Marilyn Goldwater, Maryland delegate and health care champion, dies at 95

The former emergency-room nurse spent 24 years over three decades in the Maryland House of Delegates

By [Emily Langer](#)

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Marilyn R. Goldwater, an emergency-room nurse by training who served 24 years in the Maryland House of Delegates, where she became known as an advocate for improving and expanding health care across the state, died Jan. 7 at her daughter's home in Manhattan Beach, Calif. She was 95.

The cause was complications from Parkinson's disease, said her daughter, Diane "Dee" Goldwater.

Mrs. Goldwater, a self-described liberal Democrat, was first elected to the Maryland House in 1974. Her district included Bethesda — her longtime place of residence — as well as portions of Rockville, Kensington and Chevy Chase.

She had previously worked in hospitals across the country and volunteered with the Red Cross in the Washington area, where she became active in politics with the organization that is now the Women's Democratic Club in Montgomery County, Md.

When she took the oath of office as an elected official, she told The Washington Post years later, she thought, "I can't believe this is me."

Mrs. Goldwater remained in the House of Delegates through 1986, when she unsuccessfully ran for the Maryland Senate. In 1994, she reclaimed a House seat, serving until she retired midway through her term in 2007 at age 80.

Mrs. Goldwater, who served at times as deputy majority whip, was by the end of her career vice chairman of the health and government operations committee.

Among other initiatives during her years in office, she helped establish the Wellmobile program that dispatched mobile clinics to areas of Maryland where residents, many of them poor and uninsured, had little access to health care.

She was a vocal advocate for stem-cell research, which she argued held the promise of improved therapies for diseases including multiple myeloma, a blood cancer for which she was treated.

She supported abortion rights but worked with opponents on the issue to create pregnancy counseling services and served over the years on state panels on mental health and nursing.

Marilyn Rubin was born in Boston on Jan. 29, 1927. She was raised by a single mother, a Jewish immigrant from Russia who was 19 at the time of her birth. Mrs. Goldwater's efforts to improve health care for the poor, particularly women and children, were motivated in large part by her memories of her mother's struggles, her daughter said.

Mrs. Goldwater joined the Army Nurse Corps during World War II and graduated in 1948 from the Mount Sinai School of Nursing in New York, where she met her husband, biochemist William H. Goldwater.

She worked as a nurse in New Orleans and in San Mateo, Calif., before settling in the Washington area in 1959, when her husband joined the National Institutes of Health. As a Red Cross volunteer, Mrs. Goldwater counseled teenage mothers in the care of their babies.

In between her two stints in the House of Delegates, Mrs. Goldwater directed the Maryland health department's federal relations office and was a health policy adviser to Gov. William Donald Schaefer (D).

Mrs. Goldwater's husband died in 2011. Besides her daughter, survivors include a son, Charles "Chuck" Goldwater of Los Angeles; a sister; and a granddaughter.

With Mary Jane Lloyd Zusy, Mrs. Goldwater was the author of the 1990 book "Prescription for Nurses: Effective Political Action."

When she retired, she told The Post that of all her civic work, what brought her "most satisfaction was helping give nurses a voice."