

METRO/STATE

# Former Sen. Patricia Kronebusch, 77, dies

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By **Chao Xiong**  
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Patricia Kronebusch was a stabilizing influence in her family of 10 and kept leading the way for six years as a state senator and an active volunteer.

Kronebusch, of Goodview, Minn., died Saturday of congestive heart failure. She was 77.

She was the daughter of farmers James and Luella Keller.

She and her family lived in rural Rollingstone, where she taught religion in grade schools for several years. She received her undergraduate degree from the College of St. Teresa and her master's in education from Winona State University.

In 1980, Kronebusch, an Independent Republican, de-



**Patricia Kronebusch in 1983**

feated DFLer Roger Laufenburger for a seat in the state Senate representing District 34. Laufenburger had defeated her father, James Keller, in his second try for the seat in 1962. When Kronebusch took office, she received her father's desk in the Senate. At the time, few women gained prestigious pub-

lic offices.

"Mother was never afraid to be the first woman to try anything," said her daughter, Anne Kronebusch of Minneapolis.

Kronebusch picked up a taste for politics from her father and her time on the District 861 school board. Family members say Kronebusch took a keen interest in education and women's and human rights during her time in the Senate.

During her tenure, Kronebusch had lunch at the White House with President Ronald Reagan and authored a bill that would allow minors to donate their organs with the permission of their parents.

She also objected to the state's elimination of the Council on the Economic Status of Wom-

en in favor of a commission. The measure called for eliminating the council's public members and including legislators only. In a May 23, 1983, letter to the Star Tribune, Kronebusch wrote, "If state government is truly interested in addressing the needs of women, we must be open and responsive to the Minnesota public — not just an elite group of legislators."

"I don't think there's a person that served with her that can say they had anything but a positive experience," said former state Sen. Duane Benson, who sat next to Kronebusch.

Friends and family members said Kronebusch loved jokes and was lighthearted — often leaving plastic bugs in her children's beds or jokingly offering candy

to fellow senators during heated debates. Of the latter, Benson remarked, "It worked."

Much of Kronebusch's Senate work took place when most of her eight children had reached their teens. But she stayed busy juggling public and domestic duties, which included growing and canning nearly all the family's food each year.

"She was a woman way ahead of her time," said another of her daughters, Kathleen Kronebusch of Maple Grove.

Kronebusch lost her reelection bid in 1986. She was active in St. Anne's Hospice Board of Directors, the Winona Historical Society, the Kiwanis and other groups.

Kronebusch is also survived by her husband, Paul; children

Paula Trevor of Clinton, N.J.; Carol Hubbard of Rochester; Mary Mlynczak of Winona; Barbara Carlson of Houston, Texas; James Kronebusch of Rollingstone and Stephanie Wolle of Northfield. She is also survived by 11 grandchildren, brothers James Keller of Bloomington and Michael Keller of La Crosse, Wis., and sisters Mary Krage of Houston and Anita Hamm of Anaconda, Mont.

Visitation will be held from 4 to 8 p.m. Tuesday at Fawcett-Junker Funeral Home, 1476 W. Broadway in Winona. Funeral services will be held at noon Wednesday at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Winona.

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