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## **Tom ‘Smitty’ Smith Is Hanging Up His Spurs**

### ***Longtime Director of Public Citizen’s Texas Office to Retire***

AUSTIN, Texas - Tom “Smitty” Smith, director of Public Citizen’s Texas office, will retire next year after 31 years of championing consumer rights and clean energy policies - and racking up significant and lasting victories - in Texas.

Smith is widely known as the man in the white hat around the state Capitol. He has testified more than 1,000 times before the Texas Legislature and Congress. He has led a team based in Austin but has staff in Houston and Dallas. And he has affected reforms that have improved public health and safety, protected consumers’ pocketbooks and helped curb climate change. Smith:

- Helped make Texas the top wind energy state in the country by conducting studies, organizing Texans and assembling a coalition of groups to push for wind power. As a result of the organizing led by the office, Texas is about to begin a huge solar energy building boom;
- Worked with state policymakers to create the Texas Emissions Reduction Program (TERP), which has awarded more than \$1 billion to replace 10,000-plus diesel engines and has cut more than 160,836 tons of smog-forming NOx;
- Along with Karen Hadden of the SEED coalition, his organizing partner and now wife, started local groups that stopped the construction of 12 of 17 proposed coal plants over the past decade and four new nuclear reactors;
- Helped pass the state’s building energy code, which has saved money for every new homeowner since 2003 and saved more energy than a coal plant would produce;
- Helped craft and pass major ethics reforms that included the creation of the state’s ethics commission;
- Helped craft insurance reforms passed in 1991;
- Successfully pushed for a better state lemon law; and
- Co-founded and mentored 13 nonprofit organizations including Solar Austin, Clean Water Action in Texas, Texas ROSE (Ratepayers Organized to Save Energy) and the Sustainable Energy & Economic Development (SEED) coalition.

“Smitty’s work has had an immeasurable impact on people’s lives in Texas,” said Robert Weissman, president of Public Citizen. “Because of him, the air in Texas is cleaner, so fewer people are suffering from asthma or dying early because of pollution-related lung disease. Because of him, solar power in Texas is now cheaper

than coal-generated power. Because of his mentoring of students and assistance in creating and helping new groups, consumer advocacy in Texas is more robust. Smitty is an amazing and dedicated advocate for the public interest, and he has accomplished a staggering number of victories for Texans over the past three decades.”

Smith and his staff have won 19 awards for consumer advocacy and environmental leadership.

“The only way to beat political corruption is with organized people,” Smith said. “Time after time I have seen a small group of citizens organize and speak out, and change happens. Our job as citizens is to take back our government and keep our government open, honest and responsive.”

One of Smith’s proudest accomplishments is having trained more than 300 interns to become activists.

“Our interns’ work has led to the passage of more than a dozen laws,” Smith said. “Their research led to the creation of the state office of administrative hearings in Texas, lemon law reforms, creation of a patients’ bill of rights and the smoke-free University of Texas campuses. Our goal has been to give the next generation the tools they need to keep perfecting democracy - and to stand up for the little guys.” Smith, an Illinois native, joined Public Citizen as director of the Texas office in 1985. Before that, he worked in the Texas Legislature as an aide, was director of the Community Nutrition Institute, worked as a legal aid paralegal and served as director of the Houston Food Bank. “It’s time for someone new to take the reins and round up the next generation of advocates,” Smith said. “I am proud to have had a hand in improving the lives of Texans.”

Austin Mayor Steve Adler said “For over thirty years, Tom “Smitty” Smith has led the fight to protect the Texas environment, to mainstream renewable energy choices, and to fight new coal power plants. That he has been so successful in a state like Texas is a testament to the widespread respect he earned, his legislative expertise, and an unyielding commitment and drive. Smitty’s role as the environmental conscience for our State will be missed even as his impact on our lives may well live forever”

Texas state Rep. Rafael Anchia said, “With the wisdom of Yoda and the dogged determination of the Lorax, “Smitty” Smith gave voice to the common man in the Texas Legislature for decades. Smitty is that rare person who always put the best interests of the people of Texas first, and whether he was advocating for more honest government, voting rights or the environment, he did so with boundless knowledge,

grace, good humor and patience. Smitty has become a valued friend and counselor, and I will dearly miss seeing his signature wide-brimmed hat at the Capitol.”

Added Texas state Sen. Jose Menendez, “For the last 30 years, Tom ‘Smitty’ Smith has built his reputation at the Texas Capitol around protecting the people’s interests. Mr. Smith has successfully fought for more renewable energy in Texas and stood up to big polluters. He has rigorously defended Texas’ ethics laws to ensure more transparency and disclosure in government. His positive impact on this state will be felt for generations. His friendly counsel and advice in legislature will be missed.”

Public Citizen will conduct a national search for a director of the Texas office.

[Click here for the job description](#)