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QuickTakes!

U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo Donates His Congressional Memorabilia to Stockton University

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Stockton President Harvey Kesselman signs the agreement with U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo and his wife, Tina.

After more than 23 years in Congress, U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo is retiring in January and cleaning out his office. His career has filled some 350 boxes with papers, mementos and plaques.

On Monday, October 15, 2018, U.S. Representative LoBiondo signed an agreement with Stockton University that will make items from his 35 years in public service available to Stockton students and researchers through the Special Collections department in the Richard E. Bjork Library at Stockton's main campus in Galloway Township.

"You've done incredible work," Stockton President Harvey Kesselman said at the signing held at Stockton University Atlantic City. "Frank is a humble public servant who has made a fundamental difference. We are a better region for his having served."

Dr. Kesselman said he is proud and honored that U.S. Representative LoBiondo chose to share his life's work with Stockton University.

"For him making this donation is important for our students and future generations," Dr. Kesselman said. "I cannot be more proud that our students will be studying your work."

Attending the event with his wife, Tina, Congressman LoBiondo said it is bittersweet to be leaving. He said he decided early in his career in Congress that he would focus on serving his district, but that many local issues had national reach, such as the William J. Hughes FAA Technical Center, the 177th Fighter Wing, N.J. Air National Guard, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

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Congressman LoBiondo also presented Kesselman with a flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol in honor of Stockton University.

“You and Stockton have been a game changer in the region,” Congressman LoBiondo said. He brought several items to the signing, including the very first bill he sponsored to provide protective vests for law enforcement, and a booklet of voting cards that represent more than 20,000 votes.

The protective vest bill, said the congressman, was inspired by the death of Bayside State Prison corrections officer Fred Baker who was stabbed by an inmate while on duty at the Cumberland County prison in 1997. Congressman LoBiondo was surprised Baker was not wearing a protective vest, and, as a result, he drafted the law that continues to provide bulletproof vests to law enforcement nationwide.

He also brought a photo of the twin towers in Manhattan, a photo of him with President George W. Bush, and awards from the Nature Conservatory and the Human Society. A longtime member of the House Armed Services Committee, Congressman LoBiondo said he and his wife are “dog people.” He said while many may think of the Armed Services Committee as only dealing with weapons and protection, it also deals with quality of life issues such as the condition of military bases, veterans’ services, and the treatment of military dogs.

The collection will include materials from LoBiondo’s entire 35-year career as a Cumberland County Freeholder, N.J. State Assemblyman, and U.S. Congressman. He said he hopes those who study the materials gain an understanding of “how complex it is to take a good idea and make it happen Students can see the tangible evidence of what it took to get to that point,” he said.

He hopes future generations also get a picture of his focus, and his dedication to the 2nd District, which geographically covers some 40 percent of the state.

“For me, the district came first, even if it was at odds with the party,” he said.

Stockton archivist Heather Perez is working with LoBiondo’s staff to collect and sort the materials. Some items will be gifts and others will be on loans. Ms. Perez said an exhibit is planned for some time in 2019 that will show “how all of the things come together to explain to us how bills come into law.” She said she hopes to enlist student interns to assist. The collection will also include a video interview with the Congressman.

“I didn’t set out to spend 24 years in Congress,” Congressman LoBiondo said. “But I’m happy I had the opportunity to serve.”