

Richard G. Smolka, a professor emeritus at American University and one of the world's leading experts on elections, voting and the electoral process, died at his home in Mesa, Arizona, on Nov. 5. He was 81.

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Smolka taught in the School of Public Affairs at American for 31 years before his retirement. He created *Election Administration Reports*, a bi-weekly newsletter on election law and administration for election officials, in 1971 and served as its editor for more than 40 years. It became an industry standard and developed a worldwide readership among those in the business of running elections.

For more than 20 years, Smolka served as the expert and in-studio consultant for WRC-TV, the NBC affiliate in Washington, D.C., each Election Night, offering projections and analysis on local and national races.

He was also widely sought after as an expert source throughout the Bush-Gore "hanging chad" controversy, appearing on CNN, NBC Nightly News, 60 Minutes and other national media outlets to discuss the 2000 presidential election.

Smolka served as an elections observer and consultant for voting procedures in developing democracies around the world, including Bulgaria, the Federated States of Micronesia, Russia, Poland, Taiwan and more than 20 other countries. He once served as a poll worker in the Australian outback.

In 2001, Smolka received the Freedom Award from the National Association of Secretaries of State for his lifetime contributions to election administration in the United States and around the world.

At American University, Smolka taught courses related to campaigns and elections. He co-authored, with Harold Gosnell, a textbook on political parties and has written several other books and articles on the election process.

Smolka grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and attended St. Ignatius High School.

Smolka served in the Marine reserves from 1953-54 and was active duty in the U.S. Army from 1954-56.

After his military service, he went on to earn bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from American University.

Smolka is survived by his wife of 55 years, Margaret (Farrell), better known as Peggy, their six children – Daniel M. Smolka, a Foreign Service officer stationed in Barbados; Michael T. Smolka of Mesa, Ariz.; Gregory L. Smolka of Groton, Mass.; Stephen. P. "Bo" Smolka of Baltimore, Md; Mary M. Csernica of Lewisburg, Pa.; and David A. "Dewey" Smolka of Chicago -- and 15 grandchildren. He is also survived by two sisters.

Smolka was a sports fan throughout his life, with particular interest in baseball and horse racing. As a teen-ager, he served as a vendor at the 1948 World Series in Cleveland. He also created a dice-based horse race game that later received a U.S. patent.