

Veteran Anne Arundel lawmaker Ted Sophocleus dies



Theodore "Ted" Sophocleus

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Del. Ted Sophocleus, one of the longest-serving public officials in Anne Arundel County history, died Friday while hospitalized in Baltimore. He was 79.

The Democratic delegate from Linthicum was running for another term in a crowded District 32 primary election. He went through surgery earlier this year after a neck injury and took a brief leave of absence during the 2018 **General Assembly** session. He returned to applause from his delegate colleagues.

He is survived by his wife, Alice, their children and grandchildren. His wife worked closely with him during his political career of more than two decades.

Maryland Speaker of the House **Michael E. Busch**, D-Annapolis, applauded Sophocleus as someone who always gave 100 percent for the community.

“He had a heart bigger than life,” Busch said. “He was a very compassionate guy; he was a great member of the General Assembly and the (Anne) Arundel delegation. He was a great mentor to many young members and a pragmatic leader on budget issues.”

County Executive Steve Schuh, like other office holders, was quick to lament Sophocleus' passing and sing his praises.

"We are heartbroken at the loss of such a dedicated public servant and tireless community advocate. Ted has left Anne Arundel County better than he found it, and we are eternally grateful. Dania (his wife) and I express our sincerest condolences to Alice and the rest of the family."

For Sen. Ed DeGrange, who got to know Sophocleus when he first ran for office in the early 1990s, the loss is personal.

"He will be sorely missed. He loved helping people — that was his life. And he did it very well, from coaching little league to working with constituents. He was a real people person," DeGrange said.

"He really worked hard for his constituents. He looked out for the citizens and did a lot for our district," Del. Pam Beidle said. "He just loved being delegate. He had a lot of experience that we are going to lose."

A pharmacist by training, Sophocleus was elected to the County Council in 1982 and served two terms.

He was a Democratic candidate for county executive in 1990 and 1994, years when Republicans won the office.

After leaving the council, Sophocleus was appointed to a seat in the Maryland House of Delegates in 1993, named by then Gov. William Donald Schaefer for two years. He was elected to his own seat in 1998.

As a delegate, Sophocleus served on the Appropriations Committee since 2007 and was vice chair of the Health and Social Services Subcommittee.

While his health had caused him problems in recent years, Sophocleus continued his work within the Anne Arundel County delegation. He was respected by his colleagues and served as delegation chair during the 2018 session.

He spoke highly of his fellow lawmakers and fought back tears when saying goodbye to outgoing delegates at the end of this year's session in April.

Sophocleus positioned himself as a moderate Democrat taking a conservative stance on same-sex marriage in 2006.

In recent years, he filed fewer bills with a focus on bond bills. These bills brought money back to his district and other parts of the county. In 2016, he was the primary sponsor on a bill that increased the use of DNA within court proceedings.

Tragedy visited his family when his daughter, Dina Sophocleus Furrow, died in July 2005 after her husband crashed his Harley-Davidson while drunk.

Stanley Furrow was sentenced in April 2007 after a manslaughter conviction. In the following years, Sophocleus visited his daughter's grave to catch her up on recent events.

In the 2008 session, Sophocleus put forth legislation that would prohibit someone detained for alcohol- and drug-related driving to knowingly refuse to take a specific blood or breath test.

This would have only applied to people previously detained for similar incidents and had previously refused the test. That bill was withdrawn in committee.

“Ted Sophocleus was one of the finest people I’ve met in public office,” said Del. Nic Kipke. “He was honest, true to himself and his constituents, and loved his family dearly. He never wore his party on his sleeve and often, in a grandfatherly way, gave me good advice on how to pass bills or get important projects funded. I’ll miss him dearly.”

Corrections

JUN. 9, 2018, 7:20 AM

This story has been updated to correct portions of Sophocleus' biography.

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