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Cryor to Receive Lifetime Service Award

Jean Cryor, Maryland delegate and longtime Potomac activist, will be honored at the Potomac Chamber of Commerce dinner on Thursday.

By Aaron Stern and Mary Vause/The Almanac
November 14, 2006

One moment in particular stands out for Allison Cryor DiNardo about her mother's 12 years in the Maryland House of Delegates.

DiNardo was visiting Annapolis to observe her mother, Del. Jean Cryor (R-15), on the House floor. The bill being considered was about earned income credit, a Democratic issue that Republicans historically opposed. Cryor, a moderate Republican, rose to be recognized by the House speaker.

"She stood and she said it was time to put a face to the bill and see who is really affected by having an earned income credit," recalled DiNardo. "She said that these were very hard-working, low-income people, mostly women, and she said that when [the delegates] cast their vote, it was important to put a face on the bill and remember who would be affected."

Cryor sat down and the other delegates stood up to give her a standing ovation. The bill passed.

"It was a rousing moment, and it was her way to make sure everyone's heard," said DiNardo. "Certainly those hard-working, low-income people weren't going to be able to come and testify for themselves in Annapolis, but she spoke for them and reminded the legislators of the daunting task they face."

DiNardo said that Cryor is always eager to lend a helping hand to constituents from all walks of life.

"My mother is always energized by politics," she said. "Each person she speaks to, each idea she hears is part of her fuel. She's the epitome of a people person."

Jean Cryor's Honors and Awards

- ✓ * 2005: Woman of Achievement Award, Suburban Maryland Business and Professional Women Association.
- ✓ * 2002: Thornton Commission Award, Maryland State Board of Education.
- ✓ * 2002: Legislator of the Year, Childhood Brain Tumor Foundation and Registry of Maryland.
- ✓ * 2002: Businessperson of the Year, Maryland Business for Responsive Government.
- ✓ * 2000: Legislator of the Year, Maryland Retailers Association.
- ✓ * Hero of the Taxpayer, Maryland Taxpayers Association, 2000.
- ✓ * Award for Building the Bridge to Educational Excellence in Maryland Public Schools, State Board of Education, 2002.
- ✓ * First Prize, Investigative Reporting, Maryland Society of Professional Journalists, 1993

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DEL. JEAN CRYOR (R-15) will be honored with a lifetime service award by the Potomac Chamber of Commerce at its annual dinner on Thursday night.

Cryor, 67, has lived in Potomac for more than 30 years and is no stranger to community awards. She was named Business Person of the Year by the Potomac Chamber of Commerce, and she was also named Citizen of the Year for her environmental work (she was formerly president of the West Montgomery County Citizens Association). She is a widow who has three daughters and three grandchildren. Cryor moved to Potomac with her family in 1973 when her husband, a political reporter for CBS, was promoted to bureau chief in Washington, DC. After his death, Cryor entered journalism herself, working as editor and publisher for the Potomac Gazette, where she developed insight into local issues and politics. She was subsequently elected to three four-year terms in the Maryland House of Delegates. As a delegate, she worked on the Joint Administrative Executive Legislative Committee and the House Rules Committee, and she was the ranking member of the powerful Ways and Means Committee. In addition, the Speaker of the House appointed her to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee. Cryor was the first Republican elected president of the Women Legislators of Maryland, the largest and oldest women's caucus in the country.

* Citizen of the Year, Almanac Newspapers

* Businessperson of the Year, Potomac Chamber of Commerce.



Photo by Cissy Finley Grant/The Almanac

Jean Cryor poses with former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani during his visit to Potomac.

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ELIE PISARRA-CAIN has volunteered as campaign treasurer for Cryor over the past 12 years. "She's up from early in the morning until late at night going to meetings," said Pisarra-Cain. "Everyone wants her to come be a speaker at their functions - she's so good at what she does she's wanted everywhere."

Pisarra-Cain was impressed by Cryor's work for a sales tax holiday on back-to-school shopping in the fall since it "keeps business in Maryland" and helps working families.

"She has had the most wonderful 12 years and there'll never be anybody like her," said Pisarra-Cain. "She works so hard, and she's so intelligent."

Cissy Finley Grant met Cryor through their time working together at the Gazette Newspapers and the two quickly became friends. When Cryor made the jump into politics Grant was one of several women who helped organize her campaign and who served as an unofficial advisor during her time in office, functioning as what Grant described as Cryor's "Kitchen Cabinet."

"We spent a lot of hours together and had a lot of laughs," said Grant. "She is just a wonderful woman with a brain that won't quit."

Adam Greenberg, owner of Potomac Pizza, has known Cryor for over ten years.

"She comes into my restaurants all the time," he said. "She's just a great person. She's someone who is always willing to lend an ear and who wants to hear your problems and will do whatever she can to help you."

AS THE ONLY Montgomery County Republican in the state legislature, Cryor impressed Democrats and Republicans alike with her bipartisan consensus-building.

"She is an independent broker and she doesn't toe the party line," said Brian Feldman (D-15). "She did what she thought was right for her constituents, and I think that people respect her for that."

Cryor shared an office with Feldman and Kathleen Dumais (D-15), her two Democratic counterparts who also represent District 15, which covers most of Potomac.

"It was probably the only bipartisan office in the whole assembly and that speaks volumes to the relationship that we established," said Dumais. "In the last four years, there's been plenty of party acrimony in the legislature but our office was not indicative of that. The three of us got along very well and collaborated very well on the issues for our district."

Cryor's ability to build consensus among the other delegates was due in part to her independent nature and nurturing, steady manner.

"She was a gentle consensus builder," said Dumais. "She was great at reaching across to both sides of the aisle. She is just a very kind soul."

"Her leadership was rooted in her political independence in the legislature and that gave her a lot of respect," said Feldman. "There aren't that many people who will buck the party leadership to do what they think is right, but Jean was one of those people."

John Kane of Potomac, who serves as the outgoing Chairman of the Maryland Republican Party, is also impressed with Cryor's record.

"She did it without raising her voice and without raising a stick," said John Kane. "We need more of that from our elected officials."

CRYOR PUSHED for legislation designed to safeguard the vulnerable, increase education funding and protect the environment.

"She was a champion of people who didn't have a voice of their own," said Dumais, who cited a taskforce that Cryor created to protect vulnerable adults such as those with Alzheimer's and developmental disabilities.

Feldman said that Cryor successfully led the battle against legislation what would have closed MARC commuter train stations in Dickerson and Boyds. He also recalled the recent battle to override Republican Governor Bob Ehrlich's veto of a minimum wage increase in the state of Maryland.

"I'm sure there was a lot of pressure on her from the Governor's office and it took a lot of courage to do that," said Feldman. "People respected that she did what she thought was the right thing despite the political pressure that she was under."

"She didn't always vote with Governor Ehrlich," agreed Kane, "and that was indicative of her independence. That's what Jean Cryor did for 12 years."

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