



## Serphin (Serf) Maltese

### *Honorary Chairman*

Serphin R. Maltese was first elected to the New York State Senate in November of 1988 on the Republican, Conservative and Right to Life Party lines. He was reelected for ten terms on the Republican, Conservative and Independence Party lines, serving a total of 20 years, despite almost a 2 ½ to 1 Democrat Party enrollment advantage in the district. In the 2008 Presidential election year he lost his bid for reelection and retired from elective office.

He represented the 15th Senatorial District in Queens County in the City of New York, which includes the communities of Forest Hills Gardens, Glendale, Hamilton Beach, Howard Beach, Maspeth, Middle Village, Old Howard Beach, Ridgewood, Woodhaven, and parts of Elmhurst, Forest Hills, Kew Gardens, Ozone Park, Rego Park, Richmond Hill, South Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, Sunnyside and Woodside; serving over 320,000 constituents.

Born in Corona, Queens on December 7, 1932, Maltese graduated from P.S. 63, JHS 64 and Stuyvesant High School. After his military service, he went to Manhattan College on a Regents Scholarship and the G.I. Bill, where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree. He was awarded a War Service Scholarship and received his LL.B. and J.D. degrees from Fordham University Law School. Maltese was admitted to the New York State Bar in 1963 and admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court.

He is an Army Infantry Veteran of the Korean War, previously serving in the Marine Corps Reserves. He is a life member of the American Legion, Catholic War Veterans, Korean War Veteran's Association and a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. His active role in veterans affairs prompted his appointment during his first term as Chairman of the

Senate Standing Committee on Veterans. He was also a member of the American Legion's National Legislative Council.

In 1990, Maltese was the prime sponsor of the legislation that authorized the creation of the 250-bed State Veterans Nursing Home at St. Albans. He has been an active sponsor and guardian of the Veterans Home ever since.

As a Senator, Serf distinguished himself as a leading advocate not only for veterans throughout the state, but also for senior citizens and the middle class. He has been instrumental in the enactment of many significant initiatives to benefit these groups. In his second term, he served as Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Consumer Protection.

Prior to his election, Maltese served as a Queens Assistant District Attorney and Deputy Chief of the Homicide Bureau. His law enforcement experience and background led to his appointment as Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Correction in his third term.

Upon seeking reelection to his second term in 1990, Senator Maltese was opposed by political bosses in Queens who objected to his independent stance on behalf of his constituents, forcing him to seek nomination by write-in vote. In one of the largest primary write-in votes in our nation's history, with no other race on the ballot, Senator Maltese won renomination over his opponent by an astounding 6,243 to 237 margin.

In 1969, Serf was active as a citywide coordinator for State Senator John Marchi's mayoral bid and in 1970 he became Law Chairman and Election Law Advisor to U.S. Senator James L. Buckley in his successful historic third party victory on the Conservative-Independent Alliance party lines. He then served as Counsel to Senator Buckley and also to U.S. Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato . He was elected a New York State Reagan-Bush Elector in the 1980 and 1984 presidential elections. He also served as New York State Chairman of Conservatives for Ronald Reagan in 1980 and is a member of the Reagan Alumni President's

Club. He served for seven years as a member of Senator D'Amato's Federal Judicial Selection Panel. He has served for more than 25 years on the National Board of Directors of the American Conservative Union.

He and his wife Constance were co-founders of the New York State Conservative Party in 1962. He ran on William F. Buckley, Jr.'s ticket for State Senate in 1965. In speaking to students, he often pointed out the merits of persistence, noting his 1965 run and his Senate election victory 23 years later.

He served as Counsel to Assemblywoman Rosemary R. Gunning and was the Republican-Conservative candidate for State Assembly to succeed her in 1976 and was the Republican-Conservative candidate for the much publicized congressional vacancy of Geraldine Ferraro in 1984 when she was selected by Mondale as his Vice Presidential running mate. After being personally endorsed by President Reagan he ran a close race to Congressman Tom Manton, despite a 3 to 1 Democrat enrollment advantage in the Congressional District, and laid the groundwork for his successful State Senate run in 1988.

In October of 1988, his personal endorsement in Queens by Vice President Bush and all major law enforcement organizations made national news and was a major factor in his State Senate Victory.

Serf became Executive Director of the New York State Conservative Party in 1971 and Chairman of the Queens County Conservative Party in 1972. He was elected to the position of State Chairman of the party in 1986, a position in which he served until his election as Senator, when he voluntarily relinquished that post.

Senator Maltese's experience and interest in election law led to his appointment as Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Elections in 1995, a position in which he served through 2002. In 2003, Senator Maltese was appointed Chairman of the Senate Cities Committee which handles a wide variety of legislation impacting the six big cities and

over fifty small cities throughout the state. In his final term, he also served on the following Senate Committees: Rules, Civil Service and Pensions; Codes; Higher Education; Finance; Judiciary; Veterans; Homeland Security and Military Affairs. He was the only Senate Majority member from New York City on the Higher Education Committee. Senator Maltese also served in the Senate Leadership as Vice Chairman of the Majority Conference.

In keeping with his keen interest in the arts, Senator Maltese was also appointed and served as Chairman of the Special Committee on the Arts and Cultural Affairs. His wife Constance, an artist and pianist, was a continuous dedicated volunteer and inspiration in these endeavors.

Taking pride in his Italian American heritage and prominent in his advocacy of American and Italian American cooperation and causes he was knighted by the Republic of Italy and given the title "Cavaliere".

As a renowned artist and for her splendid achievements during the Columbus Quincentennial and her award winning "Age of Navigation" portrait series, Constance was knighted by the Republic of Italy and given the title "Cavaliere." Thus, Serf and Constance are one of the few couples in the world to both have that coveted distinction.

As Senator, he was affiliated with many civic and community organizations, including the Richmond Hill Block Association, Woodhaven Residents Block Association, Juniper Park Civic Association; Glendale Kiwanis; Queens Chamber of Commerce; Sons of Italy-Mario Lanza Lodge; Alpha Phi Delta; Belmonte-Mezzagno Benevolent Society; Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Memorial Association and previously served as Counsel to the New York State Commission on the Deaf and Multiply Impaired and Counsel to the Commission on Campus Disorders. Serf has served for over 15 years as an Executive Board Member of the Stuyvesant High School Alumni Association, an Honorary Trustee on the Board of Trustees of the Oratorio Society of Queens and the Italian Charities of America. He was credited as the leader in the

successful effort to reopen Christ the King Regional High School and has been serving pro bono as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Christ the King since 1975.

Maltese is a past president of the New York Conference of Italian American State Legislators. He served as liaison for the Columbus Countdown Quincentennial Program with Commendatore Anne Paolucci and is an Honorary Chairman of the Italian American Professional Business Association. Senator Maltese served as Chairman of the Queens County Republican Party for ten years and stepped down in order to serve as a full time Senator. He was elected as a Delegate to the Year 2000 Republican National Convention by the largest margin in the entire City of New York.

In addition to the many awards received by Senator Maltese, he was recognized by St. John's University as the recipient of their prestigious President's Medal and by LaGuardia Community College with their distinguished President's Medal. He was named "Man of the Year" by the Commission for Social Justice and was presented with the New York State Catholic Conference's Year 2000 Public Policy Award for his courageous public service in defense of innocent human life and in furtherance of educational choice.

During his tenure in office, he has authored 219 Maltese Bills that have been signed into law. He takes pride in the fact that he was always there for his constituents and maintained an official 100% attendance record throughout his 20 years of Senate service.

Prominent among his legislative accomplishments are his 1989 legislation that provided \$175 million in funding to save Wyckoff Heights Hospital and enabled then financially-troubled hospital to continue to provide quality medical care to patients in Queens and Kings Counties and his securing in 2006 one of the largest legislative grants in CUNY history - \$55 million - for LaGuardia Community College.

Due to his years of service, experience and leadership, he was able to secure legislative grants for 240 nonprofit groups in 2008. Securing \$1 million in capital funding for the

Greater Ridgewood Youth Council (GRYC) and \$1 million in capital funding for the new Italian American Museum were achievements of note.

He is an active leader for governmental disclosure and reform. Upon his election in November of 1988, Senator Maltese voluntarily gave up the practice of law to serve as a full time Senator. He practices only "pro bono" and since then has never accepted a referral, commission or fee of any kind.

Since leaving office he has been honored by the Diocese of Brooklyn with the "Celebration of Life Award" and by Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio with the Bishop's Good Scout Award and by Commissioner Patricia Smith and the NYS Department of Labor with the "We Will Always Remember" award for honoring the memory of the 146 immigrant victims of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire of March 25, 1911 which included his grandmother and two aunts.

He also recently received the J. Daniel Mahoney Award from the Conservative Party of New York State and the leadership award from the Queens County Conservative Party. He was honored by the VFW Daniels Post 2813 for "his long years of dedication to veteran's causes", by the Belmonte Mezzagno Society and for "Excellence in Support of the Performing Arts" by the Salvatore LaRusso Dance Theatre Academy and with the Achievement Award for "Years of Outstanding Leadership and Devotion" by the St. John's University Committee. His most recent honors were the "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Queens County Republican Party, the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War Merit Award for his "continued support to perpetuate the memory of Civil War Veterans" and being named by the Allied Veterans' of Greater Ridgewood and Glendale 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Memorial Day Parade Committee as "2009 Veteran of the Year".

He and the former Constance Mary DeVecchio have been married for 53 years. They were married in the Old Ascension Church in Elmhurst, Queens on August 27, 1955, prior to his sophomore year at Manhattan College. Constance is a renowned portrait artist and is well known for her award-winning "Age of Discovery" and "American Women" portrait series, the latter which is exhibited in connection with Women's History Month celebrations. They reside in Middle Village, Queens. They have two daughters, Andrea Maltese Spanarkel and Leslie Maltese McGill, and Serf and Constance take great pride in them, their husbands, Arthur and Jim and their achievements. Leslie and Jim have presented the Senator and Mrs. Maltese with two granddaughters, Sondra Elizabeth and Eva Daly, and a grandson James Francis McGill III. Andrea and Arthur added to their happiness with Genevieve Frances Spanarkel.