

Global Real Estate Summit 2019



Secretary William Cohen

Former US Secretary of Defense
Chairman and CEO
The Cohen Group

Secretary of Defense (1997-2001)
Senator (1979-1997)
Congressman (1973-1979)

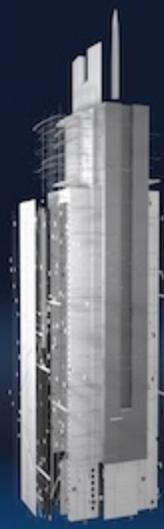
From his very first days in Washington, Secretary William Cohen was singled out as a future American leader. In 1974, during his very first term in Congress, TIME magazine named him as one of "America's 200 Future Leaders," and the following year the US Junior Chamber of Commerce named him one of the "Ten Outstanding Young Men in America."

This reflected, in part, the national prominence Secretary Cohen attained as a freshman Republican Congressman who was tasked by the House Judiciary Committee to build, on national television, the evidentiary base for impeachment of President Nixon -- and who then cast one of the critical votes to impeach. But it also reflected the recognition that the intellectual clout, integrity, independence, and public persuasiveness he demonstrated during the Watergate hearings portended a future without bounds on the national scene. Internationally, Secretary Cohen's reputation also took root as, despite the political risk it could entail for a freshman Congressman, he traveled to Thailand in 1974 to reassure a stalwart ally following the US military withdrawal from Vietnam. In the process, Secretary Cohen established relationships that have flourished there and elsewhere around the globe over the quarter century since.

In 1978, he was propelled into the Senate, defeating a highly respected incumbent. During his first weeks in the Senate, he was singled out to be chairman of two powerful subcommittees, the Armed Services Committee's Seapower and Force Projection Subcommittee and the Governmental Affairs Committee's Government Oversight Subcommittee. The former was responsible for tens of billions of acquisition dollars for naval vessels and long-range transport aircraft, as well as US security policy in East Asia, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf. The latter was responsible for reforming the procurement process for the entire Federal Government. As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Aging, Secretary Cohen led efforts to improve the efficiency of Medicare and other health care programs and was a central player in the health care reform debates of the 1990s. Secretary Cohen also was a member of the Select Committee on Intelligence for a decade, serving half that time as Vice Chairman, overseeing a large budget involving some of the Nation's most advanced technology.

His experience and expertise led to his selection to serve on the "Iran-Contra Committee." His sustained leadership on environmental issues gave him the distinction of being the only Republican Senator endorsed by the League of Conservation Voters re-election after re-election, while his efforts on behalf of small business and early leadership in reversing federal deficits won him awards from the National Federation of Independent Businessmen and the National Taxpayers Union.

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Secretary Cohen's international expertise was recognized by his selection to the Board of Directors of the Council on Foreign Relations from 1989 to 1997, whose Middle East Study Group he chaired. He has chaired and served on numerous other study groups and committees at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the School for Advanced International Studies, and the Brookings Institute. He established and led US delegations to the annual Pacific Dialogue in Kuala Lumpur, as well as the American-Arab Dialogue in Cairo, both regional conferences on economic and security issues. Beginning in 1985, he led the US delegation of senior Executive Branch officials and Members of Congress to the annual Munich Conference on Security Policy, which brings together senior government and industrial officials from throughout Europe and Asia.

Secretary Cohen's service in the House and Senate was marked by electoral success, as well. He was undefeated in six consecutive Maine elections, winning each by wide margins. In 1996, again expected to easily defeat whomever would be nominated to challenge him, Secretary Cohen stunned Maine and Washington by announcing he would not seek re-election. Frustrated with partisan gridlock, Secretary Cohen announced he would return to private life to promote international business and, through his writings and the media, a more thoughtful public discourse on national political issues. He also launched the William S. Cohen Center for International Policy and Commerce at the University of Maine.

President Clinton changed these plans, however, when he asked Secretary Cohen to lead the Department of Defense, the first time in modern US history when a President has chosen an elected official from the other party to be a member of his cabinet. At his January 1997 confirmation hearing, Secretary Cohen set forth his prioritized objectives as Secretary and completed his tenure having accomplished them all. Reversing a steady decline in defense budgets that began in the 1980s, Secretary Cohen succeeded in modernizing the military and maintaining its readiness to fight; reversing recruitment and retention problems by enhancing pay and other benefits; and strengthening security relationships with countries around the world in order to reorient them from the Cold War to the challenges of a new era. Under his leadership, the US military conducted the largest air warfare campaign since World War II, in Serbia and Kosovo, and conducted other military operations on every continent. During his tenure, Secretary Cohen held substantive meetings with foreign leaders in over 60 countries.

A published author of thirteen works of nonfiction, fiction, and poetry; a futurist with degrees in classical Latin and Greek literature; the son of a working-class family who rose to the highest levels in government, it was natural for the Christian Science Monitor to call him "a true Renaissance Man." He is also an accomplished athlete and was named to the Maine all-state high school and college basketball teams, and, while at Bowdoin, he was inducted into the New England All-Star Hall of Fame. In 1987, he was named by the National Association of Basketball Coaches to the Silver Anniversary All Star Team, and in 2001, the NCAA presented him with its Theodore Roosevelt Award. Secretary Cohen is currently a member of the Board of Directors of CBS Corporation. He is also a World Affairs Contributor for Bloomberg Television providing analysis and commentary on major domestic and international news stories.

After 31 years of public service, Secretary Cohen leaves behind a record of unparalleled accomplishment, integrity, and respect, and takes with him unrivaled knowledge, reputation, and relationships, across America and around the globe.

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