

Lowell Weicker
Governor of Connecticut, 1991-1995

Born: May 16, 1931, Paris, France

College: Yale University, 1953, University of Virginia Law School, 1958

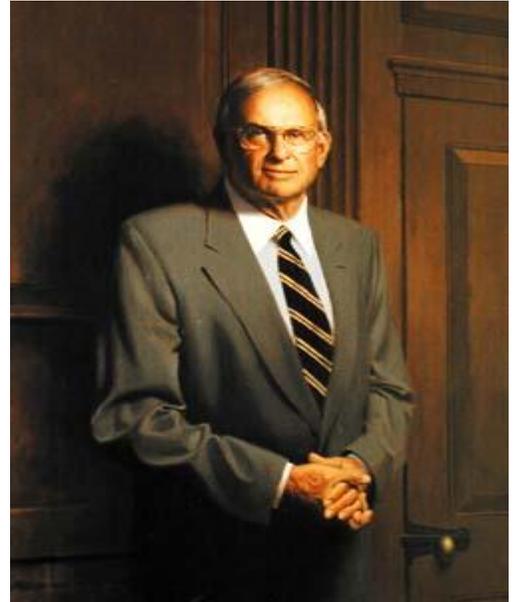
Political Party: A Connecticut Party. Republican prior to 1990

Offices: Connecticut General Assembly, House, 1963-1969 (R); First Selectman, Greenwich, 1964-1968 (R); U.S. Congress, 1969-1971 (R); U.S. Senate, 1971-1989 (R); Governor of Connecticut, 1991-1995 (ACP)

Lowell Palmer Weicker, Jr. was sworn in as Connecticut's 85th Governor on January 9, 1991, becoming the first independent Governor in the state since the Civil War. Weicker was born May 16, 1931 in Paris, France to Lowell P. and Mary Bickford Weicker. As a child, Weicker attended the Buckley School in New York City and Culver Military Academy in Culver, Indiana. In 1949 he graduated from the Lawrenceville School, a prep school in New Jersey. He went on to Yale where he developed an interest in politics, graduating in 1953 with a B.A. in political science.

Weicker served in the United States Army from 1953 to 1955 and in the Army Reserve from 1958 to 1964. He graduated from the University of Virginia Law School in 1958 and then moved to Greenwich, Connecticut where he helped found a law firm. As a Republican, he served as First Selectman of that town as well as a Representative to the Connecticut General Assembly.

In 1968 Weicker ran for and won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives from the 4th District. During his one term in the House, he focused on urban renewal and transportation legislation and gained a reputation as a moderate conservative. Weicker won election to the U.S. Senate in 1970 after a split in the state Democratic Party resulted in a three-way race between Weicker, the Democratic nominee Joseph Duffy, and U.S. Senator Thomas Dodd, who entered the race as an independent. The split in the Democratic vote gave Weicker the victory. While in the Senate, Weicker worked for passage of the War Powers



Act, served on the Senate Watergate Committee, advocated oceanic research, and served on the Appropriations, Small Business, and Labor and Human Resources Committees. Weicker found himself at odds with the far right of the Republican Party over issues of school prayer, busing, and abortion. He also worked for health and education programs for physically and developmentally disabled persons and the poor. Weicker sponsored the Protection and Advocacy for the Mentally Ill Act in 1985 and in 1988 introduced legislation that would become the Americans with Disabilities Act. Weicker's independence led members of his own party to back his opponent Joseph Lieberman in the 1988 Senate race, causing Weicker's defeat.

Weicker then went to work for Research! America, a non-profit organization that raised public awareness about the benefits of medical research. He also taught a constitutional law course at the George Washington University Law School. It wasn't long before some of Weicker's friends began to urge him to seek the governorship of Connecticut. Ruling out a run as a Republican and believing the political atmosphere was right for a third-party candidate, Weicker entered the race and won under the A Connecticut Party that he founded. His opponents were Republican John Rowland and Democrat Bruce Morrison.

When Weicker entered office, the state's budget deficit was \$963 million. During the campaign he had opposed an income tax but did not rule it out. Weicker asked William B. Cibes to become his budget director as head of the Office of Policy and Management. Cibes had sought the Democratic gubernatorial nomination but lost in a primary to Morrison because his platform included the creation of a state income tax. Cibes and his team developed three budget proposals, two that relied on the sales tax and one that included an income tax. Cibes convinced Weicker that an income tax was the only fiscally responsible choice. On February 13, 1991 Weicker unveiled a budget that proposed a flat income tax of 6 percent and a drop in the sales tax from 8 to 4.25 percent. During the next six months the General Assembly passed three no-income-tax budgets that continued the state's reliance on the sales tax. Weicker vetoed them all. For his part, Weicker proposed two other income-tax based budgets during that time. Stalemate resulted because the General Assembly did not have enough votes to override the vetoes or enough votes to pass an income tax. Both parties were split over the issue. Temporary spending authorizations kept the state running after the start of fiscal year 1992 except for a three day interruption starting on July 1. Finally on August 22, 1991 the General Assembly passed a budget that included a 4.5 percent flat income tax and a cut in the sales tax from 8 to 6 percent. Forty thousand people gathered at the state capitol in Hartford in protest on

October 5, 1991. The income tax did take effect and the state ended fiscal year 1992 with a surplus of \$110 million and continued in the black for the next two fiscal years.

The 1991 budget crises led to a standoff between Weicker and the state employee unions that supported his gubernatorial campaign. Wage concessions that some unions agreed to in April of 1991 had expired when the state started the new fiscal year without a budget. Without the concessions in place, some employees received scheduled wage increases at the start of the new fiscal year. Weicker asked the state employee unions to revive the April agreement. The unions wanted guaranteed job security in return. Without an agreement in place, thousands of state employees were either furloughed or laid off starting in November 1991, although some of the laid off employees would eventually be reinstated.

In addition to restructuring the revenue system, Weicker also implemented spending reforms and reorganized state government by consolidating agencies. Among the legislation he signed into law during his term were bills dealing with school desegregation, stricter gun control, and health care reform. Weicker's accomplishments during his first year as Governor led the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation to recognize him with the Profiles in Courage Award in 1992.

Weicker has three sons with his first wife Marie Louise "Bunny" Godfrey: Scott, Gray, and Brian and two sons with his second wife Camille Butler: Sonny and Lowell P. Weicker III, known as Tre. In December 1984 Weicker married his third wife Claudia Testa who has two sons: Mason and Andrew.

Bibliography

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Portrait

47 1/4" x 33 1/4" in its frame, painted by Herbert E. Abrams.

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