

The Honorable William A. Oberle, Jr.

Presidential Citation for Legislative Leadership

Bill Oberle leaves the Delaware House of Representatives this year as the longest-serving Republican in the House. First elected in 1976 at age 27 in the 24th district in Newark; Minority Whip 1983-1984; Majority Leader 1984-1987; and Speaker Pro Tempore 1999 - 2008. His district has many more Democrats than Republicans; even more Independents than Republicans. But the R behind his name didn't matter to his constituents because he was always 100% pro-labor. His father worked for what was then Worth Steel in Claymont. He graduated from Brandywine High School and worked for many years for the DuPont Company.

We honored him in 1992 as our Legislative Friend of Education, recognizing that he was our key to getting difficult, pro-union legislation through the House. During those many years when the House was controlled by Republicans, he was our "go-to guy." In 1992, he sponsored the bill that would require school districts to deduct "agency fee" payments. Before that, it was always a battle, a battle we often lost.

The legislation that allows the DSEA President to go on unpaid leave – and therefore have a right to go back to his/her school district – Bill Oberle sponsored. Our recent victories regarding workers' compensation, binding arbitration for grievances and now also binding arbitration for contract disputes, Bill Oberle sponsored. Legislation that many of his Republican colleagues would oppose, he would not only sign on to, but proudly stand up and defend and carry the day.