

## Racine St. Catherine's Reverses Decision; Will Name Conservative Icon Paul Weyrich To School's Hall Of Fame

*By Mark Belling, WISN-AM*

After the decision by Racine St. Catherine High School to again exclude Paul Weyrich from the Catholic school's hall of fame was discussed on my program, school officials have reversed their decision and Weyrich, an alumnus of the school, will be inducted this year.

Weyrich is one of the five most important figures in the contemporary American conservative movement and, along with direct mail pioneer Richard Viguerie, is credited with essentially inventing the grass roots conservative movement. Weyrich died in 2008 at age 66.

After growing up in Racine and graduating from St. Catherine's, Weyrich made his way to Washington and quickly became one of the most powerful conservatives in the country, usually in behind the scenes roles. He founded the Free Congress Foundation, the first major grassroots conservative movement in the country. He was a close adviser to many top Republicans, a frequent columnist in publications like the Wall Street Journal and National Review, and one of the driving ideological forces behind the so-called Reagan Revolution.

Weyrich's greatest influence was in pushing the largely elitist GOP of the 1970s and 1980s toward conservative beliefs and was one of the first to understand the Republican Party could draw the support of blue collar working class voters. He was one of the most prominent pro-life leaders ever.

Weyrich occasionally dabbled in Wisconsin issues and his views were sometimes eclectic. For example, he was a major booster of railroad mass transit, an idea virtually no other conservatives believe in. He fell out of the Ronald Reagan inner circle because he felt Reagan wasn't governing conservatively enough.

St. Catherine's started its Hall of Fame in 1996 and has consistently chosen to not name Weyrich to it, an omission that has no plausible explanation other than some people didn't like his conservative political views. This year, the parent of a former St. Catherine student nominated Weyrich. The nomination was rejected by school officials. The parent contacted me and I discussed the astonishing snub on my program. The school's principal denied political bias had anything to do with the 25-year exclusion of one of the most famous graduates in the history of the school. They did acknowledge the Weyrich nomination was not handled properly.

The school supporter who nominated Weyrich was informed this week that the school has reversed its decision and Weyrich will be inducted this year.

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