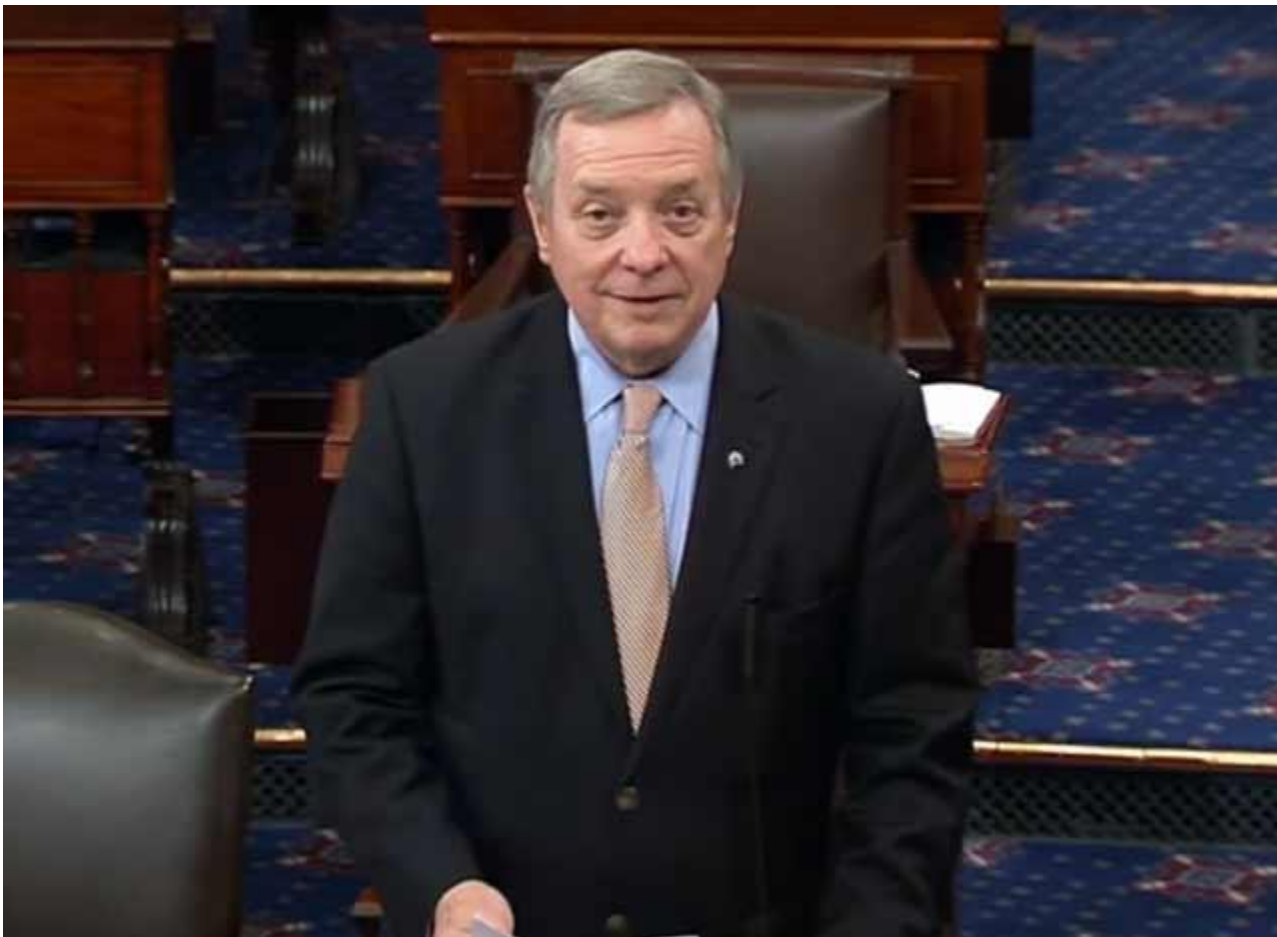


Durbin pays tribute to Phil Rock on Senate Floor

February 12 2016 10:10 AM



WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) paid tribute today to Phil Rock, the longest serving **President of the Illinois Senate**, on the **United States Senate Floor**.

“This morning at Old Saint Patrick’s church in downtown Chicago, there is a funeral service for an extraordinary Illinois public servant: the late Senate President Phil Rock. On January 29, Illinois lost one of its most principled leaders and public servants. He was a good friend of mine and a good friend of my wife as well,” Durbin said. “His legacy shines bright from Oak Park to Springfield and across our state. My wife Loretta and I want to offer condolences to Phil’s wife of more than 50 years, Sheila, their four kids Kathleen, Meghan, Colleen, John and, of course, the grandkids. Phil Rock was a tireless advocate for the little guy. He was a giant in Illinois politics, and he will be missed.”

Remarks of U.S. Senator Dick Durbin

Former Illinois State Senate President Philip Rock

February 11, 2016

On January 29, Illinois lost one of its most principled leader’s and finest representatives. He was a good friend to my wife and me too.

Phil Rock represented Chicago’s Oak Park and parts of the West Side in the Illinois state legislature before retiring from politics in 1993.

He spent 14 of those years as the longest-serving Illinois Senate President. I was his parliamentarian for some of that time.

People used to say that Phil was born a Catholic, a Democrat, and a Chicago Cubs fan, but not necessarily in that order. He actually was born and lived much of his life in the Midway Park section of Austin, Illinois.

Phil nearly became a priest, attending Quigley Preparatory Seminary. He decided to attend University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois.

After graduating from Loyola Law School – and newly married – Phil took a different path than his colleagues.

Rather than joining a big law firm, he chose to enter public services. He took a job working for Illinois State Attorney General William Clark in 1965.

And in 1967, he became chief of Illinois’ consumer fraud division.

Phil chose to enter public service at a particularly difficult time in our nation’s history.

In the late 1960s, the country was torn over social issues and the Vietnam War. The turmoil of the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago offered a painful reflection of the nation's troubles.

Instead of turning away from public service, Phil decided to dive in and make a difference.

In 1970, he was elected to the Illinois State Senate, where he rose quickly in both the party and the statehouse.

Within a year, he was elected Democratic state committeeman for the sixth district. A couple years later he became Assistant Senate Minority Leader.

In 1979, Phil was chosen by his colleagues to be Senate President.

When Phil became Senate President, Illinois was entering hard times. Illinois was hard hit by the national recession and some of the highest urban unemployment levels in the country.

But through his leadership, Phil helped guide the State through the storm of a recession.

Phil was a loyal and passionate Democrat, but he understood that compromise was needed in order to get things done.

Bipartisanship was not a dirty word to Phil Rock. He was old school. He worked with everyone. He just wanted to get things done for the people of Illinois.

With Phil Rock, his word was his bond. When his allies made high and unreasonable demands. Phil had the courage to say 'no.'

When the day's legislative work was done, you could still find Phil presiding over a barbeque grill and handing out chilled Budweisers to those same legislators and friends who wandered into his backyard.

Phil couldn't resist doing a rendition of 'Danny Boy' to audiences too. St. Patrick's Day wasn't complete until you heard those vocals with someone joining him. It was a bipartisan event with Democrats and Republicans helping out.

This is a lesson that we can learn from today.

Phil leaves a proud legacy. He had a wonderful sense of fairness and a strong voice for the most vulnerable in communities across the state.

Phil exemplified what Hubert Humphrey called “the moral test of government.”

He authored and passed more than 450 major pieces of legislation in his career. He earned dozens of awards by groups from Cairo to Zion, Illinois.

Among his legislative accomplishments was Illinois’ I-SEARCH missing children law, which provides state funding for information instantly to those the search for a child.

He also authored laws for mandatory insurance for newborns and the state’s original child abuse and neglect reporting act.

One of his finest achievements was sponsoring the legislation for the nation’s first school for the deaf and blind in Glen Ellyn – which became the Philip J. Rock Center and School.

Phil Rock passed away last month at the age of 78.

His legacy shines brightly from Oak Park to Springfield, Illinois.

Loretta and I want offer our condolences to Phil’s his wife of more than 50 years – Sheila – and their four children: Kathleen ... Meghan ... Colleen ... and John.

Phil Rock was a tireless advocate for the little guy – but he was a giant in Illinois politics and he’ll be missed.