

January 15, 2002 - New York Times: Founder of the "Peace Corps" Idea Dies

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By **Admin1 (admin)** on Tuesday, January 15, 2002 - 12:55 pm: [Edit](#)

Founder of the "Peace Corps" Idea Dies



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[Founder of the "Peace Corps" Idea Dies*](#)

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Founder of the "Peace Corps" Idea Dies

U.S. Congressman from Wisconsin, Henry S. Reuss, died on Saturday in California of congestive heart failure. While others had talked about "youth service" William James, for example, as early as 1904 at the Universal Peace Conference in Boston, Reuss and Hubert Humphrey both proposed the idea of a government service "Peace Corps" in the late 1950s.

Reuss's advocacy went back to 1957 when he was a member of the Joint Economic committee and traveled to Southeast Asia. He by chance came upon UNESCO team of young teachers from America and other countries who were working at the village level.

For three years he talked to student conferences about establishing a "Point Four Youth Corps" and wrote articles about it in magazines. In January of 1960 Reuss introduced the first Peace Corps-type legislation. This was in the House and sought a study of "the advisability and practicability to

Mr. Reuss was a strong advocate of environmental protection, not merely through legislation but also through his own action. In 1970, he discovered a dusty 1899 statute, the Refuse Act, which allowed individuals to force action against polluters and be entitled to half the fines imposed. He took action against 149 Wisconsin companies.

In 1964, he was the author of legislation to establish the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, a 1,200-mile path tracing the southernmost reach of glaciers in Wisconsin. He hiked the trail in lederhosen.

In 1972, he pushed for an inquiry by the Banking Committee into Watergate, an effort that was thwarted when the Nixon White House persuaded a few Democrats to desert Mr. Reuss and Wright Patman of Texas, the committee chairman, and halt the investigation.

Three years later, at 62, he unseated Mr. Patman, 81, from the chairmanship. It was part of a burst of activity by younger Democrats against elderly chairmen, three of whom they ousted in the biggest setback to the seniority system in a century. He then voluntarily gave up that chairmanship to take over the Joint Economic Committee in 1981, with the goal of checking President Ronald Reagan's economic policies. He did not seek re-election in 1982.

Mr. Reuss grew up in the German section of Milwaukee, the son of a bank executive. He graduated from Cornell in 1933 and Harvard Law School in 1936. He won a Bronze Star as an infantryman in World War II, and served in the military government of Germany and later as deputy general counsel for the Marshall Plan.

The last of his six books, "When Government Was Good: Memories of a Life in Politics," argued in 1999 that a golden age existed from 1948 to 1968, when the nation proved that it could achieve full employment, secure civil rights and prevent nuclear war. Another such age might come, he said, but it would require citizen rededication.

He quoted from a commencement address he had recently given at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee: "Pericles was right when he told the Athenians that the citizen who takes no part in public affairs is not merely unambitious but useless. If you will combine the private aim of getting ahead in life with the public pursuit of justice, you will help restore the essence of democracy — informed and lively participation by its citizens. And that can produce a government which feels compelled neither to do everything nor to do nothing."

Besides his son, Michael, of Portland, Ore., he is survived by his wife of 60 years, Margaret Reuss; two daughters, Jacqueline Reuss of Paris and Anne Reuss of Chicago; seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.



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the establishment of a Point Four Youth Corps."

In June of 1960, Senator Humphrey of Minnesota, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, introduced in the Senate a bill to send "Young men to assist the peoples of the underdeveloped areas of the world to combat poverty, disease, illiteracy and hunger." What's important here is this bill: Senate S 3675 was the first to use the specific name, "Peace Corps." The rest is history. Henry Reuss of Wisconsin was 89.

Henry S. Reuss served in the U.S. Congress (D-WI) from 1955 until his retirement in 1983. He chaired the House Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs (1975-1981); the Joint Economic Committee (1981-1983); the Subcommittee on Conservation; and the Subcommittee on International Exchange and Payments. He was legislative author of the Peace Corps, the Federal Reserve Reform Act, and the Mass Transit Research Act.

Prior to his election to the House of Representatives in 1954, Reuss practiced law in Milwaukee. He served as Assistant General Counsel of the Office of Price Administration in Washington, as acting General Counsel of the Marshall Plan in Paris, and as Director of the Milwaukee School Board as well as other posts. He entered the U.S. Army as a private in January, 1943, and served in the European Theatre until his discharge in January, 1946. He was awarded the Bronze Star for action at the Rhine Crossing, and is a Lt. Colonel in the Infantry Reserve.

Reuss' books include *The Critical Decade: An Economic Policy for American and the Free World*, *Revenue-Sharing: Crutch or Catalyst, To Save a City: On the Trail of the Ice Age*, and *The Unknown South of France* written with his wife Margaret.

Education B.A., Cornell University, 1933 J.D., Harvard Law School, 1936

Henry Reuss, Liberal in Congress, Dies at 89

By ADAM CLYMER

ASHINGTON, Jan. 14 — Henry S. Reuss, for 28 years a leading liberal in Congress on issues from interest rates to pollution to Watergate to aid for New York City, died on Saturday in San Rafael, Calif. He was 89.

The cause was congestive heart failure, said his son, Michael Reuss.

Though brought up as a Republican, from 1955 to 1983 he represented Milwaukee's North Side as a Democrat. He said he changed parties in 1950 because of his antipathy for Wisconsin's Republican senator Joseph R. McCarthy. In 1952 he unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination to challenge Mr. McCarthy, who was then at the height of his influence because of his claims of Communists in government.

As chairman of the House Banking Committee from 1975 to 1981, Mr. Reuss sought increased disclosure of banking activity. A House colleague for 13 years, Representative David R. Obey of Wisconsin, today called him "a crusader for financial regulation to keep the big boys honest."

"He would have been out to skin somebody alive for the way Enron double-dealt on their securities operation," Mr. Obey said.

Mr. Reuss's interests ranged far beyond that committee's work. In 1959, he was the first in Congress to propose what became the Peace Corps in 1961 after the idea was taken up in the 1960 presidential campaign, first by Senator Hubert H. Humphrey and then by Senator John F. Kennedy.