

# Delegate Howard "Pete" Rawlings

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The recent death of delegate Howard "Pete" Rawlings deprives Baltimore City of one of its most prominent political figures and a champion of the city in the Maryland general Assembly. Rawlings, a member of the legislature since 1978 was the powerful chairman of the House of Delegates' appropriations committee which wielded enormous power over the state budget.

Rawlings was a master of the state budget process and he ensured that city projects were funded and he ensured sound fiscal policies. He was a stickler for accountability and he was not afraid to take unpopular positions or confront powerful governors over budgetary issues.

He was a strong proponent of public education, especially for city children and his persistence in criticizing the city's schools leadership on academic achievement eventually resulted in legislation that created a city state; partnership that essentially wrested control of the city's public school system from the exclusive control of city government. He was a critic of the partnership when large deficits were run up by the city schools. Rawlings was widely honored for his efforts in bringing change to the city schools.

Delegate Rawlings was also an early proponent of slot machine gambling in Maryland as a revenue source for supporting education. He was expert at analyzing the budget and finding ways to fund state government. Up to the very end of his tenure in the legislature when he was battling cancer, he raised his powerful voice on budgetary issues in the General Assembly.

Rawlings will also be remembered as a politician who exerted influence on politics inside and outside his district. He was instrumental in the election of State Senators Verna Jones and Lisa Gladden and he used his enormous fund raising efforts to help finance candidates of his choice in various races. Rawlings supported Mayor Martin O'Malley in his first run for the city's top office and he was an early supporter in that racially charged election.

The death of delegate Rawlings deprives the city of a major player in state politics at a time when the city's influence in the General Assembly is waning due to population loss. Rawlings will not be easily replaced. His rise from a childhood in the Poe Homes Public Housing Complex to the chairmanship of the most powerful committee in the Maryland House of delegates is a classic American success story. Delegate Rawlings' life will leave a lasting impact on this state.