

Beacon Hill Byline by Representative Mary Rogeness

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Representative Anthony Scibelli, Dean of the House

Last week marked the end of an era for the political world of Springfield and for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: Representative Anthony Scibelli, the Dean of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, died as his forty-eighth year of service in the legislature drew to a close. Service such as his will not be seen again.

Rep. Scibelli earned the title "Dean of the House" by having the earliest service among the members. And Tony held that distinction with no rival. Simply stating that he took office in 1950 does not convey the extent of that tenure. Let me put it in historical context.

In 1950, Harry Truman was president of the United States. The Korean War was beginning. Longmeadow had not built a high school because there were not enough students to use it. The town had a population of 6,507. The House of Representatives had 240 members instead of today's 160, and Anthony Scibelli was a freshman member.

In the years that followed, Rep. Scibelli became a leader in Boston. By the 1960's, he was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. While he wielded power on the budget of the entire state, the Dean focused his attention on his neighborhood and Springfield. He helped individuals in his district and garnered state support and funding for projects such as Springfield Technical Community College, Forest Park and the libraries and swimming pools of the city. One accomplishment of particular pride to the Dean was the enactment of a 65 miles per hour speed limit on interstate highways.

As we mourn the loss of a colleague, legislators share stories of our years with the Dean. He was admired by all of us for his grasp of politics and his compassion for the people of his district.

In recent years, Tony Scibelli talked from time to time of retiring from the House. But when the filing date for re-election came, his name would again be on the ballot. The House of Representatives was his life work, and he left that work only with the end of his life. He will be missed.