

NEWS OBITUARIES

# John Brandl, policymaker, public servant

● The former aide in the Johnson administration was also a legislator and dean of the Humphrey Institute.

By BEN COHEN 8-20-08  
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John Brandl of Minneapolis, a former state legislator and former dean of the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota, walked deftly between his roles as policymaker and professor, said his friends and colleagues.

Brandl, an economist by training who "always had the human view," one colleague said, died of gastric cancer on Monday. He was 70.

The Harvard-trained Ph.D., who earned his bachelor's degree from St. John's University in Collegeville, Minn., in 1959, had his highest-profile job in the Lyndon Johnson administration in the 1960s, first as an analyst with the Defense Department and later as a deputy assistant secretary in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

In 1968, he returned to Minnesota to work as an assistant professor at the old School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. He rose to be its director.

The school later was absorbed into the Humphrey Institute, where he served as dean from 1997 to 2002.

Brian Atwood, current dean of the Humphrey Institute, said Brandl was considered a "whiz kid" when he worked in the Johnson administration, honing his expertise in the economics of education.

"John was one of our most respected professors, and the students just loved him, because he had one foot in the realm of scholarship and one in the practical world of politics," Atwood said.

Brandl represented parts

of south Minneapolis in the Minnesota House in 1977-78 and from 1981 to 1986, and in the Minnesota Senate from 1987 to 1990.

Roger Moe, former Senate majority leader, said he was "one of the most respected" legislators, adding it was impossible to guess how he would vote in the Legislature.

"When he would get up to justify how he was going to vote, you would always say to yourself, 'Why didn't I think of that?'" recalled Moe. "He cared deeply about the process and about the state."

"Whether it was through his service in the Minnesota House and Senate or as a highly regarded professor, Brandl always pushed government to perform at its very best," said Margaret Anderson Kelliher, current speaker of the Minnesota House.

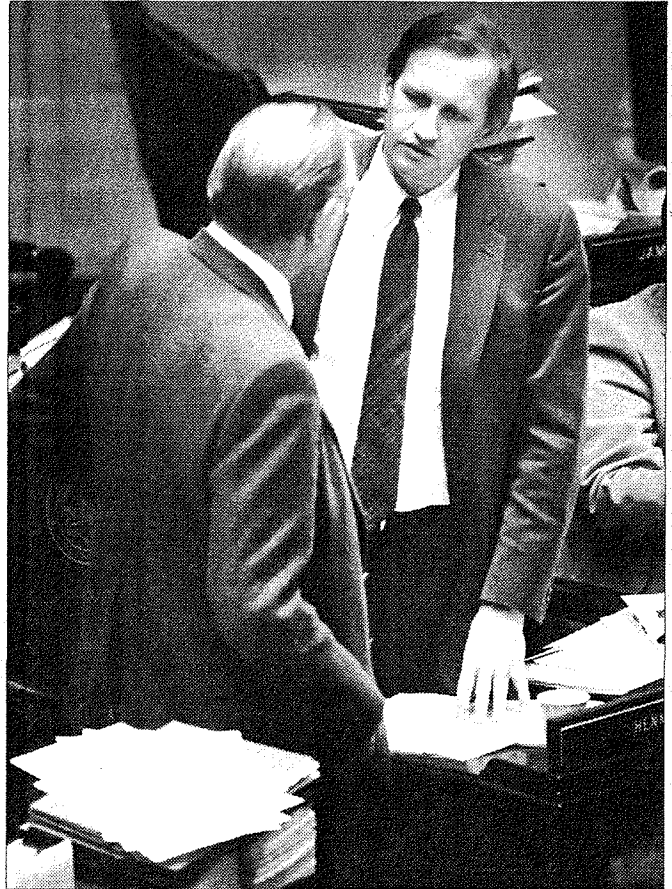
Often to his own DFL Party's chagrin, Brandl believed that school vouchers were a good idea that would help low-income kids.

In a June 29 Star Tribune article, he wrote that he couldn't understand the fear of school vouchers for private schools.

"More than a whole generation of poor kids have been lost," he wrote. "We've got to be trying things different from what we've been trying for those kids."

While he called for college tuition increases, he also advocated expanding the reach of the state's financial aid program, which he helped design.

And although he advocated raising welfare benefits for indigent families, he also asked for more educational progress and/or public work from recipients in return.



BRUCE BISPING • Star Tribune file

John Brandl, right, represented parts of south Minneapolis in the Minnesota House in 1977-78 and from 1981 to 1986.

"John always had the human view," said Bob Kudrle, a professor at the Humphrey Institute. "He cared that families lived lives of meaning and dignity."

"He created a lasting bond" with his students, Kudrle said.

Former congressman Tim Penny, a Humphrey Institute fellow, said Brandl "had a quiet command of the classroom because he exuded competence. He could relate things more effectively, because he was in the arena."

Brandl took a research-based approach to public policy, forgoing conventional political party lines, said Art Rolnick, senior vice president and director of research for the Federal Reserve Bank

of Minneapolis.

"He was somebody that was pushing us in a much more thoughtful direction," Rolnick said.

Brandl held many honors, including the Fordham Foundation Prize for Academic Excellence and the Governors Association Award for Distinguished Service to State Government.

He had served as a regent of St. John's University and as president of the Citizens League of the Twin Cities.

Brandl is survived by his wife, Rochelle; a son, Christopher, and two daughters, Mary Katherine and Amy. Services are being planned; arrangements will be by Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapel in Edina.