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## Former House of Representatives doorkeeper Molloy dies at 75

By [Emma Brown](#), Published: July 20

James T. Molloy, who served as doorkeeper of the U.S. House of Representatives for two decades until the centuries-old position was abolished by Republicans when they took control of Congress in 1995, died July 19 at a hospital in Rochester, N.Y. He was 75 and had complications from diabetes.

Mr. Molloy was the last in a line of 34 House doorkeepers stretching back to 1789, when the first — Gifford Dalley — was elected by Congress three and a half weeks before George Washington's inauguration as the nation's first president.

The doorkeeper's most visible job was introducing American presidents and foreign dignitaries to Congress.

Mr. Molloy introduced heads of state, including Queen Elizabeth II, and six presidents, from Richard M. Nixon to Bill Clinton. "Mister Speaker, the president of the United States," he said, in a bellow revealing his Irish heritage, before each annual state of the union address.

Gregarious and well liked, Mr. Molloy was known for his trove of Capitol Hill stories. As he prepared to introduce President Gerald R. Ford's Cabinet members to Congress before the 1975 state of the union address, he liked to recall, he was surprised by the sudden appearance of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

"Tell the world that Henry and the boys are here," Kissinger said.

Besides offering his voice to House floor ceremony, Mr. Molloy was a behind-the-scenes institution who controlled a multimillion-dollar budget and 400 patronage jobs, including pages. He oversaw the House barber shop and beauty parlor, its print shop, its cloakrooms and press galleries.

Mr. Molloy was an aide to former House speakers Carl Albert, Thomas "Tip" O'Neill, Jim Wright and Tom Foley. He organized more than 70 joint sessions of Congress — a feat that involved such delicate dealings as deciding which congressional spouses should be assigned seats in balconies behind the rostrum, from which the speaker is all but invisible.

"I'm a political creature," he told the New York Times in 1985. "If something involves politics, it ends up here."

He lost his job after the 1994 elections, a Republican landslide that handed control of the House to the GOP for the first time in 40 years.

Seeking to streamline government and save money, the new House leadership eliminated the doorkeeper position. Its duties were spread among the sergeant at arms, the clerk of the House and the newly created position of chief administrative officer.

"I've been a lucky stiff," Mr. Molloy told the Buffalo News when he left the House in 1995. "The process has been good to me."

James Thomas Molloy was born in South Buffalo on June 3, 1936. As a young man, he worked at grain elevators and for the city fire department to put himself through school at Buffalo's Canisius College, from which he earned a bachelor's degree in 1958.

He had been surrounded by and interested in Democratic politics since he was a kid. "I suppose if you're from Colorado, you grow up skiing. If you're from South Buffalo, it's politics," he told the News in 1995.

At 27, Mr. Molloy became Buffalo's youngest-ever ward chairman, and several years later was invited to work in Washington by Rep. John Rooney (D-N.Y.).

Mr. Molloy worked in the House Finance Office for several years until 1974, when the Democratic caucus elected him to succeed long-serving doorkeeper William "Fishbait" Miller.

After leaving the House in 1995, Mr. Molloy was chairman of the board of the Wright Patman Congressional Federal Credit Union and worked as a lobbyist for clients that included the tobacco giant Philip Morris. He and his wife of 40 years, Roseann Tonucci Molloy, lived in Laurel for many years.

They had recently taken an apartment in Rochester, where their daughter, Amy Molloy Bogardus, is a lawyer. Besides his wife and daughter, Mr. Molloy had two sisters and two grandchildren.

Despite being a Democrat, Mr. Molloy said he had great admiration for former president Ronald Reagan's personality and humanity.

Before one State of the Union address by Reagan, a White House aide called to tell Mr. Molloy that the president planned to buck tradition and wear a brown suit rather than the standard navy blue.

The doorkeeper was warned not to wear brown. He disobeyed.

When Reagan arrived at the House chambers, he smiled and congratulated Mr. Molloy on his attire. "Nice suit you have on," the president said, smiling.

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