

**Obituaries**

# David P. Schippers, lawyer who helped bring impeachment charges against Bill Clinton, dies at 88

By [Matt Schudel](#)

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David P. Schippers, a onetime organized crime prosecutor from Chicago who reviewed the findings of independent counsel Kenneth W. Starr and determined that President Bill Clinton should be impeached and removed from office, died Sept. 28 at his home in Grayslake, Ill. He was 88.

His family announced his death in a notice placed in Chicago newspapers. The Chicago Sun-Times reported that the cause was pancreatic cancer.

Mr. Schippers, often described as a blunt, bearish and rumpled lawyer, was the U.S. Justice Department's chief prosecutor of organized crime in Chicago during the early 1960s, under then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

He won several high-profile cases, most notably against Chicago mob boss Sam Giancana. Using a little-known ploy, Mr. Schippers offered immunity from prosecution to Giancana in return for his testimony to a grand jury. When Giancana refused to testify, a judge sent him to a jail for a year, dealing a serious blow to organized crime in Chicago.

Giancana later moved to Mexico to escape justice, and Mr. Schippers indicted Giancana's successor, Sam Battaglia, who went to prison. Mr. Schippers later became a defense lawyer.

He had family members who were prominent in the city's powerful Democratic Party machine, but he was also friendly with [Henry J. Hyde](#), a Republican congressman who in the 1990s was chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

In 1998, amid a highly polarized political climate in Washington, Hyde tapped Mr. Schippers as an impartial outsider to review the findings of independent counsel Starr. Starr's team, which included U.S. Supreme Court nominee Brett M. Kavanaugh, spent four years examining charges of wrongdoing against Clinton.

With the title of chief investigative counsel for the House Judiciary Committee, Mr. Schippers hired eight other investigators — all from Chicago, and one of whom was his son — to determine if there was sufficient evidence to impeach Clinton.

“I don’t want to be a household name,” Mr. Schippers said at the time. “I will do the job, I will fold my tent and go back to Chicago and pick up where I left off.”

The most explosive charges to emerge from the Starr Report, as it was called after its release in September 1998, were that Clinton had lied under oath and obstructed justice to conceal his relationship with White House intern Monica S. Lewinsky. Starr determined that there were 11 counts on which Clinton could possibly be impeached.

Mr. Schippers, who said he began his work by saying it “is not for me to say or even to give an opinion,” issued a blistering report to the Judiciary Committee in December 1998, concluding that Clinton had not committed 11 impeachable offenses, but 15.

“The president,” Mr. Schippers told the House committee, “has lied under oath in a civil deposition, lied under oath in a criminal grand jury. He lied to the people. He lied to his Cabinet. He lied to his top aides. And now he’s lied under oath to the Congress of the United States. There’s no one left to lie to.”

As the House prepared to bring articles of impeachment against Clinton, the arguments for and against took a predictable partisan turn.

“His conduct constitutes a great insult to our constitutional system,” Rep. Bill McCollum (R-Fla.) said. Then-Rep. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) — now the Senate minority leader, said Clinton’s misdeeds hardly rose to the level of “treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors” mandated by the Constitution for impeachment.

“What would we be removing him for?” Schumer said. “Sex and lying about sex.”

Mr. Schippers, who said he had voted for Clinton twice, remained adamant in his interpretation of the Starr Report.

“If you don’t impeach as a consequence of the conduct that I’ve just portrayed,” he told the Judiciary Committee, “then no House of Representatives will ever be able to impeach again. The bar will be so high that only a felon or a traitor will need to be concerned.”

Days after Mr. Schippers issued his report, the House voted to impeach Clinton on two charges of perjury and obstruction of justice, but rejected two other articles of impeachment. It was then up to the Democratic-controlled Senate to determine whether to convict Clinton and remove him from office.

In January 1999, the Senate rejected the articles of impeachment, and Clinton served the remaining two years of his term.

David Philip Schippers Jr. was born Nov. 4, 1929, in Chicago. He grew up in a large Irish-American family and said his loyalties were to the Chicago White Sox, the Catholic Church and the Democratic

Party, “and not necessarily in that order.”

After working for the telephone company, he attended Chicago’s Loyola University, graduating in 1955 and receiving a law degree in 1959. He became a federal prosecutor in the 1960s.

After entering private practice, Mr. Schippers handled several high-profile cases, including the defense of seven federal law enforcement officials accused of 42 counts of civil rights violations while making drug arrests in Illinois in 1973.

“Every dope peddler in the United States will be listening to your verdict,” Mr. Schippers told the jury in his closing argument. “Every cop and law enforcement officer will be listening, and our kids will be listening.”

The jury returned 42 verdicts of not guilty.

In the 1980s, Mr. Schippers defended the porn star known as Seka and also represented Larry Eyler, who later admitted to killing at least 20 young men and boys in the Midwest.

Mr. Schippers’s survivors include his wife of 66 years, the former Jacquelin Liautaud of Grayslake; 10 children; 26 grandchildren; and 29 great-grandchildren.

Mr. Schippers often noted how the lure of power tended to corrupt people in Washington.

“If somebody comes to me and says, ‘Do you want to run for office? Would you like to write a book?’ Absolutely not. I have no desire for any of that,” he said in 1999. “I think it would be obscene to gain notoriety from the agony of your country.”

Mr. Schippers’s book about the Clinton impeachment, “Sellout,” appeared in 2000.

“The president of the United States of America and his White House waterboys sold out the American people,” he wrote, “not just in a one-time spasm of political expedience, but in a deliberate snarl of sophistry and cynical manipulation of public opinion, the singular aim of which was political self-preservation.”

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Matt Schudel has been an obituary writer at The Washington Post since 2004. He previously worked for publications in Washington, New York, North Carolina and Florida. [Follow](#)

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