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# Philip Hoff, Governor Who Steered Red Vermont to Blue, Dies at 93

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS APRIL 27, 2018

Philip H. Hoff, a Democrat who as governor of Vermont was credited with starting the state's transition from one of the most Republican in the country to one of the most liberal, died on Thursday. He was 93.

The Residence at Shelburne Bay, an assisted-living facility in Shelburne, Vt., where he had been living, confirmed the death.

Mr. Hoff, a lawyer, became the first Democrat elected governor of Vermont in more than 100 years when he defeated the incumbent, the Republican F. Ray Keyser, in 1962 by about 1,300 votes.

"A hundred years of bondage broken! A hundred years of bondage broken!" Mr. Hoff proclaimed to cheering supporters on election night. At the time, the state was under a federal court mandate to reapportion the House, where each of the state's 241 cities and towns were represented by a single person, no matter the community's population.

"The people of Vermont have clearly said that they don't want to continue with the old ways, and if we fail to respond to forces at work in our society, we face a bleak future," Mr. Hoff said in his inaugural address in January 1963.

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system.

He created a civil rights commission, a precursor of the state's Human Rights Commission. A year before Congress passed sweeping federal legislation he championed a state fair housing law making it illegal to refuse to sell, lease or rent property to members of minority groups.

He also presided over a ban on highway billboards, abolition of the state's poll tax and an increase in state aid to education, and he started a youth project that brought black teenagers from Harlem to Vermont for summer programs, The Burlington Free Press reported.

"Phil Hoff forever changed the state of Vermont," said Stephen C. Terry, a former journalist who, with Anthony Marro and Samuel B. Hand, wrote the biography "Philip Hoff: How Red Turned Blue in the Green Mountain State" (2011). "His influence in the 1960s has molded and created the Vermont many of us know today."

The governor's office has largely alternated between Democratic and Republican governors since Mr. Hoff was elected.

His breaking of the Republican lock on Vermont politics also paved the way for the election of his protégé Patrick J. Leahy to the United States Senate, the state's first Democrat to win a seat in that chamber.

Mr. Leahy had joined Mr. Hoff's Burlington law firm after graduating from law school in 1964. Two years later, Mr. Hoff appointed him state's attorney for northern Chittenden County, which embraces Burlington. He held the post for eight years until his election to the Senate in 1974.

Philip Henderson Hoff was born on June 29, 1924, in Turners Falls, Mass. He took time off from his studies at Williams College to serve in the Navy during World War II and returned to Williams after the war. After graduating, he went on to law school at Cornell University. He moved to Burlington in 1951.



Mr. Hoff first ran for office in 1958, for a seat on the Burlington Board of Aldermen. He was defeated. Two years later, he was elected to the Vermont House after running what Mr. Terry called “a minimalist campaign.” He had no campaign literature of his own and instead handed out brochures promoting the presidential candidacy of Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

Mr. Hoff won the race for governor in 1962 after one term in the Legislature.

“A handsome and energetic campaigner, Hoff found himself being compared to John Kennedy and did nothing to discourage the comparison,” his biographers wrote.

In 1968, he was briefly considered as a Democratic vice-presidential candidate. He withdrew his name when it became clear that his friend Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine would be chosen by the party’s presidential nominee, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey.

Mr. Hoff ran for the United States Senate in 1970 but lost to the incumbent, Winston Prouty, a Republican. He returned to the Legislature in 1982 after being elected to the State Senate. He served three two-year terms.

He married Joan Brower in 1948, and they had four daughters. There was no immediate word on survivors.

The New York Times contributed reporting.

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