

= Rogers Morton =

Rogers Clark Ballard Morton (September 19 , 1914 ? April 19 , 1979) was an American politician who served as the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Commerce during the administrations of Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford , Jr . , respectively . He also served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Maryland .

Though he was born in Louisville , Kentucky , Morton moved to a farm on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in the early 1950s . In 1962 , he was elected to the House of Representatives , in which capacity he established an environmental record . Morton would joke that his two middle initials stood for " Chesapeake Bay . " In 1968 , Morton played a major role in Richard Nixon 's campaign for president , and was chosen by Nixon in 1969 to serve as chairman of the Republican National Committee .

In the elections of 1970 , Morton was considered a strong candidate to challenge Joseph Tydings for his U.S. Senate seat from Maryland , but he chose instead to remain as chairman of the RNC . In 1971 , President Nixon tapped Morton to serve as Secretary of the Interior , during which time he oversaw the construction of the Trans - Alaska Pipeline System and the 1973 oil crisis . Morton was the only person from the East Coast to serve as head of the Interior Department in the 20th century .

Following Nixon 's resignation due to the Watergate Scandal , Morton continued in his post in the Gerald Ford administration until 1975 , when he was nominated to serve as Secretary of Commerce . From April to August 1976 , Morton served as Ford 's campaign manager in his bid for election . Morton retired from politics following Ford 's election defeat . Three years later , he died of cancer at his home in Easton on the Eastern Shore of Maryland .

= = Early life and career = =

Morton was born in Louisville , the son of David Clark Morton , a physician , and his wife , Mary Harris Ballard Morton , an heiress to a flour milling business . He was related to George Rogers Clark , a military officer who served during the American Revolutionary War . Morton was one of three children ; his brother Thruston B. Morton also had a career in politics , serving as chairman of the Republican National Committee and representing Kentucky in both the United States House of Representatives and then the United States Senate .

Morton received his early education from the Woodberry Forest School near Orange , Virginia , and in 1937 graduated from Yale University , where he was a brother of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity (Phi chapter) . Like his father , Morton worked to become a physician and entered the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons . However , he dropped out after only one year . In 1939 , Morton married the former Anne Jones . They had two children , David Clark and Anne Morton .

In 1938 , Morton was commissioned in the United States Navy but only served for a short time due to problems with his back . Afterwards , he entered his family 's flour business , Ballard & Ballard . In 1941 , at the outset of World War II , Morton enlisted in the Armored Field Artillery of the United States Army as a private and served in the European Theater . He received a commission during the war and left the army as a captain in 1945 .

After the war , Morton returned to the family business , where he served as president from 1947 to 1951 . In 1952 , the business was merged into the Pillsbury Flour Company , where Morton went on to serve as a director and a member of the executive committee for several more years .

= = Congressional career = =

In 1947 , Morton spent a great deal of time helping his brother Thruston in his ultimately successful campaign for election to the House of Representatives in Kentucky . After this initial exposure to politics , Morton moved to the Eastern Shore of Maryland in the early 1950s , where he set up a 1 @, @ 400 acres (5 @. @ 7 km2) cattle farm along the Wye River in Talbot County . In 1962 ,

Morton decided to challenge Democratic incumbent Thomas Francis Johnson of Maryland 's 1st congressional district . Johnson , who was reeling from a political scandal , lost to Morton in the general election . Morton was lauded for not making Johnson 's legal troubles his primary campaign issue .

Morton was re-elected to Congress four more times , and served from 1963 until 1971 . In Congress , Morton worked to enact legislation that would preserve the Chesapeake Bay , including laws reducing pollution into the Bay , working for the creation of a national park on Assateague Island , and providing funds to the Army Corps of Engineers to model how the Bay functions as an estuary . Concerning civil rights , Morton voted for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 , but not the Act of 1968 .

During the 1968 Republican National Convention , Morton served as the floor manager for eventual presidential nominee Richard Nixon . Morton also delivered the speech nominating Spiro Agnew , then Governor of Maryland , as the vice presidential candidate .

Due to his role in Nixon 's election campaign and his environmental advocacy , Morton expected to be appointed as Secretary of the Interior in 1969 . However , he was passed over for the position in favor of a westerner . He had also been considered for Nixon 's vice presidential running mate , but lost out to Agnew . In January 1969 , to recognize his efforts , Nixon appointed Morton as chairman of the Republican National Committee .

= = 1970 United States Senate election = =

In 1969 , leading up to the 1970 elections , Morton was considered one of the strongest potential candidates to challenge incumbent Democratic senator Joseph Tydings . Morton had sought the Republican nomination for Maryland 's other U.S. Senate seat in the 1968 elections , but bowed out in favor of Charles Mathias , Jr. to prevent a primary battle .

Speculation that Morton would seek election to Tydings ' seat increased after an editorial in the Baltimore Sun encouraged him to challenge Tydings . Sources within the administration of Vice President Spiro Agnew , who was formerly governor of Maryland , were also commenting that Morton would make a strong candidate and would likely run . When Morton stated he would be making an important announcement with President Nixon in December 1969 , it seemed all but certain at the time that it would be to declare his candidacy .

However , Republicans around the country were concerned that Morton , who had just been appointed chairman of the RNC in January 1969 , would resign during the election season to better handle the battle with Tydings . President Nixon shared their concerns , and encouraged Morton to remain as chairman . On December 16 , 1969 , with Nixon by his side , Morton announced that his priorities were with the national committee , and that he would not seek Tydings ' seat . Morton also threw his full support for the nomination behind J. Glenn Beall , Jr . , a freshman member of the Maryland Senate .

Morton 's decision not to challenge Tydings initially worried Maryland Republicans , who saw Morton as one of their best candidates . National Republican strategists had also begun to write off Tydings ' seat as unwinnable for the 1970 election because of Tydings 's wealth and popularity in the dense urban areas of Montgomery County and Baltimore . However , despite initial misgivings by state republicans , Beall defeated Tydings on November 3 , 1970 , by a margin of more than 30 ,000 votes .

= = Secretary of the Interior = =

Morton continued to serve in the House and as chairman of the RNC until 1971 , when he was nominated to be Secretary of the Interior by President Nixon . He was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate Subcommittee on the Interior , though some concerns regarding Morton 's record of environmental protection were raised by Phillip Berry , then President of the Sierra Club . Morton 's predecessor , Walter Joseph Hickel , had been chosen over Morton to fill the job in 1969 , but was fired by Nixon in late 1970 for criticizing White House policy . Morton was the only

person from the east coast to serve as Interior Secretary in the 20th century .

Upon assuming the office of Secretary of the Interior , Morton promised he would seek to " purify the environment " . However , as his tenure progressed , he was gradually isolated from the proceedings of the White House and lost several major divisions to other departments . During the 1973 oil crisis , for example , the oil and natural gas divisions of the department were transferred to the Office of Emergency Preparedness . Furthermore , though Morton was the one who announced the construction of the Trans @-@ Alaska Pipeline System , speculation was put forward that he did not play a major role in determining its route . On August 1 , 1974 , Morton approved Anza @-@ Borrego State Park for inclusion in the national registry of natural landmarks .

As he was leaving his post in 1975 , further criticism was directed at Morton for his overseeing the partial dismantling of the Interior Department . He was also criticized for lacking the vigor necessary to serve as head of a cabinet department , and for failing to see through the proposed creation of a new , stronger cabinet department that would have replaced the Interior .

= = Later years and the Ford Administration = =

Following the resignation of President Nixon in the Watergate scandal , Morton continued in his position as Secretary of the Interior in the administration of President Gerald Ford . In March 1975 , while still serving as the head of the Interior Department , Morton was nominated by Ford to serve as the next Secretary of Commerce . Ford cited Morton 's extensive business experience as the primary factor for selecting him and expressed the hope that Morton would be able to " encourage American business to expand energy development and conservation efforts " .

In January 1976 , Ford announced Morton would be resigning as Commerce Secretary , and would serve as " special counsellor to the President " , with cabinet @-@ rank . Morton 's new position was to advise the president on domestic and economic policy . In addition , Morton was to serve as the special liaison to the political committee to elect President Ford . Morton 's duties blurred the line between his public and political duties , and caused controversy concerning how Morton would divide his time between the White House and Ford 's election campaign , and how much of his salary would be supplied by taxpayers versus the Ford election committee . In rebuttal , Morton stated " you can 't separate government from politics " , and that Presidential aides should be allowed to offer political advice .

In April 1976 , Morton was named campaign manager for President Ford leading up to the 1976 presidential election . He replaced former U.S. Representative Howard Callaway of Georgia , who was forced to resign following allegations of improper use of authority while he was Secretary of the Army . Morton directed Ford 's campaign until August 25 , 1976 , when he was reassigned as chairman of a steering committee and was replaced by James Baker of Houston , Texas . Morton 's demotion was at his own request ; he said that he no longer wished to bear " the responsibility and accountability of the chairmanship " . However , former Nixon aide Harry S. Dent , Sr. , of South Carolina claimed that Ford had relieved Morton as campaign manager because of a remark that Morton had made about the need for the GOP to " write off the Cotton South " in formulating the general election strategy against Democratic nominee Jimmy Carter , the former governor of Georgia who unseated President Ford .

After the 1976 campaign , Morton retired from politics to his farm , " Presqu 'isle " , near Easton , Maryland , where he operated a boat construction business .

Morton had been diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1973 , but he said that the disease was in its early phase and was still treatable . In 1979 , however , Morton died of the cancer at his home in Easton . He is interred in Old Wye Cemetery in Wye Mills , Maryland .