NASS
National Association of Secretaries of State

2011 MARGARET CHASE SMITH AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AWARD NOMINATION FORM

Deadline for Submitting Nominations: Friday, May 6, 2011

NOMINEE INFORMATION

Name of Nominee: Ken Hechler

Job Title (if applicable): Former Congressman

Address: 101B Greenbrier St., Charleston, WV 25311

Telephone (please include daytime and cell phone numbers, if possible): (304) 343-1116

Email Address:

Short Description of Specific Acts of Courage/Reason for Nomination: Continuing in his eighties and nineties a pattern he has shown throughout his life of standing up for what he believes in regardless of obstacles. Running for Governor at the age of 96 to get mountaintop removal into the gubernatorial debate. Protesting mountaintop removal mining to the extent of being arrested.

NOMINATOR INFORMATION

Nomination Submitted By: Natalie E. Tennant

Address: Building 1, Suite 157K, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. E., Charleston, WV 25305

Telephone: (304) 558-6000

Email Address: ntennant@wvsos.com

In addition to this form, please provide a separate statement or letter (approximately 600-1200 words) explaining your reason(s) for nominating this individual, including a detailed description of how the nominee has demonstrated uncommon courage and/or exceptional character in pursuit of the common good. Emphasis should be placed on contemporary acts of courage, rather than examples from the distant past.

Please submit completed form and supporting nomination materials to the NASS office no later than Friday, May 6 via mail, e-mail, or fax to:

Stacy Fisher, NASS Executive Assistant
National Association of Secretaries of State
444 N Capitol Street NW- Suite 401
Washington DC 20001
PHONE: (202) 624-3525
FAX: (202) 624-3527
EMAIL: sfisher@sso.org

Submitted by Hon. Natalie Tennant, West Virginia Secretary of State

2012 Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award Nomination
Ken Hechler

Because of the unflinching political courage he has demonstrated throughout his life, especially in his eighth and ninth decades, it gives me great pleasure to nominate former Congressman Ken Hechler for the Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award.

Ken Hechler has been called many things – a maverick politician, a rabble-rouser, a great statesman, a trouble-maker, a hero – but he has never, to my knowledge, been called a quitter. And so at the age of 97 he continues to do what he has done throughout his long life: advocate for the common good, no matter unpopular, or even dangerous, his political stances may be.

Although Ken Hechler has had many outstanding high points in his career, I would like to emphasize his more recent acts of political courage. As I write, Ken is fighting to preserve the beautiful state of West Virginia from the devastation caused by various environmental issues. On August 28, 2010, he ran in the special election to succeed the late Senator Robert Byrd, not with the thought of winning, but simply to bring the environmental issues affecting West Virginia into the campaign dialogue. He chose to use his own personal resources to pursue his campaign to share his message.

At the age of 89, in order to continue the fight against political corruption that he began as West Virginia Secretary of State, he ran for that office again. His age was made an issue in the campaign by opposing candidate Mike Oliverio, who ran an ad simply saying "Vote for Mike Oliverio, I'm not 89 years old." It takes courage to run for election, to seek out public judgment, again and again, with an ever higher risk of defeat. But that is not unexpected from Ken Hechler – it is simply a culmination of a path he has chosen to take over many years.

As Secretary of State, he did much to battle the "good old boys" club that held power when he was elected. He is well-known for his successful prosecution of political boss Johnny Owens, who sold his office as sheriff for $100,000. As Secretary of State, he also rallied against rampant campaign spending, and was a principal force behind the mobilization of Secretaries of State and Attorneys General in 33 states to limit campaign spending. He was also the architect of the 300 foot law, which prohibits campaigning within 300 feet of a polling place, and initiated the Code of Fair Campaign practices. Finally, he walked 530 miles with Granny D. in support of campaign finance reform. It is always dangerous to fight corruption if you have been elected by a corrupt system, but Ken has never let fear stand in his way.

This fearlessness has characterized his entire career. Let us not forget that he was the only Congressman to march with Martin Luther King in Selma, Alabama. He also was the first Congressman to sponsor legislation to limit coal dust and provide strict safety standards in the Federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act of 1969. In doing so he set himself directly against the powerful coal interests that control much of West Virginia. He also fought against corruption in the coal union, and risked his life to campaign for insurgent candidate Jock Yablonski, who was later murdered. In his nineties he has turned his focus to mountaintop removal mining, and his stance alienates the mining community that he relied on for support throughout his early political career.

Throughout his life, Ken Hechler has advocated for his own beliefs in pursuit of the common good, in spite of any opposition or political cost. He embodies the principals of the Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award. It gives me great pleasure to nominate him for this well-deserved recognition, which would be a culmination of a lifetime of stellar achievements.

STATE OF MINNESOTA
Office of Minnesota Secretary of State
Mark Ritchie

Ms. Stacy Dodd
National Association of Secretaries of State
444 North Capitol Street, Suite 401
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Stacy:

I am writing to nominate West Virginias's former Secretary of State, Mr. Ken Hechler for the 2012 Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award.

Mr. Hechler has demonstrated an unparalleled and lifelong commitment to his community, state and nation, beginning during his college years at Swarthmore College and Columbia University.

He honorably served our country during World War II in the 9th Armored Division, who captured the Ludendorff Bridge at the famous battle of Remagen. Mr. Hechler advanced from private to major due to his courage under fire, earning a bronze star and five battle stars. Shortly after the end of the war Mr. Hechler became the chief interrogator of the top Nazi officials at Mondorf, Luxemburg. Mr. Hechler documented his experiences during World War II in two books, "The Bridge at Remagen," (which sold 650,000 copies and was made into a full length motion picture) and "Goering and His Gang," published in 2011.

Mr. Hechler's continued to dedicate his life to our country after his time in the military came to an end. His career in public service began in 1949 and he served until 1953 as special assistant to President Truman's White House staff.

His career in public service did not stop at the White House. He was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1958 and served until 1977, earning a reputation for being an articulate and outspoken champion of many causes. He was the only member of the Congress to march with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, requiring him to face gunfire in Alabama and mounds of hate mail from his constituents back home. He was the chief architect of the 1969 Coal Mine Health and Safety Act.

After serving in Congress Mr. Hechler was elected as West Virginia's Secretary of State in 1985 and served until 2001. He worked to clean up dirty elections and successfully oversaw the prosecution of a particularly notorious political boss named Johnnie Owens.

At 97 years young Mr. Hechler is still as courageous as when he was when he marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and as courageous as when he was nearly murdered fighting mobsters to defending the rights of coal miners. Still to this day he continues to fight to shed light on unsafe practices in the West Virginia coal mining industry.

180 State Office Building | 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. | Saint Paul, MN 55155-1299
Phone: 651-201-1324 or 1-877-600-8683 | Fax: 651-296-9073 | MN Relay Service: 711
E-mail: secretary.state.@state.mn.us | Web site: www.sos.state.mn.us

It was my honor to come to know former Secretary of State Ken Hechler at last year's NASS summer conference. Since that time I have been reading his book and corresponding with Mr. Hechler and others who know him well. I believe he is a very worthy candidate for our Margaret Chase Smith American Democracy Award and has demonstrated true courage throughout his military and career in public service. I ask that the NASS membership strongly consider Mr. Ken Hechler for the Margaret Chase Smith Award.

Sincerely,

Mark Ritchie

MARK RITCHIE
Secretary of State