



Rep. Bill Hitchens
District 161

Biography

Bill Hitchens is no stranger to government service. Prior to his election to the Georgia House of Representatives, he served 47 years in the military and state law enforcement. He is a Marine Corps Vietnam veteran, and he served 28 years on the Georgia State Patrol (GSP) prior to retiring in 1997. During his career with the GSP, he was stationed in Savannah, Americus, Statesboro and Atlanta. At the time of his retirement from the GSP, he held the rank of major and was the South Division adjutant. In that position, he was responsible for all State Patrol law enforcement activities in the southern half of the state, and he reported directly to the commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. During the 1996 Olympic Games, he was a law enforcement shift commander and was responsible for all state law enforcement personnel at the many venues in Atlanta and across the state. On one memorable night, he was called to the scene of a “suspicious package” in Centennial Park, which culminated with him being about thirty-five to forty feet from “the bomb” when it detonated.

After retiring from the GSP, Bill worked three years with the Governor’s Criminal Justice Coordinating Council as a law enforcement consultant, where his primary responsibility was working with the 30 federally funded multi-jurisdictional drug task forces in Georgia.

Throughout most of his career with the GSP, Bill maintained a parallel career in the Coast Guard Reserve. Although primarily involved with Readiness and Port Contingency Planning, he also served two tours as the executive officer of Coast Guard Reserve Unit Air Station Savannah. He was called to active duty for the Muriel Boatlift in 1980 and was later activated twice for Operation Desert Storm. His last assignment was as the senior planner for the Coast Guard’s Olympic Task Force in preparation for the yachting venue in Savannah. Bill retired from the Coast Guard Reserve with the rank of commander (O-5).

In January of 2003, former Governor Sonny Perdue selected Bill to be the first director of the Georgia Office of Homeland Security. In a realignment of the state’s law enforcement agencies, Bill’s role was to serve as the point person for all homeland security issues in the state of Georgia. His position was one of six that reported directly to the governor. In May 2004, via an Executive Order by Governor Perdue, Bill was named executive commander of the G-8 Public Safety Command. Reporting directly to the governor, he was placed in charge of all state efforts to coordinate law enforcement and public safety operations for the Group of Eight Summit (G-8) held June 8-10, 2004, on Sea Island, Georgia. Coordinated by then Director Hitchens, the state effort included over 11,000 public safety and Georgia National Guard personnel from across the state with a budget of \$25 million. In total, 77

law enforcement agencies within the state and several agencies from South Carolina and Florida participated in the G-8 effort. An unprecedented success, the G-8 event produced no fatalities, no injuries and only 18 arrests of protestors.

In December 2004, Governor Perdue nominated Bill Hitchens to be the commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Safety and the colonel of the Georgia State Patrol. The Georgia Board of Public Safety unanimously approved his appointment with an effective date of December 16, 2004. After his election, former Governor Nathan Deal reappointed Bill and swore him in on January 18, 2011.

Bill is a graduate of Georgia Southern College and the 130th Session of the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia. He has also completed the Georgia Executive Leadership Program and the Legislative Leadership Institute, courses administered by the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Throughout his many years of public service, he has accumulated thousands of specialized training hours in the military, law enforcement, homeland security and emergency management.

An active member of his community, Bill has coached numerous little league baseball, softball and basketball teams, served as the president of his hometown Jaycee organization and three terms as president of the Effingham County High School Booster Club. He also served as the state president of the Georgia Chapter of the FBI National Academy Associates and as the state president of the Peace Officers' Association of Georgia. He has served on several state boards, commissions and authorities, including the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council (POST), the State Indemnification Commission, the Georgia Aviation Authority and the Brain and Spinal Injury Trust Fund Commission. Bill has been a member of the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) Executive Board since 2003 and was selected as a member of the 16th GILEE delegation. He was elected by the delegation to be the spokesperson for the group during their two week trip to Israel, hosted by the Israeli National Police. In 2009, Bill was named as the chairman of the National Law Enforcement Explorers Conference, which was held in July 2010 at the Georgia Institute of Technology and involved approximately 3,000 Law Enforcement Explorers (14 -21) and their law enforcement sponsors from all 50 states and Puerto Rico.

For his civic, military and law enforcement efforts through the years, Bill has received several awards, including Savannah Metropolitan Police Officer of the Year in 1978, Effingham County Police Officer of the Year in 1978, The T. Malone Sharpe Memorial Award as the Outstanding Local Chapter President in the Georgia Jaycees in 1979, Outstanding Military Citizen of Georgia Award in 1988, the Georgia State Patrol's Meritorious Service Award for his actions in Centennial Park immediately after the bombing in 1996, the Arthur Hutchins Memorial Award as the Georgia Peace Officer of the Year for Meritorious Service in 2004, Outstanding Leader of the Year Award for Georgia State Government and the University System in 2009, a Governor's Public Safety Award for career contributions to the law enforcement profession in 2010 and the Georgia Chapter of the FBI National Academy Associates Member of the Year Award in 2011.

Bill has been married to his wife, Norma, a Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism retiree, since August 31, 1968. They have four children and ten grandchildren. Norma and Bill reside in Rincon and are members of the Baptist Church at Ebenezer.