

Patty Berg

December 3, 2024



Patricia "Patty" Berg, a fervent Democrat and former State Assemblywoman passed away on November 19, 2024, in Eureka.

A Humboldt County resident since 1974, Berg established herself not only as one of the CA Legislature's most dependably progressive members, but also as one of the few members whose personal integrity earned her respect and cooperation on both sides of the political aisle. As a member of the legislature, one of Patty's proudest efforts was carrying "Death with Dignity" legislation in 2005-2007, to replicate the Oregon law of choice to allow aid in dying. It was an effort that spurred the adoption of the landmark Compassionate Choices Act in 2015.

She was a creative force in the Humboldt community, over the years leaving her stamp of enthusiasm and effectiveness on many organizations. She was founder of the Area I Agency on Aging and cofounder of the Redwood Coast Jazz Festival. She was also enormously proud to have helped start "the Girlfriends Over 60" group – 16 fabulous, local women friends who met monthly to discuss issues around how to grow old with class, dignity and verve. She always said, "It's all about the Girlfriends."

A prodigious local fundraiser, when Patty made a commitment to a project, she was tireless in her effort to see the goal achieved. From the Redwood Coast Jazz Festival initiated to support senior programs, to Six Rivers Planned Parenthood, Hospice of Humboldt and Life Plan Humboldt, many knew if you took a call from Patty, keep your check-book close because she was a convincing and very effective advocate.

In the last days of her life, Patty was embraced by the loving warmth of her many friends, who gathered to watch over her during her last struggle. She was a force in this life. Determined, organized, kind and generous. Once you were taken into her family circle, her generosity knew no bounds. Famous for her clip board, daily to-do check list, she was organized. Need to make a decision about the next steps in your life, see Patty – she'd help develop the pros and cons, and help you think it through. She was a good listener, genuinely curious about people and cared enough to want to know your story. She was a matchmaker and fabulous hostess, where no detail was left unattended and where over the years, she brought many together at her dining room table. Patty loved to garden her acre of land, both with flowers and vegetables and in the early 90's she became a Master Gardener. Gardening gave her such joy.

Patty often acknowledged how very lucky she had been in this life – to have enjoyed many loving relationships and friendships; to have experienced a truly intimate and loving relationship with a husband she adored; to help raise two step-children that she often referred to as her own; to have been given so much and be able to give back in return; to have been financially independent and to always have strived to be true to herself.

Elected to the CA Assembly (2002-2008), 1st Assembly District, she was a tireless advocate for her district, which included the counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, Trinity, Lake, Mendocino, and parts of Sonoma. She was Chair of the Aging and Long-Term Committee and the Select Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture.

Patty was also a strong and vocal advocate for women's issues throughout her lifetime. She chaired the Legislative Women's Caucus, which developed the first working family's agenda, and she worked tirelessly to encourage more women to run for public office – a goal only recently achieved when for the first time in the history of the CA Senate, parity was achieved – at least 50% of the members are now women. During her six-year term, she received 14 Legislator of the Year awards from various statewide organizations and developed the nation's first Master Plan and Policy Agenda for aging adults. Following her tenure in the Legislature, Patty continued to work with the Assembly, to create the nation's first training program for incoming women legislators in 2010 and 2012. Beginning in 2014, she served as the Principal Consultant to the Senate Select Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care, developing a comprehensive report with over 30 legislative recommendations to restructure long-term care in California. Patty always dressed with style and flair, in fact, her legislative colleagues once voted her "the Best Dressed" legislator in Sacramento.

Patty was born and raised in Seattle, WA, moving to Southern California in 1962. She graduated from California State University at Los Angeles with degrees in Sociology and Social Work. Prior to her election in the California State Legislature, Berg served as the founding Executive Director of the Area 1 Agency on Aging, serving Humboldt and Del Norte counties for nearly 20 years. There, she became a leading advocate for policy change in Sacramento and our nation's Capital by writing legislation and testifying before

Congress. Patty's agency was nationally recognized, receiving the Administration on Aging's highest award for developing the most comprehensive system of services for older adults in all of California. She also served on multiple local non-profit boards, and two national boards: The National Association for Area Agencies on Aging and the national Compassion and Choices organization. She was an instructor at HSU in both the Sociology and Psychology Departments and was awarded "Woman of the Year" by both the State Assembly in 1992 and the State in Senate in 2000. In 2008 she was honored as "Democrat of the Year" by the Humboldt County Democratic Central Committee.

After graduating from college, Patty moved to New York City, where in 1970 she met the love of her life, Patrick Murphy, MD, who had traveled to New York to hock pickles. It was love at first sight when they met at a Block Party that Patty helped organize to raise money to plant street trees on West 69th Street. Following a whirlwind 4-day romance, Patty moved back to southern California, where Patrick was an Internist in private practice in Newport Beach and a clinical instructor in medicine at UC Irvine. In 1971, Patrick began a residency in psychiatry, which he completed at Napa State Hospital, following which Patty and Patrick moved to Humboldt County. Patrick died in 1987.

Patty is survived by her brother, Danny Berg (Colleen) of Washington; sister, Marsha Bowman (Bruce) of Florida; stepdaughter Gretchen Tavenner (Chris) of Montana; stepson Brian Murphy of Idaho; cousin Judy Nick, niece (Danielle); nephew (Eric) and step-granddaughters, Damia and Leila; her 'team' of many intimate friends, and her friend and care-giver, Mia Mulhern.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the following organizations selected by Patty: Hospice of Humboldt, Life Plan Humboldt, the Humboldt Library Foundation, or to a charity of your choice.

A memorial service to celebrate Patty's life will be held after the first of the year. Notice will be provided.