



August 17, 2017

## **AAAS CEO Rush Holt Issues Statement On Death of Former Rep. Vern Ehlers**

Vernon James Ehlers, a research physicist who represented Michigan's 3<sup>rd</sup> congressional district for 17 years before retiring in 2011, died Aug. 15 in his hometown of Grand Rapids. He was 83.

“Vern Ehlers was a fine person, a fine representative, and a good friend. With a sharp mind and excellent scientific education, a commitment to serving and teaching, and a sincere respect for all people, he was for years the primary advocate in the federal government for STEM education for all. Vern brought modern technology to the operations of Congress and a critical eye to misguided government programs.

As the only two Ph.D. physicists for most of our time in Congress, we shared a great rapport. With his good humor and consistent smile, Vern welcomed me as the second member of the bipartisan physics caucus, saying we could meet anywhere – even in a phone booth – as long as it had a blackboard where we could discuss such things as the quadrupole moment of the nucleus, or impedance matching of simple machines, or congressional debates. We amused each other by calculating the growth rate of physicists in Congress, with Vern arriving after about two centuries and me coming six years later; at this rate, we estimated that by the mid-21st century most of Congress would be made up of physicists. I do not think he was able to finish the aircraft he was building and I regret that he did not have the chance to fly in it.”

– Rush Holt, CEO of the American Association for the Advancement of Science

###

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) is the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the journal *Science*, as well as *Science Translational Medicine*; *Science Signaling*; a digital, open-access journal, *Science Advances*; *Science Immunology*; and *Science Robotics*. AAAS was founded in 1848 and includes nearly 250 affiliated societies and academies of science, serving 10 million individuals. *Science* has the largest paid circulation of any peer-reviewed general science journal in the world. The nonprofit AAAS is open to all and fulfills its mission to “advance science and serve society” through initiatives in science policy, international programs, science education, public engagement, and more. For additional information about AAAS, see [www.aaas.org](http://www.aaas.org).