

Howard 'Pete' Rawlings,

dies at age 66
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Loses battle with cancer

By Baltimore Times staff writer

Longtime Baltimore legislator, Howard "Pete" Rawlings died last Friday, of cancer. He was 66.

According to a statement released by his family, "Rawlings passed away in the early morning hours of Friday, November 14, 2003, at the University of Maryland Medical Center."

Delegate Rawlings is survived by his wife, Nina Cole Rawlings; two daughters, Stephanie Rawlings-Blake and Lisa Fax Rawlings; a son, Wendell Peters Rawlings; granddaughter, seven-week-old Sophia Ruth Blake; three brothers, Gilbert, Richard and Guy Rawlings and two sisters, Rebecca Scott and LaVerne LaWal.

Rawlings grew up in a Baltimore public housing complex, the Poe Homes.

After high school, he graduated from both Morgan State [College] and the University of Wisconsin with Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Mathematics.

An early foray in to local politics landed Rawlings an internship with the late Senator Verda Welcome, who was also his mentor.

When he was elected to the Maryland General Assembly, Rawlings quickly rose to become chair of the powerful Appropriations Committee. His chairmanship allowed him to make decisions that affected the entire state, especially Baltimore.

A tireless advocate of education, Rawlings insisted on the best public education possible and worked hard at making sure that all Maryland's students received it.

In addition to his legislative duties, Rawlings held positions at Morgan State University and Baltimore City Community College (BCCC), which held a

memorial tribute to Rawlings. At the time of his death, Rawlings was assistant to BCCC's president.

Messages of condolence poured in after Rawlings' death was announced.

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings said, "I was deeply saddened by the death of Delegate Howard Rawlings. The people of Maryland have lost a true leader; and I have lost a good and dear friend.

"I thank God, however, that He allowed Pete's life to eclipse my own. Delegate Rawlings was a man of great integrity; and as Dr. Steven Carter once observed, true leaders are defined by their integrity..."

"At this difficult time for Pete's wife, Nina, and their wonderful family, I join all of the people of Maryland in offering our prayers — and our gratitude — for a life well-lived."

The American Cancer Society expressed condolences to Maryland lawmakers on the death of longtime State Delegate Rawlings, saying, "Our thoughts and prayers [today] are with Delegate Rawlings' family members and with his extended family and colleagues in Annapolis.

"As an influential leader in Annapolis for nearly a quarter-century, Delegate Rawlings was an institution, well-known for driving many policies in hopes of improving the life of Marylanders."

Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley issued the following statement: "Maryland is blessed with many good and thoughtful public servants. But Pete

Rawlings was a giant. He always followed his moral compass, ignoring political expedience — whatever the consequences. A member of the House of Delegates for nearly 25 years, there was no fiercer advocate for Baltimore's children — and Maryland's children. He made us face the shame of our under-funded schools."

Mayor O'Malley ordered city flags flown at half-staff in memory of Delegate Rawlings.

Congressman C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger also expressed condolences. He said, "Delegate Howard 'Pete' Rawlings was one of the finest Maryland lawmakers and a good friend. He was a fantastic leader who had the courage to stand up for what he believed in — even when things got difficult.

"We worked together on many issues and spent many long days in Annapolis fighting to bring more education funding to Baltimore City and Baltimore County. I admired and respected Delegate Rawlings for his convictions and dedication to the people he represented. Delegate Rawlings will be greatly missed."

Robert Moore, president of Service Employees International Union (SEIU District 1199E-DC), sent this statement on the death of Rawlings: "We have lost a champion of the people of Baltimore, the people of Maryland and the public school students of the inner city.

"I knew Pete well and admired his long leadership in making the funding of public education a top priority for the state.

"Pete never forgot his roots in the inner-city of Baltimore and never lost sight of the needs of the people who elected him to represent them. He was a tireless leader in the fight to improve the quality of life for all of Maryland's working families."

Dr. John A. Sabatini, Jr., acting secretary of Maryland Higher Education Commission, said, "The passing of Delegate Howard 'Pete' Rawlings is a great loss for the state of

Maryland, but also to the higher education community as a whole. He was tireless in his commitment to higher education, particularly to disadvantaged but capable students. He thought that all students should have access higher education, regardless of race or

income. He fought for access and he fought for financial aid.

"On behalf of the Maryland Higher Education Commission and its commissioners, we mourn the loss and celebrate the life of Howard 'Pete' Rawlings. His impact on higher education in Maryland is enduring and will be felt forever."

Funeral services were held Thursday at Douglas Memorial Community Church. Delegate Rawlings was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the Howard P. Rawlings Scholarship Fund, c/o First Mariner Bank, PO Box 25959, Baltimore, Maryland 21224.