



Snyder represented N.Ky.

79-year-old was steady conservative voice

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**LOUISVILLE** - When Marion G. "Gene" Snyder first ran for Congress, the political climate of Northern Kentucky was much different than it is today.

Political historians say that in the 1960s, when Mr. Snyder began his career, Democrats outnumbered Republicans 10 to 1 in Northern Kentucky.

But Mr. Snyder helped change it all.

Bringing what one longtime GOP activist called a "consistently conservative" approach to campaigning, Mr. Snyder was able to sweep support in Northern Kentucky in 1966, a first for a congressional candidate. Now, Republicans outnumber Democrats in the area, and much of the credit goes to Snyder, GOP officials say.

The former U.S. Congressman died late Friday in Naples, Fla., according to a family friend. He was 79.

Snyder served 11 terms as a congressman. He was first elected in 1962 from Kentucky's 3rd District but lost a re-election bid. He ran again in 1966 in the 4th District and held the seat for the next two decades. He was succeeded by Jim Bunning, now a U.S. Senator.

Former U.S. Attorney Joe Whittle, who was with Snyder's family in Florida on Saturday morning, said Mr. Snyder passed away shortly before midnight.

"Kentucky lost a good friend," Whittle said. "He brought a lot of improvements. He loved Kentucky. He was a great statesman."

U.S. Rep. Geoff Davis, a Republican from Kentucky's 4th District, said Mr. Snyder's tenure brought great progress to Kentucky.

"During his time in the House, Congressman Snyder was an unyielding force whose visionary efforts laid the groundwork to improve our region," Davis said in a written statement. "Personally, he was a great friend, mentor and constant encourager."

Specifically for Northern Kentuckians, Mr. Snyder will be remembered for helping to bring funding for the area's flood wall.

Mr. Snyder grew up in Louisville, attended the University of Louisville and earned his law degree from the Jefferson School of Law. An expressway and the federal courthouse in Louisville are named for Mr. Snyder.

Despite the urging of the Republican Party, Mr. Snyder decided not to run for a 12th term in 1986. He endorsed Bunning, who won the seat and went on to hold it for the next 12 years. "I am deeply saddened by the death of my friend and mentor Gene Snyder," Bunning said in a written statement. "During his time in the U.S. House of Representatives, Congressman Snyder worked tirelessly to better the lives of the people he served in the Fourth District of Kentucky. He will be greatly missed."

Democrat Ken Lucas won the Congressional seat in 1998, but Republicans again control it now with Davis.

Former Kenton County Judge-executive Clyde Middleton of Fort Mitchell was active in politics in the late 1960s. He said Mr. Snyder helped change the political landscape. "After he took Northern Kentucky, the Republicans held on to Northern Kentucky," Middleton said. "He helped bring about a complete change in Northern Kentucky politics. Snyder had a consistently conservative message for this area, which is very conservative, and it worked."

In 2006, Davis established the Gene Snyder Congressional Fellowship at Northern Kentucky University to send a student to work at Davis' Washington office.

*The Associated Press contributed*