

DIANE LOEFFLER 1953–2019

15-year House member advocated for vulnerable

She served as a health policy analyst for Hennepin County.

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"Diane was dedicated to... the sick, the elderly, and those with disabilities." —House Speaker Melissa Hortman

In her 15 years in the Minnesota House, Rep. Diane Loeffler always stood up for the forgotten ones.

Now, those who worked alongside her are remembering Loeffler, who died Saturday of cancer at age 66, as a tireless advocate for immigrants, working people, the disabled, the homeless and the mentally ill.

Loeffler had represented northeast Minneapolis in the Legislature since 2004. She also had worked as an education policy analyst for the state

and on finance and tax issues for the city of Minneapolis. Most recently, she served as a health policy analyst and planner for Hennepin County, focusing on service to seniors and people with disabilities, according to her website.

Presidential candidate U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., tweeted Sunday that Loeffler was "a model legislator — respected, liked and dedicated to the people she served."

Former Rep. Erin Maye Quade called her as a "fierce woman who served her community for 15 years."

Loeffler graduated from Augsburg University with a bachelor's degree in history, economics and sociology, and studied educational and public administration as a graduate student at the University of Minnesota.

House Speaker Melissa Hortman said in a note to colleagues that "Diane was dedicated to helping people in Minnesota who were the most vulnerable — the sick, the elderly, and those with disabilities."

Loeffler's website says her interest in education, social services and health care stemmed partly from her family's experience. She had an Aunt Lil who

was born with Down syndrome. Her parents rejected the idea of sending her to the state hospital system, which was the practice at the time. Lil finally was able to go to school at age 35, thanks to volunteers, and she eventually went to work under a government-funded day training program.

"Lil's life taught Diane the power of government policies to open doors of opportunity and ignited her passion to use public policy as a way of improving people's lives," the website said.

Services are pending. Survivors include her husband, Michael Vennewitz.

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