

Jean Roesser, Maryland state senator and secretary of aging, dies at 87

By **Harrison Smith** October 9

Jean W. Roesser, a moderate Republican from Montgomery County who served two terms in the Maryland Senate and was an advocate for the rights of the elderly as secretary of aging under Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., died Oct. 2 at a hospital in Bethesda, Md. She was 87.

The cause was complications of leukemia, said her son, Eugene Roesser Jr.

Mrs. Roesser (pronounced ROSS-er), a longtime resident of Potomac, Md., was elected to the House of Delegates in 1986 on a campaign that emphasized tax cuts and increased funding for education. She served two terms in the House before being elected to the state Senate in a 1994 upset, defeating five-term Democratic incumbent Laurence Levitan.

Mrs. Roesser criticized Levitan for representing his legal clients before state agencies, a practice that was subsequently banned.

Representing Potomac and western Montgomery County, she served on the Finance and Legislative Ethics committees and was one of just three Republican senators to vote in favor of 2000 bill that required handguns to be sold with built-in locks. “If it saves the life of a child or individual,” Mrs. Roesser told The Washington Post, “it may be worth it.”

The legislation made Maryland the first state in the country to require the trigger locks.

Mrs. Roesser was narrowly beaten by Democrat Robert J. Garagiola in her 2002 reelection campaign. The following year, she was appointed secretary of aging by Ehrlich, a Republican. The department helps seniors access housing and financial planning services and aims to prevent elderly abuse and neglect.

Gloria Jean Wolberg was born in Washington on May 8, 1930. Her father was a commercial real estate broker, and her mother was a homemaker.

She received a bachelor’s degree in economics from what is now Trinity Washington University in 1951 and married Eugene Roesser in 1957. He died in 2003.

Before an unsuccessful first run for the House of Delegates in 1982, Mrs. Roesser was a reporter for the Suburban Record, a now-defunct newspaper based in Silver Spring, Md. She was also a member of groups including the Potomac Women's Republican Club.

In addition to her son, Eugene Roesser Jr. of North Potomac, survivors include two daughters, Mary Roesser Calderon of London and Anne Roesser of Gaithersburg, Md.; a sister; and two grandchildren.

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