

Rep. Quincy Murphy dies after battle with cancer

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Rep. Quincy Murphy, D-Augusta, a state representative for 11 years, died Thursday after a battle with cancer. He was 60.

Murphy was an “extra-compassionate public servant. He loved his constituents, and they loved him,” party Chairman Lowell Greenbaum said.

Born in Atlanta but reared by his grandmother in Edgefield County, S.C., William Quincy Murphy Jr. was an Allstate Insurance Co. agent and co-owner, with Robert O’Neal, of O’Neal-Murphy Insurance Agency, which was founded in 1977 and is one of the area’s oldest black-owned businesses.

Murphy graduated from a seat on Augusta-Richmond County Coliseum Authority to the state House in 2002, when he defeated Otis Smith to fill the House District 97 seat vacated by Rep. Ben Allen, who resigned to run for Congress.

Murphy, who was serving his sixth term, was opposed only once for re-election, a 2006 challenge by Helen Blocker-Adams. Murphy also survived two reconfigurations of his district, which was renumbered 120 in 2004 and 127 in 2012.

Blocker-Adams remarked that Murphy was a good family man and successful businessman who always remained lighthearted and approachable, even during political debates.

“The community has lost a great public servant,” she said. “He was an advocate for young people. He was the type of person that knew how to make people feel at ease.”

His colleague on the delegation, Rep. Earnest Smith, said he had known Murphy since high school. “He was not only a colleague but a very, very good friend, a longtime friend,” Smith said. “He will be significantly missed in this region.

Rep. Wayne Howard, another member of the delegation, echoed the sentiment.

“His involvement in the community of Augusta and dedication to the state will always be remembered, and he will be deeply missed,” he said. “I am honored to have called him a friend.”

Former Sen. J.B. Powell, who served alongside Murphy on the Augusta legislative delegation for several years, called Murphy “a fighter” who is now no longer suffering.

Rep. Barbara Sims, R-Augusta, said Murphy never talked about his illness.

“I never heard him complain, and I know he was not well,” she said.

Murphy officiated at Richmond County high school football and basketball games for nearly 40 years, slowing down only because of a busy schedule in the past couple of years, said school system Athletic Director George Bailey, whose family is very close to Murphy’s.

“He has been a true friend to my family,” said Bailey, whose daughter works with Murphy’s wife at Jenkins-White Elementary. “He’s just a super person all around.”

Mayor Deke Copenhaver called Murphy a good friend whom he’ll miss deeply. One of his fondest memories of the state representative was when Murphy referred to Augusta’s new generation of leaders as “The Joshua Generation.” The statement referred to President Obama’s 2008 outreach to young people of faith. The biblical Joshua was Moses’ successor and led the Israelites into the promised land.

“He was a staunch believer in the city of Augusta and shared with me on many occasions how excited he was to see all the great things going on in the city that he loved,” Copenhaver said.

Sen. Hardie Davis, D-Augusta, said he was saddened to learn of Murphy’s death.

“I will always remember Quincy’s steadfast dedication to his family, church and community,” Davis said. Murphy, a member and deacon at Augusta’s historic Tabernacle Baptist Church, held on to his House seat despite the Augusta delegation’s loss of legislative clout with the 2005 conviction of Sen. Charles Walker and the shift to a Republican-dominated General Assembly, serving instead on a delegation whose primary role in recent years has been to affect local politics.

The delegation, for instance, has repeatedly declined to forgo its assigned role to make appointments to various Augusta governing boards and authorities, despite the Augusta Commission’s request.

Murphy cast doubts on the commission’s governance, sponsoring an unsuccessful House bill last year that would require all city departments with budgets greater than \$500,000 and some government contractors to undergo mandatory forensic audits every five years.

He also sponsored unsuccessful legislation seeking to make commission elections partisan and supported bills seeking to increase black clout on the commission, but in 2008 sided with the commission in its push to replace the entire coliseum authority.

Because of the timing of Murphy’s death after the legislative session during the first year of his term, the governor has until Sept. 5 to set the date of a special election, which he can order to be held any time between Oct. 5 and Dec. 5.

Special elections don't have partisan primaries, but candidates can chose to have their party affiliation listed by their names on the ballots. They typically draw several candidates, requiring a runoff if none gets a majority. District 127 includes Fort Gordon and areas west of Bobby Jones Expressway and north of Deans Bridge Road in Richmond County and about two-thirds of Jefferson County.

Murphy is survived by his wife, Dianne Dunton; a son, William Quincy Murphy III; and a daughter, Jennifer Alisha Murphy.

Walter Jones of Morris News Service contributed to this article