

### ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY OCTOBER 6



**Former United States senator Chapman Revercomb died on October 6, 1979.**

**CSO: SS.8.2., SS.8.4, ELA.8.1**

**Investigate the Document:** (*Charleston Gazette-Mail, October 7, 1979*)

1. In 1942, Senator Chapman Revercomb pulled off one of the most memorable upsets in the state's history by defeating \_\_\_\_\_, who was the current governor of West Virginia.
2. Chapman lost in his 1958 re-election bid to *this* Democrat who would remarkably fill the position until his death in 2010.

**Think Critically:** Chapman Revercomb was the last Republican to represent West Virginia in the Senate (1956-59) until Shelley Moore Capito in 2014. Why do you think West Virginia has shifted from a Blue State to a Red State within the past twenty years? Why have Democrats been able to tread water in state and local elections in West Virginia, but have not been successful in regaining West Virginia, nationally? Cite YOUR elected officials at the national, state and local levels. What political party are they? <https://www.commoncause.org/find-your-representative/addr/>



## GAZETTE - MAIL

Charleston, West Virginia, Sunday Morning, October 7, 1979

### Ex-Senator Revercomb Dead at 84

By Herb Little

The Associated Press

The courtly, handsome, white-haired Chapman Revercomb, who died Saturday in Kanawha Valley Memorial Hospital at the age of 84, could have played United States senator roles in the movies if he had not been one in real life.

He was five times the Senate nominee of badly outnumbered West Virginia Republicans. He was elected to the Senate twice — in 1942, in one of the memorable upsets of state political history, and again in 1956.

His 1942 victory was at the expense of imperious New Deal Democrat Matthew M. Neely, then governor, who on that occasion overdraw on his reputation for political invincibility.

In his 1960 gubernatorial primary campaign, Revercomb advocated repeal of the sales tax on food, a proposal that was not to succeed until 19 years later, when it was made by a Democratic governor.

WITH TWO years left of a Senate term, Neely had run for governor in 1940 and resigned from the Senate after his election. Midway in his term as

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Revercomb

### Ex-Senator Revercomb

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governor, Neely decided he wanted to return to Washington and ran for the Senate, with the view of resigning as governor if elected.

Revercomb, the GOP nominee after a hairbreadth primary victory, overcame a 150,000 Democratic registration advantage to defeat Neely by almost 50,000 votes in November.

Revercomb owed his place on the 1942 November ballot to a Republican primary victory — by a statewide margin of only 124 votes — over wealthy Eastern Panhandle industrialist Raymond J. Funkhouser.

Six years later, Revercomb ran for re-election to the Senate, but was defeated by Neely, who by this time was back in Congress as a member of the House of Representatives.

AFTER THE Republicans nominated Revercomb for the Senate for the third time in 1952, only to see him beaten by Democratic incumbent Harley M. Kilgore, it appeared that the gentlemanly Charleston lawyer had been a one-term phenomenon.

But Kilgore died in office. The two years left of his term were therefore at stake in the 1956 election. Again the top GOP nominee, Revercomb defeated outgoing Democratic Gov. William C. Marland for the short term. It was the Eisenhower re-election year. The Republican president carried West Virginia after losing it four years earlier. Cecil H. Underwood became the first Republican in a generation to be elected governor.

The next two years were Revercomb's last hurrah in Washington. Running for re-election in 1958, he lost to Democrat Robert C. Byrd in the election that first put the subsequent majority leader in the Senate.

Back in Charleston, Revercomb turned his attention to state office. Once before, as a young lawyer in 1936, he had run for the GOP nomination for governor, but finished third in a five-man primary race.

Now, at the age of 64, Revercomb ran in the 1960 primary for the Republican nomination to succeed Underwood. In the last of his seven statewide political races (not counting national convention delegate contests), Revercomb lost to Underwood-endorsed Har-

old Neely, who had been public institutions commissioner in the Underwood administration.

**SURVIVING:** brother, Horace Revercomb, Dr. Paul H. Revercomb, both of Charleston, Edmond Revercomb of Covington, Va.; sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Hudnall of Covington, Va.

Friends may call from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. Monday at Wilson Funeral Home.

Revercomb's record in his first Senate term was decidedly conservative. He advocated foreign aid cuts. He alienated organized labor by support of the Taft-Hartley law. He was attacked by minorities.

A FOOTBALL and baseball player in high school, Revercomb went on to Washington and Lee University, where he was captain of the freshman football team. But he gave up football after his freshman year to concentrate on his studies.

Revercomb went to law school at the University of Virginia. He completed his legal education there after an interruption for World War I Army service as a corporal in a coast artillery battery.

After law school graduation, he came to West Virginia in 1922 and joined a Charleston law firm. He was married in 1925 to the former Sara Hughes of Ashland, Va. They had four children.

Revercomb had been in failing health for several years. He gave up law practice after a 1968 stroke affected his hearing and vision, although he continued to go to his office frequently to take care of correspondence. He was further incapacitated by a second stroke in 1976, which, he said, "crippled me quite a bit."