

House Speaker's funeral held at Annapolis church

A funeral program for Maryland House Speaker Michael Busch, who died April 7 at age 72, filled St. John Neumann Church in Annapolis April 16.

Busch collaborated with the Catholic Church on issues such as abolishing the death penalty, but supported same-sex marriage and introduced and later withdrew an amendment in the 2019 session that would enshrine abortion in Maryland's constitution.

"There were many areas where we were privileged to work together with the speaker," said Mary Ellen Russell, former executive director of the Maryland Catholic Conference and current director of community affairs for the Archdiocese of Baltimore. "It's clear that it's a great loss for the entire state of Maryland."

He was especially a great partner, Russell said, in repealing the death penalty.

"He was very helpful and supportive of the issue," Russell said.

Russell said Busch "had a real heart" for people in need, and the people of Baltimore City.

While he originally was against state support of programs helping students in nonpublic schools, Russell said, he eventually came around and became a supporter.

"Our hearts go out to his wife, Cindy, and his daughters, Erin and Megan," Russell said, noting that everyone agreed he was a great and endearing father. "We certainly pray for them in their loss."

Busch was remembered at his funeral for his athletic talent, first developed at his high school, St. Mary's in Annapolis. He returned to his alma mater to teach and coach.

Governor Larry Hogan was among his eulogists.

“Just days before he passed away, I was fortunate to have had the chance to share a few last words with the speaker,” Hogan said. “I had called him in the hospital just to check in on him and to let him know that we were all thinking of him and praying for him.”

Hogan said Busch had called him a few years ago while he was battling cancer.

“He and I had a heart-to-heart about how the partisan battles and the political rivalries were really not all that important, and we agreed that what really mattered was our families and loved ones and the profound sense of pride that comes with serving the people of Maryland,” Hogan said.

The governor noted that Busch had served in the house chamber for 32 years, and had led as its speaker for 17.

“Speaker Busch and I came from different sides of the aisle, but we often found a way to come together in the best interest of the people of this great state,” Hogan said. “I truly feel honored to have known him and fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with him.”

Deacon Leroy Moore of St. Mary in Annapolis officiated at the funeral service. St. John Neumann is a mission church of St. Mary.

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