

# Longtime Nevada Senator Bill Raggio dead at 85

By Guy Clifton, Reno Gazette-Journal

Bill Raggio, a legend in Nevada politics for more than half a century, has died.

Raggio, the longest-serving senator in state history, was 85, and died Thursday of a respiratory illness while on vacation in Sydney, Australia. His wife, Dale, was at his side.

“With the death of Sen. Bill Raggio, one of the great lights in the world of Nevada politics has gone out,” said Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval.



Bill Raggio

A Reno native, Raggio served 18 years with the Washoe County District Attorney's office, including three terms as the district attorney, where he earned a reputation as a hard-nosed prosecutor.

He was elected to the state senate in 1972 and served there until resigning for health reasons in 2010. In those 38 years, he forged a reputation as a master of the legislative process, a tough negotiator and a champion for education and Northern Nevada interests.

He took heavy criticism in 2010 for backing U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., over Republican Sharron

Angle in their U.S. Senate race, but Raggio said he was doing what he thought was in the best interest of Nevada.

“He always fought for Nevada and his invaluable contributions and service to our state will live on,” Reid said in a statement on Friday.

Raggio was unapologetic and said in a 2010 interview that criticism is part of the life of an elected official.

“You show me someone who doesn’t have detractors, and I’ll show you someone who hasn’t done a damn thing in their lives,” Raggio said.

Raggio did plenty.

A second-generation Reno native, William J. Raggio grew up on Surprise Valley Road (now Valley Road) in Reno. His mother was a bookkeeper, his father a bank teller.

**Read the whole story**