

Bob Gammage, former Texas congressman who defeated Ron Paul

By WILL WEISSERT

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AUSTIN, Texas — Bob Gammage, a Democratic lawmaker and unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate who was part of the early 1970s “Dirty 30” in the Texas House and who once beat Ron Paul when running for Congress, died Monday, his family said. He was 74.

Mr. Gammage was up late watching a movie and was found the following morning slumped over in the bathroom, said Paula Bundrant, a cousin to Mr. Gammage’s wife, Linda. Bundrant said the cause of death was believed to be a heart attack but that no autopsy was planned.

Robert Alton Gammage was born in Houston and served in the Texas House from 1971 until 1973. He was part of the bipartisan group known as the “Dirty 30” that rallied against the speaker of the House and other officials investigated by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

The speaker, Gus Mutscher, was later convicted and sentenced to five years’ probation for conspiring to accept a bribe.

Mr. Gammage served in the Texas Senate for three years beginning in 1973, then left to run for Congress in 1976, defeating Paul, then the Republican incumbent, by fewer than 300 votes. But Paul returned to beat Gammage for the same seat in 1978.

As a 3rd Court of Appeals justice from 1982-91 and a state Supreme Court justice from 1991-95, Gammage dealt repeatedly with major school-finance lawsuits.

He retired from the Texas Supreme Court in 1995, capping a near quarter century of public service. Mr. Gammage originally planned to simply return to practicing law, teaching and writing books.

But 11 years later, he launched an unlikely bid for governor citing what he saw as relentless corruption at the state and federal levels. He lost to fellow Democrat and former U.S. Rep. Chris Bell in the primary. Bell was then defeated by Republican Gov. Rick Perry, who was re-elected to his second full term.

Linda Gammage said that after he retired from the court, her husband continued to do “many, many hours of pro-bono work” for people in-need.

“He always had an open-door policy,” she said.

Linda Gammage said he also remained active in Democratic politics, even traveling to Iowa twice for the presidential campaign of Hillary Clinton in 1998.

“He was a good man. He was a good public servant, and I just wish he could have cast his absentee ballot for Obama,” she said of the upcoming presidential election, recalling how the couple enjoyed watching every night of the Democratic National Convention on television last week.

Bill Brannon, executive director of the Texas Democratic Party, called him “a great Democrat and a fine member of the U.S. House of Representatives.”

“Our thoughts and prayers are with the Gammage family,” Brannon said. He added that Mr. Gammage’s longevity and dedication to public service were impressive, noting that “Bob served at a time when partisan flags didn’t fly every day” unlike the current political climate.

AP