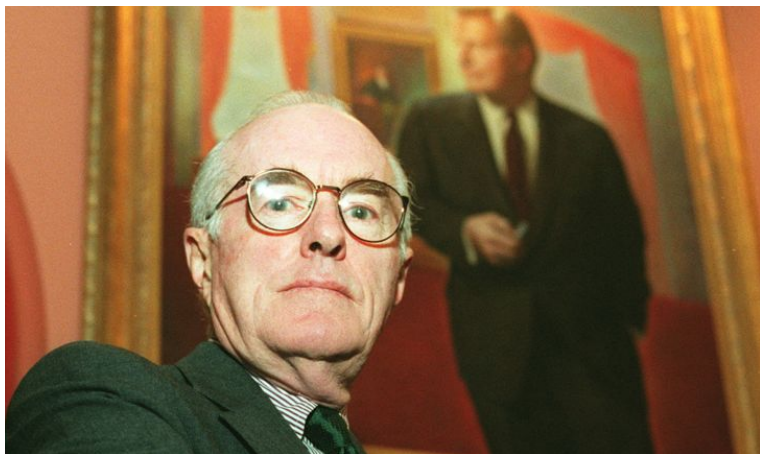


LONG ISLAND / POLITICS**Former Long Island state senator and GOP stalwart John Dunne dies at 90**

Former Republican State Sen, John Dunne represented Long Island's Sixth District for 23 years. Credit: Dave Oxford

By Robert Brodsky

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Former Long Island State Sen. John Dunne, a towering figure in local GOP politics who served 23 years before his appointment to help lead the Civil Rights division of the U.S. Justice Department, has died. He was 90.

Dunne, a lawyer who lived for decades in Garden City, died Sunday of cancer at his home in Chatham.

He represented the Sixth District from 1966 through 1989 and rose to become second-in-command of the chamber.

During the 1971 Attica riots, Dunne, then chairman of the Corrections Committee, entered the prison with Assemb. Arthur Eve to negotiate with inmates and seek a peaceful resolution for them and their hostages.

Dunne, who later became instrumental in addressing prisoner reform issues, criticized fellow Republican Gov. Nelson Rockefeller for failing to come himself, saying the dispute could have ended without bloodshed.

"John was honest, truthful, direct and always did what he thought was right and not what was politically expedient," said Denise Dunne, his wife of 62 years.

The couple had four children: Joanne Dunne Murphy, 60; Peter, 58; Timothy, 56; and Hillary Dunne Ferrone, 54.

"He was as fine a man in his

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private life as he was in his public life," Ferrone said. "He led by example."

A graduate of Georgetown University and Yale Law School, Dunne served in private practice for several years as a partner in the law firm of Rivkin, Radler, Dunne & Bayh. He later worked as senior counsel to the firm of Whiteman Osterman & Hanna LLP in Albany.

"John was the consummate professional, filled with both a love of the law and compassion for those who were most affected by its application," Whiteman Osterman & Hanna said in a statement. "He brought the best out in all of us and humbly served as an inspiration for any woman or man lucky enough to find themselves in his orbit."

While Dunne helped write the Nixon-era Rockefeller Drug Laws, he later became an outspoken advocate for their eventual reform, serving as chair of the State Capital Defender Office, Task Force on the Future of Probation and director of the State Office of Indigent Legal Services.

"John Dunne's example of integrity and intellect, together with a gift for working with people, added up to an outstanding public official," said Kemp Hannon, who succeeded Dunne in his Senate seat. "His innovations in the criminal justice system and prison reform were, as many of his proposals, ahead of their time. Yet he had the legislative craft to see many of them enacted."

From 1990 to 1993, Dunne worked in Washington, D.C., as the assistant attorney general for civil rights after his appointment by President George H.W. Bush.

In a statement, the State Bar Association called Dunne "an admired statesman, respected scholar and a giant in the law and politics."

Along with his wife and four children, Dunne is survived by sons-in-law Thomas Murphy and Christopher Ferrone; daughter-in-law Wendy Dunne and nine grandchildren.

The family will hold a private funeral service.



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Robert Brodsky is a breaking news reporter who has worked at Newsday since 2011. He is a Queens College and American University alum.



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