

Neal E. Smith (1920 -):

Neal Edward Smith of rural Altoona was Iowa's longest serving representative in the United States Congress. He served from 1959 to 1995 as representative from Iowa's Fourth and Fifth Districts. Smith's congressional career was marked by many achievements. Smith championed numerous agricultural, small business, and environmental issues including the Federal Meat, Poultry, and Egg Inspection Acts. He helped sponsor legislation to construct Red Rock, Saylorville, Big Creek, Earlham, and Rathbun dams along with the Des Moines River Greenbelt and the Red Rock Watershed Conservation District.

Throughout his career, Neal Smith worked tirelessly on the advancement of education in Iowa. He is credited with helping to establish the Southeast Polk Community School District during the 1950s. As congressman, he worked with Iowa State University to develop research programs that would strengthen Iowa's economy. Smith obtained federal funding to expand and develop programs and facilities in agricultural science at the university. His efforts at Iowa State led to the creation of the Institute for Physical Research and Technology, the Center for Crops Utilization and Research, and Iowa State's new College of Veterinary Medicine.

The Neal and Bea Smith Law Center at Drake University was named after the congressman and his wife. The Center is a fully computerized, functional law office with support staff and office space for up to forty students. It houses clinical programs and the Center for Public Service Attorneys along with research facilities, library, classrooms, conference rooms, and a courtroom.

The Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge near Prairie City in Jasper County, IA, was also named in Smith's honor. It is the largest federally funded prairie reconstruction effort in the U.S. Exhibits center on all aspects of the prairie history---pioneer life, Native Americans, and the railroad. The mission of the Refuge is to preserve and restore the tallgrass prairie ecosystem that once covered most of Iowa.

Neal Smith was born in Hedrick, Keokuk County, Iowa, and attended public school in Packwood, IA. He was a highly decorated veteran of the U.S. Army Air Force during WWII. Smith received a Purple Heart, nine Battle Stars, and the Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters for his military service. He did his undergraduate study at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and at Syracuse University. Smith earned his law degree from Drake University in 1950.

Neal Smith and his family moved to the rural Altoona area in 1951. He and his wife, Beatrice, who was also a graduate of Drake Law School, had two children, Doug and Sharon. Smith practiced law in Des Moines before he entered politics and resumed his legal practice in Des Moines after he retired from Congress.

In 1996, Smith published his autobiography, *Mr. Smith Went to Washington: From Eisenhower to Clinton*.

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