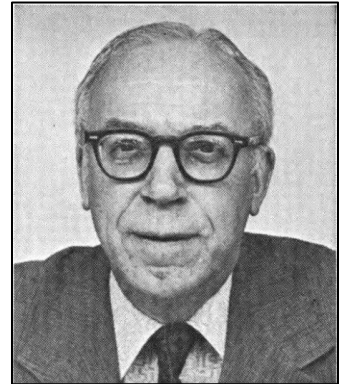


Kenneth W. Hechler

U.S. Census Bureau Section Chief, Combat Historian, Congressman

The U.S. Census Bureau has always been a home to veterans of the United States armed forces. The first superintendent of the census, William Augustus Weaver, appointed in 1840, received wounds as a combat veteran in the War of 1812. Francis Amasa Walker, the highly influential superintendent of the 1880 Census was a veteran of the Civil War and former prisoner of war. In 1890, census legislation made it clear that honorably discharged veterans of the armed services would receive preference for employment as enumerators—a practice that continues to this day and one that has been further strengthened and expanded through civil service reforms. In 2015, for instance, the U.S. Department of Commerce, to which the Census Bureau belongs, employed 5,684 veterans (12 percent of workers at the Department of Commerce). The Census Bureau is proud to utilize the proven discipline and motivation of this unique and patriotic workforce.

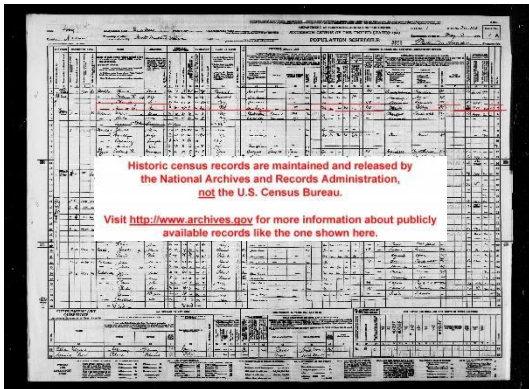


Congressman Kenneth W. Hechler, 1973.

Congressional Pocket Directory, 1973.

Although he served as a nine-term U.S. congressman (1959–1977) and West Virginia’s 26th secretary of state (1985–2001), Kenneth (Ken) W. Hechler served his country as a veteran and public servant for most of his professional career. Born on September 20, 1914, on Long Island, New York, to parents Charles H. and Catherine Hauhart Hechler, Ken grew up as the youngest son in a family of five people. After graduating second in a high school class of 30 students, Ken attended Swarthmore College and earned his B.A. in political science. In 1935, Hechler attended Columbia University, earning his M.A. (1936) in American history and a Ph. D. in political science (1940). As a graduate student, Hechler worked on his dissertation and taught classes at Barnard College and Columbia University. In the summer of 1940, Hechler began his career in public service when he

accepted a temporary position with the Census Bureau. Given his academic credentials, Hechler worked as a section chief in the Population Division. As section chief, he reviewed the enumerators' reports, clarified the contents of the reports, and organized the reports before sending them forward for processing. According to Edwin Goldfield, a Census Bureau alumnus, Hechler used his temporary job to pay his Washington, DC, living expenses and to conduct research at the nearby Library of Congress on his days off.



Ken Hechler's 1940 Census Record.

After working for the Census Bureau in the summer of 1940, Hechler returned to Columbia University to continue teaching and, a few months later, began working with Judge Samuel Rosenman on editing *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*. While he had created a comfortable life for himself in New York, Hechler’s desire to be close to the center of historical events drove him to return to Washington. Between the fall of 1941 and the spring of 1942, Hechler worked for the Office for Emergency Management before accepting a position with the Bureau of the Budget. During his first stint with the Bureau of the Budget, Hechler worked as an administrative analyst on the Committee of Records for War Administration. In this role, he captured and recorded some of the key experiences of government officials in the defense agencies during the early years of the Second World War.

Hechler continued working for the Bureau of the Budget until he was drafted into the U.S. Army in July of 1942. Entering the Army as a private in the Infantry, Hechler completed basic training at Camp Croft in Spartanburg, SC, before applying to Officer Candidate School. To his surprise, Hechler's commanding officer sent him and his colleagues to the Armored Force Tank School at Fort Knox, KY. Thirteen weeks later, the Army commissioned Hechler as a second lieutenant and assigned him to be a combat historian under Major Kent Roberts Greenfield.

Hechler began his career as a combat historian late in 1943. During this period, he visited numerous military bases across the United States, encouraging various corps and armies to create a tiny staff that would produce reports about what kinds of training the troops got, mistakes in training, and what lessons the military derived from those experiences. While Hechler later acknowledged the importance of encouraging different parts of the military to produce detailed reports, he still expressed an interest in going to the frontlines of the war.



As a combat historian, Hechler witnessed and wrote about battles such as the breakout from Saint Lo, the battle of the Bulge, and the American's capture and defense of the Ludendorff Bridge (pictured above) during the battle of Remagen.

Image Courtesy of the National Archives.

In January 1944, Hechler arrived in the United Kingdom and received more training before landing in Normandy, France, a few weeks after D-Day (June 6, 1944). After arriving in France, Hechler and his colleagues began conducting after-action interviews with famous generals such as George Patton and Omar Bradley, lower-ranking officers, and groups of soldiers. From these interviews, Hechler produced reports that supplemented the official after-action reports and provided future military leaders and historians with a detail-rich permanent record of the Allies' campaign to liberate Europe.

Shortly after World War II ended, Hechler utilized his academic training and oral interview skills to serve on the Shuster Commission. Created by either the U.S. State or War Department, Hechler and four other subject experts interviewed captured Nazi leaders such as Goering, Jodl, von Ribbentrop, and Kesselring about various elements of the Nazi's regime and military before the Allies tried them for crimes against humanity in Nuremberg. These interviews allowed U.S. officials to gain crucial and unfiltered economic, diplomatic, political, and military insights about the inner workings of Hitler's regime and military before the various participants created a more sanitized version of events.



Congressman Ken Hechler (West Virginia) visited the Census Bureau on June 7, 1963, to see a display honoring West Virginia's Centennial. Phyllis Strathman (EOD), who hailed from Huntington, WV, presented the display to Congressman Hechler.
Census Bulletin (Census Bureau Publication) July 5, 1963.

Hechler completed his assignment with the Shuster Commission and returned to working for the Army's Historical Section, which had moved from Paris to St. Germain-en-Laye. Although he assisted the team with organizing the various documents and battlefield reports from the European Theater and even interviewed German generals to gather their perspectives, an anxious Hechler returned to the United States in the spring of 1946 and resumed his work with the Bureau of the Budget. In the following decades, his career continued in academia and public service, where he achieved immense success.

By the time he passed away at the age of 102, on December 10, 2016, Hechler had taught at Princeton University in New Jersey, Marshall University, and the University of Charleston in West Virginia. He served as a special advisor to President Harry Truman, championed miners' rights, and environmental policies both inside and outside of Congress, just to name a few of his accomplishments. In addition to his public and professional accomplishments, Hechler also married Carol Kitzmiller, a fellow activist, on August 12, 2013. Finally, after passing away at the age of 102, along with Carol, Hechler's stepson, Josh Kitzmiller, and numerous surviving relatives and friends, the Census Bureau, and a grateful nation continue to strive toward honoring Hechler's incredible legacy of public service.