



Douglas Earl Stites

September 18, 1950 - May 25, 2025

Douglas Earl Stites, age 74, a steadfast and principled public servant, passed away peacefully at his home on May 25, 2025. Known for his directness, honesty, and unwavering integrity, Doug lived a life marked by quiet strength, ethics and dedication to his work, his family, and his community.

Born on September 8, 1950 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Doug was the cherished son of Robert E. and Leona (Oehrl) Stites. His formative years were spent on the shores of Lake Mecosta, a place that remained dear to his heart and evoked treasured memories of a childhood surrounded by family, nature, and animals.

After graduating from Central Michigan University and Lake State Superior University, Doug spent several decades in Sault Ste. Marie, leading the Michigan Works! Of the Upper Peninsula. His daughter, Robin, was born in 1979. In the late 1980's, Doug met Leanne, and he soon relocated to the Lansing area and began working for the State of Michigan. Doug and Leanne married in 1990.

Doug's most notable professional contributions included his tenure in the office of Governor John Engler, advancing workforce development initiatives across the state. There, Doug's keen intellect and sharp political insight-nurtured by his voracious appetite for reading and his deep interest in history and public affairs-allowed him to help guide policy decisions with purpose and conviction.

Following his time in the Governor's office he continued his leadership as

CEO of Capital Area Michigan Works! where he served with vision and determination. Doug's dedication to developing the workforce of Michigan - and his ability to bring people together - helped shape policy, improve lives, and build stronger communities across the state.

Doug's love of the outdoors was deeply rooted in his experiences across Michigan, especially the Upper Peninsula, where he developed a lifelong passion for hunting-both fur and fowl. That passion was born from lessons first taught by his mother, who introduced him to hunting and fishing and later to cooking the wild game he brought home. Those early experiences blossomed into a love of cuisine and hospitality. It was not uncommon for Doug to spend days planning and preparing elaborate gourmet meals for family and friends, fussing over the details of each dish until it met his high standards. These dinners were more than meals-they were expressions of his love, creativity, and attention to detail.

Doug was known for his commanding presence and keen sense of purpose. He possessed a powerful personality that allowed him to lead with clarity, negotiate with strength, and make difficult decisions with confidence. Whether guiding a complex workforce initiative, planning a weekend fishing trip, or pouring over the details of the next family dinner gathering, Doug always knew where he was going and how to get there.

Doug is survived by his wife of 34 years, Leanne; his daughter, Robin Stites; stepchildren, Tracy (Robert) Russman and Christopher Waite; grandson, Joseph Arens; brother, Phillip Stites; and a wide circle of friends, colleagues, and extended family who admired and respected him deeply.

Friends and loved ones are encouraged to remember Doug by sharing memories on his Tribute Page on the Pray Funeral Home website at www.PrayFuneral.com, or or making a donation to a local Hospice organization. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date. In honoring his legacy, we remember a man who served with dignity, loved with sincerity, and lived with unwavering purpose-always leading from the front, and always inviting others to his table with warmth and grace. May his memory live on in the lives he

touched and the stories that will be shared for generations. The family is in the care of Pray Funeral Home in Charlotte, MI.

Tribute Wall



“ Pray Funeral Home, Inc created a Tribute Video in memory of Douglas Earl Stites



Pray Funeral Home, Inc. - June 10, 2025 at 03:37 PM

LC

“ Doug was one a senior exec at the Michigan Jobs Commission (later the Dept. of Career Development, DELEG, etc.) and he lived up to his reputation as a mover and shaker, someone who created innovative public policy and made things happen. He expected results and did not tolerate excuses. He was blunt but fair. I continued to work with him when he moved to Capitol Area Michigan Works! as its Director and I was assigned to be their State Rapid Response Consultant. Doug was one of the truly gifted public policy operators I served under and someone I enjoyed knowing. He will be missed.

-Lloyd A. Conway

Lloyd A. Conway - June 25, 2025 at 07:26 PM



“ 33 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Pray Funeral Home, Inc. - June 10, 2025 at 03:34 PM



“ *Doug was dedicated to making the world a better place. I was blessed to work alongside him, and even more so to call him a friend.*

Luann Dunsford - June 02, 2025 at 08:23 PM



“ 1 file added to the album *Doug Stites Photos*



Luann Dunsford - June 02, 2025 at 08:16 PM

CL

“ Doug was an amazing leader, an amazing cook, and a great friend. He was a prolific reader, bird hunter, and fly fisherman. He loved animals, especially his English Setters. He will be greatly missed. My condolences to Leanne and his family.

Chris Laverty - May 31, 2025 at 09:44 PM

SA

“ I worked at CAMW when Doug was there and will never forget his leadership when the roof unexpectedly collapsed and we had to temporarily relocate to another building. (No one was in the building when this happened). What would have normally taken months to sort out, he managed to secure space for all CAMW staff in less than 2 weeks and he made sure the temporary location met ADA requirements. In short, he managed to work a miracle. Then again, I can't imagine anyone telling him what can't be done in the time he wanted it done either! He will be missed. My condolences to his family.



Sigrid Adams - May 30, 2025 at 01:25 PM

LH

“ Doug was by husband, Bill's, best fishing buddy. Every year for a week at the end of June Doug would come to stay with us in the U.P. to fish for Atlantic Salmon. He would bring enough food for 10 people. In between the fishing outings he would cook for us and tell stories about Bill that would make me laugh out loud. Late June will never be the same. RIP Doug. We'll miss you. Lynn

Lynn Hauptmann - May 30, 2025 at 11:03 AM

WH

“ Doug and I met in the early '70's. We immediately became the best of friends rooted in our love of the out of doors. I could fill 2 Hemingway novels with stories of our adventures but this is one that would make him smile and laugh from above. We were fishing the Pigeon River Country late one June in the mid-'80's in anticipation of the start of the hexigenia mayfly hatch that brought big browns up from Mullet Lake. Because the river is small we both went our separate ways and would meet back at the Jeep well after dark. It was a beautiful calm night and I was on a section called the bend. It was pitch black and all you could hear was the flow of the water. Not more than 10 feet from where I was standing, there was a rustling in the brush and tall grass behind me and then a snort. I started off at a run through the water thinking there's not enough room in this river for both me and a bear. About 5 seconds later, I hear his tell-tale cackle and booming laugh. The SOB got me good. We both had a good laugh all the way home. I promised him I'd get him back but never did. Not because I wouldn't have, we just ran out of time. RIP my friend. I love you. Bill

William Hauptmann - May 30, 2025 at 10:55 AM

CH

“ Chris Holman purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Douglas Earl Stites.



Chris Holman - May 29, 2025 at 06:21 PM

CH

“ Chris Holman planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Douglas Earl Stites.

Chris Holman - May 29, 2025 at 06:21 PM

PT

“ I will always remember sitting down at Doug's table for a sumptuous meal prepared by Doug. I was always made to feel like family for which I will be grateful. With love Patti

Patti Trabue - May 29, 2025 at 05:22 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Douglas Earl Stites.



May 29, 2025 at 05:09 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Douglas Earl Stites.

May 29, 2025 at 05:09 PM

JH

“ Doug was not only my boss, but a good friend for many years. He was a demanding, fair and brilliant boss. We shared many great adventures together in pursuit of upland game, deer hunting and fly fishing. Some of the most memorable were those times spent with him and his beloved English Setter Traver. May you rest in peace Doug, in the company of Traver once again. Condolences to Leanne and your family and countless friends. Jim Houck

James Houck - May 29, 2025 at 03:32 PM

SP

“ I know his love of hunting from being with him at Jerry Irvine's for many years. We shared many good times together for all those years of deer hunting. Although i know Doug would rather bird hunt !! Hunting friends are always close, we all had so much fun together. I am so sorry for your loss, thoughts are with the family and his many friends.
Sincerely Scott Phillips

Scott Phillips - May 29, 2025 at 01:08 PM

LG

“ We are thinking of you all at this hard time in your lives. Such a lovely tribute to Doug. Praying for God's peace and comfort. Love you all. Lee and Sharon Gifford

Lee and Sharon Gifford - May 29, 2025 at 09:18 AM

TF

“ My sincere condolences to you and your family. May wonderful memories help heal your heart. May Doug soar with the angels.

trudie Frick - May 28, 2025 at 09:52 PM

LP

“ Leslie Prame lit a candle in memory of Douglas Earl Stites



Leslie Prame - May 28, 2025 at 07:17 PM

CN

“ *Such a lovely tribute to Doug. Our prayers are with you all for God's comfort. We love you all. Dave and Cathy Norman*

Cathy Norman - May 28, 2025 at 04:31 PM

TR

“ *32 files added to the album Doug Stites Photos*



Tracy Russman - May 28, 2025 at 02:10 PM

EC

“ *Edythe A Copeland lit a candle in memory of Douglas Earl Stites*



Edythe A Copeland - May 28, 2025 at 12:28 PM