



Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill

November 3, 1942 - November 6, 2025

The Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill, born November 3, 1942, passed peacefully with family by his side on Thursday morning, November 6, 2025. The former State Senator for Pennsylvania's 48th District of nearly two and a half decades, Chip was most proud of the success of his five boys. A man of unlimited generosity, through the years, Chip, Donna (his wife of 37 years), and their family were at the center of countless joyful gatherings of sons, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws, extended family and their friends of all ages. First elected to School Board at age 23, Chip later ran "against the Party" to become Lebanon County District Attorney in 1977. He was a practicing attorney and member of the Lebanon County Bar Association for more than 50 years.

In the State Senate, his Land Recycling Act, Act 2 of 1995, became a national model after dozens of states adopted the legislation. Chip was on hand with President George W. Bush for the bill signing when Act 2's ideas were later incorporated into the federal Brownfield Amendments of 2002. Chip rose through the ranks of the State Senate to become Majority Leader. Some of his many contributions included leadership and funding for: acquisition and restoration of Governor Dick park, the Lebanon Valley Rail Trail network, the Union Canal Tunnel, Hazel Dyke, the Giant Center in Hershey, the City of Lebanon railroad overpasses, the commuter parking at the Lebanon exit of the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and the Lebanon Valley Exposition Center & Fairgrounds, where the Brightbill Arena is named in his honor. Chip further

championed legislation to deregulate and bring market competition to Pennsylvania energy markets, reform the Milton Hershey School Trust and keep The Hershey Company a great Pennsylvania company, as well as numerous environmental laws to improve air, water, and land quality in the Commonwealth.

After leaving the Senate in 2006, Chip joined the Harrisburg office of Stevens & Lee, a Mid-Atlantic regional law firm, as Senior Counsel in the Government Affairs group. Chip worked at Stevens & Lee advocating for many clients in the areas of healthcare, agriculture, railroad, and beverage suppliers from 2006 until his retirement in June of 2024. Many of his clients became good friends.

Chip was the son of the late Jonathan McMichael “Jack” Brightbill and Verda McGill Brightbill. Jack, the son of a steelworker at the Bethlehem Steel Plant, started and operated The Junction Diner in Jonestown, then the Lincoln Diner on Cumberland Street (now Mel Diner’s) in Lebanon. Jack, a World War II Veteran, later served on Lebanon City Council. Verda, daughter of a Palmyra school principal and professor at Lebanon Valley College, opened and operated a beauty shop on South Eight Street in Lebanon, before joining Jack in business at the Diner making the pies and managing the waitresses, lovingly referred to as “the girls.” Chip was preceded in death by his sister, Pearl Stewart, and brother, Jack Snavelly Brightbill.

Chip would say he was a “terrible student” as a kid. High school teachers told him he was not “college material.” Chip proved them wrong, attending Pennsylvania Military College, Penn State University, and then working as a reporter for the Lebanon Daily News before attending The Duquesne University School of Law. His proudest day was having his Mom and “Pop” — who was Chip’s hero and biggest supporter — on hand to see Chip graduate second in his class and Law Review Editor-In-Chief.

Throughout his lifetime, Chip enjoyed many hobbies and interests. Chip was a private pilot, sailor, powerboat enthusiast, and history buff. He enjoyed downhill skiing, hunting, fishing, amateur carpentry, photography, sporting clay

shooting, and traveling with his family.

Chip is survived by his wife, the Hon. Donna Jean Brightbill (nee Long), a Judge on the Lebanon County Court of Common Pleas, his son J. David and wife Rose, son Jonathan and wife Nicole, son Andrew and partner Tina, son Christian, son Adam, grandchildren Hanna, Tamsin, Jacob, Chip and Davis — and the many, many people whose lives he touched and even changed.

A public viewing will be held on Friday, November 14th, 2025, from 6:00 PM-9:00 PM at Kreamer Funeral Home and Crematory, Inc., 618 E. Main St. Annville, PA 17003. Additional parking is available for the public viewing at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, 125 Spruce St. Annville, PA 17003. A Celebration of Life will be held at 11:00 AM on Saturday, November 15th, 2025, at Blair Music Center on the campus of Lebanon Valley College, College Ave., Annville, PA 17003. Please plan to arrive earlier to the service due to limited parking near Blair Music Center. Chip will be laid to rest at a private interment next to his parents, Jack and Verda, at Mt. Lebanon Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Clarence Shock Memorial Park at Governor Dick, 3283 Pinch Road, Mt. Gretna, PA 17064 or Lebanon Valley Rails-to-Trails, P.O. Box 2043, Cleona, PA 17042. Kreamer Funeral Home, Annville is handling arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Mt. Lebanon Cemetery

235 E. Maple Street
Lebanon, PA 17046

Previous Events

Public Viewing

NOV **14**. 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM (ET)

Kreamer Funeral Home & Crematory, Inc
618 E. Main Street
Annville, PA 17003
(717) 867-4811

Celebration of Life

NOV **15**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Blair Music Center at Lebanon Valley College
College Ave.
Annville, PA 17003

Tribute Wall

DG

“ I was not a political hire as a lawyer with the State Senate. But that didn't matter to Senator Brightbill, who would come to me and ask me for my help in researching and supporting his many publicly beneficial Legislative endeavors. He always treated me like an equal... a true professional.....more like a law partner....not like a Senator and a staff lawyer. This also occurred after he left the Senate and decided to begin a career in the law and government relations practice I had been in for years, as he picked my brain about what to expect. That was the charm of Senator Brightbill.... always acting as though he was no different than you...not an elected official...not a Senator...just a guy from Lebanon County.. RIP my friend.

Dick Gmerek

Dick Gmerek - November 16, 2025 at 09:44 AM

CS

“ Carol S. planted a grove of 5 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

Carol S. - November 15, 2025 at 11:15 AM

DL

“ Dan L. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

Dan L. - November 14, 2025 at 01:31 PM

KB

“ Kimberly B. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

Kimberly B. - November 14, 2025 at 09:48 AM

DF

“ DOE Office of General Counsel Family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



DOE Office of General Counsel Family - November 14, 2025 at 08:11 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



November 14, 2025 at 08:05 AM

TC

“ The Cordell/ Halpin clan purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



The Cordell/ Halpin clan - November 13, 2025 at 10:18 PM

TC

“ The Cordell/ Halpin clan planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

The Cordell/ Halpin clan - November 13, 2025 at 10:18 PM



“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



November 13, 2025 at 07:09 PM

LM

“ Love, Ali and Rob McCoolle planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

Love, Ali and Rob McCoolle - November 13, 2025 at 07:09 PM

MC

“ Mayor Sherry Capello purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



Mayor Sherry Capello - November 13, 2025 at 06:18 PM

KK

“ Chip had so many amazing accomplishments and has touch people’s lives in very memorable ways. At a birthday celebration years ago, Chip asked me how my business ways going. I responded saying it was great, but if I could do it over again I would have been a teacher. He was so encouraging. A week later I receive a large envelope from his senate office that contained information regarding accelerated college programs. Two months later, and in my mid-30’s I was enrolled in college and have since received my BS in Education. Thanks for encouraging me to follow what was on my heart with no regrets! My thoughts and prayers go out to Donna and family.

Kelly Keener-Kosmela - November 13, 2025 at 08:52 AM

FF

“ Furhman Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



Furhman Family - November 13, 2025 at 08:08 AM

KK

“ Kelly Keener-Kosmela purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



Kelly Keener-Kosmela - November 13, 2025 at 07:56 AM

LC

“ Lebanon County Republican Committee purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



Lebanon County Republican Committee - November 12, 2025 at 01:11 PM

TF

“ Thomas & Bamberger Family purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



Thomas & Bamberger Family - November 12, 2025 at 09:48 AM

TF

“ Thomas & Bamberger Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

Thomas & Bamberger Family - November 12, 2025 at 09:48 AM

JG

“ Janine D Grayson purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



Janine D Grayson - November 11, 2025 at 06:35 PM

JG

“ Janine D Grayson planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

Janine D Grayson - November 11, 2025 at 06:35 PM

DS

“ I went to see Chip for legal advice in 1977 in his small office above the pizza shop (?) on the first block of South 8th Street. It was not perfectly neat and tidy but I liked it. It had character. I liked Chip too. I continued to have contacts with him through my job over the years and one time traveled to Washington, DC with him. He was a sharp guy. Always had a quick answer to every question. He also had a good sense of humor. I am glad I had the opportunity to know him. Donna, I am sorry about your loss but I know Chip and you had many good years together.
Doug Stump

Douglas Stump - November 10, 2025 at 01:56 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



November 10, 2025 at 01:06 PM

LR

“ Lebanon Valley Rails-to-Trails planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

Lebanon Valley Rails-to-Trails - November 10, 2025 at 01:06 PM

L6

“ Condolences to Chip 's family and friends from his LHS Class of 60 classmates. Rest in peace, Chip.



LHS Class of 60 - November 10, 2025 at 09:37 AM

TM

“ I worked with Chip at Stevens & Lee from 6/15-12/22. I was the support person in the office. We figured out how to work together and developed a nice relationship through our years there together. He knew what he wanted and I learned a lot from working with him. We also would talk about cooking and share recipes. He gave me several cooking tools and I think of him whenever I use them. Rest in Peace Chip. You left your mark.

Teresa McGee - November 10, 2025 at 08:22 AM



“ Fiery Lily and Rose was purchased for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.



November 10, 2025 at 08:15 AM

BF

“ Brian L. Deiderick and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.

Brian L. Deiderick and Family - November 10, 2025 at 08:15 AM

JE

“ *Rest in peace my friend, you will be greatly missed, but always remembered for all you have accomplished and the lives you have touched*

Jedd E Erdman - November 09, 2025 at 05:07 PM

D(

“ *Dr. Sulin Chung (WMC) purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Hon. David John "Chip" Brightbill.*



Dr. Sulin Chung (WMC) - November 09, 2025 at 04:07 PM