

SC GENERAL ASSEMBLY HONORS JENNINGS AS HE LEAVES AFTER NEARLY 20 YEARS OF SERVICE



The 118th Session of the South Carolina General Assembly finally came to an end Tuesday afternoon.

With the pounding of the gavel by S.C. House Speaker Bobby Harrell, legislators adjourned their 2010 session sine die, which means they will not meet in regular session again (unless called into special session) until January 2011, when an all-new session begins with all new members, including Marlboro County's newly-elected Representative Elizabeth Rogers Munnerlyn, taking the oath of office for a new two-year session.

During the final days of the legislative session, the House, the Senate, and the Governor paid special tribute to our own respected Representative Douglas Jennings, Jr., who did not seek re-election after serving almost 20 years in the South Carolina House of Representatives.

Rep. Jennings was honored on the Senate floor in late May with a special resolution presentation organized by Senator Dick Elliott and joined in by Senators Kent Williams, Gerald Malloy, Vincent Sheheen, John Scott, Joel Lourie, Brad Hutto, and Luke Rankin.

In a rare move, the Senate stopped its normal order of business to honor a House member on the Senate floor with glowing praise and comments about his many contributions to the state's leadership for the past 20 years.

One longtime legislator said he'd never seen the Senate pay such respect to a retiring House member. Senator Dick Elliott, who authored the Resolution honoring Rep. Jennings, said "Representative Doug Jennings is one of the finest public servants of our time, and his dedicated service and leadership have contributed greatly to making South Carolina a better state."

Others, who followed at the podium, praised Jennings' legislative and oratorical skills and noted that he always had a knack for bringing people together and finding consensus on difficult issues.

Senator Vincent Sheheen recalled the key leadership role which Jennings played on tough issues like video poker, the removal of the Confederate flag, and the creation of the state education lottery.

He called Jennings "a great friend and mentor to me during my time in the Legislature."

The House also recognized Jennings' many contributions during his service since 1991 with a Concurrent Resolution (H 4985) authored by Rep. Jackie Hayes (D-Dillon) and presented on the House floor by Rep. James E. Smith, Jr. (D-Richland).

During his presentation, Smith noted that Jennings had served as House Minority Leader, as Chairman of every major subcommittee on the Judiciary Committee, as well as First Vice-Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, as well as Co-Chair and a founding member of the House

Rural Caucus, promoting the interests of smaller rural counties.

"One of our finest leaders is leaving this House," Smith noted, "but I feel confident that with his energy and his genuine love for our state, his days of being involved and of public service are not over."

Governor Mark Sanford also honored Rep. Jennings and several other retiring legislators with a reception and dinner at the Governor's Mansion on Tuesday, June 1st.

Sanford presented Jennings with The Order of the Palmetto, our state's highest civilian honor for service.

In the presentation, Governor Sanford told Jennings, "I am certain that your colleagues will have a positive and lasting impression of your effectiveness and dedication to our state when you leave this public service."

"South Carolina is blessed by your committed and faithful service. Thank you for upholding the highest ideals of servant leadership in everything you do. I wish you all the best in your next chapter."

Rep. Jennings was joined at the Governor's Mansion dinner by his wife, Suzanne, and his children, Douglas E. Jennings, who is at the Charleston School of Law, and Martha Grace Jennings, who now manages the Sona restaurant in Anderson.

Rep. and Mrs. Jennings then were overnight guests of the Governor at the Mansion.

Jennings has served in the South Carolina House longer than any other resident of Marlboro County in recent history.

During his almost twenty years, he represented House District 54, consisting of Marlboro County and portions of Dillon and Chesterfield counties through the years.

Another example of the great respect which his colleagues have for him was shown by their unanimous passage of H 4900, a bill recommending that the South Carolina Department of Transportation name a portion of SC Highway 38 the "Representative Doug Jennings Highway" in recognition of his numerous contributions to our county and state.

The DOT will be naming that portion of Highway 38 from the intersection at the Highway 15/401 ByPass to the caution light in the Town of Blenheim in his honor in the near future.

When asked by the Herald-Advocate for a comment this week, Jennings stated, "It has been a great honor and joy to serve my community in the Legislature, and I'm truly appreciative of the many kindnesses shown to me as I step aside from public service."

"I want to thank the people of House District 54 for their votes and support and for trusting me with this leadership position for all these years."

"As we turn the page, Suzanne and I look forward to living in Bennettsville and to finding exciting new ways to be involved. I also look forward to returning to my law practice on a full-time basis to better serve the clients who have trusted me with their legal business."

"And I also want to wish my successor in this job, Rep.-Elect Elizabeth Rogers Munnerlyn, all the best as she begins her service in the House."

Jennings' term expires at the end of 2010.