



## Congress of the United States of America House of Representatives

Vernon J. Ehlers

Michigan

March 3, 2006

### Former Congressman Richard F. VanderVeen of East Grand Rapids, Michigan, Dies at 83

Dear Colleague:

It is my sad duty to report to the members of the U.S. House of Representatives that a former member of our body, Richard F. VanderVeen, passed away Thursday evening at his home in East Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was 83 years old.

Mr. VanderVeen, a Democrat, was elected to the U.S. House as a representative of Michigan's Fifth (now Third) District in a special election on Feb. 18, 1974. He replaced then-Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford, who had resigned his seat to accept his appointment as Vice President in 1973. Mr. VanderVeen subsequently was elected to a full term in November of that year, but lost his bid for re-election in November 1976. Mr. VanderVeen is the only Democrat to hold the Congressional seat covering the Grand Rapids area since 1913. In 1978, he lost a bid for the Democratic nomination for the U.S. Senate to now-Sen. Carl Levin.

A native of Grand Rapids, Mr. VanderVeen served in the United States Navy in the South Pacific during World War II, then graduated from the University of South Carolina and Harvard Law School. After serving in the Korean Conflict, VanderVeen returned to Grand Rapids, where he commenced his law practice and became involved in local and state Democratic politics. He also was elected to the East Grand Rapids Board of Education and served on the Michigan State Mental Health Commission and the Michigan State Highway Commission. After his service in Congress, Mr. VanderVeen served as a member of the Michigan State Waterways Commission.

Dick VanderVeen was a consummate gentleman – one of the finest people I have had the pleasure of knowing. Even though we were from opposite parties, we got along very well and worked together on several projects. We shared a common interest in supporting libraries. He cared a great deal about our community and we will all miss him.

A memorial service is scheduled for Sunday, March 5, at 2:30 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In lieu of flowers, donations in his memory can be made to the Grand Rapids Public Library Ryerson Library Foundation, 111 Library Street N.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49503-3268, or [www.ryersonfoundation.org](http://www.ryersonfoundation.org).

Sincerely,

Vernon J. Ehlers  
Member of Congress

