



Governor Maura T. Healey has ordered that the United States of America Flag and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts flag be lowered to half-staff beginning immediately today, June 15, 2023, until sunset on the day of interment, in honor of the life and legacy of former Representative David Bartley, who passed away on June 13, 2023.



Former Speaker David Bartley. [Courtesy/Holyoke Community College]

HOLYOKE, Mass. (WWLP) – One of western Massachusetts’ most prominent political and educational leaders of the late 20th Century, David M. Bartley, has died at the age of 88.

Bartley, a Holyoke Democrat, was first elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1962, and was selected as speaker in 1969. His legislative accomplishments included crafting the state’s special education law, and cosponsoring Bartley-Fox Law, which created a one-year mandatory minimum sentence for anyone found to be carrying a gun without an FID card.

Bartley served as speaker until 1975, when he became president of Holyoke Community College, a role he held onto until 2004. At HCC, he was instrumental in the construction and development of the college’s current campus.

Bartley had served as Massachusetts’ Secretary of Administration and Finance under Democratic Governor Edward King from 1981 through 1983. In 1984, Bartley unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination for U.S. Senate, finishing third in a race won by then-Lieutenant Governor John Kerry.

He was the father of three children, including Holyoke Ward 3 City Councilor David K. Bartley.

Congressman Richard E. Neal (D-Springfield) released the following statement about Bartley’s passing:

“Throughout his life, Dave Bartley epitomized what it meant to be a public servant and was a true champion for the City of Holyoke. His career in public service began in the classroom at Forest Park Junior High School before he ran for State Representative in 1962 and eventually ascended to the Speakership in 1969. Dave’s approach to legislating provided a valuable lesson for those in public life; while he was firm in his beliefs, he understood that legislation is what truly changes lives and knew just how to get the votes needed to pass that legislation.

While Dave remains the youngest Speaker of the House since the Civil War, perhaps his most celebrated achievement during his time in the Massachusetts Legislature was authoring the Chapter 766 Special Education Law, guaranteeing a free public education for disabled children throughout the Commonwealth between the ages of 3 and 22. Dave was a tireless advocate for education, something that continued after leaving the House and being named the second President of Holyoke Community College. He played an indispensable role in helping rebuild the current campus after the original building burned down in 1968, ensuring HCC could continue its mission of providing a quality, affordable education.

Dave was a devoted husband to his wife, Bette, and a loving father to their three children. My thoughts and prayers are with the entire Bartley family during this difficult time.”

*Congressman Richard E. Neal*