

## Former state Rep. Babette Josephs remembered as a progressive pioneer

By:  
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*Babette Josephs at Mt. Fuji, Japan*  
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Babette Josephs, a former state legislator and attorney who established herself as a leading liberal voice in Harrisburg for nearly three decades in office, has died at the age of 81.

Josephs, who represented the 182nd House District from 1985 to 2012, developed a reputation for her commitment to liberal issues – including her advocacy for LGBTQ equality and women’s rights.

In addition to her time as a state lawmaker and attorney, Josephs was a co-founder of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League of Pennsylvania – known as NARAL-PA – where she also once served as executive director. She co-founded the Clara Bell Duvall Education Foundation, which she formed in an effort to protect abortion-related education in medical schools. Josephs also spent time as co-chair of the Philadelphia 8th Ward Executive Committee and served on the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

Josephs was elected to 14 consecutive terms in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and was remembered fondly on Monday by colleagues and friends for her commitment to progressive causes at a time the issues she advocated for weren't always in the political mainstream.

"I think she was someone who – she had this deep relationship with social justice and the progressive movement," said Ben Waxman, a political consultant. Waxman also served as an 8th Ward committeeman and received Josephs' endorsement when running for her old seat in 2016.

Josephs was a vocal advocate for environmental issues and was supportive of a severance tax on natural gas. She also was a fierce defender of abortion access.

Waxman described Josephs as "deeply principled." He said she was a frequent user of public transportation and didn't own a car for an extended period of time, which he said underscored her stance on the severity of climate change.

"She took positions that, at the time, were not very popular, either with her fellow members, other lawmakers or even, in some cases, the public outside of her district," Waxman said. "The world seems to have come a long way towards where she was standing for a very long time."

State Rep. Brian Sims, who defeated Josephs for her 182nd House District seat in 2012, said Josephs will be remembered for her commitment to public service.

"We learned late last night of the passing of my predecessor, Rep. Babette Josephs," Sims said in a [tweet](#). "Babette was a fierce liberal, a strong advocate, & a public servant for nearly three decades in the House. She will be remembered fondly for her service & her dedication to Philly!"

Former State Sen. Larry Farnese and Philadelphia City Council President Darrell Clarke both described Josephs' as a [\*trailblazer\*](#).

“Babette was a friend and an ally as we worked together to make sure Philly was well represented in Harrisburg,” Clarke said in a [\*tweet\*](#). “She was a trailblazer for LGBTQ freedoms and womens’ rights. Rest in power, my friend.”

House Democratic Leader Joanna McCClinton said Josephs dedicated her career to lifting up issues important to marginalized Pennsylvanians.

“Pennsylvania has truly lost a ‘Liberal Lion.’ Rep. Babette Josephs spent her career giving a voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless, McCClinton said in a [\*tweet\*](#). “She fought for the civil liberties of all and we stand upon her shoulders as we continue the fight for justice today.”