

Robert W. Kastenmeier
2006 Wall of Fame Outstanding Alumnus

Robert W. Kastenmeier graduated from Beaver Dam High School in 1941. He attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison where he studied law and received his LL.B in 1952. Kastenmeier took a break from his college studies to serve in the United States Army from 1943 – 1948.

Kastenmeier was elected to serve Jefferson and Dodge Counties as Justice of the Peace from 1955 – 1959 while also practicing law in Wisconsin until he was elected to Congress from the second congressional district of south central Wisconsin in 1958. Kastenmeier served as chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on courts, Intellectual Property, and the Administration of Justice.

As a member of Congress, Kastenmeier was an advocate for and strong supporter of individual rights. He supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and 1968, Voting Rights of 1965, legal voting age of 18, and the Equal Rights Amendment. Kastenmeier was the author of the Civil Rights on Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA), written to protect children, aged, mentally ill institutions, and prisons. He gained approval from Congress to eliminate authority for setting up concentration camps in the United States. “Kastenmeier has consistently supported social programs to improve educational opportunities, health care access for all Americans, and welfare programs, which effectively promote self-sufficiency,” said Kastenmeier’s nominator.

Kastenmeier lead the writing of rules that directed the Judiciary Committee’s actions during the Nixon impeachment proceedings in 1974 and directed the writing of an article of impeachment in 1986 in convicting and removing from office the first federal judge in 50 years.

Kastenmeier was given the responsibility to oversee the U.S. Patent Office. “Charged with the oversight of the U.S. Patent Office, he mounted a successful effort to institute patent reforms,” said Kastenmeier’s nominator. “The GAO termed the changes ‘significant in stimulating business sponsorship of university research’ making it easier for universities and small business to market ingenuity.”

Kastenmeier protected the Copyright Law of 1976 through Congress. This was the first revision to the original law from 1909. “In 1984, he oversaw enactment of a new form of legal protection for semiconductor chips, the heart of most high tech systems, from piracy of their design, and in 1988 he led the way for the U.S. to become a member of the premier international copyright treaty, the Bern Convention,” said Kastenmeier’s nominator.