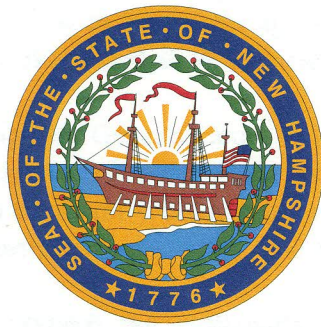


# GEORGE ROBERTS HALL

OCTOBER 25, 2019



HON. GEORGE B. ROBERTS JR.  
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE  
1975-1980



WELCOME TO THE PORTRAIT UNVEILING  
OF THE  
HONORABLE GEORGE B. ROBERTS, JR.

OCTOBER 25, 2019

2:00 PM



October 25, 2019

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Lee B. Marden

*Chairman of the Friends of George Roberts*

Governor Chris T. Sununu

Hon. Steve M. Duprey

Richard Whitney, Ph.DH

Hon. George B. Roberts, Jr.



George B. Roberts Jr. served as New Hampshire's Speaker of the House for three consecutive terms, starting in January 1975. He was elected to his first term in the House in 1966 at the age of 27 and later served as majority leader with Speaker Marshall W. Cobleigh and Speaker James E. O'Neil.

The New Hampshire General Court, with 24 senators and 400 House members, was considered to be among the most representative of any State Legislature in the country, because of the relatively low number of constituents each lawmaker represented. The reality didn't match the image.

"I saw on my first day in the Legislature, it was a weak institution" Roberts said.

Roberts said there were three problems that prevented the N.H. General Court from doing its job effectively: It lacked meeting space for committees, only met every other year for about six months and did not have a convenient way to record roll calls.

A study by a public affairs consultant gave the legislative branch 25 out of a possible 100 points for "responsiveness and representativeness," citing a lack of access to roll call tallies, office space, non-partisan staff and annual sessions.

A solution to many of these problems appeared when the old U. S. District Courthouse and Post Office, located behind the State House, became available. Federal government offices were moved to the James C. Cleveland Federal Building, leaving the 1888 French Renaissance-style structure empty. The Executive Council wanted the building to be given to the city of Concord so it could be demolished to make way for a parking lot.

Majority Leader Roberts opposed the demolition and told Governor Peterson and the Executive Council that he would seek an injunction to block the transfer of the building to the city. Governor Peterson quietly tabled the proposal. Rep. Roberts and others introduced legislation to require an architectural study and make recommendation for a new building or renovation of the old structure. In 1973 Governor Thompson vetoed the bill. Representative Roberts convinced Governor Thompson to write a letter to the House and Senate to override his veto which he did. The Legislature voted overwhelmingly to override the Governor's veto to appropriate 4.7 million dollars to renovate the structure to be known as the Legislative Office Building.

Renovation work began, including the construction of a two-level parking garage, and the building was rededicated as the Legislative Office Building on Nov. 15, 1975. The project was completed on time, under budget and fully furnished.

Roberts was also instrumental with others in introducing constitutional amendments to enable the General Court to meet in annual sessions, putting the Legislature on a co-equal status with the Executive and Judicial Branches.

Finally, the Legislature was able to respond to the general public's needs.

Roberts was involved in many public activities. He was elected town moderator and school moderator for over 35 years. Chairman of the county delegation and was a founder and president of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

There is a long list of public and non-profit institutions that Roberts has served as either chairman or president.

There is a long list of legislative, executive and judicial reforms initiated by Speaker Roberts.

He is known as a "Leaders leader" and a legislative reformer. It was a pivotal time that the role of the state legislature was being tested by the bureaucracy of the federal government. It took strong leadership to restore the state legislatures role.

Former Speaker George B. Roberts Jr. was born in Andover, Mass., on June 13, 1939. Soon afterward, his family moved to Gilmanton, N.H., and he has lived in Gilmanton ever since.

Roberts attended Gilmanton Elementary School and graduated from Laconia High School in 1957. He enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard, serving on active duty in the North Atlantic until 1959 and four years in the Coast Guard Reserve. He majored in political science at the University of New Hampshire and graduated with a B.A. degree in 1964. He later returned to University of New Hampshire for graduate studies receiving a Master of Public Administration, while serving in the legislature. He continues to serve as President of his class to this day.

**Welcome to George Roberts Hall!**

*by James VanDongen*