



*Steven Dean Fought*

**None - Jan. 10, 2026**

Steven Dean Fought of Toledo, Ohio departed this life on January 10, 2026, in Nebo, North Carolina, in the presence of family members. He was 71 years old.

Steve was born in Rapid City, South Dakota in June, 1954. He is the son of Robert Dean Fought of Delphos, Ohio and Ruth Joan Thomas Hasis of Mendon, Ohio, both deceased. He is preceded in death by Mary Fought, his stepmother; Fred Hasis, his stepfather; paternal grandparents Harlan and Nellie Fought; and maternal grandparents Waldo and Ella Mae Thomas. He is survived by two sisters and a brother-in-law: Cathy and Michael Ruhlen of Nebo, North Carolina; and Nora Fought of Delphos, Ohio. He also is survived by a nephew, three nieces, and their spouses: Christopher and Catherine Ruhlen of Rockville, Maryland; Tara Ruhlen of Aliso Viejo, California; Kelly and Benjamin Rude of Davidson, North Carolina; and Emily and Ryan Ebbeskotte of Ottawa, Ohio. He leaves six great nieces and nephews, as well as many other family members.

Steve graduated from Mendon-Union High School in 1971. He studied literature at Ohio University and at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, where he focused on the

works of James Joyce. He then returned to Celina, Ohio and became a sports editor with The Daily Standard newspaper and a beloved summer baseball league coach for middle-school age students. Later, he graduated from Capital University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in History; from The University of Cincinnati College of Law with a Juris Doctor degree; from The University of Toledo with a Master's Degree in

Business Administration; and from Gonzaga University with a Master's Degree in Communications and Leadership.

In 1983, Steve embarked on a multi-decade career in government, assuming roles with the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Ohio Department of Health, and with Secretary of State Sherrod Brown. When Mr. Brown was elected to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1992, Steve continued as his Communications Director and relocated to Washington, D.C. He served in that role until 2000. Steve then spent most of the latter portion of his career working with Representative Marcy Kaptur, beginning first in 2001 as Legislative Director and then as Communications Director. He also served as an administrator for the Toledo City Council.

In 2016, Steve campaigned as the Democratic Party candidate for the 8th Congressional District of Ohio in an election for the Congressional seat vacated by John Boehner, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. Although no other Democratic Party candidates were willing to enter the race for this long-held Republican seat, Steve strongly believed that the District's constituents deserved an opportunity to choose an elected representative, rather than being stuck with a rubber stamped replacement. While unsuccessful, he was proud to earn 27 percent of the overall vote result and place second.

Steve claimed to be "semi-retired" in recent years, but that was far from true. Those who knew him best also knew that he slept little and never stopped working. Even while attempting to recover from a nearly fatal heart attack, he read a small mountain of books, wrote several op-eds, and assisted various charities. Remarkably, in his final weeks, he spearheaded a successful fundraising campaign with the nonprofit organization Arc of Appalachia to preserve Pip Ridge, a 60 acre tract of land in Hocking County, Ohio that provides habitat for a State endangered species of bats known as "pipistrelles."

Steve was many things to many people and had a knack for somehow being everywhere, all at once. In addition to being a public servant, he was a deep thinker and conversationalist; a world traveler who visited 41 different countries; a voracious reader and eternal student; a big-hearted hellion; an old hippy who loved rock and roll and bluegrass music; a Zags basketball fanatic; and a passionate champion for

underdogs everywhere. But most of all, until the very end, Steve was an outspoken believer in the decency and value of common people, the collective public good, and the principles of democracy, diversity, and equality. He was loved deeply by his family and friends and will be severely missed.

A private memorial service will be held at a later date for immediate family and close friends. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations in Steve's memory be made to the Arc of Appalachia or to a local food bank.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

# Tribute Wall



—Lisa Frew



I'm so sorry for your loss. I wish I had known the gentleman. Sounds like he was a wonderfully engaging person.

—Amy Walker

From a friend from long ago, sorry to hear about Steve. He was truly a remarkable person who will be missed by all. RIP Steve.

—John R Archer