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## Ray receives Iowa's top honor for public service

**He spent five terms as governor, but his work extended far beyond, colleagues praised.**

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Former Gov. Robert Ray, noted for a long career of public service that extended beyond his 14 years in office, received the state's highest award to a citizen on Monday.

Ray could have qualified for the Iowa Award under at least five categories, Gov. Tom Vilsack said in presenting the award at a Statehouse ceremony.

While governor during the 1970s, Ray put Iowa in the national forefront of efforts to resettle refugees from Indochina following the Vietnam War.

"I think it's momentous what he's done. . . . It's a very unique and very special history, especially in the lives of Southeast Asians," said Kim Poam Logan, executive director of the Iowa Asian Alliance, which is organizing a 30-year commemoration this month of the tens of thousands of Southeast Asians who resettled in Iowa.

"It's a testament to the governor's achievements that he was able to . . . literally, physically change the face of the way Iowa looked by bringing different people here. And as a refugee myself, I wouldn't be here had it not been for what he had done," she said.

After Ray, a Republican, left the governor's office, he served in interim posts as mayor of Des Moines and as president of Drake University. As chairman of the Institute for Character Development, he helped bring the "Character Counts" program to Iowa.

The Des Moines native also worked as a lawyer and insurance company executive.

Elected five times as Iowa's 38th governor, Ray could have rested on his laurels after leaving office, Vilsack said. Instead, Ray continued to provide leadership and inspiration in the state. "You have provided an extraordinary example to every single person in public life, that it doesn't stop when the elected job is finished. There is more to (helping) society and the state," Vilsack said.

The Iowa Award presentation brought together Iowa's last three governors: Vilsack, a Democrat in his second term, Republican Terry Branstad and Ray.

"We lived through some rough times — they weren't all good times — but they were, in a way, fun times," said Ray, who was accompanied by his wife, Billie, two daughters, and grandchildren.

Ken Quinn, a former Ray assistant who worked on Iowa's program to rush food and medical aid to Indochina refugees in 1979, lauded the former governor's character, saying Ray had met a series of challenges during his distinguished career.

In the post-Watergate era, Quinn said, Ray brought openness and honesty to state government. "His instructions to his staff were, if you're not prepared for what you say and do to appear on the front page of The Des Moines Register, then don't do it," said Quinn, a former diplomat who is president of the World Food Prize Foundation.



**ROBERT NANDELL/THE REGISTER**

**Applause:** Former Gov. Robert Ray is congratulated by his wife, Billie, on Monday after he received Iowa's highest citizen award, the Iowa Award, in a ceremony at the Statehouse in Des Moines. Gov. Tom Vilsack and former Gov. Terry Branstad are at left.

### Iowa Award

Recipients of the award were: Former Gov. Robert Ray, former President Hoover, former Vice President and Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, Nobel Prize-winning scientist Norman Borlaug, pollster George Gallup, conservationist Ding Darling, composer Meredith Willson, space scientist James Van Allen, nuclear scientist Frank Spedding, composer Karl King, first lady Mamie Eisenhower, religious leader Monsignor Luigi Ligutti, women voting rights leader Carrie Chapman Catt, singer Simon Estes, artist Mauricio Lasansky, computer pioneer John Atanasoff, inventor George Washington Carver and entrepreneur John Ruan.

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