

# 9-term Rep. Jim Ramstad dies at 74

He championed mental health issues for decades.

Former U.S. Rep. Jim Ramstad, who served Minnesota for nine terms and earned broad bipartisan respect for his centrist approach on issues such as mental health, died late Thursday, multiple sources reported.

He was 74 and had been in failing health.

Ramstad represented western Hennepin County's Third Congressional District from 1991 to 2009 and served in the state Senate for a decade before that. He was most known in Congress for his work on access to treatment for mental health and was chief sponsor of legislation that opened the door to treatment for millions of Americans suffering from mental illness or chemical addiction.

The legislation was named in honor of the late Sen. Paul Wellstone, a Minnesota Democrat who was also passionate about mental health equity.

His other legislative achievements include the Jacob Wetterling Crimes Against Children Act, a part of the 1994 crime bill that requires convicted child molesters to register with the police after their release. The provision was inspired by the 1989 Wetterling abduction, which for decades was one of Minnesota's most enduring crime mysteries.

Ramstad was open about his

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# Ramstad championed mental health issues in centrist role

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own alcoholism and recovery. For a time, he was an Alcoholics Anonymous sponsor to a Democratic congressman, former Rep. Patrick Kennedy, D-Rhode Island.

"A person of great humanity" was how Vin Weber, another former Minnesota congressman, described Ramstad in a text Thursday night.

Ramstad was known in Congress for a willingness to work across the political aisle in Congress. His politics would have left him out of step in today's Republican Party: he was a supporter of legal abortion and sponsored climate change legislation,

among other things. He also backed measures to increase auto fuel efficiency standards and sided with the Clinton administration's "roadless rule" to protect national forests, including those in northern Minnesota.

Ramstad was even considered for a post in the administration of former President Barack Obama, though the appointment didn't end up happening. After he left Congress, he served as a fellow at Harvard University and was a senior adviser to Minnesota's Hazelden Treatment Center.

When Ramstad opted not to run for re-election in 2008,

he was replaced in Congress by former Rep. Erik Paulsen, a fellow Republican. The Third District seat is now represented by a Democrat, U.S. Rep. Dean Phillips.

"He served with principle and grace for almost two decades, and left a remarkable legacy in our community, our state, and our country," Phillips said in a tweet late Thursday.

Ramstad was born in Jamestown, N.D., in 1946. He attended the University of Minnesota, earned a law degree from George Washington University and was an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve.

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