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CORRECTION TO THIS ARTICLE

An earlier version of this story, including Monday's print edition of the Washington Post incorrectly said William Ratchford worked as the Clinton administration's top lobbyist for the General Services Administration until 2002. This version has been corrected.

Obituary: William R. Ratchford, 76, Conn. congressman and Clinton official

By Emma Brown

Washington Post Staff Writer

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William R. Ratchford, 76, a Democrat who served three terms in Congress as a representative from Connecticut and who later became a lobbyist and a Clinton administration official, died Jan. 2 at Goodwin House Bailey's Crossroads in Falls Church. He had Parkinson's disease.

Mr. Ratchford represented Connecticut from 1979 until 1984. His 5th District was a swath of the southwestern part of the state that included wealthy suburbs as well as struggling mill towns in the Naugatuck Valley and small cities with industrial pasts.

He held seats on the Education and Labor Committees, the Permanent Select Committee on Aging and, in his third term, the powerful Appropriations Committee.

After winning election in 1978, Mr. Ratchford survived the Republican tide of 1980 and won again in 1982. He lost his reelection bid in 1984 to Republican John G. Rowland, who went on to become Connecticut's governor.

Mr. Ratchford, who remained in the Washington area, took a job with the lobbying firm Gold & Leibengood. His first day at work was Jan. 4, 1985, the day after his congressional term expired - a quick turnaround that he said was due in part to having sons in college.

"The tuition bills keep coming," Mr. Ratchford told the New York Times in the waning days of his term. "That doesn't give you much time to contemplate your future."

He remained with Gold & Leibengood until 1993, when he joined President Bill Clinton's administration as the top lobbyist for the General Services Administration.

Mr. Ratchford continued in that job until the end of Clinton's term in 2001. He then worked as a consultant for several years before retiring.

William Richard Ratchford was born May 24, 1934, in Danbury, Conn. He graduated in 1956 from the University of Connecticut with a political science degree and received a law degree in 1959 from Georgetown University.

Mr. Ratchford served in the Connecticut National Guard from 1959 until 1965.

His political career began in 1962, when he won election to the Connecticut House as a representative from Danbury. He served until the early 1970s, including several years as speaker, before running for U.S. Congress in 1974.

That race ended in a narrow loss to the Republican incumbent, Ronald A. Sarasin.

Mr. Ratchford served in the Connecticut executive branch for several years, first as chairman of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Nursing Homes and then as commissioner on aging.

In 1978, he won election to the U.S. House after a close race against state legislator George C. Guidera.

Mr. Ratchford was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington.

Survivors include his wife of 53 years, Barbara Carpenter Ratchford of Arlington; three sons, Shaun Ratchford of Danbury, Scott Ratchford of West Hartford, Conn., and Brian Ratchford of Lawrenceville, Ga.; a brother; a sister; and eight grandchildren.

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