

## **Richard Beth**

### ***Bellport High School Class of 1962***



Richard S. Beth, a 1962 graduate of BHS, went on to become a political scientist, and spent most of his career as a Specialist on Congress and the Legislative Process at the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS is a non-partisan, in-house policy analysis institute for Congress; it is part of the Library of Congress and employs over 400 analysts in all areas of public policy. Rick remained at CRS from 1980 until his retirement in 2017, serving for several years as Head of its Legislative and Budget Processes Section.

During his time at CRS, Rick became a nationally recognized expert on filibusters in the Senate, the “cloture rule” for limiting filibusters, and the “nuclear option” for strengthening the cloture rule. Rick was also closely involved in the development of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995, which established procedures to regulate congressional consideration of legislation that would impose financial burdens on State and local governments. In addition, reports that Rick produced for Congress developed improved ways of understanding the “fast track” procedures that Congress uses for specific classes of legislation, especially the Congressional Review Act for disapproval of regulations proposed by government agencies and the procedures for Congress to approve trade agreements with other countries.

Other subjects on which Rick’s work at CRS developed new insights included recesses, adjournments, and lame duck sessions of Congress; the House rule for discharging committees from considering bills; and the process by which the Senate has considered Supreme Court nominations. Rick has testified before the House Committee on Rules, his research has been cited in debate on the Senate floor, and some of his writings have been included in various publications of Congress itself.

Rick was valedictorian of his BHS class and went on to get a B.A. in public affairs *magna cum laude* from Princeton in 1966, followed by an M.Phil. (1970) and a Ph.D. (1976) from Yale in political science. Rick was commissioned an Army officer through the ROTC program at Princeton, and his graduate work was interrupted by service as a desk officer at Ft. Bragg, NC, from 1970 to 1972. After Rick finally completed his Ph.D. thesis on “Analysis of Political Interaction through Communication Theory,” he was an Assistant Professor of political science at Boston University (1974-1978) and Southwest Missouri State University (1978-1980), teaching courses on American politics, especially Congress. By 1980, however, it appeared that Rick was unlikely to attain tenure as a professor, so he turned back from academic political science toward his earlier specialization in public affairs, taking the position at CRS.

Rick nevertheless continued to maintain an active interest in his academic field, writing papers for political science audiences not only about Congress, but also about various theoretical concepts for understanding politics. In retirement, he intends to continue writing on these and other topics, some more philosophical and some more directly addressed to contemporary American politics.

One of Rick’s most appreciated honors was being selected by his colleagues for the 2011 Director’s Award at CRS. Another was being the invited commencement speaker for the BHS graduating class of 2006.