



News Release

## LOUISIANA STATE SENATE

August 28, 2023

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BATON ROUGE, La. – Senate President Page Cortez shared news of the passing of former State Senator Fritz H. Windhorst with members today acknowledging his service to the people of Louisiana.

“The Louisiana Senate sends its most sincere condolences to the family and friends of former Senator Windhorst,” said Cortez. “We honor his legacy of achievements and reflect on his impact to our great state and its people.”

Below is a press release issued earlier by the family of former Senator Windhorst.

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### **Fritz H. Windhorst, Pioneer U.S. Jurist & Senator, Dies at 88**

*Youngest-ever U.S. Commissioner and legislator built geographical, political & social bridges in the Greater New Orleans Region*

NEW ORLEANS, La. - Fritz H. Windhorst, the youngest-ever United States Commissioner and a five-term Louisiana State Senator, passed away August 27, 2023, in New Orleans, Louisiana, at 88 years old.

From 1955 to 1961, Windhorst was court clerk and court crier for the Honorable Herbert W. Christenberry of the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District. At Christenberry’s encouragement, Windhorst completed Loyola Law School night classes in 1962. At age 27, Windhorst was appointed as the youngest-ever U.S. Commissioner in 1962 and reappointed for a second term in 1966. As Chairman of the National Association of United States Commissioners Legislative Committee, Windhorst led the drafting and passage of the Federal Magistrates Act of 1968 to replace commissioners with a federal magistrate system.

Windhorst's first political campaign was an unsuccessful 1969 bid for a New Orleans City Council at-large seat on the ticket of mayoral candidate Jimmy Fitzmorris, his longtime friend and political ally. Lisa Fitzmorris Clement fondly remembers 50 years of "Fitz and Fritz." "From their early beginnings in the Irish Channel, my father and Fritz made serving others their trademark, which made them beloved and outstanding leaders of our time."

In 1972, Windhorst was elected to the Louisiana State Senate and served for 20 years. He represented the Westbank area of Greater New Orleans and was the first Louisiana legislator with a district including both Orleans and Jefferson Parishes. After just his first Legislative Session in 1972, the Alliance for Good Government named Windhorst its first Legislator of the Year. Former appellate judge Edwin Lombard admired Windhorst as a "great friend...even when we supported different candidates" and credits him with "passing some of the most important bills in Louisiana's history."

In 1985, Windhorst (a Democrat) joined the Republican Party. During a 1986 meeting with President Ronald Reagan, Windhorst got Reagan to help him propose to Barbara Turner, which Reagan later memorialized in a personal letter.

Starting with his 1970 Algiers Bridge Committee, and then throughout his Senate years, Windhorst worked tirelessly as the driving force for a second New Orleans span across the Mississippi River, and the GNO Bridge No. 2 finally opened in 1988. In 1989, Windhorst sponsored the Name the Bridge Contest and the legislation to adopt fourth-grader Jennifer Grodsky's winning entry: Crescent City Connection. His other legislative accomplishments include four-laning LA 23 (Behrman Highway), the elevated Westbank Expressway, Intracoastal Waterway Bridge, Louisiana Superdome, Delgado Community College Westbank Campus, levee protection projects, Westbank vocational schools, creation of the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Algiers Cutoff Bridge, and Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve. Former Senator John Alario calls Windhorst a "giant in representing the Westbank of Jefferson and Orleans Parishes" and the Crescent City Connection "the crowning achievement" of Windhorst's career.

Fiercely loyal to his constituents, Windhorst was a skilled politician in bipartisan efforts, serving as floor leader for three Louisiana Governors (Edwin Edwards, Dave Treen, and Buddy Roemer). Known for his political decorum and self-taught oratory skills, people stopped and listened when he took to the Senate podium. Louisiana Lt. Governor Billy Nungesser always "looked up" to Windhorst, a family friend. He "taught me to do all you can to make a difference. We have lost a true Louisiana champion."

Windhorst also practiced law and founded numerous law firms, including Windhorst, Heisler, deLaup & Wysocki and Windhorst, Gaudry, Ranson, Higgins & Gremillion. Windhorst successfully defended Harry Connick Sr. against incumbent Jim Garrison's lawsuit challenging Connick's primary victory in the 1973 election for Orleans Parish District Attorney. He then served as Connick's legislative leader for 17 years (until Windhorst's retirement) during which the Orleans DA's office never lost a bill in the Louisiana Legislature.

Windhorst, a devout Roman Catholic, became a Catholic knight in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem in 2011 and was awarded the Order of St. Louis IX Medallion in 2015. The Honorable Jay C. Zainey of the Louisiana Eastern District remembers Windhorst as "a friend and man of faith. By his example, legislation, and personal conduct, Fritz has certainly improved the lives of many people."

Windhorst is survived by his wife Barbara Turner Windhorst and his children Judith Windhorst Cahill, Stephanie Hildebrandt, and Stephen J. Windhorst.

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Fritz H. Windhorst of New Orleans is sworn in as U.S. Commissioner (the youngest ever at age 27) by Judge Herbert W. Christenberry (October 9, 1962).



Attorney Fritz H. Windhorst (May 1965).



Fitz and Fritz – Jimmy Fitzmorris and Fritz Windhorst on the New Orleans campaign trail (1969).



Fritz H. Windhorst celebrates his first election to the Louisiana Senate with family (daughter Judith Windhorst in front). (February 1, 1972)



Louisiana State Senator Fritz Windhorst at his Senate Chambers desk during his first Legislative Session (April 1972).



Louisiana Senator Fritz H. Windhorst stands at the Orleans-Jefferson Parish line for his LA 23 Behrman Highway four-lane project (January 1974).



Orleans Councilman Mike Early and Senator Fritz Windhorst help cut the ribbon opening the four-lane LA 23 Behrman Highway (February 1974).



Senator Fritz H. Windhorst gives his victory speech at his first re-election to the Louisiana Senate as daughter Judith Windhorst. (November 1, 1975)





Louisiana State Senator Fritz H. Windhorst District 8 (May 1983).



Orleans DA Harry Connick Sr. reviews anti-crime legislation with Rep. Peppi Bruneau and Senator Fritz Windhorst (March 1984).





Governor Edwin Edwards visits the Senate floor in jeans in time to hear Louisiana State Senator Fritz H. Windhorst debate his bill with Senate counsel Bonnie Denoux (June 1979).



Louisiana State Senator Fritz H. Windhorst makes a point at the podium during the 1981 Legislative Session (June 19, 1981).



Senator Fritz H. Windhorst watches Orleans Councilman Mike Early, Assessor Jimmy Smith, and Joe Worley tally the votes for his 1987 Senate re-election (October 24, 1987).



Louisiana State Senator Fritz H. Windhorst chairs Senate Judiciary C Committee hearing at Louisiana State Capitol, Senator Tony Guarisco on left (May 1987).



Senator Fritz H. Windhorst celebrates his 1987 re-election with wife Barbara (October 24, 1987).



Louisiana State Senator Fritz H. Windhorst District 7 (February 1988).  
(Photo release from photographer Sonny Randon available upon request).



Senator Fritz H. Windhorst helps Governor Buddy Roemer cut the ribbon opening GNO Bridge No. 2 with from left Mayor Sidney Barthelemy, Rep. Frank Patti, and Senator Sammy Nunez (September 30, 1988). (Photo release from photographer Sonny Randon available upon request).



Senator Fritz H. Windhorst looks on as Name the Bridge Contest winner Jennifer Grodsky presents Governor Buddy Roemer with Crescent City Connection medallion at the signing of Windhorst's bill to rename GNO Bridge No. 2 (May 1989).



President Ronald Reagan helps Louisiana State Senator Fritz Windhorst propose to Barbara Turner (November 1986).