control of the House for the first time in over 40 years, Bill’s colleagues chose him to chair the powerful House Committee on Government Reform and Oversight. In that capacity, he co-authored landmark legislation to reform the federal government’s procurement process (the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996), as well as a law preventing the federal government from imposing unfunded mandates on States and localities. As a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he served as Vice Chairman in the 104th Congress, Bill was a passionate advocate for investments in infrastructure and other capital improvements to better the lives of the residents in his largely rural district. His time in Congress included stints as the chairman of both the House Wednesday Group and Ripon Society Board of Directors.

Upon retirement from Congress in 1997, Bill joined the faculty of The Johns Hopkins University as a Senior Fellow at the Center for Advanced Governmental Studies, having received the University’s Harold Seidman Distinguished Service Award in 1996. In 1997, he and Judy spent a semester at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, where he was a Fellow at the Institute of Politics. In addition to his academic postings, Bill was an active member of a number of boards and other organizations — many of them focused on good government — including the Council on Excellence in Government, the National Academy of Public

Administration, the National Building Museum, and the Former Members of Congress Association.

Bill was a lifelong summer resident of the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, NY, where he met and courted Judy while working as a reporter on the Chautauquan Daily newspaper during his college summers. He served on the Institution's Board of Trustees after his retirement from Congress, including two terms as Chairman of the Board. In recognition of his many contributions to the Institution, Chautauqua endowed an ongoing lectureship in his and Judy's honor at the conclusion of his service on the Board. Bill was the devoted and adored father of four children: Eleanore "Bijou" (Greg) Miller, William F. Clinger III, James Hunter (Catherine) Clinger, and Julia Boulton Clinger. He is also survived by seven beloved grandchildren: Sara and Juliet Miller, Charlotte and Jane Clinger, and Boulton, Porter, and William Yanhs. A memorial service will be held in Chautauqua in late August.