Statement from Senator Winner on former area State Senator William T. Smith II

GEORGE WINNER   March 30, 2010

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Elmira, N.Y., March 30--Long-time, legendary New York State Senator William T. "Cadillac" Smith II, who represented the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions in the state Senate from 1962 until his retirement in 1986, died earlier today. He was 94.

Read more in the Corning Leader and Elmira Star-Gazette, and watch a report on WENY-TV.

Senator Winner, who began his career in state government as a counsel to Senator Smith in 1971 and currently represents much of the same Senate district as his friend and mentor did for 24 years, released the following statement:

"I began my own career in New York State government as an aide to Senator Bill "Cadillac" Smith, who from the beginning was a legendary figure at the Capitol.

"He was an effective and productive state legislator who made enduring contributions in the areas of fiscal accountability, social services reform and, especially, in building the foundation for New York's nationally renowned efforts to prevent the tragedies of drunk driving. His landmark achievements in this arena of public policy will always anchor his legacy in New York State government.

"But I also saw firsthand what a welcome figure he was in the halls of Albany, and we could use more like him today. People from all walks of life and across every political persuasion liked him. He was firmly grounded in the ways of common decency, good humor, and kindness, and so he inspired unusual loyalty from friends and foes alike.

"Bill Smith was a constant and very powerful reminder that no matter how far you might get in life, don't ever forget where your roots are. Bill never did. He loved the farm in Big Flats more than anyplace in the world and he put that ethic, those values, and a deep-rooted common sense to work in state government in very meaningful and memorable ways.

"Bill was a mentor, and a great friend, and I will truly miss him."

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