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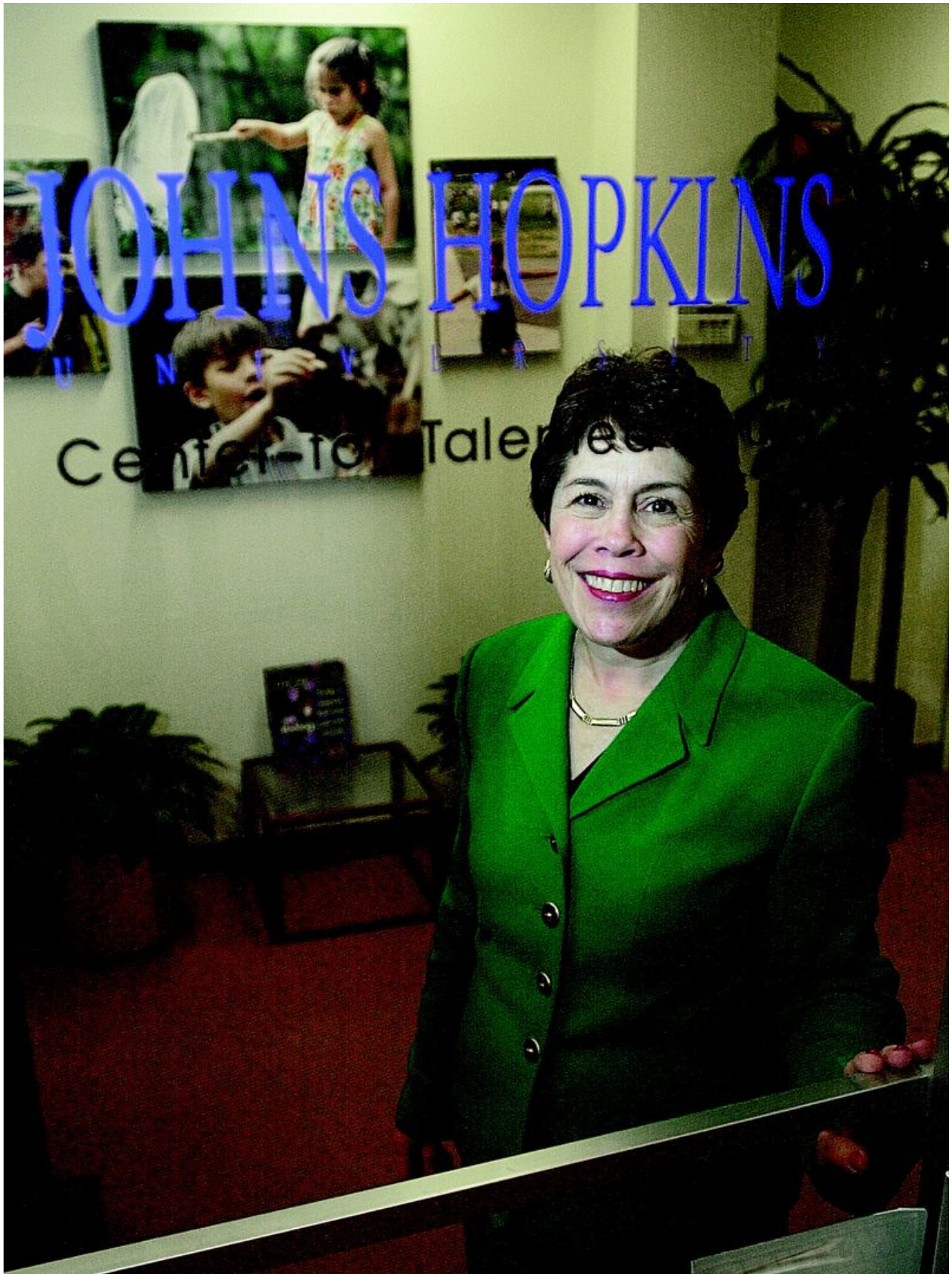
OBITUARIES

# Former state Sen. Barbara A. Hoffman, who chaired Budget and Taxation Committee and championed environment, education and women's rights, dies

FEEDBACK

By **FREDERICK N. RASMUSSEN**  
BALTIMORE SUN | JUN 24, 2021





Former state Sen. Barbara A. Hoffman previously served as executive director of the Maryland Democratic Party. (Steve Ruark/Patuxent Publishing)

Former Democratic state Sen. Barbara A. Hoffman, who worked tirelessly as a supporter of environmental and public education initiatives and women’s rights during her years in the legislature, died of cancer Sunday at her Cheswolde home. She was 81.

“Barbara was tough, tough and determined, and didn’t suffer fools gladly,” said former state Sen. Paula C. Hollinger, a Democrat who represented Baltimore County’s 11th District, and served in the legislature from 1987 until 2007. “We were also good friends, and our districts adjoined each other and our issues were just the same.”

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Ms. Hoffman was serving as executive director of the Maryland Democratic Party when she was appointed to the Maryland Senate in 1983 after her political mentor, Sen. Rosalie Silber Abrams, retired to head the state Department Office on Aging.

During a two-decade career, Ms. Hoffman, who represented the 42nd District, which spanned Northwest Baltimore City and County, rose to become one of the most powerful figures in Annapolis, where she chaired the Budget and Taxation Committee from 1995 to 2003, when she left the legislature.

“Barbara was very smart and was in the first wave of female leadership in the legislature,” said Samuel I. “Sandy” Rosenberg, a Democrat, and member of the House of Delegates since 1983 when he shared the district with Ms. Hoffman. He now represents the 41st District.

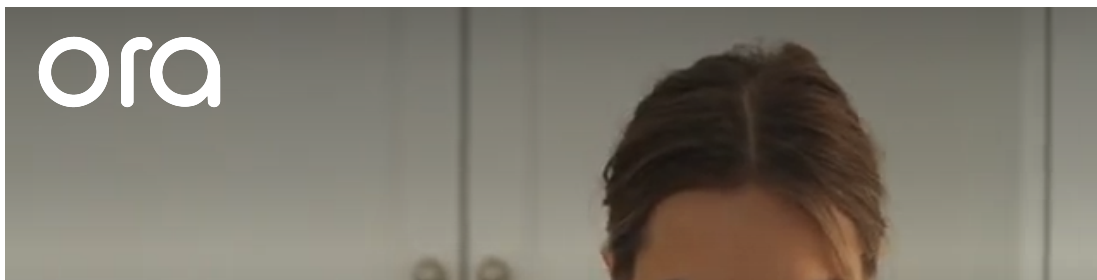
“Barbara was the first woman to chair the Budget and Taxation Committee and she was extraordinarily skilled at that. She was a trailblazer,” said Mr. Rosenberg, who now represents the 41st District.

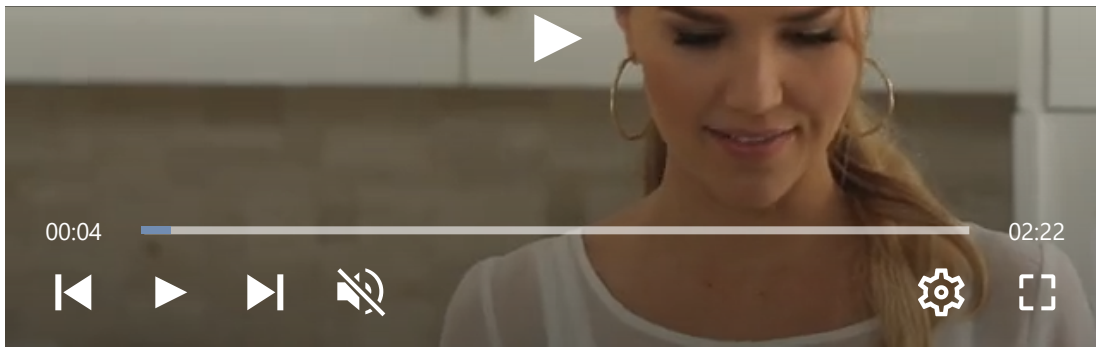
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These are some of the notable Marylanders who (HOTZ / Check with Baltimore Sun Photo)





“She was smart, committed, effective and tough, and as a woman in the legislature, she was in the forefront,” Mr. Rosenberg said. “The same attitudes she showed as a legislator, that was Barbara.”

She gained a reputation as a strong supporter of educational and environmental initiatives, especially educational issues and programs that affected Baltimore.

“As an elected official, I try to convince people about an issue, and learn what they think. Teachers do that every day,” Ms. Hoffman told The Baltimore Sun in an interview during her third term in the Senate.

FEEDBACK

“It’s quite rewarding to best the bureaucracy and get an important law passed when it’s the right thing to do,” she said. “The times when a strong back and willing mind were enough for the job market are gone. Education is becoming increasingly important. There aren’t too many places for people without computer knowledge.”

Mr. Rosenberg said Ms. Hoffman was skilled at working with others on crucial issues — “on education, with Pete Rawlings, her House budget chair counterpart, and with Paula Hollinger, Larry LaMotte and myself when we codified Roe vs. Wade.”

Ms. Hoffman, Ms. Hollinger, Mr. Rosenberg and Del. Patricia R. Sher, a Democrat from Montgomery County, were sponsors of a controversial abortion bill they introduced in the General Assembly in 1990, fearing that the Supreme Court might overturn Roe vs. Wade.

“The bill, introduced by legislators who support abortion rights, offers abortion on demand for women during the initial stages of pregnancy. In the later stages of

pregnancy, abortions would be barred unless the woman's life is endangered or there is significant risk that the fetus is deformed," The Sun reported at the time.

"We were the leaders and this was a very contentious issue," Mr. Rosenberg recalled. "It was a test of Barbara and Paula's courage and fortitude and the bill established the Roe principle, but not without the women experiencing some ugly moments from anti-abortion opponents.

"They found antisemitic and misogynistic literature on their desks."



State Sen. Barbara A. Hoffman is pictured in 2001. She chaired the Budget and Taxation Committee from 1995 to 2003. (Amy Davis / XX)

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Said Ms. Hollinger: "They also put plastic fetuses on our desks and they continued to get two short Jewish women confused. They thought I was Barbara and she was me."

The result was an eight-day filibuster of the bill that eventually went to referendum and is now part of state law, Ms. Hollinger said.

"Back in those days, the legislature was pretty much Catholic and even though St. Patrick's Day was a Saturday night, they still went at it," Ms. Hollinger said. "If the Supreme Court ever overturns Roe vs. Wade, Maryland could become the center for women who want to get abortions."

Ms. Hoffman was a great supporter of the Baltimore Museum of Art and was instrumental in helping it receive a \$10 million capital grant.



After leaving state government, Barbara A. Hoffman became a partner with the Artemis Group, a lobbying firm. (Patuxent Publishing)

“Without her leadership, vision and commitment a lot would not have been accomplished. She was simply amazing,” said former BMA director Doreen Bolger. “When I heard that Barbara had passed away, tears came to my eyes.”

Ms. Bolger added: “She realized that the BMA was something unusual that brought the Jewish and Christian community together,” Ms. Bolger said. “The grant allowed for the renovation of the galleries, lobby and the auditorium. She knew how important the BMA was.”

After leaving Annapolis, Ms. Hoffman became a partner with the Artemis Group, a lobbying firm. She also served on numerous state

boards and commissions, including the 21st Century School Facilities Commission, the Interagency Commission on School Construction and the board of the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

[Sharon Brackett, Baltimore City Democratic State Central Committee member, dies »](#)

In 1998, 2000 and 2003, she was named one of “Maryland’s Top 100 Women” by the Maryland Daily Record.

Ms. Hoffman was awarded honorary doctorate degrees by the University of Maryland, University College, and in 2001, she was a recipient of the First Citizen Award.

”Known for her plain talk, toughness and perspicacity, especially with regard to budgetary matters, Sen. Hoffman is an outspoken proponent of carefully chosen initiatives for young children, and a strong advocate of meeting the needs of her less affluent constituents,” said Dr. Edward C. Papenfuse, former Maryland State Archivist and Commissioner of Land Patents, when presenting her the First Citizen Award.

The former Barbara Ann Marks, daughter of Sid Marks, a furniture salesperson, and his wife, Eve Marks, a Beth Tfiloh School kindergarten teacher, was born in Baltimore and raised on Burleith Avenue in Mondawmin.

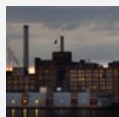
After graduating from Forest Park High School in 1956, she earned a bachelor’s degree in 1960 from what is now Towson University, and a master’s degree in liberal arts in 1966 from the Johns Hopkins University.

An English teacher, she was also supervisor of secondary school teachers at what is now Morgan State University from 1968 to 1973, where she also wrote “Journeys in English,” an English textbook, and was executive director of the Maryland Democratic Party from 1979 to 1983.



Here are some of the celebrities and newsmakers (David Zalubowski/AP)

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Ms. Hoffman was an avid reader and an accomplished quilter and knitter.



She was a member of Beth Tfiloh Congregation.

Funeral services were held Tuesday at Sol Levinson & Bros. in Pikesville.

She is survived by her husband of 61 years, Donald E. Hoffman, a businessman; two sons, Alan Hoffman of Silver Spring and Michael Hoffman of Chicago; a daughter, Carolyn Karoll of Patterson Park; a sister, Sheila Eller of Pikesville; and six grandchildren.

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*Baltimore Sun librarian Paul McCardell contributed research.*

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