

Former NY Conservative Party leader Michael Long dead at 82

Carl Campanile



Former state Conservative Party Chairman Michael Long died Sunday morning at the age of 82. AP/Seth Wenig

Former state Conservative Party Chairman [Michael Long](#) — a powerful force in New York politics who was instrumental in getting Republican [George Pataki](#) elected governor — died Sunday morning after a long illness. He was 82.

The Brooklyn-born political operative headed the Conservative Party for more than 30 years, from 1988 to 2019, and served a stint as an at-large member of the New York City Council from 1981-83.

He served in the US Marines from 1959-1961 and advocated for a

strong American military.

Long was a fixture in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, where he and his brother Tom owned Long's Wines and Liquors on Fifth Avenue and 79th Street. He later moved to Breezy Point, Queens.

A champion of small-business interests, he and his brother previously owned an ice cream parlor in Cypress Hills, Brooklyn.

It was Long's Conservative Party ballot line that helped [Republican Pataki](#) topple three-term Democratic incumbent [Mario Cuomo](#), the father of former Gov. [Andrew Cuomo](#), for the governorship in 1994. Pataki would go on to serve three terms.

The Conservative Party ballot line earlier also was crucial in electing Republican [Al D'Amato](#) to three terms in the US Senate.



Long headed the Conservative Party from 1988 to 2019.

"Mike Long was one of the finest human beings I ever met," Pataki said in a statement to The Post.

"Mike's commitment to his faith, his family, and his belief in America and freedom are things that were inspirational to me throughout our time together. Quite simply, without his support I would have never been elected governor.

"In my first race for governor, the Conservative line was the difference between winning and losing and without Mike Long, I would have never had that line. I am forever grateful for his friendship, his leadership and most of all his strength and courage. He will be missed. Libby and I extend our thoughts and prayers to Eileen and the entire incredible Long family."

Long is survived by: his wife of 59 years, Eileen; nine children; 25 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

He died at home in Breezy Point surrounded by his family, said his son, Chris Long.

"Not only were his nine children fortunate to



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Gregory P. Mango

have him as a father, there were countless other people whose lives he positively impacted," Chris Long said.

Current state Conservative Party Chairman [Gerard Kassar](#), a Long protege, said, "The loss of Mike Long is immeasurable.

"We have lost a good man, a close friend, mentor and outstanding political leader; a void for me and many has been created that cannot be filled.

"The countless number of people who learned from Mike can today be found throughout the political world and will act as his legacy for many years to come."

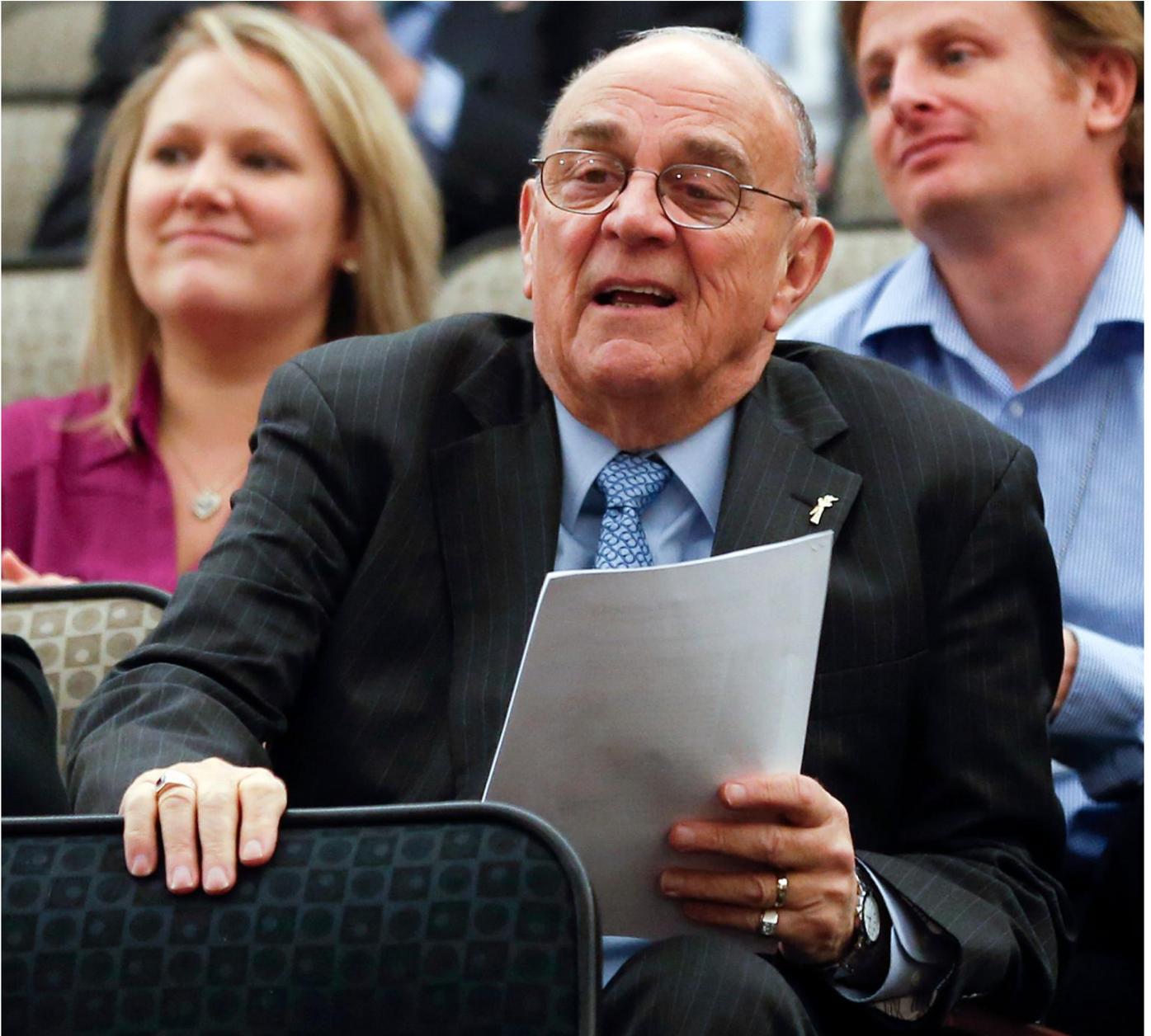
Shaun Levine, the party's executive director, added, "Throughout his life, Mike certainly lived up to the Marine's motto, Semper Fi.

"To say Mike will be sorely missed is an understatement; his dedication to making lives better is a loss when needed most."



George Pataki (left) said he would not have become governor of New York without Long's help.

Courtesy George Pataki



Long suffered an illness in the years before his death.

AP/Mike Groll

Long became a conservative activist after attending a Madison Square Garden rally for Barry Goldwater, a Republican who ran for president in 1964. He volunteered for Goldwater's campaign.

While Goldwater lost to Lyndon Johnson, the conservative movement is credited with later helping elect Ronald Reagan to the White House in 1980.

Long's political career began in 1968 as a district leader, and he quickly rose to chairman of the Brooklyn Conservative Party in 1972.

In 1974, he was elected by his colleagues as a state vice chairman and in 1984 as the executive vice chairman. He was elected the state Conservative Party chairman in 1988.

Long never veered from his long-held beliefs despite a cultural swing to the left in New York. He opposed abortion and [same-sex marriage](#) and championed gun ownership.

He also was active in his community, serving as a member of the board of directors of the Cathedral Club of Brooklyn; secretary of the board of trustees of Daytop Village, a substance-abuse treatment program, and past chairman of the board of directors of Holy Angels Academy in Bay Ridge.