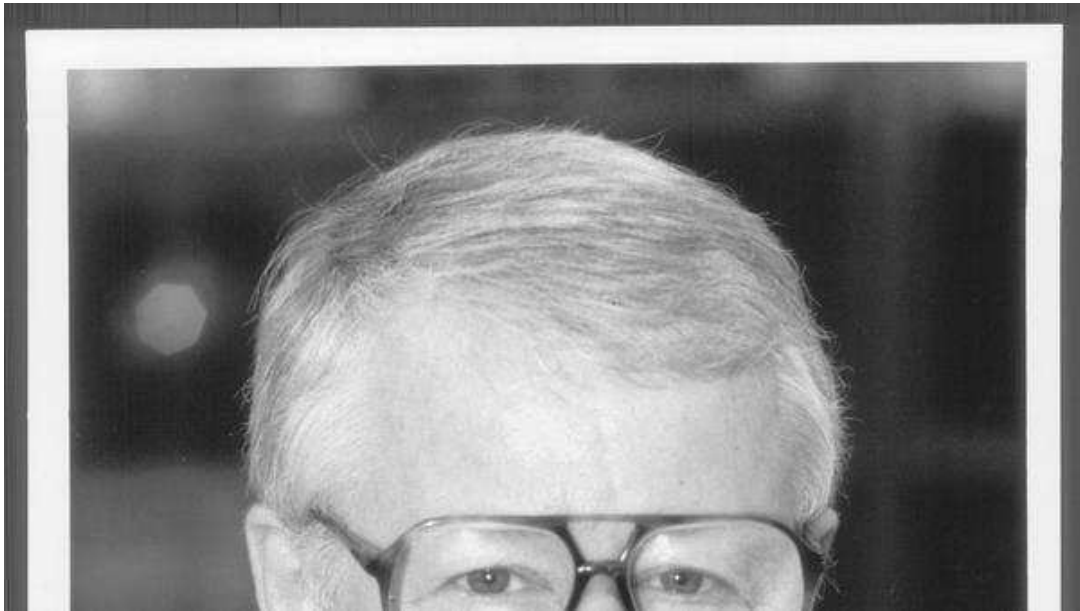


Leon Billings, former Maryland delegate and author of clean-air measures, dies



Leon G. Billings, a former member of the Maryland House of Delegates from Montgomery County, died Tuesday in Nashville, Tenn. (Check with Baltimore Sun Photo)

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Leon G. Billings was also a key author of the Clean Air Act.

NOVEMBER 16, 2016, 7:20 PM

Leon G. Billings, a former member of the Maryland House of Delegates from Montgomery County who was a key author of the federal Clean Air Act and other landmark environmental laws, died Tuesday in Nashville, Tenn., after suffering a stroke while visiting family. He was 78.

Born in Montana, Mr. Billings moved to Washington in 1962 and had a 50-year career in politics and public policy. As the first staff director of the Senate Environment subcommittee, he was a primary author of the 1970 Clean Air Act, one of the most influential environmental laws in U.S. history and a foundation for current air pollution laws.

Mr. Billings also played a key role in the 1972 Clean Water Act, the primary federal law governing water pollution, and 1977 amendments to both the air and water pollution laws.

He served as Maine Sen. Edmund Muskie's environment adviser for more than a decade and later was the Democrat's chief of staff in the Senate. He also served that capacity when Senator Muskie was secretary of state under President Jimmy Carter.

Mr. Billings' first wife, former Maryland Del. Patricia Billings, died in 1990. Mr. Billings was appointed to her seat representing Montgomery County.

The Democrat later won election in his own right, and served in the General Assembly until 2003. He focused on environmental issues as a member of the Environmental Matters Committee, among others.

In 2002, he hailed a state measure to limit development around five coastal bays in Worcester County, calling it "landmark legislation."

He was a critic of efforts in the legislature to deregulate electricity. "Somebody is going to get screwed and you and I know who it is, and that's the residential retail consumer," he told The Baltimore Sun in 1997.

Mr. Billings later ran a consulting firm and taught college courses on the Clean Air Act and other laws. He also taught politics at the University of Southern California.

He is survived by his wife, Cherry Billings of Bethany Beach, Del., and three children.

Mr. Billings' son Paul, senior vice president of the American Lung Association, said his father learned the importance of advocating for social justice from his parents.

"Our air and water are cleaner and Americans are healthier because of Leon Billings," he said. "There was no greater public health champion."

The Baltimore Sun contributed to this article.

—Associated Press

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