

# Rawlings eulogized by peers, family

## Lauded for his principled way

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BALTIMORE — Civic and political leaders from across the state paid tribute yesterday to Howard "Pete" Rawlings, the influential Baltimore state delegate who died of cancer last week.

As mourners packed Douglas Memorial Community Church, Mr. Rawlings was described as a strong, passionate, giant of a man who fought for what he thought was right regardless of the consequences.

"Pete was the antithesis of the modern politician," said former House Speaker Casper R. Taylor Jr. in one of many tributes to Mr. Rawlings, who died Nov. 14 at age 66. "He was a politician who was almost totally oblivious to public opinion. If he wanted a poll, he looked in a mirror."

Lasting more than two hours, the memorial service inspired tears and affectionate laughter on behalf of a man frequently described as one of the most powerful politicians in the state.

The audience included Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich Jr., State Comptroller William Donald Schaefer, and a roster of state officials and civic leaders.

"We all of us have busy schedules, busy jobs, busy itineraries, but Pete decided to call a meeting, and so here we all are," said Kweisi Mfume, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Born in the West Baltimore housing project named for Edgar Allen Poe, Mr. Rawlings earned a bachelor's degree with honors in mathematics from what was then Morgan State College and a master's from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He did

doctoral work in Wisconsin and the University of Maryland and taught math at Morgan State and the University of Maryland-Baltimore County.

Mr. Rawlings was elected to the state House of Delegates in 1978.

As chairman of the House Appropriations Committee for the past 12 years, he played a major role in shaping state fiscal and tax policies, with a special emphasis on education.

In the 1990s, Mr. Rawlings began a major battle with the educational establishment in Baltimore and many of his fellow city legislators to give the state a say in running the city's school system.

Mr. Rawlings engaged in a similar battle with Morgan State University and the Prince George's County school board. In each case, he insisted he wanted to hold those institutions accountable although critics accused him of establishing a separate set of ground rules for black institutions.

Speakers yesterday returned repeatedly to Mr. Rawlings' courage as champion of unpopular causes.

Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley said Mr. Rawlings exemplified Frederick Douglass' advice to abolitionists to "agitate, agitate, agitate."

"When Pete believed in something, he was unmovable," Mr. O'Malley said. "And there was no fiercer advocate for Baltimore's children, Maryland's children. . . . He was prodding, challenging, demanding, cajoling."

Mr. Taylor said Mr. Rawlings leaves a legacy of accomplishments "unmatched in our legislature."

"Look at the panorama of the Inner Harbor and you are looking at buildings that he helped build," Mr. Taylor said.

Described as a "service of triumph," yesterday's service included tributes from members of Mr. Rawlings' family and close friends as well as from his colleagues in the political world.

Donald E. Wilson, dean and vice president of medical affairs of the University of Maryland School of Medicine described his personal anguish, standing by Mr. Rawlings' bedside during his final days at the University of Maryland Medical Center "with the finest physicians at my beck and call knowing there was nothing I could do to save my friend."